

Great is life

based on extracts from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*

composed by Sheena Phillips

for SATB chorus (divisi)

This piece was written in response to a call for scores by Chicago A Cappella for a program on the theme of 'The American Dream'. The lyrics are drawn from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, first published in 1855, and in particular from the final poem in the collection ('Great are the myths'), which ecstatically portrays the wealth and energy and greatness of American society.

Over the distance of 150 years, Whitman's passionate voice still speaks powerfully to us, but our times also seem somewhat dark, uncertain, and worrying. While the American dream is still very much alive, so also are feelings of division, grief, and danger, and I wanted to sound a note of plangency as well as excitement when surveying life in this rich and free society.

duration c 5'00

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Great is life

la la la la la la
la la la la la la

Life!

It is good to live!

It is good to live in this age.

Great is the earth!

- commerce and trade, international exchanges

- action, ambition and language and laughter

Great is the law. Great are the landmarks of the law.

They are the same in all times.

They shall not be disturbed.

Great is today, and beautiful.

It is good to live in this age.

Great is expression.

Great are the plunges and throes and triumphs and falls of democracy.

Life!

It is good to live!

- fullness and color and form and diversity

Great, great is the earth, the way it became what it is.

Death. Great is death, as great as life.

Great is wickedness.

Great is liberty.

Great is equality.

Great is goodness.

I am their follower.

O truth, truth of the earth!

O truth, sound your voice!

It is good to live!

It is good to live in this age.

- candor and knowledge and pride and enfolding love!

Life!

Based on extracts from the final poem in Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855 edition)

Great is life

SSAATTBB

a contemporary reading of Walt Whitman

Sheena Phillips

$\bullet = 76$ *energico*

Soprano *mf*
la la la la la la etc

Alto *mf* *p*
la la la la la la etc

Tenor *mf* *p*
la la la la la la etc

Bass *mf* *p*
la la la la la la etc

7
S *mf* *f*
la la la la la la la la la la la la Life!

A *f* *mf* *f*
Life! la la la la la la la la la la la la Life!

T *f* *mf* *f*
Life! la la la la la la la la la la la la Life!

B *f* *mf* *f*
Life! la la la la la la la la la la la la Life!

13

S *f* It is

A *p* la la la la la la etc

T *p* la la la la la la etc

B *p* la la la *f* unis. It is good to live! It is good to live in this age.

18

S good! *f* It is

A *mp* la la la la la etc *f* It is

T *mp* la la la la la etc *p*

B *mp* la la la la la etc *p*

23

S
good to live! It is good to live in this age. Great

A
good to live! It is good to live in this age. Great

T
8
la la la la la la etc *mp*

B
la la la la la la etc *mp*

28

S
is the earth!

A
is the earth!

T
8
mf com-merce and trade, in-ter - nat-ional ex-chan-ges *f* Great is the

B
mf com-merce and trade, in-ter - nat-ional ex-chan-ges *f* Great is the

34 *mf*

S ac-tion, am-bi-tion, and lan-guage and laugh-ter

A ac-tion, am-bi-tion, and lan-guage and laugh-ter

T earth! *p* la la la la la la etc

B earth! *p* la la la la la la etc

40 *mf* *f*

S Great is the law. Great are the land - marks of the

A Great is the law. Great are the land - marks of the

T *f* Great are the land - marks of the

B la la la la la la etc *f* Great is the law. Great are the land - marks of the

46

S law.

A *p* law. la la la etc

T *p* law. la la la etc

B *f* unis. law. They are the same in all times. They shall

51

S They shall not be

A *mf*

T *mf*

B not be dis-turbed. They shall not be

55 *mp*

S dis - - - - turbed. la la la la la la la la la la

A *mp*
la la la la la la la la la la

T

B dis - - - - turbed. It is good to live in this age.

60 $\text{♩} = 64$ *mp dolce*

S beau - ti - ful

A *p*
* lul lul lul lul etc

T (opt. solo) *mf piangente, cantabile*
Great is to - day, and beau - ti - ful. It is

B *p*
* lul lul lul lul etc

* dark, liquid 'l', minimally articulated; vowel as in 'lull'

66

S *mf* It is good to live in this

A *mf* It is good to live in this

T good to live in this age.

B

73 $\bullet = 76$

S *mf* age! *mf* Great is ex-press-ion. *f* Great are the plun-ges and

A *mf* age! *mf* Great is ex-press-ion. *f* Great are the plun-ges and

T *sub. mf* la la la la la la etc *p* *mp*

B *sub. mf* la la la la la la etc *p* *mp*

78

S throes and tri-umphs and falls of de - mo - cra - cy. Life!

A throes and tri-umphs and falls of de - mo - cra - cy. Life!

T *mf*

B *mf*

85

S Life!

A Life! *f* ful-ness and co-lor and form and di-ver-si-ty

T *p* *f* ful-ness and co-lor and form and di-ver-si-ty

B *f* It is good to live! It is good to live in this age.

91 *mf*

S Great, great is the earth, the way it be - came what it

p

A la la la la la la etc

T

B

98

S is. *f* la la la la la la la la la la la //

A *f* *p* *sf* > *sf* //

T *f* *p* *sf* > *sf* //

B *f* *p* *sf* *sf* //

la la la la la la etc

106

f *f* *sfp*

S Life! Life! Death.

A Life! Life! Death. Death.

T *f* *f* *sfp* *f*
la Death. Death.

B *f* *f* *sfp* *f*
la Death. Death.

112

f *f* *ppp*

S Life!

A Great is death, as great as life. *ppp*
la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la

T *f*
Great is death, as great la la la la la la la la la la

B *f*
Great is death, as great la la la la la la la la la la

121

S

A

T

B

la la la la la etc

p Great

p Great

mp with edge

Great is wick-ed-ness.

Great is wick-ed-ness.

128

S

A

T

B

la la la la la la la la la

pp

mp

mf Great

mf Great

mf Great

Great is

135

S *mp* Great is lib - er - ty!

A *mf* la la la la la etc *mp* la la la la la

T *mp* wick - ed - ness. Great is lib - er - ty!

B *mf* Great is wick - ed - ness.

141

S *mf* Great is e - qua - li - ty!

A *mf* la la la la la la etc *f* la la la la la I am their fol - low - er

T *mf* Great is e - qua - li - ty!

B *mf* Great is wick - ed - ness.

147 *f* $\bullet = 64$

S Great is good - - - - - ness. //

A la la la la la la la la la la la la I am their fol - low - er lul lul lul lul etc //

T *f* Great is good - - - - - ness. (opt. solo) *mf* O //

B *f* Great is wick - ed - - - - - ness. // *p* lul lul lul lul etc

152 *mp*

S O truth, //

A //

T *molto piangente* truth, truth of the earth! O truth, *f* sound your voice! //

B //

161 *mf* *f* $\bullet = 76$

S
sound your voice, sound your voice!

A
mf *f* *p*
sound your voice, sound your voice! la la la la la la

T
mf *p*
la la la la la la etc

B
mf *f*
la la la la la la etc It is

167 *f*

S
It is good!

A
etc *mf*
la la la la la la la la la la la la

T
mf
la la la la la la la la la la la la

B
mf
good to live! It is good to live in this age. la la la la la la la la la la

173 *p* *cresc.*

S can - dor know - ledge

A *p* *cresc.*
can - dor know - ledge

T *p* *cresc.*
can - dor la la la la la know - ledge la la la la la

B *p* *cresc.*
can - dor la la la la la know - ledge la la la la la

177 *mf appassionato* *cresc.* *f*

S can - dor and know - ledge and pride and en - fold - ing love!

A *mf appassionato* *cresc.* *f*
can - dor and know - ledge and pride and en - fold - ing love!

T *mf appassionato* *cresc.* *f*
can - dor and know - ledge and pride and en - fold - ing love!

B *mf appassionato* *cresc.* *f*
can - dor and know - ledge and pride and en - fold - ing love!

181

p *mp* *mf*

S Life! Life! Life! Life!

A Life! Life! Life! Life!

T *p* *cresc.*
la la la la la la etc Life!

B *p* *cresc.*
la la la la la la etc la Life!

189

f *f* *f* *f*

S Life! Life!

A Life! Life!

T *f*
ac - tion, am - bi - tion, and lan - guage and laugh - ter la la la la la la

B *f*
ac - tion, am - bi - tion, and lan - guage and laugh - ter la la la la la la