

# The Willow Tree

from The Stone&Tara Songbook

How magical that complete silence of a hot summer afternoon can be! Perhaps you remember the feeling from long ago, when you were a child, when school holidays seemed to last forever. You would lie on your back in a meadow where the grass grew tall above your face, and you could see the stems of the flowers against a clear, blue, unmoving sky. The only sound was the buzzing of the insects. The birds were silent, as they often are when summer is at its hottest. It was as if normal time had been replaced by something you might have called 'Willow Time', which is the time of a summer world where the only sound is everything is silent and a peaceful humming.

This is the quietness in the *The Willow Tree*, a poem put to music for women's choir and a soloist, with piano accompaniment. It evokes the image of two lovers lying asleep underneath the leafy, shady dome of a weeping willow. We see the play of the green leaves against the azure summer sky while a faint breeze is playing through the branches, making them wave softly.

*the willow tree*

*there is a willow tree amid the grass,  
there is a leafy roof inviting birds  
with light and darkness underneath those leaves.*

*green stains with dots of blue dance tango steps,  
and sunlight enters through those open arms,  
its hanging branches moving with the breeze.*

*our bodies lie untouched by thoughts or time,  
with only earth and leaf and tree around.  
they lie so still, as if a spell sublime  
had frozen them to marble. there's no sound.*

*now Time, stand still and let our beating hearts  
dictate our Willow Time till she us parts.*

The work opens with an exquisite theme reminiscent of pastoral, nineteenth-century romanticism. This is followed by a light and happy waltz as the summer breeze creates a moving mosaic of patches of green leaves and blue sky. The music culminates into a glorious dancing feast.

Then, silence. Nothing but soft voices and prolonged chords, almost static, reflecting the stillness of the sleeping lovers' bodies, *as if a spell sublime / had frozen them to marble.*

Finally the dreamy opening theme returns, with Time being summoned to stand still and let the Willow Tree moment last just a little bit longer.

*Tara, October 2021.*