

Gerald Cohen

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting

For children's chorus, SATB chorus and organ
(2002)

PERUSAL SCORE

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting was commissioned by St. Bartholomew's Church, New York, NY as part of the Faith Partners Residency of the American Composers Forum, with funds provided by the Wolfensohn Family Foundation.

For this residency, in which St. Bartholomew's Church collaborated with Temple Emanu-El and the Church of St. Ignatius-Loyola, also of New York City, I composed four pieces, one for each congregation, and one as a joint commission to be performed by each of the three congregations. St. Bartholomew's, wanting for its individual commission a piece for both the children's and adult choirs of the congregation, chose a beautiful excerpt of William Wordsworth's *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*. The text highlights a principal idea of the entire poem—that in childhood we have intimations of an existence transcending our everyday physical world, and that as we grow into adults, this vision fades. The piece juxtaposes the clear unison lines of the children's choir with the more complex harmonies of the mixed choir and organ, beginning and ending in quiet wonder.

The premiere of *Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting* was performed by the St. Bartholomew's adult and children's choir, William Trafka, conductor, in November 2002.

—Gerald Cohen

(Text by William Wordsworth, from
Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood)

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
and cometh from afar.
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
from God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy.

Commissioned by St. Bartholomew's Church, New York City,
as part of The Faith Partners Program of the
American Composers Forum

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting

Duration—Approx 6'

for Children's Chorus, SATB Chorus and Organ

William Wordsworth

Gerald Cohen

Broadly ♩=66

Children's Chorus

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Organ

ppp *p* *ppp* *pp* *p*

Oo, Oo, oo,

Broadly ♩=66

Solo: *p* gentle, mysterious

Flute celeste:

ppp *pp* *ppp*

6 *p simply*

Child. *pp*
Our birth is but a sleep and a for - get - ting,

S *pp*
ah, —

A *pp*
oo, ah, —

T *pp*
oo, —

B

Org. *pp* *pp* *p*

11

Child. *pp*
The Soul that ri - ses with us, *pp* our life's —

S *pp*
ah, —

A *pp*
ah, —

T

B

11 Flute celeste: *p* Solo: — — — —

Org. *p*

17

Child. Star, Hath had else - where its set - ting, and

S *pp* ah,

A *pp* ah,

T

B

Org. *p*

21

Child. com - eth from a - - far.

S *p* Not in en -

A *p* Not in en -

T *p* Not in en -

B *p* Not in en -

Org. Solo: *p* Not in en -

26

Child.

S tire for - get - ful - ness, And not in ut - ter

A tire for - get - ful - ness, And not in ut - ter na -

T tire for - get - ful - ness, And not in ut - ter na -

B tire for - get - ful - ness, And not in ut - ter na -

Org.

30

Child. *mp cresc.* But

S na - ked - ness, *mp* But trail - - - ing clouds of *p subito cresc.*

A ked - ness, *mp* But trail - - - ing *p subito*

T ked - ness, *mp* But trail - - - ing clouds of *p subito cresc.*

B ked - ness, *mp* But trail - - - ing clouds of *p subito*

Org.

33

Child. *f*
trail - ing clouds of glo - ry do we come from God;

S *mf*
glo - ry do we come from God, who is our

A *cresc.* *mf*
clouds of glo - - - ry, God, our

T *mf*
glo - ry do we come from God, who is our

B *cresc.* *mf*
clouds of glo - - - ry, God, our

Org. *mf*

A little faster ♩ = 72

36

Child. *p* gently, with warmth
home: Our birth is but a

S *p* gently, with warmth
home: Our birth, but a

A *p* gently, with warmth
home: Our birth, but a

T *p* gently, with warmth
home: Our birth, but a

B *p* gently, with warmth
home: Our birth, but a

Org. *dim.* *p* legato gently, with warmth

8' +16'

40

Child.

S sleep, The Soul that ri - ses with

A sleep, birth, The Soul, with The

T in en - tire for - get - ful - ness, And

B in en - tire for - get - ful - ness, And

Org.

42

Child.

S us, of *cresc. poco a poco*

A us, Soul, But trail - ing clouds of *cresc. poco a poco*

T not in ut - ter na - ked - ness, But trail - ing clouds of *cresc. poco a poco*

B not in ut - ter na - ked - ness, clouds of *cresc. poco a poco*

Org.

More motion ♩ = 80

More motion ♩ = 80

45 *mf cresc. accel.*

Child. do we come from God, —

S glo - ry, But trail - ing clouds — of glo - ry, do we come from God, —

A glo - ry, but trail - ing clouds of glo - ry, do we come

T glo - ry, trail - ing clouds of glo - ry, do we come

B glo - ry, clouds of glo - ry,

Org. *accel.*

49 *ff* *More motion ♩ = 88* *rit.*

Child. — who is our home:

S — who is our home:

A from God, our home:

T from God, our home:

B from God, our home:

Org. *ff* *More motion ♩ = 88* *rit.* *dim.*

God who is our home:

+32'

(rit.)

Tempo I ♩ = 66

Child.
S
A
T
B

Org.

Child.
S
A
T
B

60

Hea - - - - ven lies a - bout us in our

Org.

PERUSAL SCORE

65 *p*
 Child. in - fan-cy! Hea - ven lies a - bout us in our in -
pp
 S Hea - ven, Hea - ven,
pp
 A Hea - ven, ah,
p
 T Hea - - - ven lies a - bout us in our in - fan-cy!
p
 B in - fan-cy!

65
 Org. *pp*

69 *rit.* *a tempo*
 Child. fan - cy!
pp *p*
 S Hea - ven lies a - bout us in our in - fan-cy!
pp *p*
 A Hea - ven lies a - bout us in our in - fan-cy!
pp *p*
 T Hea - ven lies a - bout us in our in...
pp *p*
 B Hea - ven lies a - bout us in our...
ppp
 Org. *rit.* *a tempo*

73 *p*

Child. Hea - ven... lies a - bout us...

S

A

T

B

Org. *ppp*

g^{va} Soft flute: *pp*

77

Child.

S

A

T

B

Org. *ppp*

g^{va}