

# Samuel Barber

(1910–1981)

## Sure on this shining night

published by G. Schirmer, 1941, from *Four Songs*, Op. 13, No. 3

originally for voice and piano

words by James Agee

Composition was completed in September, 1938

Dedicated to Barber's sister, Sara.

SATB and piano adaptation by the composer

published by G. Schirmer, 1961

This has become the most famous of Barber art songs. He later created a voice and orchestra version, and also this choral arrangement. The composer told an anecdote about a 1979 conversation with a New York City telephone operator who asked him to sing the beginning of "Sure on this shining night" to prove that he was Samuel Barber.

Though Barber and James Agee would become friends after the composer's setting of *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, they had not yet met when "Sure on this shining night" was composed. The poem is from the "Descriptions of Elysium" section of the 1934 Agee collection *Permit Me Voyage*. James Agee (1909–1955) was a screenwriter (*The African Queen*), journalist, novelist, and a literate and respected film critic, writing for *Time* and *The Nation*. His movie reviews were later collected in *Agee on Film*. His 1941 book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Three Tenant Families* is considered a masterwork. His posthumously published novel, *A Death in the Family*, won the Pulitzer Prize.

to Sara  
SURE ON THIS SHINING NIGHT

James Agee\*

Samuel Barber  
Adapted by the composer

Andante ♩ = 50

*mp espr.*

Soprano  
Sure on this shin-ing night Of star-made

*p*

Alto  
Sure on this

*mp espr.*

Tenor  
Sure on this shin-ing

*p*

Bass  
Sure on this

Andante ♩ = 50

*p molto legato*

Piano

4

shad-ows round, Kind-ness must watch for

shin-ing night, Kind-ness must

night Of star-made shad-ows round, Kind-

shin-ing night, Kind-ness must

\* From *Permit Me Voyage*. Used by permission of Yale University Press, Publishers.