

Craig K. Sandford

A NEW SONG

SSA choir and piano

Text by Richard Rolle

CKSandford Music
craigksandford.com

A New Song

by *Richard Rolle* (ca. 1290-1349)

translation into modern English by *Frances Bevan*, 1899

I know not the song of Thy praises,
Till Thou teach it, my God, to me—
Till I hear the still voice of Thy Spirit,
Who speaketh for ever of Thee—
Till I hear the celestial singing,
And learn the new song of Thy grace,
And then shall I tell forth the marvels
I learnt in Thy secret place.
Thy marvels, not mine, far surpassing
All thoughts of my heart must they be—
I can but declare the glad tidings,
As Thou hast declared them to me.

ABOUT THE PIECE

The writings of medieval mystic and hermit, Richard Rolle, “reflect his fervent devotion and his emphasis on a rapturous mystical union with God.” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*) To that end, the setting of this text is meant to reflect his mystical experience of the divine, which he described to include warmth, sweetness, and heavenly music. His medieval context is evoked through the melody, as it hints at plainchant through its lyrical rise and fall, its movement almost entirely by step or thirds, and its rhythmic fluidity. The harmonies and modulations reinforce the journey he describes between sweetness and fire. The swirling polyrhythmic accompaniment represents the mysterious and joyful pull of personal meditation and revelation, as it draws the seeker from the earthly to the heavenly. Since the faith community in which Richard Rolle participated was a convent of nuns, this setting is for treble voices. In the end, my hope is for the ensemble to communicate a sense of Rolle’s deep personal devotion, and the visceral elation he experienced in the presence of God, a mystery he was eager to share with others. -CKS



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born at Thornton, Yorkshire, England, circa 1290, **Richard Rolle** was educated at Oxford and in Paris from 1320-1326, before entering into the life of a hermit on the estate of a friend. After several years of intense contemplation, he took to wandering across England, finally settling down at Hampole where he assisted the spiritual development of the nuns in a nearby Cistercian community. He died there on September 29. Rolle was very well known and his writings widely read during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He was one of the first religious writers to use the vernacular. His works include letters, scriptural commentaries, and treatises on spiritual perfection. In one of his best-known works, *The Fire of Love*, Rolle provides an account of his mystical experiences, which he describes as being of three kinds: a physical warmth in his body, a sense of wonderful sweetness, and a heavenly music that accompanied him as he chanted the Psalms. (Excerpted from: *Christian Classics Ethereal Library*, ccl.org/ccl/rolle)



ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Craig Sandford is a composer, singer-songwriter, and music educator based in New England. With a compositional voice rooted deep in the classics, Craig infuses his choral works with a freshness and vibrancy that masterfully paints text with music. Against a traditional harmonic backdrop his love of subtle dissonance places his music clearly in the 21st century. With utmost attention given to the rhythm and meaning of the text, Craig crafts musical stories that capture the essence of the words with gracious musical lines and shimmering harmonies.

Craig holds a composition degree from the Hartt School, and has completed summer programs in choral conducting, choral pedagogy, and choral composition at Westminster Choir College and Oxford University. His concert works have been performed in the United States and Europe by high school, college, and adult choirs. In addition to composing, he is the accompanist and assistant conductor at the Northfield Mount Hermon School, where he teaches music theory and arts appreciation. Craig has titles in print with GIA Music and Boosey & Hawkes, but self-publishes most of his music. For more information, please visit craigksandford.com.

A New Song

Treble Chorus, SSA(A) and Piano

Richard Rolle (c. 1290-1349)
translated by Frances Bevan, 1899

Craig K. Sandford

Flowing, freely, with expression (♩ = ca. 68)

Soprano

Alto

Piano

mp

Flowing, freely, with expression (♩ = ca. 68)

4 All voices unison *mp*

I know not the song of thy prais-es, Till Thou teach it, my God, to

8 me; Till I hear the still voice of thy Spir - it, Who speak-eth for -

(divisi)

Duration: ca. 3' 45"

A New Song

11 Soprano 1 & 2 *mf*
ev - er of Thee; Till I hear the ce - les - tial sing - ing, And learn the

Alto *mf*
ev - er of Thee; Till I hear the ce - les - tial sing - ing, And learn the

15 *mp* *mf*
new song of thy grace; And then I shall tell forth the the mar - vels I

mp *mf*
new song of thy grace; And then I shall tell forth the the mar - vels I

19 *mp*
learned in thy se - cret place.

mp
learned in thy se - cret place.

23 *mf* Thy mar - vels not mine far sur - pass - ing All

23 *mf* Thy mar - vels not mine far sur - pass - ing All

23 *mf* Thy mar - vels not mine far sur - pass - ing All

26 thoughts of my heart they must be; I can but de - clare the glad

26 thoughts of my heart they must be; I can but de - clare the glad

26 *mp* thoughts of my heart they must be; I can but de - clare the glad

26 *mp* thoughts of my heart they must be; I can but de - clare the glad

26 *mp* *mf* *mp*

29 *p* *poco rit.* *a tempo* tid - ings, As thou hast de - clared them to me.

29 *p* tid - ings, As thou hast de - clared them to me.

29 *p* *poco rit.* *a tempo* tid - ings, As thou hast de - clared them to me.

29 *p* tid - ings, As thou hast de - clared them to me.

29 *p* *poco rit.* *a tempo* *mp*

A New Song

33

33

mf

37 *rit.* *a tempo* Soprano 1 *mf*

I know not thy

Soprano 2 & Alto *f*

I know not the song of thy praises, Till Thou

37 *f* *rit.* *a tempo* *mf*

41

song, Till Thou teach it to me; Till I hear thy still

teach it, my God, to me; Till I hear the still voice of thy Spirit, Who speak-eth for-

teach it, my God, to me; Till I hear the still voice of thy Spirit, Who speak-eth for-

41

45

voice, speak - ing of Thee; of Thee; Till I hear the sing - ing, And learn the

ev - er of Thee; Till I hear the ce - les - tial sing - ing, And learn the

ev - er of Thee; Till I hear the ce - les - tial sing - ing, And learn the

45

49

mp new song of thy grace; *mf* And then I shall tell forth the mar - vels And then

mp new song of thy grace; *mf* And then I shall tell forth the mar - vels And then

mp new song of thy grace; *mf* And then I shall tell forth the mar - vels And then

49

A New Song

53 *rit.* **f** *a tempo* **mp**

I shall tell forth the mar - vels I learnt in thy se - cret place.

I shall tell forth the mar - vels I learnt in thy se - cret place.

I shall tell forth the mar - vels I learnt in thy se - cret place.

57 **pp** **p** **p**

Song of thy prais - es, song of thy grace,

60 **pp** **p** *molto rit.* **mp** **mf**

Song of thy prais - es, song of thy grace, Song of thy grace.

Song of thy prais - es, song of thy grace, Song of thy grace.