

Jake Runestad

# FIREFLIES

SATB choir



**I. Living Light**

My fancies are fireflies –  
specks of living light  
twinkling in the dark.

**II. The Day Will Break**

Let me not grope in vain in the dark  
but keep my mind still in the faith  
that the day will break  
and truth will appear  
in its simplicity.

**III. The Worm**

The worm thinks it strange and foolish  
that we do not eat our books.

**IV. Love Is An Endless Mystery**

Let my love, like sunlight, surround you  
and yet give you illuminated freedom,  
for love is an endless mystery.

**V. Fireflies**

The fireflies, twinkling among the leaves,  
make the stars wonder.

**About the Work**

Rabindranath Tagore’s “Fireflies” is a collection of quirky, humorous, wise, and profound aphorisms offering powerful poetic punches. Each mini-poem expresses a world of its own, so I assembled five of these morsels to create a multi-movement musical work illuminating thoughts on life, love, joy, empathy, and beauty. The Iowa All-State Choir is one of the largest in the country, yet is capable of such detailed singing. In creating this work, I wanted to allow the ensemble to find the nuance and uniqueness of character in each movement. Because choral music serves as an important educational tool in the classroom, “Fireflies” can also function as a collection of etudes to develop choral techniques, study compositional devices, inspire in-depth conversations about poetic meaning, and embody diverse emotional landscapes.

The work should not have large breaks between movements – it is best to follow the score as it appears with the breaks as notated. It is imperative that all triplets are stretched (think jazz) and *never* verge on sounding like a shorter, duple note value. Err on the side of making them too long (especially if there’s a rest on the first triplet)! Take the initiative to find your way into each musical line to give it a meaningful shape as you see fit. There’s a lot of room for interpretation!

**About the Composer**

Considered “one of the best of the younger American composers” (Chicago Tribune), award-winning composer and conductor **Jake Runestad** has received commissions and performances from leading ensembles and organizations including Voces8, Washington National Opera, the Philippine Madrigal Singers, the Netherlands Radio Choir, the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, Seraphic Fire, the Dallas Symphony Chorus and Orchestra, the Pacific Chorale, and the Santa Fe Desert Chorale. “The Hope of Loving,” the first album dedicated to Runestad’s choral music, recorded by Craig Hella Johnson and Conspirare, received a 2020 GRAMMY® Award nomination. In 2019, Jake became one of the youngest composers ever awarded the prestigious Raymond C. Brock commission by the American Choral Directors Association.

Dubbed a “choral rockstar” by American Public Media, Jake is one of the most frequently performed composers in the world and has traveled to work with ensembles on all but one continent. Jake Runestad holds a Master’s degree in composition from the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University where he studied with Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Kevin Puts.

Learn more at: [JakeRunestad.com](http://JakeRunestad.com)

Commissioned by the Iowa Choral Directors Association  
for the 75th Anniversary All-State Music Festival Chorus

# FIREFLIES

Rabindranath Tagore  
(1861-1941)

Jake Runestad  
(b. 1986)

## I. LIVING LIGHT

Softly Floating ♩=66  
*p* smoothly, connected

Soprano  
Fire - flies, - fire - flies, - fire - flies, - fire - flies, -


Alto  
Fire - flies, - fire - flies, - fire - flies, - fire - flies,

Tenor  
*mp* legato  
My

Bass  
*mp* legato  
My

Piano  
(for reh.)  
Softly Floating ♩=66

The musical score is written for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Piano. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo is marked 'Softly Floating' with a metronome marking of ♩=66. The Soprano and Alto parts feature a melody of eighth notes with triplet markings. The Tenor and Bass parts have rests for most of the piece, with the lyrics 'My' appearing at the end. The Piano part consists of a simple accompaniment of eighth notes with triplet markings. Performance instructions include 'p smoothly, connected' for the vocal parts and 'mp legato' for the Tenor and Bass parts.

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5

S  
fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies,

A  
— fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies,

T  
8  
fan - cies are fire - flies—

B  
fan - cies are fire - flies—

Pno.

9

S  
fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies,

A  
— fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies,

T  
8  
— fleck's of liv - ing light—

B  
— fleck's of liv - ing light—

Pno.

9

13

S fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies,

A — fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies,

T twin-ling in the dark.

B twin-ling in the dark.

Pno.

13

17

S fire - flies, fire - flies,

A — fire - flies, fire - flie

T oo.

B oo.

Pno.

17

This section has been left blank  
in hopes you will purchase this score.

Thank you for supporting living artists!

21

S  
fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies,

A  
— fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies,

T  
oo

B  
oo

Pno.

21

*molto rit.*

25

S  
fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies.

A  
— fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies, fire - flies.

T

B

Pno.

25

*molto rit.*

## II. THE DAY WILL BREAK

Freely with Rubato ♩=54

S *mp*  
Let me not grope in vain in the dark but

A *mp*  
Let me not grope in vain in the dark but

T *mp*  
Let me not grope in vain in the dark but

B *mp*  
Let me not grope in vain in the dark but

Freely with Rubato ♩=54

S *mp*  
keep my mind still in the faith that the day will break and

A *mp*  
keep my mind still in the faith that the day will break and

T *mp*  
keep my mind still in the faith that the day will break and

B *mp*  
keep my mind still in the faith that the day will break and

Pno.

rit. . . . . a tempo

S  
truth will ap - pear in its sim - plic - i - ty.

A  
truth will ap - pear in its sim - plic - i - ty.

T  
truth will ap - pear

B  
truth will ap - pear

Pno.

37

S  
sim - plic - i - ty.

A  
sim - plic - i - ty.

T  
sim - plic - i - ty.

B  
sim - plic - i - ty.

Pno.

43



### III. THE WORM

Quirky, with Drama & Humor ♩=72

Over-enunciate.  
Exaggerate nasal "r" sounds.

SA 47 *mp* *mf* *f* *mf*  
The worm thinks it strange and fool - ish that

TB 47 *mp* *mf* *f* *mf*  
The worm thinks it strange and fool - ish that

SA 50 *f* *mf* *mp*  
we do not eat our books.

TB 50 *f* *mf* *mp*  
we do not eat our books.

# IV. LOVE IS AN ENDLESS MYSTERY

Freely with Rubato ♩=42

accel. . . . ♩=54

*p smoothly*  
Stretch! Not 16ths!

S  
Let my love, like sun-light, let my

*p smoothly*  
Stretch! Not 16ths!

A  
Let my love, like sun-light, let my

*p smoothly*  
Stretch! Not 16ths!

T  
Let my love, like sun-light, let my

*p smoothly*  
Stretch! Not 16ths!

B  
Let my love, like sun-light, let my

Freely with Rubato ♩=42

accel. . . . ♩=54

Pno.

53

58

S  
love, like sun - light, sur - round you and yet give you il -

A  
love, like sun - light, sur - round you and yet give you il -

T  
love, like sun - light, sur - round you and yet give you il -

B  
love, like sun - light, sur - round you and yet give you il -

Pno.

58

rit. . . . .

61

S  
lu - mi - nat - ed free - dom, for love, is an end - less

A  
lu - mi - nat - ed free - dom, for love is an end - less

T  
lu - mi - nat - ed free - dom, for love,

B  
lu - mi - nat - ed free - dom, for love,

Pno.

61

Slower, Stretch a tempo molto rit. . . . . Grand ♩=52

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

64

*f* rit. . . . . a tempo

S stretch! love stretch! stretch! 3

A stretch! 3 stretch! 3 stretch! 3

T for love,

B for love,

Pno. 3

64

67

Freely *p* unis. *mp*

S a mys-ter-y. ah

A a mys-ter-y. ah

T a mys-ter-y. ah

B a mys-ter-y. ah

Pno. Freely

67

70

S

A

T

B

Pno.

ah

oo

rit.

*p*

*p*

*p*

*pp*

*p*

*pp*

70

V. FIREFLIES

Softly Floating ♩=66

76

S

A

T

B

Pno.

*p smoothly*

*p smoothly*

*mp softly*

*mp softly*

The

The

Softly Floating ♩=66

76

80

S

A

T

B

Pno.

fire - flies, twin - kling a - mong the

fire - flies, twin - kling a - mong the

84

S

A

T

B

Pno.

leaves, make the

leaves, make the

88

S

A

T

B

Pno.

stars

won - der.

ethereal

ethereal

stars

won - der.

molto rit. . . . .

94

S

A

T

B

Pno.

molto rit. . . . .