

THE BUSY BEE, Raybon
SBMP 1796

SA or TB
piano



The Busy Bee

words by

Isaac Watts

music by

C. Leonard Raybon



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About the composer

C. Leonard Raybon [b. 1970] is Associate Professor of Music and Director of Choirs at Tulane University. He is also the founder of Sacred Nine Project (sacrednine.com), where he engages with music, texts, and events from an earlier America to help shape a future one. For example, Raybon curated and composed a concert for UNC Chapel Hill, called *Sacred Nine Project: The Mending Sampler*, a kind of companion to John Wood Sweet's book, *The Sewing Girl's Tale*, about Lanah Sawyer, the first woman in the United States to sue for sexual assault (1793). He also created concert for The American Civil War Museum in Richmond, VA, about the infamous Libby Prison. In November 2023, Raybon's article, "Oh Don't You Want to Go," about the issue of whites singing African American Spirituals, was published in *Journal of Singing*. Raybon also hosts Sacred Nine Project Podcast.



About the poet

Isaac Watts was a prolific British poet and writer, best known for hymns like "Joy to the World" and "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." He also wrote moral poetry, like *Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children* (1715), also called *Divine and Moral Songs*, widely circulated in England as well as the United States from its genesis throughout the entire 19th century. Since no child in England or America could have escaped *Divine and Moral Songs* at home or at school, Raybon originally set this poem for *Sacred Nine Project: The Mending Sampler*, to muse about the education of the survivor, Lanah Sawyer, mentioned above. "Against Idleness and Mischief" is one of the lighter texts in the volume, though it clearly points to a shame-based, "Idle hands are the Devil's workshop" mentality. This piece can serve as a playful way to begin a conversation about the kinds of Puritanical strongholds that were established early in our country that can still be observed. Incidentally, the year of this publication marks Watts' 350th birth year.

The Busy Bee

(original title: "Against Idleness and Mischief")
Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

From *Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children* (1715)

How doth the little busy Bee
Improve each shining Hour,
And gather Honey all the day
From every opening Flow'r!

How skillfully she builds her Cell!
How neat she spreads the Wax!
And labours hard to store it well
With the sweet Food she makes.

In Works of Labour or of Skill
I would be busy too:
For Satan finds some Mischief still
For idle Hands to do.

In Books, or Work, or healthful Play
Let my first Years be past,
That I may give for every Day
Some good Account at last.

(from the 2nd edition, where all nouns were capitalized)

Ranges

The image shows a musical staff with two systems. The first system has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B-flat4 (quarter), and G4 (quarter). The second system has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The notes are: G3 (quarter), F3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), and D3 (quarter). Below the notes are the labels S, A, T, B, indicating the vocal ranges for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass.



recording and rehearsal tracks available at sbmp.com

The Busy Bee

Isaac Watts
from *Divine and Moral Songs for Children*, 1715

C. Leonard Raybon

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system shows the piano introduction with a tempo marking of quarter note = 82. The piano part consists of a treble and bass clef staff. The right hand plays a series of ascending and descending eighth-note patterns, each marked with a '7' for a seven-finger fingering. The left hand plays a simple bass line with quarter notes. The second system begins at measure 4 and includes the vocal line for Sopranos or Tenors. The lyrics are: "How doth the lit - tle bus - y bee". The piano accompaniment continues with similar eighth-note patterns. The third system begins at measure 7 with the lyrics: "im - prove each shin - ing hour,". The piano accompaniment continues. The fourth system begins at measure 10 with the lyrics: "And gath - er hon - ey all the day". The piano accompaniment continues. A large, diagonal watermark reading "PREVIEW" is overlaid across the center of the page.

13

From ev' - ry op' - ning flow'r!

The musical score for measures 13-15 features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a whole note rest, followed by the lyrics "From ev' - ry op' - ning flow'r!". The piano accompaniment consists of a right hand with a continuous eighth-note arpeggiated pattern and a left hand with a steady bass line. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 4/4.

16 Sopranos or Tenors

Altos or Basses

How skil - ful - ly she builds her cell!

The musical score for measures 16-18 includes vocal parts for Sopranos or Tenors and Altos or Basses, along with piano accompaniment. The vocal lines start with whole note rests. The piano accompaniment continues with the eighth-note arpeggiated pattern in the right hand and the bass line in the left hand. A large "PREVIEW" watermark is overlaid diagonally across the page.

19

How neat she spreads the wax!

The musical score for measures 19-21 features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a whole note rest, followed by the lyrics "How neat she spreads the wax!". The piano accompaniment continues with the eighth-note arpeggiated pattern in the right hand and the bass line in the left hand.

22 **rit.** **a tempo**

And la-bours hard to store it well. With

And la-bours hard to store it well. With

26 **rit.** **a tempo**

the sweet food she makes.

the sweet food she makes.

29 **f**

bzzz In works of la - bour

bzzz

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32

or of skill _____ I would be bus - y

l.h.

35

too: _____

For Sa - tan finds some

38

mis - chief still _____ For i - dle hands to

41

do. In books, or work, or

44

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PREVIEW

47

rit.

past, That I may give for

50 *rit.* *p* **a tempo**

ev'-ry day bzzz, bzzz, bzzz, bzzz, bzzz, bzzz, bzzz,

ev'-ry day bzzz, bzzz, bzzz, bzzz, bzzz, bzzz, bzzz,

f

53 *f*

Some good ac - count at last.

Some good ac - count at

f

56 *rit.*

bzzz, bzzz.

last. bzzz, bzzz.

r.h.

