

Lead, Kindly Light

Instrumentation

Flutes 1, 2
Oboe
English Horn
Clarinets in B^b 1, 2
Bassoons 1, 2
Horns in F 1-4
Timpani
Percussion
(Glockenspiel, Chimes, Triangle, Suspended Cymbal,
Tamtam, Low Tom Toms, Bass Drum)
Harp
SATB Choir
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello
Contrabass

Notes

As a young priest, John Newman, the author of “Lead, Kindly Light” became deathly ill while in Italy and could not travel for almost three weeks. In his own words:

Before starting from my inn, I sat down on my bed and began to sob bitterly. My servant, who had acted as my nurse, asked what ailed me. I could only answer, “I have a work to do in England.” I was aching to get home, yet for want of a vessel, I was kept at Palermo for three weeks. I began to visit the churches, and they calmed my impatience, though I did not attend any services. At last, I got off in an orange boat, bound for Marseilles. We were becalmed for a whole week in the Straits of Bonifacio, and it was there that I wrote the lines, “Lead, Kindly Light,” which have since become so well known.

Lead, Kindly Light, amidst th'encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
Lead Thou me on!
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will. Remember not past years!

So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on.
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone,
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile!