

# O Love

"O love that will not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in thee.  
I give thee back the life I owe,  
that in thine oceans depths its flow  
May richer fuller be.

O joy that seeks me through pain,  
I cannot close my heart to thee.  
I trace the rainbow through the rain,  
and feel the promise is not vain  
That morn shall tearless be."



## George Matheson (1841-1906)

"O Love" was inspired by the words of Scottish minister, George Matheson, penned in 1882. After going blind at age nineteen, his fiancée called off their engagement and his sister cared for him as he endured new challenges. 20 years later, on the eve of his sister's wedding, he faced the painful reminder of his own heartache and loss as he wrote the words to this hymn.



## About Elaine

Elaine Hagenberg's music "soars with eloquence and ingenuity" (ACDA Choral Journal). Her compositions are performed worldwide and frequently featured at distinguished international concert halls from Australia to South America and throughout Europe.

In addition to composing full-time, Elaine actively engages in bringing her music to life as the guest artist and featured clinician for professional conferences and festivals both in the U.S. and abroad as a composer, conductor, and accompanist of her work. Elaine has music in print with various publishers and publishes her concert music independently through Elaine Hagenberg Music.

Elaine lives in Iowa with her husband and four children and enjoys being in nature, traveling, gardening, and sipping homemade cappuccinos.



## INSPIRATION

I'm often asked: "What is the inspiration behind your compositions?"

As a choral composer, my inspiration always begins with poetry. The words that tend to resonate personally often include themes that are both meaningful to me and unite us through shared experiences. You will often hear uplifting messages of hope, imagery of nature, and elements of my faith. As I weave these components together, my aim is to add yet another layer of beauty to the text so we can gain a deeper understanding of its message of hope and share that hope with others.

I re-discovered the text to "O Love" in the summer of 2016 and immediately heard music to the comforting words. Though the lingering dissonances recall past pain, the ascending melody encourages us to trust that "morn shall tearless be."



## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. As you read the text by George Matheson and reflect on his life's story, which words or phrases resonate with you personally and why?
2. How is the melody used to support the text? Is it ascending? Descending? Are there higher or lower pitches to support certain ideas? Leaps or steps? Pay special attention to measures 15, 19–20, and 62.
3. How does the piece highlight certain words through the rhythm? How do downbeats support the important words in each phrase? See examples in measures 9, 16, 21, and 32.
4. How does the ritardando in measure 49 support the poetry and musical ideas?
5. How does the harmony support the text? Are there any surprising harmonic moments?
6. In measure 27, why would "joy" be sung on a dissonant minor chord which is often associated with sadness?
7. How are dynamics used to support the main ideas?
8. The form of this piece is strophic (verse one, verse two, etc.). In addition to the words, how do the two verses vary? How does the final verse in measure 43 differ from the first time we heard these words in measure 9?
9. How does the piano accompaniment support the main ideas of this piece as well as the vocal lines? See measures 17–20, 42–43, and 57–58. How does the optional cello part enhance the piece?
10. What additional observations do you have about "O Love"?



*Elaine Hagenberg*  
MUSIC

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