

There's a Tree Filled with Wings

Alexander Gilchrist (1828 - 1861)

Paul Burnell

For four or more instruments and / or singers together with a low drone on A.

The drone begins, then each performer plays in time but independently of the others. The initial entries can be staggered. Each performer plays the central main melody several times. Once played the first time, when reaching the bars marked with an asterisk (*), the performer has the option to play the alternate repeating bar, then rejoin the central melody. The dynamics should either be soft throughout, or a dynamics scheme may be devised suitable for the forces within the ensemble. Performers can play/sing in any comfortable octave. To finish, all players assemble on the final held pause, ensuring that all notes of the chord are included. Once assembled, the final chord including the drone should be held for at least 30 seconds. Total duration is free.

Play several times
Largo ♩ = 54

The score consists of a vocal line and four optional instrumental variations. The vocal line is in 2/4 time and includes the lyrics: "There's a tree filled with wings, bright an-gel-ic wings, spang-ling eve-ry bough like stars, like a star. ah". The instrumental variations are marked with asterisks (*) and labeled "optional". Each variation is a short melodic phrase in a different time signature: X 6-7 (6/4), X 5-6 (7/4), X 4-5 (8/4), and X 4-5 (9/4). Each variation includes the word "ah" with a long horizontal line underneath. A drone line is shown in bass clef, starting with a low A note and continuing throughout the piece.

There's a tree filled with wings, bright an-gel-ic wings, spang-ling eve-ry bough like stars, like a star. ah

Drone continues throughout

Text adapted from 'The Life of William Blake, Pictor Ignotus' by Alexander Gilchrist. *On Peckham Rye (by Dukwich Hill) it is, as he will in after years relate, that while quite a child, of eight or ten perhaps, he has his "first vision." Sauntering along, the boy looks up and sees a tree filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough like stars.*