

# **Thou Art a Sea Without a Shore**

*for SATBB choir and organ*

**Mark Gotham**

# Thou Art a Sea Without A Shore

## Pitch Profile

Mark Gotham

Primary pitch row (expanding intervals)

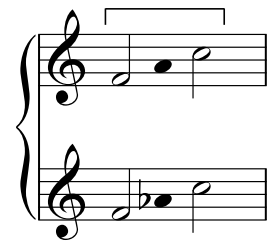


Main divisions

1. Small-Large



2. Large-Small



Intervals classes

1.

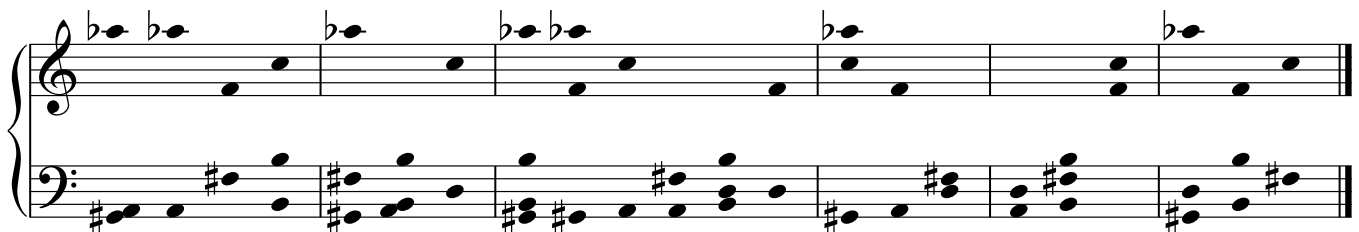
2.

3.

4.

5.

6.



# Thou Art a Sea Without a Shore

A hymn paraphrase for SATBB choir and organ by Mark Gotham

Duration: approximately 6 minutes.

## **The text in context:**

Thou art a sea without a shore,  
[a sun without a sphere;  
thy time is now and evermore,  
thy place is everywhere.]

(from a hymn verse by John Mason, 1683)

## **A note on the piece:**

This meditative piece sets a single line of text that is as wonderfully evocative as it is extremely concise. The timeless rolling of a ‘sea without a shore’ is depicted through oppositions of rising-falling and compression-rarefaction on many levels.

Most clearly, the register of the piece as a whole traces a single large pitch contour: rising from low to high then falling back again. This contour outlines a series of expanding intervals, from the semi-tone at the bottom to the minor sixth (successive interval sizes of 1 to 8 semi-tones). This primary pitch row is shown on the top stave of the figure opposite, and is perhaps most clear in the slow-moving organ part of the piece itself.

That broad, overall wave is made up of many smaller musical phrases, each of which traces that same rising-falling contour. Similarly, many constituent intervals of the main pitch row are filled in with a subset of intervals organised in the same way – see, for instance, the filling in of the tritone (6) with 3+2+1 or 1+2+3 (as shown on the second system of the figure). These ‘waves’ of successive interval classes are applied harmonically as well as melodically. See bar 15 for instance, which moves through vertical intervals of 3-4-5-4-3 between the two bass parts.

The dynamics also closely follows these patterns of rising and falling, and even the text itself provides a source of ‘high-low’ style opposition in the spectral content of different vowel / consonant pairings. This is exploited especially in the pairings of ‘ah’ – ‘oo’ (coming from the diphthong in ‘thou’) and ‘ss’ – ‘sh’ (of ‘sea’ and ‘shore’).

*Thou art a sea without a shore* has a companion in my other hymn paraphrase, *Drop drop slow tears* which was commissioned and first performed by Ben Parry, Concanenda, Tom Etheridge, and Katie Lodge at the King’s 500 Contemporary Music Festival, 2015.

## **A note to the performer:**

These ‘oo’s and ‘ah’s should be smoothly connected by both a smooth (but late) pitch glissando, and a correspondingly gradual move from one vowel to the other (as indicated by the lines as the first occurrence). All sounds to be sung are derived from the text (‘thou art a sea without a shore’). I have notated these sounds in a way that seems most expedient to English-language speakers. For the avoidance of doubt, here are the IPA symbols for the line of text: **ðou ärt ə sē wið out ə shôr**. So the opening ‘ah’s and ‘oo’s, for instance, correspond to the IPA symbols ‘o’ and ‘u’. Note that ‘th’ (ð) is voiced, while ss (‘s’), sh (‘sh’), and t (‘t’) are not.

**Mark Gotham**

Commissioned by the Thaxted Festival.  
First performance: 30.6.2018; Rodolfus Choir; Ralph Allwood, conductor.

# Thou Art a Sea Without a Shore

for SATBB choir and organ

John Mason

Mark Gotham

**♩ = 108. Unhurried, atmospheric**

**BASS**

*pp* (mouth almost closed) < > < > < > < >  
oo oo → ah oo oo ah oo ah

**Organ**

*pp* 8' swell. Register discreetly to support the choir; never dominate.

**B.**

*pp* < > *p* > *pp* **A** < > *p* < > *p* < >  
oo ah ah oo ah ah oo oo ah oo ah

*p* < > *pp* *p* < > *pp* < > *pp* < >  
ah oo ah oo ah ah oo ah oo

**T.**

*pp* < > *p* < > *pp* **B** < > *pp*  
th th th

**B.**

*pp* < > *p* < > *p* < > *pp* < > *pp* < >  
oo ah oo oo ah oo ah oo ah oo ah ah

*p* < > *p* < > *p* < > *pp* < > *pp* < >  
oo ah oo ah oo ah oo ah oo ah oo ah

*p*

22

T. *p*

ah ah oo th - ah - oo ah oo ah oo ah

B. oo ah ah oo ah oo

oo ah oo oo ah ah oo ah oo oo ah ah

27

T. *mp*

ah oo ah oo ah ah ah

B. ah oo oo ah ah ah

oo ah

*mp* *mf*

33

A. *p* *mp* *mp semplice*

(balance to low bass)

th thou

T. *p* *mp* *(p)*

th ah th ah th ah oo ah

B. *p* *mp* *mp*

oo ah oo ah oo ah oo ah thou oo ah

*p (sub.)*

38

*rall.* *mf* *f* *p* *molto*

S. thou\_ ar(t) thou\_ ar(t)

A. ar(t) thou\_ ar(t) thou\_ thou\_ thou\_ art\_

T. *mp* *mf* *mp* *f* *p*  
thou ar(t) ah\_ ah\_ ah\_ ss

B. *mf* *mf* *f* *p*  
oo ah oo oo ah oo ah oo ah ss

*mp* *mf* *f* *p*

**E** Broader, ♩ = 96

43

*ff* *f* *mp*

S. t ar(t) t

A. *ff* *f* *mf*  
thou\_ ar(t) t thou\_ ar(t) t thou ar(t) t

T. *ff* *f* *mf* *mf* *mp*  
sh thou\_ ah\_ thou\_ thou\_ art ah\_

B. *ff* *f* *mf* *mp*  
sh ah\_ ah\_ ee\_ ee\_ ss  
sh ss sh ss sh ss

*ff* *mf*

47 **F** accel. . . . Tempo primo, ♩ = 108

S. *mp* ah ee ss sh ee ah *p* *mp*

A. *mp* ah sea ah sea ah

T. 8 ah ee ee oo-ee - thou - t sea ah ah ah ('without') 3

B. *mf* sh ah ee ah sh ee *mp*

53 **G**

S. *p* t t t t t *p* 2 t t t ss sh

A. *(mp)* ee ee ah ah *p* *pp echo* ah

T. 8 ee ah ee ah out t out t ah *p*

B. ah ah ah ah

*p*

rall. . . . . **H** Meno, ♩ = 96

59

S. Solo: *pp*  
ah

A. *p*  
ee

T. *p*  
ah or ah ah

B. *p*  
out a shore  
*p* (p) < > < >  
out a shore thou thou thou

*pp*

rall. . . . . Meno, ♩ = 90

64

S. Tutti: *p* Solo: *pp* *lontano*  
t t t t t ah

A. *pp* < >  
ss sh

T. *p* 2 *ppp*  
ah t t t t t

B. *p* *pp* < >  
thou art a sea ss sh  
thou ah

*pp* *ppp*