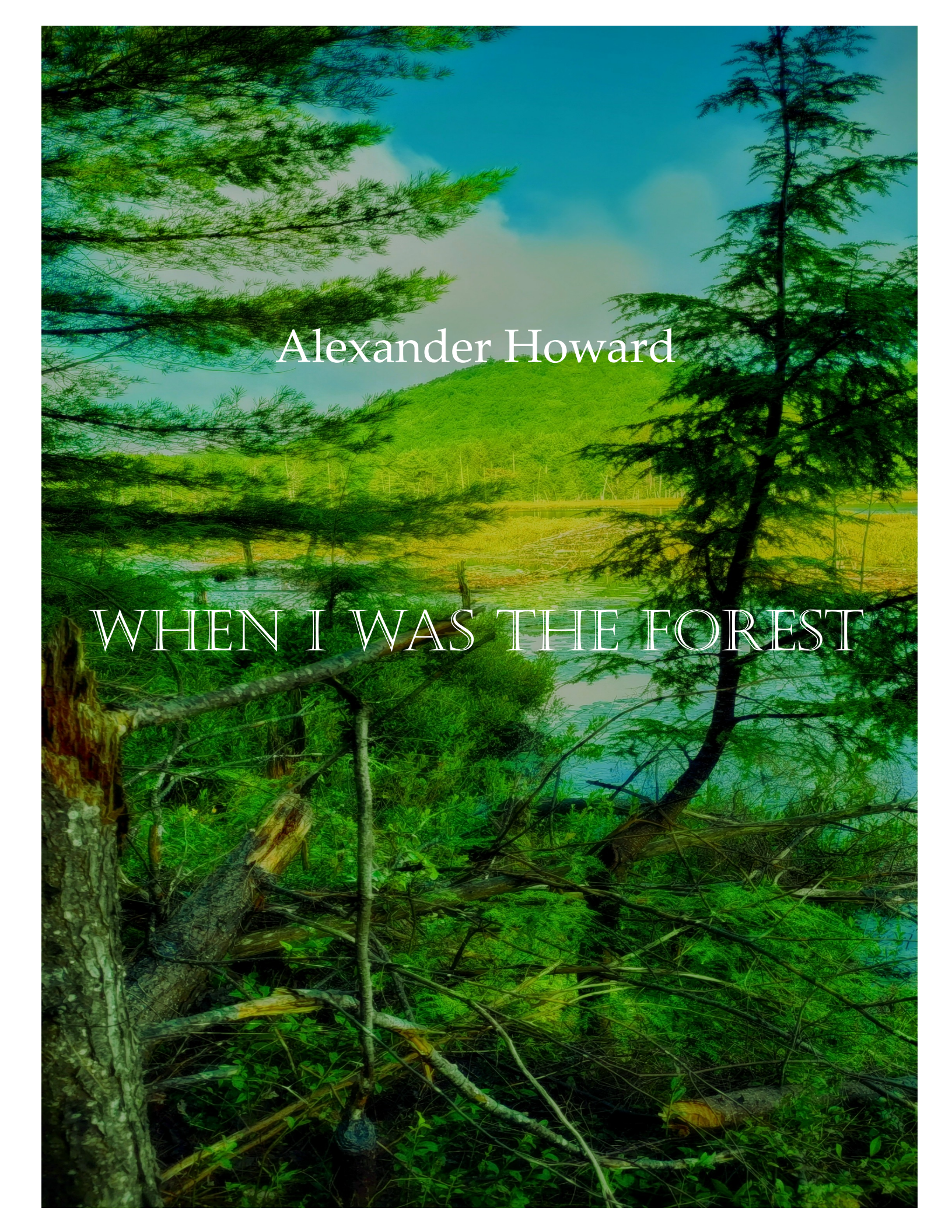


The background image is a lush, painterly landscape. It features a dense forest of tall, thin trees, possibly pines or firs, with vibrant green foliage. A calm body of water, likely a lake or a wide river, reflects the sky and the surrounding greenery. In the foreground, there are fallen tree trunks and branches, some with peeling bark, and a thick layer of green undergrowth. The sky is a deep, clear blue with a few wispy white clouds. The overall style is reminiscent of a watercolor or a soft-focus photograph with a high level of saturation.

Alexander Howard

WHEN I WAS THE FOREST

PROGRAM NOTES:

The whole of the conception for When I Was The Forest was made primarily on the front of transformation of the materials which make up the work. Ideas which form a specific identity as thematic ideas are transformed, as the turmoil of the "return to the unity of heaven and self" is exacted by the poetic narrator. For myself, this form of transformation is one that I have recently found to be apropos to how I conceptualize the self and its modus operandi. I see the self as that which simultaneously is moulded by experience, but still unburdened by the need to re-do that which it has already been moulded by. In that sense, for instance in the piece, the motif of "There Is Nothing I cannot Love" and the translated beginning stanzas (on the next page in dark pink) withstand as the self, whereas the other ideas get formed around and by especially these two motifs. The triangle (held by the soprano and operated by wooden stick) is a symbol of antiquity representing the intersection between the finite and the infinite, thus showing the indefinability of that which is lauded extensively by the mystics, and is expressed in indefinite terms to those who wish to embark down that untreaded path. One note on measure length, is that the measures all add up to 7, and as such each singular length designates a section, and is meant to sound like its own individual section. Being that the poem itself that the work is set on -- Meister Eckhart -- the numerology of the work was critical. Furthermore, the fact that the beginning of the poem is translated into multiple languages which only represent the word using vowels, shows the universality of the message, while also maintaining a distance between the speaker and listener, which mystical texts often naturally possess.

This work is dedicated to Amber Evans and Sam Zagnit of Confluss who graciously made comments and suggestions for his work. Both players are due to play the work in February 2025. Thank you to Reiko Fueting and for the anonymous committee responsible for this decision for allowing this opportunity to be had for having confidence in this work to be composed.

NOTE: Accidentals carry through the system

Duration: c.a. 5 min.

*When I Was The Forest:
(Translated by Daniel Ladinsky)*

*The Stanzas here do not appear
in the text, but are instead
translated into the syllables heard
at the beginning and all throughout
the work in specific moments.*

(When I was the stream, when I was the
forest, when I was still the field,
when I was every hoof, foot,
fin and wing, when I
was the sky
itself,

no one ever asked me did I have a purpose, no one ever
wondered was there anything I might need,
for there was nothing
I could not
love.

It was when I left all we once were that
the agony began, the fear and questions came,
and I wept, I wept. And tears
I had never known
before.

So I returned to the river, I returned to
the mountains. I asked for their hand in marriage again,
I begged—I begged to wed every object
and creature,

and when they accepted,
God was ever present in my arms.
And He did not say,
“Where have you
been?”

For then I knew my soul—every soul—
has always held
Him.

When I Was The Forest

Poem by Meister Eckhardt

Alexander Howard

Etherially; quasi-chant

pp

sections using raw phonemes like this are written using IPA; two or more vowels next to each other not separated by a dash are diphthongs, triphthongs, etc.

Soprano

[I ai ua - o - ay; I - i - ua - oiai - o - ua - i

(Approx. translation: "When I was the stream, when I was still the field")

Triangle
(small wood stick, wielded by Sop.)

Contrabass

S.

I - eu - ua - ia - aiuu - uœu; apa - e - a - i - eu; ua - o - ey a - a]

(Approx. translation: "When I was every hoof, foot, fin and, wing, when I was the sky itself")

Tri.

Cb.

S.

Tri.

Cb.

3 ♩ = 65

(pp)

[I - ai ua - o - ay; I - i - ua - oiai - o - ua]

(I) (Imitate the soprano's chanting in her solo proceeding your entrance)

pp

3 (cont'd) *weaker, uncertain*

S. *5* *7* *5*
no one ev - er ask'd me do I have a pur-pose

Tri.

Cb. III
p subito

3 (cont'd)

S. no - - - one

Tri. *pp* *tr*

Cb. I II III IV
text match-up: (no one ev - er won-der'd was there a - ny - thing I might need)

3 (cont'd)

S. *3* *6* *mf* (Breath, no tone)
for there was no-thing I could not love [I - eu - ua - ia] (repeat rather quickly, as many times in the given note value)

Tri.

Cb. (improv. sim.) "Seagull-effect" (IV)
Recommended fingering position for gliss. *gliss.* *f*

4 *p* *molto rubato*

S. *i(t)-t'was when I left all we once were that the a go ny — the a - go ny*

Tri. *p*

Cb. *(II) (III)* *8va* *(I)*

5 5 5

4 (cont'd)

S. *be-gun the fear and que-stions came and I wept and I wept*

Tri.

Cb. *sf*

accel.

4 (cont'd) *quasi-recit., pause for breaths as needed*

S. *I wept I wept the fear the a - - - go -*

Tri.

Cb. *8va* *II III II I V*

cresc. poco a poco (like a storm is brewing)

4 (cont'd) *cresc.* *with abandon*

S. ny I we - pt I we - pt I we - - - pt I wept I wept I

Tri.

Cb.

5 $\text{♩} = 72$ ***ff*** *stormy*

S. wept And tears I had ne-ver known be-fore

Tri.

Cb.

ff *stormy* ***pp***

5 (cont'd)

S. tears I had ne - ver known be - fore

Tri.

Cb.

ff

5 (cont'd) *mf*

S. *mf*

So I re-turn'd to the riv-er I re turn'd to the mount-ains

Tri. *mf*

Cb. *mf*

8va

5 (cont'd)

S. I asked for their hands in marriage again I begg'd I begg'd

Tri.

Cb.

The musical score is divided into three staves. The top staff is for the Soprano (S.), the middle for the Triangle (Tri.), and the bottom for the Cymbal (Cb.). The Soprano part begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "to wed ev - 'ry ob - ject and crea-ture". The Triangle part is marked with a triangle symbol. The Cymbal part is marked with a cymbal symbol and includes a section with a dashed line and the marking "8va".

Gradually calm the storm

5 (cont'd) *dim.*

S. *5* *3*
and when they ac-cept-ed God was ev-er pre-scent

Tri.

Cb. *dim.*

rit. *p* (more breathy tone) *pp, solemnly*

5 (cont'd) *3* *6* *3*
in my arms and He did not say "where have you been where

Tri.

Cb. *p* *5* *5*

6 ♩ = 58

S. have you been? where have you been? where have you been? where have you be - en?"

Tri.

Cb. (free bow) *pp*

6 (cont'd)

(repeat medium-pace; pause for a short breath whenever needed)

S. [I - eu - ua - ia - aiuu - uœu]

pp

Tri.

Cb. **p** *espressivo, con liberoso*

6 (cont'd)

p (ord)

S. for there was no-thing I could not love (**pp**)

Tri.

Voice **pp** *falsetto; opt. 8ba.* Repeat until where the line ends in the next system; at tempo.

Cb. where have you been? where have you been?

(ord) -----> (Breath, no tone) --> (ord)

sf

6 (cont'd)

S. for there was no-thing I couldnot love [I - eu-ua- ia] (repeat rather quickly, as many times in the given note value)

Tri.

Voice

Cb.

7 (ord) *p* (Breathe where necessary, dim. then cresc. back into note when doing so)

S. [I - i - - ua - - o - ay; I - i - ua - oiai - o - ua - ye]

Tri.

Cb. *ff*

8va-----

5 6 3

Overtone singing; range:

7 (cont'd)

S. [I œ ya ø ε] (repeat vowels slowly until the end in whatever order you want; the vowels also should correspond to the overtone produced)

Tri. *pp possible*

Cb. (II) (III) *sim.*

pp possible

5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

7 (cont'd) *dim. poco a poco al niente*

S.

Tri.

Cb. *dim. poco a poco al niente*

Contrabass speak, slowly and quietly, more than once:
"For then I knew my soul—every soul— has always held Him."

Cease speech immediately!