

Fire-Flowers

SSAA and Piano

Mitchell Covington

Text by Pauline Johnson Tekahionwake

*Dedicated to the victims of the
Northern and Southern California wildfires,
October-December 2017*

Pauline Johnson Tekahionwake was born in 1861 on the Six Nations Reserve near the Grand River, in present-day Ontario. As her Mohawk name, Tekahionwake indicates, Johnson's life was heavily influenced by her mixed-race identity as Iroquois Indian and British. Her father was of Mohawk and European descent.

Although she lived in an age of institutional racism, Johnson was taught to appreciate and respect her Mohawk ancestry. She understood the Mohawk language, having been told many stories by her paternal grandfather, Chief John Smoke Johnson, whose own dramatic talents inspired her work as a poet.

Fire Flowers

In California and elsewhere there exist several remarkable species of flower which only germinate after a wildfire. Their seeds can remain dormant for over a century. Intense heat and smoke in the air trigger the seeds to come back to life and soon the scorched chaparral is covered with crimson, lavender, yellow, orange and blue wildflowers. Two examples of California fire-flowers are the Fire Poppy and the Baker's Globe.

Fire-Flowers

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Pauline Johnson Tekahionwake (b. 1861)

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Flickering $\text{♩} = 54$

Piano

The piano introduction is in 2/2 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The right hand features a melodic line of eighth notes, grouped in threes, with a tempo of quarter note = 54. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with sustained chords and a few moving lines.

S 1 *mp*
And on - ly where, And on - ly where the for - est__

S 2 *mp*
And on - ly where, And on - ly where the for - est__

A 1 *mp*
And on - ly where, And on - ly where the for - est__

A 2 *mp*
And on - ly where, And on - ly where the for - est__

The vocal staves are arranged in four parts: Soprano 1 (S 1), Soprano 2 (S 2), Alto 1 (A 1), and Alto 2 (A 2). Each part begins with a triplet of eighth notes. The lyrics are: "And on - ly where, And on - ly where the for - est__". The dynamic marking is mezzo-piano (mp).

The piano accompaniment continues with the same melodic and harmonic patterns as the introduction, featuring triplet eighth notes in the right hand and sustained chords in the left hand.

7

S 1
— And on - ly where the for - est fires have

S 2
— And on - ly where the for - est fires have

A 1
— And on - ly where the for - est fires have

A 2
— And on - ly where the for - est fires have

11

S 1
sped, _____ Scorch-ing re - lent -

S 2
sped, _____ Scorch-ing re - lent - less - ly

A 1
sped, _____ Scorch-ing re - lent - less - ly

A 2
sped, _____ Scorch-ing

15

S 1
less - ly, Scorch-ing re - lent - less - ly the cool

S 2
Scorch-ing re - lent - less - ly, Scorch - ing the cool north lands

A 1
Scorch-ing re - lent - less - ly, re - lent - less, the

A 2
re - lent - less - ly Scorch-ing re - lent - less, the

19 *mf*

S 1
north lands, A sweet wild flower

S 2
north lands, A Sweet wild flower

A 1
north lands, A sweet wild flower

A 2
north lands, A sweet wild flower (whole step)

19 *mf*

Bring out L.H. melody

23

S 1 lifts its pur - ple head, _____ And like some gen - tle spi-rit sor - row -

S 2 lifts its pur - ple head, _____ And like some gen - tle spir-ir sor - row

A 1 lifts its pur - ple head, _____ And like some gen - tle spi-rit sor - row

A 2 lifts its pur - ple head _____ And like some gen - tle spi-rit sor - row

27

S 1 fed, _____ It hides the scars, _____ It hides the scars _____ *mp*

S 2 fed, _____ It hides the scars _____ It hides the scars _____ *mp*

A 1 fed, _____ It hides the scars, _____ It hides the scars _____ *mp*

A 2 fed, _____ It hides the scars, _____ It hides the scars _____ *mp*

27

31

S 1
— with al - most hu - man hands.

S 2
— with al - most hu - man hands.

A 1
— with al - most hu - man hands.

A 2
— with al - most hu - man hands.

35 *mf*

S 1
And on - ly to the heart, And on - ly to the heart that

S 2
mf
And on - ly to the heart, And on - ly to the heart that

A 1
mf
And on - ly to the heart, And on - ly to the heart that

A 2
mf
And on - ly to the heart, And on - ly to the heart that

35 *mf*

39

S 1 knows, And on - ly to the heart that knows of

S 2 knows And on - ly to the heart that knows of

A 1 knows, And on - ly to the heart that knows of

A 2 knows, And on - ly to the heart that knows of

43

S 1 grief, Of des - o - lat - ing fire, of hum - an *rit.*

S 2 grief, Of fire, of hum - an *rit.*

A 1 grief, Of des - o - lat - ing fire, of *rit.*

A 2 grief, Of hu - man *rit.*

43

Slower ♩ = 86

47

S 1
pain, There comes some pur - i - fy - ing sweet be - lief, —

S 2
pain, There comes some pur - i - fy - ing sweet, be - lief, —

A 1
pain, There comes some pur - i - fy - ing sweet be - lief, —

A 2
pain, There comes some pur - i - fy - ing sweet be - lief, —

50

S 1
f Some fel - low feel - ing *mf* rit. beau - ti - ful, if

S 2
f Some fel - low feel - ing *mf* rit. beau - ti - ful, if

A 1
f Some, some fel - low feel - ing, if *mf* rit.

A 2
f Some fel - low feel - ing beau - ti - ful, if *mf* rit.

Tempo Primo ♩ = 54

53 *mp* *mp* *mp* *mp*

S 1 brief. Oh And

S 2 brief. Oh And

A 1 brief Oh And

A 2 brief. Oh And

53 *mp* Tempo Primo ♩ = 54

57

S 1 life, and life re - vives, and

S 2 life, and life re - vives, and

A 1 life, and life re - vives, and

A 2 life, and life re - vives, and

57

61

S 1
life re - vives and blos - soms _____ once a -

S 2
life re - vives and blos - soms _____ once a -

A 1
life re - vives and blos - soms _____ once a -

A 2
life re - vives and blos - soms _____ once a -

65

S 1
gain. _____ *mf* And a sweet wild flower lifts its pur - ple

S 2
gain. _____ *mf* And a weet wild flower lifts its pur - ple

A 1
gain. _____ *mf* And a sweet wild flower lifts its pur - ple

A 2
gain. _____ *mf* (whole step) And a sweet wild flower lifts its pur - ple

69

S 1
head, _____ And like some gen - tle spi-rit sor - row - fed, _____ It

S 2
head, _____ And like some gen - tle spir-ir sor - row fed, _____ It

A 1
head, _____ And like some gen - tle spi-rit sor - row fed, _____ It

A 2
And like some gen - tle spi-rit sor - row fed, _____ It

73

S 1
hides the scars, _____ And life re - vives and

S 2
hides the scars _____ And life re - vives and

A 1
hides the scars, _____ And life re - vives and

A 2
hides the scars, _____ And life re - vives and

73

77

S 1
blos-soms once a gain, _____ and blos-soms

S 2
blos-soms once a - gain, _____ and blos-soms

A 1
blos-soms once a - gain, _____ and blos-soms

A 2
blos-soms once a - gain, _____ and blos-soms

81

S 1
once a gain. _____

S 2
once a - gain. _____

A 1
once a - gain. _____

A 2
once a - gain. _____

81

L.V. al fine