

Contents

Over the rainbow	page 3
Autumn leaves	9
Wade in the water	15

Foreword

This collection is a tribute to Eva Cassidy (1963–1996) – the American singer, guitarist and arranger who tragically died of melanoma at the age of 33. Recordings of her wonderful interpretations of jazz, folk, gospel, spiritual and contemporary pop songs are her legacy to us – they will surely continue to inspire people for many generations. Though from a musical family, Eva had no formal musical training. She taught herself to play the guitar and began performing and recording albums in her late twenties. Preferring to create her own versions of pre-existing songs rather than to write original material, she approached standard repertoire in such a unique way that the songs often sounded brand new.

The three songs in this collection are from the posthumously released anthology album *Songbird*, which went quintuple platinum in the UK as well as gaining enormous international success. As seems appropriate for an Eva Cassidy collection, the selected songs come from three different musical genres – film music, jazz and gospel.

It was her version of Harold Arlen's *Over the rainbow*, originally taken from the film *The wizard of Oz*, that made Eva Cassidy's name famous. The recording established her as an international star, albeit after her death, and couldn't be more different from the original 1939 performance by Judy Garland. Simply scored for guitar and voice, Eva's interpretation is filled with a sense of yearning and seems to transcend the song's original child-like innocence, creating a more passionate, 'grown-up' ballad. From the outset she changes the melody just as a jazz singer might, dropping the usual opening octave leap for the word 'somewhere' in favour of a repeated note. From that moment it is her song.

Similarly, Eva's adaptation of the classic 1947 standard *Autumn leaves* seems to create a new song altogether. Often performed as an up-tempo instrumental number by jazz musicians, the words (originally in French) can appear irrelevant. Eva's expressive interpretation, however, draws attention to the lyrics in a way that few other recordings of this song do. Suddenly the words make sense, the drifting leaves of autumn a poignant reminder of a lost love.

In contrast to the two preceding heart-on-sleeve ballads, *Wade in the water* is a lively and infectious spiritual. Its features include a call-and-response texture, jazz 'scat' vocalisation and finger clicks on beats 2 and 4 of the bar. This arrangement remains true to the spirit of Eva's version, adapting the instrumental improvisation on the recording to create a fun scat section.

Choral arrangements of solo songs inevitably cannot include all of the vocal inflections and subtleties of the recording on which they are based; however, conductors of groups learning these arrangements are encouraged to listen to Eva Cassidy's versions and aim for the same passion and commitment, allowing the voices as much freedom of expression as is possible in a choral texture. After all, as well as an unforgettably beautiful voice, Eva Cassidy had a rare gift – soul; if these arrangements are to be a true tribute to her, then soulfully is the only way to perform them.

Joanna Forbes, August 2006

Editorial notes

Choral basics has been devised to provide arrangements and original pieces specifically for beginner choirs.

Vocal ranges: the arrangements don't explore the extremes of the voice, but aim to stretch the vocal range from time to time in the context of a well-placed musical phrase. Small notes indicate optional alternatives: 1) where the main notes may fall out of comfortable range for some singers, 2) where certain singers on the male-voice part, which mainly falls in the baritone range of a 10th (B–D), wish to explore the tenor or bass register, or 3) where doubling within a part is suggested.

Breathing: singers should aim to follow the punctuation of the text and breathe accordingly. However, commas above the music suggest places to breathe where not provided for within the text.

Piano accompaniments: the simple yet imaginative piano parts have been written to support the vocal lines. Small notes in the piano part are intended to help support singers while learning the piece; however, once more confident you may choose to omit the notes, or just to play them very gently.

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37 A. *p*

When au-tumn leaves start to fall.

40 (A.) S. A. *pp*

mm *mm*

MEN *pp*

mf espress.

44

mm *mm*

47 S. *mf*

mm Moving on a touch

A. *mp cresc.*

mm Since you went a - way, the

went a - way the

went a - way the

mp cresc. Moving on a touch

46 (S. A. click)
MEN

Must be the chil - dren. that's com - in' through. God's gon - na trou - ble the

49 S. A. *f*

Wade in the wa - ter...
wa - ter. *f*

52

Wade in the wa - ter, chil - dren, Wade

55 S. A. A. S. A.

in the wa - ter, God's gon - na trou - ble the wa - ter. If