

Keep me, Jesus, keep me

Waverley Turner Carmichael was an African-American poet born in Alabama in the late 19th century. His poem 'Keep me, Jesus, keep me' has an attractive call-and-response structure which lends itself ideally to song and particularly to a setting for double choir. Indeed, a collection of Carmichael's poems was published in 1918 under the title, "From the Heart of a Folk: A Book of Songs".

The repetitive use of language in this poem is almost meditative. This is reflected in the serenity of the majority of the music: openly spaced harmonies, calmly lilting time signatures and frequent pauses to hear the voices resonate. In this respect, the work is particularly suited to cathedral performance. The same music is used to set the two strophes, with recurrence of the line, "Keep me, Jesus, keep me," forming an imploring refrain.

The composer, March 2013

*Keep me 'neath Thy mighty wing,
Keep me, Jesus, keep me;
Help me praise Thy Holy name,
Keep me, Jesus, keep me.
O my Lamb, come, my Lamb,
O my good Lamb,
Save me, Jesus, save me.*

*Hear me as I cry to Thee;
Keep me, Jesus, keep me;
May I that bright glory see;
Keep me, Jesus, keep me.
O my Lamb, my good Lamb,
O my good Lamb,
Keep me, Jesus, keep me.*

Waverley Turner Carmichael (c.1881-?)

Performance instruction:

Where pauses are indicated on barlines or full-choir rests, the conductor should wait for the resonating sound to dissipate before the next notes are sung. The overall effect should be one of spaciousness and serenity.