

A Note About This Hymn and Arrangement

The words and music for "What Wondrous Love Is This" were first printed together in William (Singing Billy) Walker's 1840 edition of *Southern Harmony*. Other southern-style hymn collections soon began to include it, but not until the 1960s did "Wondrous Love" come into broad usage in main denominational hymnals.

There have been various hymnal settings of this dorian melody. *Dorian* means that its notes are based on a musical scale beginning on the solfeg syllable *re*, and if played on a keyboard would include the white keys from *D* to *D*. Like major and minor, a dorian scale can begin on any of the twelve letter names, but its unique character is determined by the half step which occurs between the sixth and seventh scale degrees—in solfeg that is *la* to *ti*. I believe the dorian scale gives this melody its haunting mood, fitting for the mystical quality of the text.

In this arrangement, we begin by singing from shape notes the first two phrases of William Walker's three-part setting (plus an alto part I added). Many southern-style singings begin hymns with a verse of shape notes to this very day. I suggest that they be sung *with robust 19th century vigor*. Check out a recording of a singing, and my meaning will be clear.

—David Seitz
Mishawaka, Indiana
October, 2020

What Wondrous Love Is This

for SATB voices divisi unaccompanied

American Folk Hymn

Tune: WONDROUS LOVE

arr. David A. Seitz

In a slow two $\text{♩} = 56$ with robust 19th century American vigor

SOPRANO
ALTO

re la la la sol la sol sol fa re fa mi la

re fa fa mi mi re mi do la la la do re

TENOR
BASS

re re do mi sol la sol mi re re do mi la

re la la la do re do do re re do la re

8 Slowly, freely $\text{♩} = 84$

smoothly, with wonder

5 la sol la do re do do la

fa mi fa sol fa sol mi re

do ti la sol la sol mi re

fa mi do do re do la re

What won-drous love is

13 In two, a bit slower $\text{♩} = 52$

smoothly, espressively

10 My soul, what love is this!

Won -

Won -

this! What won-drous love is

15 - drous, won - drous love is this; what
 - drous love, oh my soul! What won-drous love is
 this, oh my soul, oh my soul! What won-drous love is

19 love is this, oh my soul? *mp* 22
 this, oh my soul, oh my soul! What won-drous love is
 this, oh my soul, oh my soul! What

23 *mf* *mp*
 this that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dread - ful
 won - drous love caused the (the) Lord to

27 30
 curse for my soul, for my soul, to bear the dread - ful
 bear the curse for my soul, to bear the dread - ful

31 *f* *rit.* *p* *mf* **34**
a tempo

curse for my soul! When I was sink - ing

curse for my soul!

35

down, oh my soul, oh my soul, when I was sink - ing

39 down, oh my soul, *p* **42**
rit. *a tempo*

down, oh my soul, my soul, when I was sink - ing
 down, down, down, oh my soul,

down, down, oh my soul,

43 *mf*

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

50

47 *p* What won-drous love is

crown for my soul, for my soul. What won - drous

crown for my soul, for my soul. What won - drous_

rit.

51 *mf* this, To God and to the *f* A bit faster $\text{♩} = 56$

love, oh my soul! To the Lamb I will sing, I will

love, oh my soul! To the Lamb I will sing, I will

accel.

55

sing; to God and to the Lamb I will sing!

sing;

59 **60** *ff*

To God and to the Lamb who is the great I

ff

63 *f*

Am, while mil-lions join the theme_ I will sing,_ I will

67 *moltorit.* **68** *mf* *mp*

while mil-lions join the theme I will sing!
sing; while mil-lions join the theme, I will sing!
I will

71 *p* *rit.*

What won-drous love is this! My soul, what love_ is
sing! My soul, what love_ is

75 *mf* *pp* **76** *rit.* *pp*

this! What won-drous love is this,_ oh my soul!
this!

duration: 3'35"
arr. 2020