

## Wondrous Love

SATB, *A Cappella* or with Accompaniment  
General

The text of this beloved hymn has been traced back to an 1811 collection of hymns published by the Virginia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Pairing of the text with this hexatonic melody dates from the 1840 printing of *Southern Harmony*. Ever since, variations of both text and harmony have abounded. For this arrangement I have used the first three of the six verses in the 1811 collection.

I do not know the arranger of the musical version offered here. For me it traces back to a copy in my own hand written decades ago. I recall making the copy from a wrinkled ditto sheet with faded purple print that had come my way during some choral convention or choir experience. Ditto machines were banned in the mid-1970s because their alcohol fumes were deemed hazardous, and so the purple sheet predated that time.

In any case, this arrangement touched my heart then and has stirred me ever since. I particularly love the flowing, slurred 8th-note phrases in verses 1 and 3. In copying the ditto sheet I may have made a few changes, but I am sure that I have never had the skill for composing such fluid part writing.

Verse 2 harkens back to the three-part *faux bourdon* setting of *Southern Harmony*, but with an added alto line—perhaps the work of the ditto-sheet arranger—that remains true to the hexatonic tonality of the piece.

As I have never come across this musical arrangement elsewhere, I offer it here. If anyone can identify its originator, I shall gladly and gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness.

Albert Blackwell  
January 4, 2012

# What Wondrous Love Is This

American Traditional  
Arr. unknown

1. What won - drous love is this, O my soul, O my soul, what  
3. Ye wing - ed Ser - aphs, fly, bear the news, bear the news, ye

won - drous love is this, O my soul. What won - drous love is  
wing - ed Ser - aphs, fly, bear the news. Ye wing - ed Ser - aphs,

this, that caused the Lord of bliss to send this pre - cious peace to my  
fly, like com - ets thro' the sky; fill vast e - ter - ni - ty with the

soul. soul. to my soul, to send this pre - cious peace to my soul, to my soul.  
news, with the news, fill vast e - ter - ni - ty with the news, with the news.

21

2. When I was sink - ing down, sink - ing down, sink - ing down, when

21

26

I was sink - ing down, sink - ing down, ——— When I was sink - ing

26

31

down, be - neath God's right - eous frown, Christ laid a - side his crown for my

31

36

soul, for my soul, Christ laid a - side his crown for my soul.

36

Da capo for verse 3