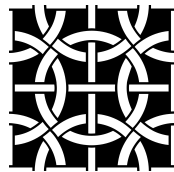


# How I came to be

Poem: Kim Stafford  
Music: John Frederick Paul

for

choir (SATB), solo violin and narrator



John F Paul Music

## The Poem

*The story goes that my father, a pacifist in the Good War, was held at a camp in the California mountains where a minister brought his pretty daughter to help attract the boys to the Lord, but my father asked her to walk into the hills with him. Evening, the lingering decrescendo of the sun, and the moon hung low. They saw dust along a distant road. One began, "I have come upon a stretch of dusty white road..." and the other said, "drinking up the moonlight beside a blind wall..." and both knew the Willa Cather story where this sentence lived, and knowing that, they recognized one another. After a few days, back home in L.A., she sent him a telegram the war censor sent back to her, thinking it code: "After long thirst," she had written, "a draught of perfect good."*

*Imagine, you are in a war, far from home, very poor, maligned, long at a loss. Someone you have just met offers a few consoling words from home. Would you not say, as he did, "Isn't this the way it should be?" Would you not say, as she did, "But you don't know if I can cook?" And in such coded words begin to knit the world together once again?*

---- Kim Stafford

## Program Notes

Kim Stafford's poem caught my attention when it appeared in the Spring 2011 edition of *Portland Magazine*. The poem relays the story of how Kim's parents (the poet William Stafford and wife Dorothy) meet during World War II. Not all poetry gets my composition juices flowing, especially modern poetry, but by the fourth line of Kim's poem I was already imagining a choral setting with solo violin. By the time I got to the word "decrecendo" I was hooked! Work on the piece did not begin in earnest until December 2012, shortly after the passing of my mother, who *could* cook but never quoted Willa Cather in my presence. The piece was written for the Marylhurst Chorale to celebrate my parents' 61 years of marriage. Theirs was a quiet endeavor that began shortly after the Good War, continued through the raising of three children, and faced its toughest challenge at the end battling Parkinson's disease. May we all be so fortunate as Kim's and my parents, finding our own code to "knit the world together once again."

The premier took place March 2013 at Marylhurst with Kim, Kim's mother Dorothy, and Kim's family in the audience.

---- JFP

## Performance Notes

The violin serves as a string of yarn that knits the disparate elements of the piece together. The violin often echoes the narrator; therefore the dynamics of the violin must match that of the narrator and its tempo and accents should mimic the narrator's words.

# How I came to be

written for the Marylhurst University Chorale  
in celebration of Phil and Dorothy's 61 years of marriage

Poem by Kim Stafford

Music by John Frederick Paul

(Narrator:)

How I came to be...

The story goes that my father, a pacifist in the Good War,  
was held at a camp in the California mountains where  
a minister brought his pretty daughter to help attract the boys  
to the Lord, but my father asked her to walk into the hills with him.

Violin



*mf*

Evening, the lingering decrescendo of the sun, and the moon hung low.

Vln.



*mf*

S  
A



*pp*

ooo. \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: women enter very quietly, one by one, quickly following after each other and independently. Each may sing these measures in her own tempo, somewhere between 60 and 84 beats per minute. The result should create an undulating major second cluster. Loop until the word "written", at which time all stop singing, no matter where in the loop the singer may be.


They saw dust along a distant road. One began, "I have come upon a stretch  
of dusty white road..." and the other said, "drinking up the moonlight  
beside a blind wall..." and both knew the Willa Cather story where  
this sentence lived, and knowing that, they recognized one another..

Vln.




*mf*

S  
A



*pp*

T  
B



*pp*

ooo. \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: The men follow in similar fashion as the women. Loop until the word "written".



14

Vln.

S  
A

T  
B

far from home, \_\_\_\_\_ ver - y poor, ma - ligned, \_\_\_\_\_

21

Vln.

S  
A

T  
B

long at a loss. \_\_\_\_\_

*mf* *mp* *solo*

B

Vln.

S  
A

T  
B

Some - one you have just met \_\_\_\_\_ of - fers a few con - sol - ing words \_\_\_\_\_

*mp*

36

Vln.

S  
A

T  
B

from \_\_\_\_\_ home. \_\_\_\_\_

*p* *solo*

**C**

Vln.

S  
A

T  
B

Would you not say, as he did, "Is-n't this the way it should be?"

54

Vln.

S  
A

T  
B

Would you not say, as she did, "But you don't

61

Vln.

S  
A

T  
B

know if I can cook?" And

**D**

Vln.

S  
A

T  
B

in such cod-ed words be-gin to knit the world, and in such

75

Vln.

S  
A

T  
B

cod - ed words be - gin to knit the world, and in such

*mf*

79

Vln.

S  
A

T  
B

cod - ed words be - gin to knit the

*f*

83

Vln.

S  
A

T  
B

world

*ff*

(Narrator:)  
begin to knit the world together... (Silent pause 3-5 seconds)

87 *solo*  
 Vln. *f*

[E] *ritardando* ..... *a tempo*

Vln. *pp*

S  
A *p*  
 to - geth - er once a gain?

T  
B *p*

102  
 Vln. *p*

108

Vln. *niento*

S  
A *pp*  
 hmmm *niento*

T  
B *pp*  
*niento*