

The War Prayer

a cantata
after a story by Mark Twain

for tenor solo
bass/baritone solo
soprano solo or group
alto solo or group
tenor/ baritone or group
organ

13 minutes

Dave Soldier

version November 19, 2011
original orchestral version 1993

1. Invocation
2. Supplication
3. Canticle
4. Benediction

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The War Prayer

A cantata

From a short story that Twain arranged to be published only after his death.

"It is a thing plainly repugnant to the word of God to have public prayer in church in a tongue not understood by the people."

- 24th Article of Religion, *Episcopalian Church (1801)*

Adapted by Dave Soldier (1993) for choir and orchestra: arranged for singers and organ (2011)
The last line by the minister is from Billy Graham and an Episcopalian prayer

For tenor solo (Minister)*,
bass / baritone or singer with a wide range (homeless man),
soprano solo or soprano choir
alto solo or choir, including a soloist on the Benediction
baritone solo or combined men:
the sopranos, altos and men (tenor, baritone, bass) parts can be sung by a gospel choir (with robes), the me split parts where appropriate

* the Minister's role and solos have also been sung successfully by a soprano

1. Invocation

Minister (tenor): (some interruption by others)

It is a time of great exalting excitement!

The country is up in arms,

and in every breast burns the holy fire of patriotism;

all: the drums are beating, (begins clapping)

minister (improv.): the toy pistols popping

all: the bands are playing,

minister (improv.) the firecrackers spluttering; (spoken) on every hand and far down the receding spread of roofs and balconies a fluttering wilderness of flags flash in the sun.

Bless us our arms

Minister:

(spoken) Let us pray to the God of Battles, the God of flag and country, beseeching His aid in our righteous endeavors.

*(sung) Oh ever-merciful Father of us all,
watch our noble handsome soldiers,
and aid and comfort them,
and shield them in the time of battle,
shield them in the hour of peril,
shield them, bear them in Your mighty hand.*

Make them hardy and strong,
help them to crush their foe,
grant us, our nation, eternal honor and glory.

(all) Bless us our arms,

grant us the vict'ry,
Lord and Protector of our land and flag.

(minister) Give them valor and confidence
steel them in the bloody fray,
grant us, Your nation, forever Your power and glory.

(all) Bless us our arms,
grant us the vict'ry,
Lord and Protector of our land and flag.

(minister) O gracious and benignant Father of us all,
lend comfort to our patriots,
in that far and bloody land,
and shield them in the time of battle,
shield them in the hour of peril,
bear them, bear them in Your mighty hand.

2. Supplication

All:
In each breast burns the holy fire.
In each breast burns the holy fire.

Minister (spoken):

Tomorrow battalions leave for the front with their young faces alight with dreams of the battle, visions of the stern advance, the gathering momentum, the rushing charge, the flashing sabers, the flight of the foe, the tumult, the enveloping smoke, the fierce pursuit, the surrender! Then home from the war, heroes, welcomed, adored, (*sung*) submerged in golden seas of glory!

(alto) God the all-terrible!
(add soprano) Thou who ordainest,
(add men) Thunder my trumpet and lightning my sword!

Thou our terror, Thou who ordains! Thunder my trumpet, lightning my sword! (*repeat with variations*)

From before the piece began, a homeless man with a large bag and old raincoat, has been sitting and sometimes muttering conspicuously in an aisle seat. During the multiple repeats of "Thunder my trumpet, lightning my sword" he has been moving to the choir, who are oblivious to him, and for a few seconds joins in with them in sarcastic imitation. He eventually stands behind the preacher, who does not realize his presence. At the end of the singing, the Stranger shoulders the minister, motioning him to step aside, which the startled minister does. There is stunned silence after the Stranger raises his arms and holds them. Whenever the Stranger refers to Lord, God, or Father, his voice uses an overtone technique. His arms are still raised as he begins to sing.

3. Canticle

Old Stranger (bass): (begins in lowest spoken bass voice)
underlined words cue the organ to play under that word: Bold words use overtone technique. Outlined words are screeched. The last cue, 9, the singers make nervous microtonal hums.

I come from the **Throne** (*hold*) - bearing a message from **Almighty God!** He has heard (*cue 1*) the prayer of His servant your shepherd (*touches the minister's shoulder*) and will grant it if such shall be your desire after I, His messenger, have explained to you its import- (*pause*) that is to say its full (*cue 2*) import. For it is like many of the prayers of men, in that it asks for more than he who utters it is aware of- except he pause (*cue 3*) and think (*cue 4*).

God's servant and yours has prayed his prayer. Has he paused (*cue 5*) and taken thought (*cue 6*)? Is it one prayer? No, it is two- one uttered, the other not. Both have reached the ear (*cue 7*) of **Him Who heareth all supplications**, the spoken and the unspoken.

(*cue 8: section is sung like a raga*)

For if you beseech a **blessing** upon yourself, beware! lest you invoke a curse upon your neighbor. If you pray for the **blessing** of rain upon your crops, you may be praying for a curse (*cue 9*, including singers who hum nervously) upon your neighbor's crop which may be injured by the **rain**. You have heard your servant's prayer- the uttered part of it. I am commissioned of **the Lord** to put into words the other part - that which the pastor and also you in your hearts, prayed silently. (*cue 9 out*)

O Lord our Father

(*sung*)

our young patriots,
idols of our hearts,

go forth onto battle- be Thou near them!

With them, in spirit, we too go forth from our sweet firesides to smite the foe.

O Lord our God,

help us use our shells to tear them to bloody shreds;

help us seed their fields with the pale forms of their dead;

help us drown the thunder of guns with the shrieks of their wounded, writhing in pain;

help us to waste their homes in a hurricane of fire;

help us to wring the widow's hearts with unavailing grief;

help us to turn them out with their little children to wander unfriended the wastes of their desolated land in rags, hunger, and thirst, sports of the flames of summer and the winds of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travail,

imploring Thee for the refuge of the grave and denied it-

Lord, For our sakes who adore Thee,

blast their hopes and their lives, protract their bitter pilgrimage, weigh down their steps, water their way with tears, stain the white snow with the blood of their feet!

We ask it, in the spirit of love, of Him Who is the **Source of Love**

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. (*enormous arpeggios cued on 2nd syllable*)

The Stranger picks up his bags, moves into the choir, shouldering singers aside, and stands in the rear.

4. Benediction

Solo alto: That man, that man, there's no purpose, no purpose
That man, that man, that man, there's no purpose.

Women: That man must be insane, there's no purpose. no purpose
That man must be insane, there's no purpose in what he says.

Women and men:
That man must be insane,
there's no reason, no reason,
That man must be insane
there's no meaning in what he says.

Bass (over organ alone):
Ye have prayed it; if ye desire it, speak! The messenger of the Most High awaits.

Tenor:
I cannot explain to mothers who I've had to talk to the tragedies overtaking their children. Go forth upon your journey from this world – forth from this world of mercy.

All performers, including organist and conductor, wait a couple of seconds of silence and then leave the stage without a cue: this is how the audience knows that the piece is finished.

The War Prayer

a cantata

Score

version 11.19.11

Dave Soldier

text adapted from Mark Twain

1. Invocation

$\text{♩} = 120$

The score is written for Tenor and Organ in 4/4 time, with a tempo of 120 beats per minute. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/D-flat minor). The Tenor part begins with a rest for four measures, then enters with a forte (*f*) dynamic, singing "It is a time of great ex-". The Organ part begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic, playing a series of chords and moving lines. The lyrics continue: "al-ting ex-cite-ment! The coun-try is up in arms and in ev-'ry breast". The Organ accompaniment features a complex texture with many chords and moving lines. The lyrics continue: "burns the ho-ly fire of pa-tri-o-ti-sm". The Organ part concludes with a forte (*f*) dynamic.

Tenor part lyrics:
It is a time of great ex-
al-ting ex-cite-ment!
The coun-try is up in arms and in ev-'ry breast
burns the ho-ly fire of pa-tri-o-ti-sm

Organ part dynamics: *p*, *f*

The War Prayer

15 *f* the drums are beat - ing — the bands are play - ing —

clap on 2 & 4

clap on 2 & 4

the drums are beat - ing — improvised melody the bands are play - ing — speech and song mixed at will

8 the toy pistols popping the firecrackers spluttering

clap on 2 & 4

f the drums are beat - ing — the bands are play - ing —

Org.

20 Db, F, Ab are "safe" notes can use high Db on "wild"

8 On every hand and far down the receding spread of roofs and balconies a fluttering wilderness of flags flash in the sun.

20 *short pause*

Org.

The War Prayer

♩ = 72 declaimed speech: stress "pray" with a raised pitch *rit.*

27

T

8

Let us *pray* to the God of Battles, the God of flag and country, beseeching His aid in our righteous endeavors.

27

Org.

♩ = 82

34

T

8

Oh ev - er mer - ci - ful Fa - ther of us all — watch our no - ble hand - some

34

Org.

39

T

8

sol - diers and aid and com - fort them — and shi - eld them in the time of bat - tle

39

Org.

The War Prayer

4

T 44

shi-eld them in the hour of pe-ril shi-eld them bear them in your migh-ty hand

Org.

T 49

Make them har-dy and strong help them to crush their foe

Org.

T 54

grant us our na-tion e-ter-nal ho-nor and glo-ry

Org.

58

S *f* Bless us our arms _____ grant us _____ the vic - 'try Lord and _____ pro - tec - tor of

A *f* Bless us our arms _____ grant us _____ the vic - 'try Lord and _____ pro - tec - tor of

T *f* Bless us our arms _____ grant us _____ the vic - 'try Lord and _____ pro - tec - tor of

B *f* Bless us our arms _____ grant us _____ the vic - 'try Lord and _____ pro - tec - tor of

Org.

64

S our land and flag _____

A our land and flag

T *mf* our land and flag Give them va - lor _____ and con - fi - dence help them in the blood - y fray

B our land and flag _____

Org.

The War Prayer

6

70

S
A
T
B

grant us — Your na - tion for - ev - er Your pow - er and glo - ry

f Bless us our arms —
f Bless us our arms —
f Bless us our arms —

Org.

big B3-type gliss *f* Bless us our arms —

76

S
A
T
B

grant us — the vic - 'try Lord and — pro - tec - tor of our land and flag —

grant us — the vic - 'try Lord and — pro - tec - tor of our land and flag

grant us — the vic - 'try Lord and — pro - tec - tor of our land and flag — *mp* Oh

Org.

grant us — the vic - 'try Lord and — pro - tec - tor of our land and flag —

The War Prayer

82

T

gra - cious be - nig - nant Fa - ther of us all _____ lend _____ com - fort to _____ our

Org.

p

87

T

pa - tri-ots _____ in that far and blood-y land _____ and shi-eld them in the time of bat-tle

Org.

92

T

shi-eld them in the hour of pe-ril bear them bear them in _____ your migh-ty hand _____

Org.

rit.

The War Prayer

8

2. Supplication

98 $\text{♩} = 110$

Org.

101

S
A
B

In each breast burns the ho - ly fire

Org.

106

S
A
T
B

In each breast burns the ho-ly fire

Org.

112

T

speech

Tomorrow battalions leave for the front with their young faces alight with dreams of the battle, visions of the stern advance,

Org.

117

T

sung

the gathering momentum, the rushing charge, the flashing sabers, the flight of the foe, the tumult, the enveloping smoke, the fierce pursuit, the surrender! Then home from the war, heroes, welcomed, adored sub-merged in

Org.

The War Prayer

10

121

S *f* Thou who or - dain__ est Thun - der my trum - pet__ and

A *f* God the all - ter - ri - ble Thou who or - dain__ est Thun - der my trum - pet__ and

T gold - en seas of glo - ry *f* Thun - der my trum - pet__ and

B *f* Thun - der my trum - pet__ and

Org.

125

S *gliss.* light - ning my__ sword! *clap on 2 & 4* Thou__ our ter - ror

A light - ning my sword! *clap on 2 & 4* Thou__ our ter - ror

T light - ning my sword! *clap on 2 & 4*

B light - ning my sword! *clap on 2 & 4* Thou__ our ter - ror

Org.

can yell encouragement when it feels natural

129

S
Thou who or dains Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning my sword

A
Thou who or dains Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning my sword

B
Thou who or dains Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning my sword

Org.
Thou who or dains stops in octaves on right hand Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning my sword

132

S
Thou — our ter - ror Thou who or - dains Thun der my trum - pet

A
Thou — our ter - ror Thou who or - dains Thun der my trum - pet

B
Thou — our ter - ror Thou who or - dains Thun der my trum - pet

Org.
Thou — our ter - ror Thou who or - dains Thun der my trum - pet

The War Prayer

12

135

S
Light - ning my sword Thun der my trum-pet light - ning my sword

A
Light - ning my sword Thun der my trum-pet light - ning my sword

T
Thun der my trum-pet light - ning my sword

B
Light - ning my sword Thun der my trum-pet light - ning my sword

Org.



138

S
Thun - der my trum-pet Light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum-pet

A
Thun - der my trum-pet Light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum-pet

T
Thun - der my trum-pet Light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum-pet

B
Thun - der my trum-pet Light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum-pet

Org.



141

S
light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning

A
light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning

T
8
light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning

B
light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning

Org.
light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning

you can improvise around the others from here on

144

S
Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet

A
Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet

T
8
Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet

B
Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet

Org.
Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet

The War Prayer

14
147

S
Light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum-pet my my my my my my my my

A
Light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum-pet my my my my my my my my

T
8
Light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum-pet my my my my my my my my

B
Light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum-pet my my my my my my my my

Org.

150

S
my my sword Thun - der my trum-pet light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum-pet

A
my my sword Thun - der my trum-pet light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum-pet

T
8
my my sword Thun - der my trum-pet light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum-pet

B
my my sword Thun - der my trum-pet light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum-pet

Org.

The War Prayer

153

clap on all offbeats, i.e., on the "ands" of each beat

S
Light - ning Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning my sword
clap on all offbeats, i.e., on the "ands" of each beat

A
Light - ning Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning my sword
clap on all offbeats, i.e., on the "ands" of each beat

T
Light - ning

B
Light - ning
clap on all offbeats, i.e., on the "ands" of each beat

Org.

156

S
Thun - der my trum - pet my my my my my my my my my my sword

A
Thun - der my trum - pet my my my my my my my my my my sword

T
Thun - der my trum - pet

B
Thun - der my trum - pet

Org.

The War Prayer

16
159

T
8

B

my my my my my my my my my my sword Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning my sword

my my my my my my my my my my sword Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning my sword

Org.

162

S

A

T
8

B

Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet

Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet

Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet

Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet

Org.

The War Prayer

165

S
Light - ning Thun - der my trum-pet my my my my my my my my

A
Light - ning Thun - der my trum-pet my my my my my my my my

T
8
Light - ning Thun - der my trum-pet my my my my my my my my

B
Light - ning Thun - der my trum-pet my my my my my my my my

Org.

168

S
my my sword Thun - der my trum-pet light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum-pet

A
my my sword Thun - der my trum-pet light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum-pet

T
8
my my sword Thun - der my trum-pet light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum-pet

B
my my sword Thun - der my trum-pet light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum-pet

Org.

The War Prayer

18
171

S
light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning

A
light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning

T
8
light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning

B
light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet light - ning

Org.

clap on every 8th note

174

S
Thun - der my trum - pet my my my my my my my my sword Thun - der my trum - pet
clap on every 8th note

A
Thun - der my trum - pet my my my my my my my my sword Thun - der my trum - pet
clap on every 8th note

T
8
Thun - der my trum - pet my my my my my my my my sword Thun - der my trum - pet
clap on every 8th note

B
Thun - der my trum - pet my my my my my my my my sword Thun - der my trum - pet
clap on every 8th note

Org.

177 claps stop

S *ff* light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet claps stop

A *ff* light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet claps stop

T *ff* light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet claps stop

B *ff* light - ning my sword Thun - der my trum - pet

Org.

180

Org.

The War Prayer

20

3. Canticle

cue 1
183
choose extremely eerie stops and effects at will

cue 2
cue 3
cue 4
cue 5
cue 6
cue 7
play with dynamics and octaves, add sound effects at will but soloist needs to be heard

cue 8
190
cue 9
nervous microtone gliss hums
p *f*
nervous microtone gliss hums
p *f*
nervous microtone gliss hums
p *f*
nervous microtone gliss hums
p *f*

Stranger:

I come from the **Throne** (hold) - bearing a message from **Almighty God!** He has heard (cue 1) the prayer of His servant your shepherd (*touches the minister's shoulder*) and will grant it if such shall be your desire after I, His messenger, have explained to you its import- (*pause*) that is to say its full (cue 2) import. For it is like many of the prayers of men, in that it asks for more then he who utters it is aware of- except he pause (cue 3) and think (cue 4).

God's servant and yours has prayed his prayer.

Has he paused (cue 5) and taken thought (cue 6)? Is it one prayer?

No, it is two- one uttered, the other not. Both have reached the ear (cue 7) of **Him Who heareth all supplications**, the spoken and the unspoken.

(cue 8 section is sung like a raga)

For if you beseech a *blessing* upon yourself, beware! lest you invoke a curse upon your neighbor.

If you pray for the *blessing* of rain upon your crops, you may be praying for a **curse** (cue 9, including singers who hum nervously) upon your neighbor's crop which may be injured by the *rain*. You have heard your servant's prayer- the uttered part of it.

I am commissioned of **the Lord** to put into words the other part - that which the pastor and also you in your hearts, prayed silently. (cue 9 out)

O Lord our Father

♩.=96
193

B

f Our — young pa - tri - ots — i - dols of our hearts —

Org.

197

B

go — forth on - to bat - tle — be — Thou near

Org.

200

B

them — with them in spi - rit — we too — go forth from our sweet

Org.

The War Prayer

22

204 *gliss. overtones* *falso tenor*

B

fire - sides _____ to smite the foe _____ O Lord Our God help us _____ fire shells

Org.

209

B

_____ and tear them to bloody shreds _____ help us _____ plant their

Org.

213 *ord.*

B

fi - elds with the pale forms of their dead Help us _____ drown the thun - der _____ of the guns with the

Org.

217 *overtone* *fakeo tenor*

B

shrieks of the woun-ded wri-thing in pain Oh Lord our Fa - ther help us waste their

Org.

222

B

homes in a hur - ri - cane of fire

Org.

225

B

help us wring the wi-dow's hearts with un-vai-ling grief

Org.

The War Prayer

24

229 *ord.*

B

help us to turn out ___ their lit-tle chil-drento wan-der un-frien-ded the wastes of their de-so-la-ted land in rags hun-ger and thirst sports of the

Org.

233

B

flames of sum - mer and the winds of win - ter bro - ken in

235 *gliss.*

B

spi - rit worn with tra - vail im - plo - ring Thee for re - fuge ___ of the grave and de - nied it

Org.

239 *overtone* *insane gliss* *fakeo tenor*

B

___ Lord for our sakes who a - dore Thee blast ___ their hopes and their lives pro -

Org.

242

B

tract their bit-ter pil-gra-mage weigh down their steps their way washed with tears

Org.

245

B

stain the white snow with the blood of their woun-ded feet We

Org.

ord.

249

B

ask it in the spi-rit of love of Him who is the Source of Love

overtones

252

B

1st amen areggio 2nd amen arpeggio 3rd amen arpeggio big Amen arpeggio

Org.

8va #2 play chords on "men" play chord on "men" play chord on "men"

4. Benediction

$\text{♩} = 56$

pretty

Org. *mf*

A

Org. *f*

That man _____

A

Org.

_____ that man _____ there's no pur- pose no pur - pose that man _____ that man that man _____

274

S

A

Org.

That man _____ must be _____ in - sane _____

there's no pur - pose. That man _____ must be _____ in - sane _____

278

S

A

Org.

there's no pur - pose no pur - pose that man _____ must be _____ in - sane _____

there's no pur - pose no pur - pose that man _____ must be _____ in - sane _____

The War Prayer

28
282

S
_____ there's no pur - pose in what he says. That man _____ must be _____ in - sane _____

A
_____ there's no pur - pose in what he says. That man _____ must be _____ in - sane _____

T
8
_____ That man _____ must be _____ in - sane _____

B
_____ That man _____ must be _____ in - sane _____

Org.

286

S
_____ There's no rea - son no rea - son. That man _____ must be _____ in - sane _____

A
_____ There's no rea - son no rea - son. That man _____ must be _____ in - sane _____

T
8
_____ There's no rea - son no rea - son. That man _____ must be _____ in - sane _____

B
_____ There's no rea - son no rea - son. That man _____ must be _____ in - sane _____

Org.

The War Prayer

290

S
there's no rea-son in what he says. *f* That man must be in - sane

A
there's no rea-son in what he says. *f* sing "da-da"s and "na-na"s

T
8
there's no rea-son in what he says. *f* That man must be in - sane

B
there's no rea-son in what he says. *f* That man must be in - sane

Org.

294

S
There's no mea - ning no mea - ning That man must be

A
There's no mea - ning no mea - ning That man must be

T
8
There's no mea - ning no mea - ning That man must be

B
There's no mea - ning no mea - ning That man must be

Org.

The War Prayer

30
297

S
A
T
B

in - sane there's no mea - ning in what he says.

what he says.

be in - sane there's no mea - ning in what he says. —

Org.

297

be in - sane there's no mea - ning in what he says. —

p

301

B

f Ye have prayed it; — if ye de-sire it, speak!

301

Org.

305 *directly to the audience*

T
8 I can - not ex plain to

B
The mes - sen - ger of — the Most High a - waits.

Org.

310

T
8 mo - thers — who I've had to talk to the tra - ge - dies o ver tak — ing their chil - dren

Org.

314 *rit.* organ and singer cut off together

T
8 Go forth u - pon your jour - ney from this world - forth from this world of mer - cy.

Org.