

MARK TWAIN

THE WAR PRAYER

**For Speaker, Soloists, SATB Chorus and Keyboard
or Brass Quintet and Percussion Ensemble**

Music by

BRUCE TRINKLEY

THE WAR PRAYER

For Speaker, Soloists, SATB Chorus, and Keyboard
or Brass Quintet and Percussion Ensemble.

Mark Twain wrote *The War Prayer* in February or March 1905, sometime after the Spanish-American War. He submitted it to *Harper's Bazaar*, but it was rejected as "not quite suited to a woman's magazine". It was not published during his lifetime because "I have told the whole truth in that, and only dead men can tell the truth in this world".

The work was published posthumously in 1923 as part of the author's *Europe and Elsewhere*. It is one of the most significant texts in Mark Twain's voluminous writings.

In the complete text of *The War Prayer*, Twain describes the entrance of the speaker:

An aged stranger entered and moved with slow and noiseless step up the main aisle, his eyes fixed upon the minister, his long body clothed in a robe that reached to his feet, his head bare, his white hair descending in a frothy cataract to his shoulders, his seamy face unnaturally pale, pale even to ghastliness . . . During some moments he surveyed the spellbound audience with solemn eyes in which burned an uncanny light: then in a deep voice . . .

The speaker is perhaps a messenger from God, perhaps a madman, perhaps our own conscience.

The War Prayer may be performed either as a concert piece or with dancers enacting the story of the drama. In either case, the speaker should not be in the performance space until his entrance. If performed with dancers, the role of the speaker should be integrated with the movement of the dancers.

It is important that Mark Twain's text, whether sung or spoken, be very clearly enunciated. The rhythmically notated spoken portions should be declaimed in natural word rhythms. The free sections should be spoken very naturally and clearly.

Approximate duration: 18 minutes

**For Speaker, Soloists, SATB Chorus and Keyboard
or Brass Quintet and Percussion Ensemble**

Bruce Trinkley

5 **March tempo** $\text{♩} = 72$ (whistling)

mp (whistling)

5 *poco rit.* *a tempo*

mp *p*

10 *mf* The

10 *mf* The

15 *div. f* *mf*

coun - try _____ was up in arms, the war was on, in ev' - ry

15 *div. f* *mf*

coun - try _____ was up in arms, the war was on, in ev' - ry

15 *mp*

19 *unison f*

breast burned the ho - ly fire of pa - tri - ot - ism, _____ pa - tri - ot - ism; _____

19 *unison f*

breast burned the ho - ly fire of pa - tri - ot - ism, _____ pa - tri - ot - ism; _____ the

23 *unison f* the drums were beat-ing, the bands ____ play-ing, the toy pis-tols *div.*

drums were beat-ing, the bands play-ing, the toy pis - tols pop - ping,

23 *mf*

27 *unison* pop - ping, pop - ping, pop - ping, pop - ping, pop - ping, the bunched fire-crack-ers 3

pop - ping, the bunched fire-crack-ers 3

the bunched fire-crack-ers 3

unison pop - ping, pop - ping, pop - ping, pop - ping, the bunched fire-crack-ers 3

27

30 *div. p (whispered)* *cresc.* *mp*

hiss-ing and splut-ter-ing, hiss - ing and splut-ter-ing, hiss - ing and splut-ter-ing, hiss - ing and splut-ter-ing,

div. p (whispered) *cresc.* *mp*

hiss - ing and splut-ter-ing, hiss - ing and splut-ter-ing, hiss - ing and splut-ter-ing, hiss - ing and sh

30

34

unison mf

on ev-'ry hand and far down the re -

34 *ff* *mp*

39 *unison mf*

on ev-'ry hand and far down the re - ced - ing and fad - ing spread of roofs and bal - co - nies

ced - ing and fad - ing spread _____ of roofs and bal - co - nies a

39

43 *ff*

a flut-ter-ing _____ wil-der-ness _____ of flags flashed in the sun; _____

flut-ter-ing _____ wil-der-ness _____ of flags flashed in the sun; _____

43 *ff*

48 *mf* *legato*

dai - ly _____ the young vol-un-teers _____ marched down the

48 *mp* *legato*

53

wide av - e - nue gay and _____ fine in their new u - ni -

53 *mf*

57 *f* excitedly

forms, and sweet-hearts cheer-ing them with

f excitedly

and sis - ters and sweet-hearts cheer-ing them with

f excitedly

and moth - ers and sis - ters and sweet-hearts cheer-ing them with

f excitedly

the proud fa - thers and moth - ers and sis - ters and sweet-hearts cheer-ing them with

57 *mp* *cresc. poco a poco* *p*

61 *cresc.* *ff* *poco rit.*

voic - es choked with hap - py e - mo - tion as they swung by;

cresc. *ff* *poco rit.*

voic - es choked with hap - py e - mo - tion as they swung by;

61 *mp* *f* *poco rit.*

Slower ♩ = 80 *tutti p cresc. poco a poco*

66 night-ly the packed mass meet-ings lis-tened, pant-ing, to pa-tri-ot or-a-tor-y which

p sonore

70 stirred the deep-est deeps of their hearts and which they in-ter-rup-ted at brief-est in-ter-vals with cy-clones of ap-plause,

mf f

72 *all applaud* *solo tenor dolce mp* *rit.* **Easy folk tempo** ♩ = 56

the tears run-ning down their cheeks the while;

p mp

77 *solo or tutti mp simply*

in the church-es the pas-tors preached de-vo-tion to

p

82

flag and coun - try and in - voked the God of Bat - tles, be - seech - ing His aid,

87 *solo or tutti mp*

be - seech - ing His aid in our good cause

be - seech - ing His aid in our good cause

91

in out - pour - ing of fer - vid el - o - quence which moved ev' - ry list' - ner.

in out - pour - ing of fer - vid el - o - quence which moved ev' - ry list' - ner.

95 *tutti mp legato* (humming) 3

95 *tutti mp legato* (humming) 3

101 *unison f* $\text{♩} = 96$ 3 3

Recitative
solo soprano mf

It was in-deed a glad and gra-cious time. And the half -

It was in-deed a glad and gra-cious time.

101 *ff* 3 3

105 3 6

doz - en rash spir - its that ven - tured to dis - ap - prove of the war and cast a doubt up - on its

105

107 *accel.* *rit.*

right - eous - ness straight-way got such a stern and an - gry warn-ing that for their per - son - al safe - ty's sake they

110 *Peacefully* ♩ = 72 *sopranos mp*

quick-ly shrank out of sight and of - fend - ed no more in that way. Sun - day

110 *tenors mp*

Sun - day morn-ing, _____

114 *mp*

morn-ing, _____

Sun - day morn-ing, _____

114 *mp*

Sun - day morn-ing, _____

120

Andante espressivo ♩ = 72*mp poco a poco accel.*

next day____ the bat - tal - ions____ would

mp

next day____ the bat - tal - ions____ would

poco a poco accel.

120

*p**mp**mp*

126

mf

leave for the front;____

the church was filled;____

mf

leave for the front;____

the vol - un - teers were there,

126

*mf***Allegro marcato** ♩ = 80*f spiritedly*

their young

fac - es a - light with mar - tial dreams,____

*spiritedly**f*

their young

fac - es a - light with mar - tial dreams,____

132

f

136 *f* the gath - er - ing mo - men - tum, *ff* the flash - ing sa - bers,

f the gath - er - ing mo - men - tum, *ff* the flash - ing sa - bers, the

f marcato vis - ions of the stern ad - vance, *ff* the rush - ing charge, the

f marcato vis - ions of the stern ad - vance, *ff* the rush - ing charge, the

136 *marcato* *ff*

141 *mf* rit. *sub. p* the flight of the foe, the tu - mult, the en - vel - o - ping smoke, the sur -

mf *sub. p* flight of the foe, the tu - mult, the en - vel - o - ping smoke, the sur -

mf *sub. p* flight of the foe, the tu - mult, the fierce pur - suit, the sur -

mf *sub. p* flight of the foe, the tu - mult, the fierce pur - suit, the sur -

141 *mf* *ff* *mf*

Adagio espressivo $\text{♩} = 66$

146 *rit. a tempo* *altos p warmly* *Then*
basses p warmly
 ren - der! Then

146 *mp* *rit. a tempo* *p* Then

152 *cresc.* *sopranos*
 home from the war, _____ bronzed he - roes, _____ wel - comed, a - dored, _____ sub-
cresc. *tenors*
 home from the war, _____ bronzed he - roes, _____ wel - comed, a - dored, _____ sub-

152

158 *f* *mf*
 merged in gold - en seas of glo - ry! _____ glo - ry!
f *mf*
 merged in gold - en seas of glo - ry! _____ glo - ry!

158 *cresc.* *mf* *f* *mf*

164 *mf* jaunty

With the vol - un - teers sat their dear

164 *mf* jaunty

With the vol - un - teers sat their dear

170 *cresc.* *f*

ones, proud, hap - py, and en - vied by the neigh - bors and

ones, proud, hap - py, en - vied by the neigh - bors and

170 *tr* *p cresc.* *f*

176 *poco rit.*

friends who had no _____ sons _____ and broth - ers to send forth to the field of hon -

176 *poco rit.*

friends who had no _____ sons _____ and broth - ers to send forth to the field of hon -

182 **Slower** ♩ = 72

unison

mp legato

or, there to win for the flag or fail - ing, die the

or, there to win for the flag or fail - ing, die the

188

dim.

div. pp

no - blest of no - ble deaths.

no - blest of no - ble deaths.

188

p

dim.

pp

no - blest of no - ble deaths.

no - blest of no - ble deaths.

194

rit.

Alto: The service proceeded.

Young voice: the first prayer was said.

Alto: The service proceeded. Young voice: the first prayer was said.

Alto: The service proceeded. Young voice: the first prayer was said.

Bass: A war chapter from the
Old Testament was read;

194

ff

rit.

Bass: A war chapter from the
Old Testament was read;

Bass: A war chapter from the
Old Testament was read;

16 Allargando

201 *mf cresc. poco a poco*

and with one im-pulse the house rose, with glow-ing eyes and poured out the tre - men-dous in-vo-ca-tion,

mf cresc. poco a poco

and with one im-pulse the house rose, and beat-ing hearts, and poured out the tre - men-dous in-vo-ca-tion,

pp

cresc. poco a poco

Adagio maestoso ♩ = 60

204 *ff* God the all - ter - ri - ble! *f* Thou who or - dain - est, *ff* Thun - der thy clar - i - on and *f dim.*

God the all - ter - ri - ble! Thou who or - dain - est, Thun - der thy clar - i - on and

ff *f* *ff* *f dim.*

204 *ff* *f* *ff* *f dim.*

210 Soprano: and moving and beautiful language.

light - ning thy sword!

Alto: Then came the "long prayer".

Alto: and benignant Father of us all

Tenor: The burden of its supplication was that an ever-merciful

Bass: None could remember the like of it for passionate pleading

light - ning thy sword!

mp

218

Freely (♩ = 60)

All: and aid, comfort, and encourage them in their patriotic work.

solo alto mp

Tenor and alto: would watch over our noble young soldiers and the hour of per - il,

solo tenor p calmly

Bless them, shield them in the day of bat - tle

218

pp

223

f

solo alto mf

help

in - vin-ci-ble in the blood-y on-set;

tutti f marcato

solo bass mf

make them strong and con-fi-dent, help

tutti marcato

bear them in His might-y hand, make them strong and con-fi-dent,

223

f

mf

Easy folk tempo $\text{♩} = 56$

227 *poco rit.*

them to crush the foe,

tutti f

help them to crush the foe,

solo or tutti mf

them to crush the foe, grant to them__ and to their flag and coun - try im - per - ish - a - ble

f

help them to crush the foe,

227 *poco rit.*

mf

f

232 *f* *ff* *molto rit.* *a tempo*

Bless our arms,___ grant us the vic - to - ry, O Lord our God,

f *ff*

Bless our arms,___ grant us the vic - to - ry, O Lord our God,

ff *ff*

hon - or and glo - ry. O Lord our God,

f *ff*

Bless our arms,___ grant us the vic - to - ry, O Lord our God,

molto rit. *a tempo*

232 *f* *ff*

f *ff*

237 *mf* *p*

Fa - ther and Pro - tec - tor of our land and flag!

mf *mp* *p*

Fa - ther and Pro - tec - tor of our land and flag! Fa - ther and Pro -

237 *mf* *poco a poco diminuendo* *p*

242 *fading away* **Faster** $\text{♩} = 80$

Fa - ther and Pro - tec - tor of our land and flag!

fading away

tec - tor of our land and flag!

242 *ff*

Speaker: I come from the Throne,
bearing a message from Almighty God! *poco. accel.* **Slower** $\text{♩} = 88$

247 *rit.* *furiously*

252 **Calmly** $\text{♩} = 60$ *on strings with eraser end of pencil*

mf *gliss.* *gliss.*

THE SPEAKER

(“I come from the Throne — bearing a message from Almighty God!” ...)

“God’s servant and yours has prayed his prayer. Has he paused and taken thought? Is it one prayer? No, it is two — one uttered, the other not. Both have reached the ear of Him Who heareth all supplications, the spoken and the unspoken. Ponder this — keep it in mind. If you would beseech a blessing upon yourself, beware! lest without intent you invoke a curse upon a neighbor at the same time. If you pray for the blessing of rain upon your crop which needs it, by that act you are possibly praying for a curse upon some neighbor’s crop which may not need rain and can be injured by it.

“You have heard your servant’s prayer — the uttered part of it. I am commissioned of God to put into words the other part of it — that part which the pastor — and also you in your hearts — fervently prayed silently. And ignorantly and unthinkingly? God grant that it was so! You heard these words: ‘Grant us the victory, O Lord our God!’ ... When you have prayed for victory you have prayed for many unmentioned results which follow victory—must follow it, cannot help but follow it. Upon the listening spirit of God fell also the unspoken part of the prayer. He commandeth me to put it into words. Listen!

Adagio $\text{♩} = 66$

Speaker

257 *ff* *Lis - ten!* "O Lord our Fa - ther, our young pa - tri - ots, i - dols of our hearts, go forth to bat - tle,

ff "O Lord our Fa - ther, *mp*

ff "O Lord our Fa - ther, *mp*

257 *ff con forza*

Sp.

260 With them, in spir - it, we al - so

ff be thou near them! *mf* we al - so

ff be thou near them! *mf* we al - so

260 *mf*

262

3

Sp. *shouted*

go forth from the sweet peace of our be - lov - ed fire - sides to smite the foe.

3

shouted

go forth from the sweet peace of our be - lov - ed fire - sides to smite the foe.

3

shouted

go forth to smite the foe.

262

Allegro marcato ♩ = 144

264 (3+2+2+2) *ff* with great passion

Sp. O Lord our God,

264 *ff*

266 *shouted*

Sp. *f*

help us to tear their sol-diers to blood-y shreds with our shells;

shouted ff *p* *fff*

sharp hiss

help usssss

266 *mf* *fff* *gliss.*

269 *ff* *f*

Sp. help us to cov-er their smil-ing fields with the pale forms of their pa-tri-ot

ff

sharp hiss gradually changing to "sh"

help usssss

ff

sharp hiss gradually changing to "sh"

help usssss

269 *ff*

272 *ff* >

Sp. dead; help us to drown the thun - der of the guns with the shrieks of their

mf (random voices) *f* > *dim.* *ff* >

dead; dead; dead; dead; dead; dead; help us help us help us help us help us ayee

mf (random voices) *f* *dim.*

dead; dead; dead; dead; dead; dead; help us help us help us help us help us

272 *ff*

knock on body of piano to create high and low raps

hold pedal down

275

Sp. wound - ed, writh - ing in pain;

ff >

ah

uh

275

right forearm on white keys

left forearm on black keys

280

Sp. *ff* > help us to lay

uh _____ help us _____

help us _____

280

f *mf*

285

Sp. waste their hum - ble homes with a hur - ri - cane _____ of fire;

285

288 **Adagio** ♩ = 50

Sp. *f* help us to *mp*

mf (whispered, heavily aspirated)

mf (whispered, heavily aspirated) hhhelp usss

hhhelp usss

288 *pp*

ff *mf* *pp*

8vb

291

Sp. wring the hearts of their un - of - fend - ing wid - ows with un - a - vail - ing grief;

291

p

(8vb)

Sp. **293** *mf* *mp*

help us to turn them out roof-less with their lit-tle chil-dren to wan-der un-friend-ed the wastes of their

mp (whispered) help us

mp (whispered) help us

293 *mp*

Sp. **295**

des - o - lat - ed land in rags and hun - ger and thirst,

p (whispered) des - o - lat - ed land

p (whispered) des - o - lat - ed land

295

296

Sp. *3*

sports of the sun flames of sum-mer and the ic - y winds of win-ter, brok-en in

(spoken) *p* *3*

sports of the sun flames of sum-mer and the ic - y winds of win-ter,

296 *mp*

298

Sp. *3*

spir-it, worn with tra-vail, im-plor-ing Thee for the ref-uge of the grave and de-nied it,

(spoken) *pp* *3* *3*

brok-en in spir-it, worn with tra-vail,

298 *p* *mf*

Slightly faster ♩ = 60

Allegro marcato ♩ = 144

Sp. **mf** solo soprano or alto **f** **fff** *shouted* *variously in the manner of jeers and catcalls*

for our sakes who a - dore _____ Thee, Lord, blast their hopes,

all women **ppp** **f** **fff** *shouted*

_____ ore _____ Thee, Lord, blast their hopes, **Sopranos: Protract their bitter pilgrimage!**

Altos: Make heavy their steps!

Tenors: Water their way with their tears!

Basses: Blast their hopes, blight their lives!

301 **pp** **f** **fff**

305

305 *8va*

Adagio ♩ = 50

309 *mp* *no vibrato* *pp* *mp* *ppp*

stain of their wound - ed feet! _____

mp *no vibrato* *pp* *mp*

stain snow with the blood of their wound - ed

mp *no vibrato* *pp*

stain the white snow with the blood _____

mp *no vibrato*

stain the white snow

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

Furiously ♩ = 144

314

314 *ff*

Slowly $\text{♩} = 60$

319

8va - - - - -

stop notes inside piano with right hand

mp

324

p-mp staggered breathing

We ask it, _____ in the spir - it of love, _____

p-mp staggered breathing

We ask it, _____ in the spir - it of love, _____

324

p

328

of Him Who _____ is the Source of Love, _____ and

of Him Who _____ is the Source of Love, _____ and

328

331

Who is the ev - er - faith - ful ref - uge and friend of all that are sore be - set and

331

334

seek His aid with hum - ble and con - trite hearts.

334

337

A - men.

337

Speaker: Ye have prayed it; if ye still desire it, speak!
The messenger of the Most High waits.

Largo $\text{♩} = 54$

341 G. P. *mf*

345 *p* *ff* *p*

Andante $\text{♩} = 76$

349 *mp* *matter-of-factly* **Largo**

It was be-lieved af-ter-ward that the man was a lu-na-tic,

mp *matter-of-factly*

It was be-lieved af-ter-ward that the man was a lu-na-tic,

349 *f*

352 Andante $\text{♩} = 76$ **G. P. Largo** $\text{♩} = 54$

be - cause there was no sense in what he said.

be - cause there was no sense in what he said.

352 **G. P.** **G. P.** **ff**

8va *8va*

356

358 **f** **mf** **mp**

361 **p** **pp**

The musical score is for a piano and voice piece. It begins with a tempo change from Andante (♩ = 76) to Largo (♩ = 54) at measure 352. The vocal lines enter with the lyrics "be - cause there was no sense in what he said." The piano accompaniment features sustained chords and moving lines. Dynamics include fortissimo (ff), mezzo-forte (mf), mezzo-piano (mp), piano (p), and pianissimo (pp). There are also markings for "G. P." (Grave Piano) and "8va" (octave up) for the vocal lines. The score ends with a double bar line at measure 361.