

## ***On Wings of Song* (1986)**

Early in his career, Weinzwieg had hesitated writing choral music, often feeling frustrated with a lack of textual clarity in choral music overall. So when he began writing his “Choral Album” of seven a capella pieces for mixed chorus, Weinzwieg explains that he created his own “sound texts, rather than poems, with phonetics chosen for their rhythmic articulation values with subjects drawn from [his] time—the concrete, here and now.” In *On Wings of Song*, the “here and now” is Weinzwieg’s proximity to nature at the family cottage near Kearney; Weinzwieg notes in the score: “When birds of a feather get together—bird talk, as overheard by the composer.”

To achieve Weinzwieg’s desired “conversational texture,” the choir sections sing individually, with only one brief *tutti* section near the end. Weinzwieg assigns various birdsong fragments to each section with one to four seconds of silence between each fragment. Weinzwieg’s birdsongs are as varied as those found in nature: some have a limited range while others include wide leaps; dynamics range from *pianissimo* to *forte*; and legato songs are contrasted by those with staccato and abrupt phrasing.

*On Wings of Song* should not be mistaken for a mystical reflection on birds, such as Messiaen might compose; Weinzwieg’s humour emerges in *tutti* tongue clicking and lip smacking, dramatic pauses, and in the birdsong “go away.”

Written by Alexa Woloshyn