Darkness Fell / *Blevins* / 2 Part (opt. 3 Part) Treble Chorus
with Piano, Sound Effects and Body Percussion

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DARKNESS FELL

Words and Music by

SHERRY BLEVINS

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Darkness Fell

Darkness fell, yet nothing made a sound.
I tried to find it shattered on the ground,
But all I heard was music in the night.

Thunder cracked, yet I couldn't catch a break.
I looked for shards, and then I felt a quake.
The earth was moved, and so was I.

Rain is falling, yet I have no cup.
If there was mercy, I would drink it up,
But I am drenched, and my palate is dry.

Darkness fell, yet nothing made a sound.
I tried to find it shattered on the ground,
But all I heard was music in the night.

Notes from the Composer:

This song was inspired while I was struggling with anxiety. For those who have this disorder, you know how frustrating it is to feel a sense of fear that you know is not based in reality. In verse one, the darkness represents those feelings of impending doom. In verse two, the thunder represents being easily startled. In verse three, rain represents the wonderful things that were happening in my life that I was unable to enjoy because of anxiety. You may have noticed the more hopeful line: "But all I heard was music in the night." While this literally could mean the music of the night creatures, it also depicts how music can be our refuge when we struggle.

I chose to punctuate this music with sound effects mimicking nature. Like our mental and physical health, nature is a force that we all must manage daily. Sometimes it is beautiful and inspiring and sometimes it is frightening and powerful. Let the darkness of this piece be eerie; let the thunder jar you; feel the weight of the pouring rain; and at last, return to the peace of nightfall and the sound of nature's music.

– Sherry Blevins

Performance Notes:

Just as the dynamics of the music in Darkness Fell create an extended crescendo-diminuendo, the sound effects should do the same. These effects can be successfully performed in many ways. While I will offer several suggestions to achieve each of these effects, feel free to use your own ideas and your singers' ideas. Have fun being creative!

Verse 1: *mezzo-piano*
Night Creature Sounds: This effect is best when the sounds reflect those in your region. There are percussion instruments called crickets and frogs, etc. that can be purchased, but you would need many of these for the proper effect. With technology, it is much cheaper and easier to achieve this. Simply conduct an Internet search using the terms, "Night-nature sounds," and you will have plenty from which to choose. There are also white-noise apps that include night sounds. If you take either of these routes, be sure to rehearse using this technology in the performance space. Select singers could also play a sound clip on their devices, or you could enlist the help of teachers or other audience members to do so. Consider emailing or texting parents/teachers links in order to download various effects prior to the performance. It will be best if not everyone has the same sound clip. For example, some could be frogs, some crickets, some barn owls, and some whip-poor-wills.

Verse 2: *mezzo-forte*

Thunder: Since thunder follows lightning, have all singers (or the audience) stomp their feet in a ripple/wave effect following a flash of lights. If lighting effects are not possible, simply have them create thunder sounds on cue. The first crack of thunder could start with the left side of the choir or audience, and then the quieter ripple effect could take place as the stomps move through the center, then the right side of the choir or audience. I find that conducting this results in the best performance. Avoid using a traditional conducting pattern though; instead, tell them to stomp when your finger passes in front of them and then move across the participants as if you were pointing to a vehicle as it passes. You may want to employ the help of an advanced student or another instructor so that you may continue to focus on other aspects of the music during this part. If you choose to have the audience perform this effect, allow them to practice prior to the start of the performance of the piece.

Verse 3: *forte*

Rain: Again, there are many ways to accomplish this effect. The raindrops will sound most realistic when singers continuously slap their hands against bare skin. If they cross their arms with their fore-arms exposed (right hand to the upper left forearm and left hand to the upper right forearm), this is the easiest way to create the perfect rain sound effect. For a summer camp performance where singers are in shorts, singers could drum on bare legs. With a little rehearsal, the audience could perform this effect as well, as long as they have a leader to model and again, as long as they rehearse it just prior to the performance.

Verse 4: *mezzo piano (fading to the end)*

Night Creature Sounds: This should be approached the same as verse one.

Overall, if you enlist the audience's help, you may want to create large flashcards that a volunteer could hold to cue each different effect. Also, while specific rhythms are notated for the sound effects, these are just suggestions. As long as your effects sound natural, don't worry about being exact.

Regarding the number of parts: if you choose to omit part 3, you should skip measures 59-68. If you include this part, feel free to add more thunder to your rain from measures 56-58.

I hope you enjoy this piece and that it is as therapeutic for you to perform as it was for me to create it for you.

Additional Learning Opportunities:

As a music educator, I feel it is imperative that we teach music standards, but also show an appreciation for learning other subjects as well. Doing this with *Darkness Fell* will make learning it a much richer experience. You may easily incorporate any of the following into your choral music instruction:

Literacy Integration:
Interpreting the meaning of lyrics including plays on words, identifying instances of alliteration, metaphors, onomatopoeia, and being able to define new vocabulary terms such as *shards, quake, drenched, and palate*.

Science Integration:
Identifying which creatures are indigenous to your region and explaining how they make sounds at night; investigating how and why thunder makes a sound; explaining what atmospheric conditions create a recipe for rain.

21st Century Skills:
Higher-order thinking including analyzing lyrics and defining terms in their own words; creating new ideas for how to effectively convey the various sound effects; allowing opportunities for student leadership and collaboration as described in "Performance Notes."

Commissioned for the South Carolina Music Educators Association's Sixth Grade Choral Clinic
Chairperson, Jeri McGuffin
for James Green

Darkness Fell

2-part (Optional 3-part) Treble Chorus with Piano,
Sound Effects and Body Percussion

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SHERRY BLEVINS

♩ = 104

Night Creature Sounds

Sound Effects and Body Percussion

Piano

mp

Ped. _____ *Pedal harmonically throughout*

5

9

All voices unison

mp

Dark - ness fell, yet noth-ing made a sound. I

mp

13

tried to find it shatt-ered on the ground, but all I heard was mu - sic in the

17

Thunder Body Percussion

night.

21

Part 1

mf

Thun - der cracked, yet I could-n't catch a break. I looked for shards and

24

then I felt a quake. The earth was moved and so was __ I.

28

Part 1

Thun - der cracked, yet I could-n't catch a break. I

Part 2

Thun - der cracked

31

looked for shards and then I felt a quake. The earth was moved and

looked for shards, earth was moved

Rain Body Percussion

34

so was ____ I.

so was ____ I.

37

Part 1

f

Rain is ____

f

40

pour - ing, ____ Rain is ____ pour - ing; ____

8

53

I am drenched and my pal - ate is dry.

56

*(If omitting, skip to
Coda at measure 66.)*

Part 1

f

Rain is _____

Part 2

f

Rain is pour - ing,

Optional Part 3

f

Rain _____ is _____

*(If omitting, skip to
Coda at measure 66.)*

f

60

pour - ing, _____ Rain is _____ pour - ing; _____

yet I have no cup. If there was mer - cy, I would drink it up. But

pour - ing, Rain _____ is _____ pour - ing,

63

I am drenched and my pa - late is dry.

I am drenched and my pal - ate is dry.

I am drenched and my pa - late is dry.

66

All voices unison

mp

Dark - ness fell, yet

70

noth-ing made a sound. I tried to find it shatt-ered on the ground, but

73

Night Creature Sounds

Stagger breathe

all I heard was mu - sic in the night.
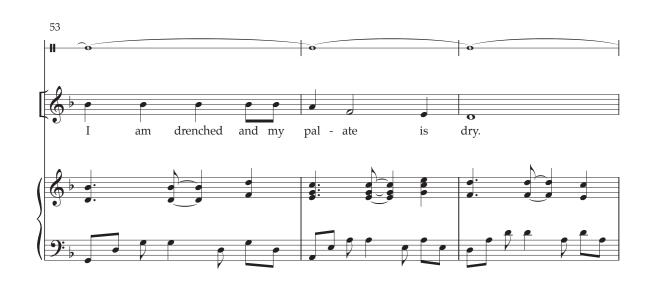
77

rit.

8va

Sherry Blevins is a teacher, conductor, and more recently, a lyricist and composer. She earned her Bachelor of Music Education with a principal in voice from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and her Master of Music Education degree with a concentration in conducting from Appalachian State University. She taught many grade levels in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools of North Carolina for sixteen years where she was the district's nominee for state teacher of the year. She is currently serving as a Supervisor of Student Teachers for Appalachian State University where she was recently selected for the Outstanding Adjunct Teaching Award for the College of Education. She also serves as Music Director for Paw Creek Presbyterian Church and as a private piano and voice instructor. Ms. Blevins frequently serves as a clinician for honor choirs and leads workshops on choral techniques and the motivation of singers across the Southeastern United States.

Her first piece, *If You Heard My Voice* was composed when she was 45. Since then, she has enjoyed composing for a variety of singers on many occasions. In 2018, she was one of seven composers nationwide to be selected as a composing fellow at the CORO Composer's Institute in Iowa where she premiered an upcoming SATB release, *Breath of Life*.

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