

# ROBERT FROST SONGS

for Voice and Piano

|                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| 1. A Leaf Treader      | 4  |
| 2. To the Thawing Wind | 8  |
| 3. The Rose Family     | 11 |
| 4. Pan With Us         | 13 |
| 5. The Flood           | 18 |

## COMPOSER'S NOTE

Robert Frost was born on March 24, 1874, in San Francisco but spent most of his life in the rural New England that he frequently wrote about. He received four Pulitzer Prizes for Poetry and, at the age of 86, read a new poem at President John F. Kennedy's inauguration. He died in 1963.

**ROBERT FROST SONGS** was begun during a residency at The Hambidge Center for the Creative Arts and Sciences in Rabun Gap, Georgia, in October 2007 and completed in State College, Pennsylvania in November 2007. The composer first encountered the poetry of Robert Frost in junior high school when he memorized "The Death of the Hired Hand" for English class. He encountered Randall Thompson's settings of Frost poems in *Frostiana* which he frequently conducted with his men's choruses. These are his first settings of Frost's poetry.

### *A Leaf Treader*

I have been treading on leaves all day until I am autumn-tired.  
God knows all the color and form of leaves I have trodden on and mired.  
Perhaps I have put forth too much strength and been too fierce from fear.  
I have safely trodden underfoot the leaves of another year.

All summer long they were over head, more lifted up than I.  
To come to their final place in earth they had to pass me by.  
All summer long I thought I heard them threatening under their breath.  
And when they came it seemed with a will to carry me with them to death.

They spoke to the fugitive in my heart as if it were leaf to leaf.  
They tapped at my eyelids and touched my lips with an invitation to grief.  
But it was no reason I had to go because they had to go.  
Now up my knee to keep on top of another year of snow.

### *To the Thawing Wind*

Come with rain, O loud Southwester!  
Bring the singer, bring the nester;  
Give the buried flower a dream;  
Make the settled snowbank stream;  
Find the brown beneath the white;  
But whate'er you do tonight,  
Bathe my window, make it flow,  
Melt it as the ice will go;  
Melt the glass and leave the sticks  
Like a hermit's crucifix;  
Burst into my narrow stall;  
Swing the picture on the wall;  
Run the rattling pages o'er;  
Scatter poems on the floor;  
Turn the poet out of door.

### *The Rose Family*

The rose is a rose,  
And was always a rose.  
But the theory now goes  
That the apple's a rose,  
And the pear is, and so's  
The plum, I suppose.  
The dear only know  
What will next prove a rose.  
You, of course, are a rose  
But were always a rose.

### *Pan With Us*

Pan came out of the woods one day,  
His skin and his hair and his eyes were gray,  
The gray of the moss of walls were they,  
And stood in the sun and looked his fill  
At wooded valley and wooded hill.

He stood in the zephyr, pipes in hand,  
On a height of naked pasture land;  
In all the country he did command  
He saw no smoke and he saw no roof.  
That was well! and he stamped a hoof.

His heart knew peace, for none came here

To this lean feeding save once a year  
Someone to salt the half-wild steer,  
Or homespun children with clicking pails  
Who see so little they tell no tales.

He tossed his pipes, too hard to teach  
A new-world song, far out of reach,  
For a sylvan sign that the blue jay's screech  
And the whimper of hawks beside the sun  
Were music enough for him, for one.

Times were changed from what they were:  
Such pipes kept less of power to stir  
The fruited bough of the juniper  
And the fragile bluets clustered there  
Than the merest aimless breath of air.

They were pipes of pagan mirth,  
And the world had found new terms of worth.  
He laid him down on the sun-burned earth  
And ravelled a flower and looked away.  
Play? Play? - What should he play?

### ***The Flood***

Blood has been harder to dam back than water.  
Just when we think we have it impounded safe  
Behind new barrier walls (and let it chafe!),  
It breaks away in some new kind of slaughter.  
We choose to say it is let loose by the devil;  
But power of blood itself releases blood.  
It goes by might of being such a flood  
Held high at so unnatural a level.  
It will have outlet, brave and not so brave.  
Weapons of war and implements of peace  
Are but the points at which it finds release.  
And now it is once more the tidal wave  
That when it has swept by leaves summits stained.  
Oh, blood will out. It cannot be contained.