

Janet Oates

2022

## Tree Proverbs

For flexible combinations of one or two sopranos, viola da gamba, theorbo, baroque violin, harpsichord, recorder, or other melody and continuo instruments.

*Duration c. 15 minutes*

- 1: Keep a green tree
- 2: They tried to bury us
- 3: The oak and the reeds
- 3a: Sinfonia: green light
- 4: That each day
- 5: Berllan anweledig
- 5a: An orchard invisible\*

\*5a: English language version of *Berllan anweledig*

Written for and premiered by the Theorbo Today Project in Richmond, 2022, and then Hay-on-Wye, 2023.

### 1: Keep a green tree in your heart, and perhaps the singing bird will come.

- For soprano and one melody instrument

Of doubtful provenance, this saying is ostensibly Chinese; one Chinese translator suggested that it might be a mistranslation of a hospitality edict about being generous! The multiple meanings inferred by people, and its popularity, appeal to me.

### 2: They tried to bury us; they forgot that we were seeds

- For bass (viola da gamba or theorbo), soprano, and any melody instrument or voice

This saying is now thought of as a Mexican proverb, used a lot in recent civil uprisings and protests; it is a paraphrase of a rather self-aggrandising couplet by Greek poet Dinos Christianopoulos, 1970s, talking of the literary community that criticised and ostracized him.

### 3: The Oak and the Reeds.

- For soprano, theorbo and viola da gamba

A paraphrase of Aesop's fable:

*A Giant Oak stood near a brook in which grew some slender Reeds. When the wind blew, the great Oak stood proudly upright with its hundred arms uplifted to the sky. But the Reeds bowed low in the wind and sang a sad and mournful song.*

*"You are right to be scared," said the Oak. "The slightest breeze that ruffles the surface of the water makes you bow your heads, while I, the mighty Oak, stand upright and firm before the howling tempest."*

*The Reeds replied "Do not worry about us! The winds do not harm us. We bow before them and so we do not break. You, in all your pride and strength, have so far resisted their blows. But the end is coming."*

*As the Reeds spoke a great hurricane rushed out of the orth. The Oak stood proudly and fought against the storm, while the yielding Reeds bowed low. The wind redoubled in fury, and all at once the great tree fell, torn up by the roots, and lay among the pitying Reeds.*

### Sinfonia: Green light

- For recorder, violin and viola da gamba

Inspired by Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre's cantata *the Isle of Delos*, which has many sections in praise of the beauty of nature, this contrapuntal interlude also alludes to the music of other movements in *Trees Proverbs*.

### 4: The bed of Reeds.

- For two voices, each of which may be replaced by an instrument

*That each day I may walk unceasingly on the banks of my water, that my soul may repose on the branches of the trees which I have planted, that I may refresh myself in the shadow of my sycamore.*

This is an Egyptian tomb inscription, 1400 BCE, (Nardo, 10): looking towards the afterlife (the 'field of reeds), which I have set as a prayer

### 5: Mae hedyn sy'n cuddio yng nghalon afal yn berllan anweledig - A seed hidden in the heart of an apple is an orchard invisible

- For soprano, melody instrument and BC.

This Welsh proverb, set in both English and Welsh, allows us to end with another moment of hope and strength.

# Tree Proverbs 1: Keep a green tree in your heart

For soprano and melody instrument.  
If recorder, you may wish to use a different recorder for page 2, and/or alter octaves).

Janet Oates

*very freely*

Soprano

kee kee kee kee\_ kee\_ kee\_ kee kee kee kee\_ kee\_ keep\_

Sop.

5 keep a green trr trr trr trr tree\_ i i i i i kee kee keep\_

Sop.

9 a green\_ tree\_ ee\_ ee\_ ee\_

Sop.

13 ee\_ ee\_ in\_ your\_ in\_ your\_ heart. And per-haps,-

Sop.

17 per per - haps\_ per-haps the sing - ing sing -

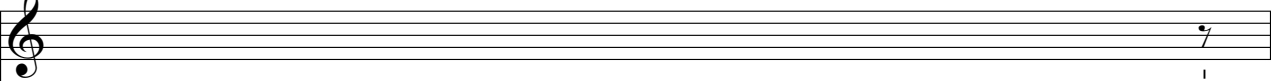
Sop.


19 ing bird...\_

Mel.

(feel free to adopt a different energy to the singer).

21

Sop. 


Mel. 

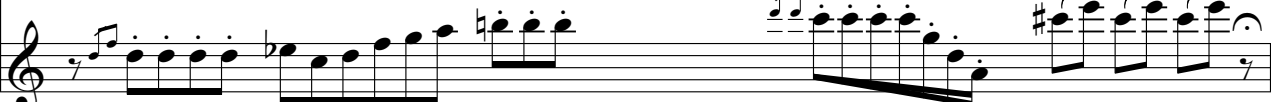
23

Sop.   
per-haps \_\_\_\_\_ the sing - ing bird \_\_\_\_\_

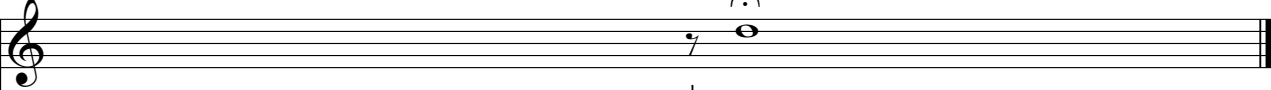
Mel. 


25 *only loosely coordinated*

Sop.   
will \_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_

Mel. 

27

Sop.   
come.

Mel. 

# Tree Proverbs 2: They tried to bury us

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For bass (viola da gamba or theorbo), voice 1, and any melody instrument or voice 2.  
 If bass is a theorbo, 'pizz.' bars are dry, 'arco' are more resonant, glisses are approximated  
 If melody instrument cannot gliss (in e.g. bar 6), use *flz* on the crotchet instead rather than imitating a gliss.  
 The motifs labelled 'pizz' refer to a violin (e.g. bar 14); for non-string instruments they should be legato but lively;  
 fl/rec could add fast trills on the dotted quavers if you like, or put the dotted quaver up an octave!  
 Whatever instrument plays M2, 'unvoiced' t t t bars, e.g. b.23, apply and are vocalised.

$\text{♩} = 84$

The score consists of three systems of music. Each system has three staves: Voice 1 (top), M2 (middle), and bass (bottom). The time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 84.

**System 1 (Measures 1-5):**  
 - Voice 1: Rests.  
 - M2: *mp*, notes with 'nn' vocalizations. A glissando is indicated in measure 5.  
 - Bass: *mp*, *pizz.* notes.

**System 2 (Measures 6-12):**  
 - v.1: Lyrics: "They tried... They".  
 - M2: Notes with 'nn' vocalizations. *mf* dynamic.  
 - Bass: *arco* and *pizz.* notes.

**System 3 (Measures 13-17):**  
 - v.1: Lyrics: "tried... to".  
 - M2: Notes with 'nn' vocalizations. *f* dynamic. Includes *(pizz.)* and *(arco sul pont.)* markings.  
 - Bass: *arco* and *pizz.* notes. *f* dynamic.

19 *p* *unvoiced* *mf*

v.1 bu-ry us bu-ry u - ss t t t t t t t t They

M2 *p* *unvoiced* *pizz. and vocalise too* *unvoiced* t t t t ffff

bass *p* *unvoiced vocalising* ffff

26 *tr tranquil*

v.1 for - go - t *mp* They for - go - t tha - t

M2 *mf* They for - go - t *mp* nn nn nn t t t t t t *gliss.* *unvoiced*

bass *pizz.* *arco* *gliss.* *pizz.* *f* *f* (vocalised - unvoiced) *mp*

33 *gliss.*

v.1 *gliss.*

M2 nn nn ah ah nn *gliss.* *(pizz.)* *(arco)*

bass *arco* *pizz.* *p*

40

v.1

were seed(s).

*mp*

if violin

*ff* unvoiced

M2

nn Hah! nnn nnn

*f* *ff* *mp*

bass

*f* *ff* *p* arco

49

v.1

SSS t t t t t

*p* unvoiced

M2

(pizz.) (arco.)

*f* ah nn nn

bass

*f* *p* pizz.

vl. *pp* gliss.

# Tree proverbs 3a: Green Light sinfonia

+ indicates a French-baroque-style ornament.  
Choose a speed comfortable for the violin in bars 34-5!

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$\text{♩} = \text{c.}82$  *gracieusement, dansant*

soprano Recorder

Violin

Viol

arco

+

5

Rec.

Vln.

Vc.

+

+

9

Rec.

Vln.

Vc.

+

+

b



13

Rec.

Vln.

Vc.

18

Rec.

Vln.

Vc.

22

Rec.

Vln.

Vc.

26

Rec.

Vln.

Vc.

30 +

Rec.

Vln.

Vc.

pizz.

pizz.

35

Rec.

Vln.

Vc.

arco

arco

38

Rec.

Vln.

Vc.

pizz.

pizz.

# Tree Proverbs 4: The Bed of Reeds

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free tempo - only loosely coordinated

VI *mp* ah ah ah ah

sop *mp* ah ah ah ah *gliss.* ah

**A** ♩ = 60+

VI *mp* *mp* *mp*

sop *mf*

That each day that each day that each day that each day I may walk may walk un-

VI *mp* *mp* *mp* *mp*

sop

ceas-ing-ly, may walk un - ceas-ing-ly may walk un - ceas-ing-ly, may walk un - ceas-ing

VI *mp* *mp* *mp*

sop

on the banks of my on the banks of my wa ter that my soul may re-pose

13 *mp* *mp* *mp*

VI

sop

that my soul may re - pose on the bran-ches the bran-ches of the trees

16 *mp* *pp*

VI

sop

bran-ches of the trees which I have plan ted which I have plan ted.

**B**

21 *mp* *sim.*

VI

sop

That each day that each day that each day that each day I may walk may walk un -

24

VI

sop

ceas-ing-ly, may walk un-ceas-ing ly may walk un-ceas-ing-ly, may walk un - ceas-ing un

28

VI

sop

ceas-ing un -ceas-ing on the banks of my on the banks of my wa ter

33

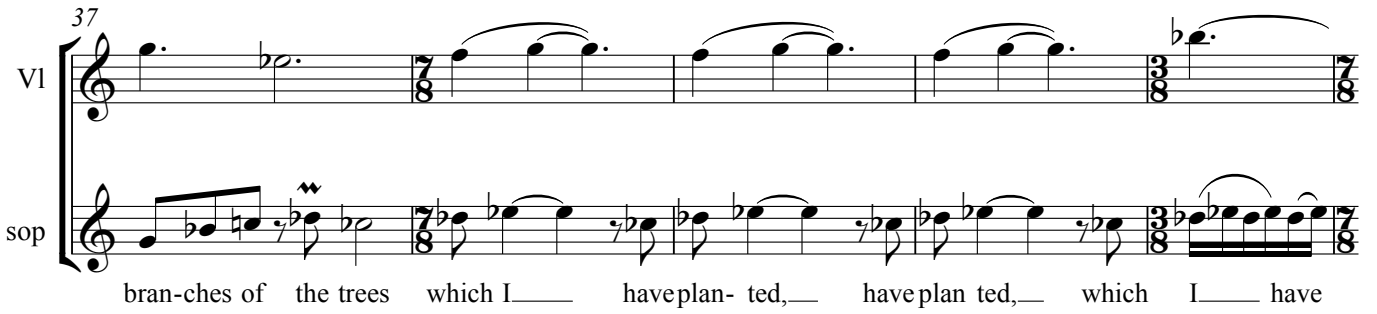


VI

sop

that my soul may re-pose that my soul may re-pose on the bran-ches the bran-ches of the trees

37



VI

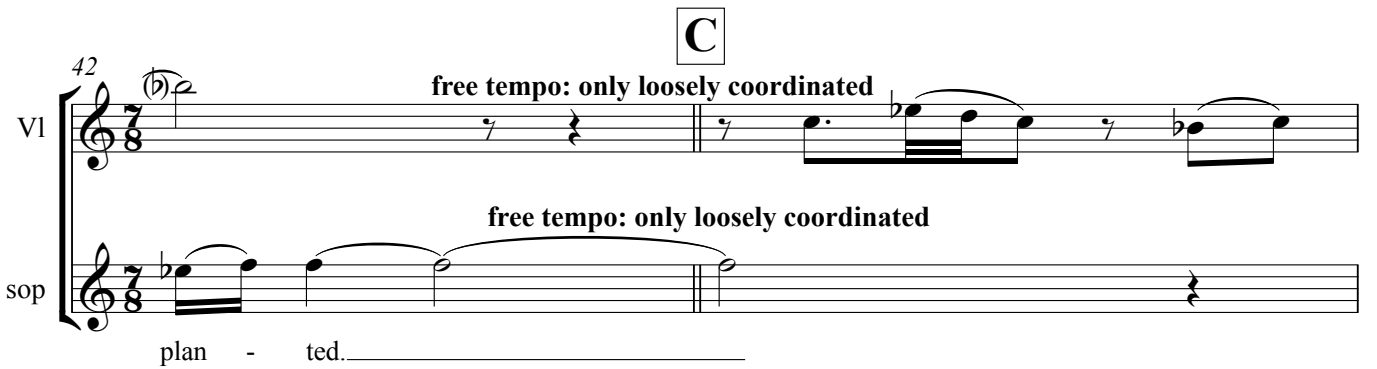
sop

bran-ches of the trees which I have plan- ted, have plan ted, which I have

42

C

free tempo: only loosely coordinated

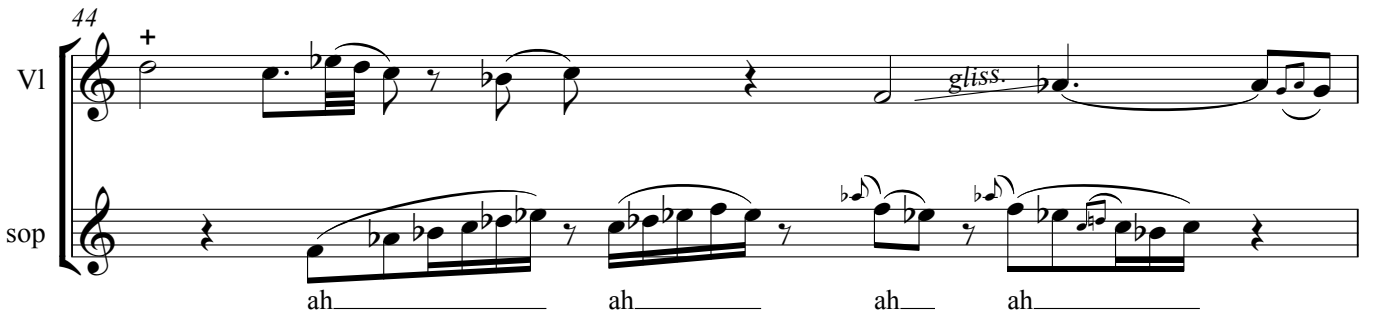


VI

sop

plan - ted.

44



VI

sop

ah ah ah ah

45



VI

sop

ah ah ah ah

47 **D**

VI

sop

That I may re-fresh my-self re-fresh my-self that I may re - fresh\_ my self in the

52

VI

sop

sha-dow in the sha - dow, the sha dow of my sy-ca-more sy-ca-more sy-ca-more in the

57

VI

sop

sha - dow, the sha-dow of my sy - ca- more, of my

*gliss.*

61

VI

sop

sy - ca-more. sy - ca-more. sy - ca-more.

# Tree Proverbs 5: Berllan anweledig

The melody instrument may change at each rehearsal mark if desired  
The make-up of the BC may change ad lib throughout  
The voice part at each big chord (at bars 1, 6, 18 and 20 ) may be played by a 2nd melody instrument if preferred

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melody inst.

voice

B.C.

*fp* <

aah Mae

*fp* <

♩ = c.60

9/6/5 ♯ 6/4 6/3

mel.

v.

B.C.

3

3

he-dyn s'yn cu-ddi-o aah

*p* *fp* <

*fp* <

♩ = c.60

♯ ♯ ♭6/3 ♯7 ♭5/3 ♭6/3 ♯6/3

mel.

v.

B.C.

7

yng ngha-lon a - fal

♩ = c.60

♭ ♯ 7 ♯ 6/4

14

*ll*

mel. 

v.   
a - fal \_\_\_\_\_ yn ber - llan \_\_\_\_\_ an - we -

B.C.   
# # # # 6 6  
4 3 *melody line only*

15

mel. 

v.   
- le - - - - - dig. aah

B.C.   
*fp* < *fp* <  
6  
#3

19

mel.   
*pp*

v.   
*fp*  
aah

B.C.   
*fp* <  
6  
5



# Tree Proverbs 5a: An orchard invisible

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The melody instrument may change (to a different instrument) at each rehearsal mark if desired  
The make-up of the BC may change ad lib throughout  
The voice part at each big chord (at bars 1,6, 18 and 20 ) may be played by a melody instrument if preferred

Melody *♩ = c.60*

voice *fp <* aah *♩ = c.60* Hid -

B.C. *fp <* 9 5 4 6 3

3 mel. *3*

v. den in the heart

B.C. 4 # b6 4 7 b5 b6

6 mel. *p*

v. *fp <* aah of ev 'ry ap-ple seed

B.C. *fp <* 6 3 b 4 7 4 6 4

16

10


mel. 


v.  ev - 'ry ap - ple seed \_\_\_\_\_ is


B.C. 

# # #

13

mel. 

v.  an or - chard an or - chard in - vi - - - si -

B.C. 

# 6/4 6/3 *melody line only*

17

mel.  *p* *pp*

v.  ble. aah aah *fp* < *fp*

B.C.  *fp* < *fp* <

# 6/3 9/5