

Edie Hill

# STEERING BY MONARCHS

for SATB vocal quartet and piano



FOR PERUSAL ONLY

## *Steering by Monarchs*

*She forgot the instruments and steered instead  
by butterflies knowing nothing human could be that sure.*

—Alison Hawthorne Deming, *The Monarchs*

Fog thick enough to lick, horizon a blanket,  
pearl gleam of sun. Sure, the sea trips  
the mind, conjures creatures, but what's  
this dusty heartbeat of wing?  
*First one. Then another. And another.*  
How to account for this river of wings  
flowing south through generations?  
She watches the monarchs drift—  
cloud of orange and black—  
Western mind says *discount*,  
but knows better than to dismiss.  
She abandons the instruments,  
tracks by dusty heartbeat,  
joins the wavering, certain path.

—Holly J. Hughes  
From *Sailing by Ravens*  
University of Alaska Press

I believe in being led by our fellow planet dwellers, in gleaning the quiet wisdom and gentle example given by the natural world of which we humans are an integral part. In her poem, “Steering by Monarchs,” Holly J. Hughes tells the story of being lost then found and led by butterflies migrating south. The woman in the boat, lost in fog, ultimately abandons her navigation instruments in favor of being led by a “river of wings.”

—Eddie Hill

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Commissioned by the Uncommon Music Festival, Ariadne Lih and Nate Barnett, Directors.  
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# STEERING BY MONARCHS

*She forgot the instruments and steered instead  
by butterflies knowing nothing human could be that sure.*  
— Alison Hawthorne Deming, *The Monarchs*

HOLLY J. HUGHES

EDIE HILL

The musical score is for a vocal quartet and piano. It is divided into two systems. The first system includes staves for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Piano. The piano part features a white note cluster in the right hand and forearm, with dynamics ranging from *ppp* to *pp*. The tempo is marked as *c. 50*. The second system includes staves for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Bass (B), and Piano (Pno.). The vocal parts have lyrics: "Fog — thick e-nough to lick, ho -". The piano part continues with the white note cluster and includes a triplet of notes. Dynamics include *ppp*, *pp*, and *p*. The tempo remains *c. 50*. A large watermark "FOR PEARUS ONLY" is overlaid on the score.

S  
ri - zon a blan - ket, pearl gleam of sun.

A  
ri - zon a blan - ket, oo

T  
ri - zon a blan - ket, oo

B  
ri - zon a blan - ket, oo

Pno.

10

mp p mp

pp mp pp

pp mp pp

pp mp pp

pp p pp

pp

loco

Red.

Red.

13

75 50

75 50

ppp

ppp

pp

loco

Svb

Red. (sustain)

Red. (soft)

again, barely audible, soft, but sprightly

right hand and forearm white note cluster again, gently press keys, as if pressing into a pillow

FOR PERUSAL ONLY

17  $\text{♩} = 75$

S *pp sotto voce, non vib.*  
what's this —

A *pp sotto voce, non vib.* *pp sotto voce, non vib.*  
what's this, — what's this —

T

B

Pno.  $\text{♩} = 75$   
*pp* *ppp* *pp* *p*  
*Red.* *Red.*

20  $\text{♩} = 70-75$

S *mf*  
the sea trips the mind, —

A *mp* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*  
Sure, the sea trips the mind, — con - jures crea - tures, —

T *mp* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*  
Sure, the sea trips the mind, — con - jures crea - tures, —

B *mf* *p*  
the sea trips the mind, — con - jures

Pno.  $\text{♩} = 70-75$   
*lightly, barely audible*  
*ppp*

22

S  
A  
T  
B

*mp* *p* *p* *mp*

crea - tures, — but what's this, — what's

Pno.

22

*p* *p*

24

S  
A  
T  
B

*mp* *mp* *p* *mp*

con - jures crea - tures, — con - jures crea - tures, —

what's this, — what's this, —

this, but what's this, —

Pno.

24

*pp* *mp* *pp*

*Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

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available for purchase.

30 *mf* *p* *p* *mf* *p*

S wing? what's this dust - y heart - beat of

A *p* *mf* *p*  
what's this dust - y heart - beat of wing?

T *p* *mf* *p*  
what's this dust - y heart - - - beat of

B *p* *mp* *mf* *p*  
what's this dust - y heart - beat of wing?

Pno. *ped.* *ped.* *ped.*

32 *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

S wing?

A *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*  
what's this dust - y heart - beat of wing?

T *mf* *p* *pp* *p*  
wing? First one. Then an - oth - er.

B *p*  
Then an - oth - er.

Pno. *ped.*

*♩* = 75

34 *mp* *mf* *mp* *f*

S What's this dust - y heart - beat of wing?

A *mp*  
And an - oth - er.

T *p* *mp*  
First one. Then an - oth - er. And an - oth - er.

B *mp*  
Then an - oth - er. And an - oth - er.

Pno. *Red.*

36 *p* *mf* *p*

S er. And an - oth - er. And an -

A *p* *mp* *mf* *p*  
First one. Then an - oth - er. And an - oth - er. And an -

T *mp* *mf* *p*  
Then an - oth - er. And an - oth - er. And an -

B *p*  
And an -

Pno. *Red.*

38 *mf* *mp*

S oth - er. And an - oth - er. And an - oth - er.

A *mf* *mp*

oth - er. And an - oth - er. And an - oth - er.

T *mf*

8 oth - er. And an - oth - er.

B *mf*

oth - er. And an - oth - er.

Pno.

39 *mf* *mf*

S How to ac-count for this riv - er of wings,

A *mf*

wings

T

B

Pno.

41 *p* *mf* *p*

S this riv - er of wings

A

T *mf* How \_\_\_\_\_ to ac - count for this riv - er of wings \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_ this riv - er of

41

43

S

A *mp* *mf* *mp*  
flow - ing south \_\_\_\_\_ through gen - er - a - tions? \_\_\_\_\_ flow - ing

T

B *f* \_\_\_\_\_ *f* \_\_\_\_\_ *p*  
wings \_\_\_\_\_

43

45 *mf* *mp*

S How \_\_\_\_\_ to ac-count for this riv-er of wings \_\_\_\_\_ flow-ing

A *mp* \_\_\_\_\_ *mf* \_\_\_\_\_ *mp* \_\_\_\_\_

A south \_\_\_\_\_ through gen-er-a-tions? \_\_\_\_\_ flow-ing south \_\_\_\_\_

T \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_

45

*Red.* \_\_\_\_\_ *Red.* \_\_\_\_\_ *Red.* \_\_\_\_\_ *Red.* \_\_\_\_\_ *Red.* \_\_\_\_\_ *Red.* \_\_\_\_\_

47 *mf* *mp*

S south \_\_\_\_\_ through gen-er-a-tions? \_\_\_\_\_

A \_\_\_\_\_ *mf* \_\_\_\_\_

A \_\_\_\_\_ through gen-er-a-tions? \_\_\_\_\_

T \_\_\_\_\_ *mp* \_\_\_\_\_

T Then an-oth-er.

B \_\_\_\_\_ *p* \_\_\_\_\_ *mp* \_\_\_\_\_

B First one. Then an-oth-er.

47

49

S

A

T

B

*mp*

*p*

*mp*

Then an - oth - er.

First one. Then an - oth - er.

49

Pno.

51

S

A

T

B

*mf*

*f*

*molto accel.*

And an - oth - er. How \_\_\_\_\_ to ac - count for this riv - er of

*mf*

And an - oth - er. And an - oth - er.

*mf*

And an - oth - er. And an - oth - er.

*mf*

And an - oth - er. And an - oth - er.

51

Pno.

*molto accel.*

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*poco rit.* ..... ♩ = c. 50

S  
A  
T  
B

gen - er - a - tions? \_

*p*

*poco rit.* ..... ♩ = c. 50

Pno.

S  
A  
T  
B

♩ = 75

♩ = c. 50

Pno.

63 palm white note cluster (hold)

*ppp*

63 right hand and forearm white note cluster (hold)

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

*Red.* \_\_\_\_\_

*Red. (soft)* \_\_\_\_\_

68 ♩=90

S  
A  
T  
B

Pno.

68 ♩=90

*ppp* *mp* *ppp*

72 ♩=40-45

S  
A  
T  
B

Pno.

72 ♩=40-45

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

She watch-es the mon-archs drift- cloud of or-ange and black-

She watch-es the mon-archs drift- cloud of or-ange and black-

She watch-es the mon-archs drift- cloud of or-ange and black-

She watch-es the mon-archs drift- cloud of or-ange and black-

75 ♩=85

S

A *mf*  
West-ern mind says dis - count, -

T *mf*  
but knows bet-ter than to dis - miss.

B

Pno. *mp*

*mp*

*Red.*

78 ♩=c. 90

S *mf* 3  
She a -

A *mf* 3  
She a -

T *p* *mf*  
She a - ban - dons the in - stru - ments,

B *p* *mf*  
She a - ban - dons the in - stru - ments,

Pno. *ppp* *p* *ppp*

*lightly, softly*

*Red.*

*Red. (soft)*

80 *mf*  
S ban - dons the in - stru - ments, She a -  
A ban - dons the in - stru - ments, She a -  
T She a -  
B She a -  
Pno. *p*

82 *ff*  
S ban - dons the in - stru - ments, —  
A ban - dons the in - stru - ments, —  
T ban - dons the in - stru - ments, —  
B ban - dons the in - stru - ments, —  
Pno. *mp* *pp*

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88 *mp* *mf* *mf* *f*

S wa - - ver - ing, cer - tain

A joins the wa - - ver - ing, cer - tain

T joins the wa - - ver - ing, cer - tain

B dust - y heart - - - - beat, cer - tain

Pno.

88

90 *mp* *mf* *pp*

S path.

A path.

T path.

B path.

90 *ppp* *p* *ppp*

Red.

repeat ad lib., fade to nothing

FOR PERUSAL ONLY



Described as "...bold...radiant, deftly crafted..." (Musical America), Edie Hill's music is performed all over the world. Venues have included Lincoln Center, Met Cloisters (NYC), Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall (NYC), Musis Sacrum in Arnhem, Holland, LA County Museum of Art, Library of Congress, Minneapolis' Walker Arts Center, St. Paul's Schubert Club, Berwald Hall (Stockholm Sweden), Liviu Cultural Center (Romania), Feszek Művészklub (Budapest), St. Peter's Basilica (Vatican City).

A three-time McKnight Artist Fellow and a two-time Bush Artist Fellow, Hill has received grants from the Jerome Foundation, ASCAP, New Music USA, Meet The Composer, Minnesota State Arts Board, Chamber Music America, and was awarded a Doctor of Humane Letters from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. The album, *Born: music of Edie Hill and Michael Gilbertson* won the 2023 GRAMMY® for "Best Choral Performance" for The Crossing (Donald Nally, conductor). She has a B.A. from Bennington College and earned her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees at the University of Minnesota.

Composer in Residence at Schubert Club from 2005-2017, she ran and grew the Mentorship Program for high school composers. She was Composer Mentor for MN Varsity for composers 14-18 years of age co-sponsored by The American Composers Forum and Classical Minnesota Public Radio. She has lectured at colleges, universities and various institutions in the States and abroad.

For Hill, writing music is an opportunity to research, learn, muse, reach down deep, and allow inspiration to come from the stuff of life. Her compositions are fueled by her experiences, passions and curiosities.

*for complete biography as well as works for perusal and sale, visit [ediehill.com](http://ediehill.com)*

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