

PROGRAM NOTES

On the Beach at Night is a poem by Walt Whitman about a father and daughter watching the stars on a partly cloudy night. The clouds start to block the view, and the father gently reassures her that the darkness is only temporary, the stars and planets will shine again. And just as the stars will emerge again, he promises her that there is something more eternal than all of the ancient celestial figures upon which they gaze.

The five stanzas of this poem can be divided into two parts, narration and then the reassuring words spoken by the father to his daughter. The piece begins with the male voices setting the scene on the beach, and the female voices enter as the dark clouds ascend through the sky about to block the view of the stars. This first part concludes with the girl weeping because of the coming obstruction, then leads into the next section that begins father's narration. The men sing alone to begin the second section using a flowing, three note idea to build musical phrases of the father's comfort. The music dwells on the words 'Something there is,' making that a transition to the concluding part which speaks of the passing of the darkness and ends with a climatic statement of the idea of immortality existing beyond the vast life spans of the stars.