

# *How Fragile She Is (2004)*

Frank A. Wallace

a song cycle for soprano, baritone and guitar

The Circle	Nancy Knowles
Song	Knowles
New Moon	Frank Wallace
Morning Wind	Knowles
Half Moon	Wallace
Full Moon	Wallace
Silent Secret	Knowles
From the Air	Wallace
Full Sun	Wallace
You're on Earth Kid	Knowles

**How Fragile She Is** is ten songs composed on an alternating poems by Nancy Knowles and myself, perhaps our most important creative collaboration to date. The theme is the fragility of our precious and only Earth, with the moon being a symbol of its feminine side. The title song was written in the car coming home from a concert when I saw a new moon on the horizon, so thin:

*Silver threads  
hold the moon,  
Silly little arachnyll ligaments,  
in space,  
Where no one knows  
how fragile she is.*

*How long will she shine?  
Who will catch her  
when she falls?  
Will the web-weavers  
wander on?  
Do you have eight legs?*

The cycle is dedicated to Jane Goodall and her untiring work to protect all life on earth. The [Jane Goodall Institute](http://www.jane-goodall.org) "is a global nonprofit that empowers people to make a difference for all living things. We are creating healthy ecosystems, promoting sustainable livelihoods and nurturing new generations of committed, active citizens around the world."

Frank Wallace

### **I. The Circle**

The circle's the secret  
He told me so  
Everywhere you go  
Sow it so  
Watch it grow  
Mow it slow.

NBK

### **II. Tall Grass**

Each make us all  
this garden  
a paradise  
all to play in.

All around the flowers  
accept the sun  
leaning, sighing.

Wait and you shall find me  
there in the tall grass  
rustling walls circle the sky

Wait, wait and you shall.

NBK

### **III. New Moon**

Silver threads  
hold the moon,  
Silly little arachnyll ligaments,  
in space,  
Where no one knows  
how fragile she is.

How long will she shine?  
Who will catch her  
when she falls?  
Will the web-weavers  
wander on?  
Do you have eight legs?

9/10/02-FW

### **IV. Morning Wind**

The soft morning wind  
teases me to follow  
all day to remember  
its sweet touch  
trusting that it happened  
that it will again too  
when today is now tomorrow.

NBK

[www.gyremusic.com](http://www.gyremusic.com)

## **V. Half Moon**

Creek is dammed;  
Dammed creek in the  
Dim moonlight falls  
Over twig and mud.

Sounds spill, slowly,  
Slender twigs slice,  
Splashes split night  
Softly pleasing.

Planets turn;  
Planet turns;  
Trees trap wind,  
Tree moans in the moon

Light falls over all  
For now, for creek  
And mud, for wind  
And wood, for all.

Is creek damned?  
Are we all?  
Will tails splash  
Over twig and mud

As nights fall  
Softly pleasing  
Now softly  
Softly now pleading?

While planets watch  
Plundered Planet pleads  
For creek and twig  
Falling, failing,  
Now softly,  
Softly flailing.

11/23/02-FW

## **VI. Full Moon**

Sandpit lies  
in the  
full moon light,  
dark like night;

Echoes of peepers  
peeping past  
sleeping lover's  
open windows;

Pine shadows  
slant over snow,  
white battles  
the dark light

While stars  
fly by  
full of  
those we know

And stones  
whisper tales of  
long-forgotten roads  
through stands of woods.

These stars of night,  
with tales of  
those we know not,  
pierce our souls;

Arrows of light  
from afar  
come to ponder  
dark shadows  
of pit and stone.

Sandpit lies open  
to lover's arms,  
abrasion of earth  
torn limb from root;

Dark patch of soul  
alone in the night  
snow and moon  
bring back your light.

12/17/02 – FW

## **VII. Silent Secret**

Hidden seeds fly  
wandering  
with wings of earth  
moved by breath,  
bird-feather

Hidden seeds swim  
yearning  
through dark pools  
eyes yet found  
by sun's rays

Hidden seeds remember  
honoring  
silent secret promise  
a song once sung  
long, long ago.

NBK

**VIII. From the Air, a prayer**

Oh how fragile  
Oh how smooth  
thin skin lying  
over surface  
of sea.

Surrounded, embracing  
lapping on shores  
wet with love.

Anxious banquet  
feast of fantasies  
surrounded by  
honeyed cones  
glowing.

Flowering fruits  
preponderous  
preposterous.

Oh St. Francis  
assist this frantic  
race of time  
and greed.

Oh San Francisco  
teach us our  
freedom of future.  
Frame our fears  
in scenes  
fragrant with joy.

02/03 FW

**IX. Full Sun**

Full sun  
in a cold midnight  
Haunts heaven here  
on hallowed earth;  
Should we fail.

Cold gray snow  
befouls and confounds  
Camel and cobra  
crown and cradle;  
Should we fail.

Mississippi and Nile  
mighty Yangtze  
And arid Amazon  
flood or flail;  
Should we fail.

Sham and Scheister  
shuffle and shout  
To hide sin of  
slavemaster's boat.

Should we?  
Must we?  
Have we?

Lest we?  
Shall we?  
Can we?

12/10/02 FW

**X. You're on earth**

You're on earth, kid  
Only way to go  
is further into it  
It's the way out now  
Sink with snow water  
through cauliflowering earth  
Sucked into moving  
roots, race upward  
whoosh to become air  
in Spring's riotous  
dance of delight.

NBK

**XI. Dark Energy**

We have only  
one Mother  
Oh how we  
loved Her,  
romping on Her soft flesh.

She joins us, dancing  
circles, circles,  
ever  
returning.

One day  
wandering  
we'll stumble  
tumbling upward  
and out  
expanding  
ever

And  
hug  
hug  
the nothing  
the all

So, so  
small.

NBK

## A Final Note

The piece revolves around a pentachord, the perfect fifth, symbol of perfection. Yet this five-note scale cannot decide whether it is minor or major, phrygian or locrian. Final chords cannot stay at rest – there is always a note, an ominous note, of fraction, of chaos. A reminder that things are not right even when they seem so – as we look out on grand expanses of wild that still seem so pristine to our naked eye.

It is my hope that we will wake to our ignore-ance of the dire situation at hand. We can no longer afford war, or double-digit growth. Our fires of industry fuel our demise. They have already sealed the fate of thousands of species that have met untimely deaths from the spewing pollution of our comfort.

The situation is dire. But we are in charge. That is our fate. We are now the masters of the world. She lies at our feet begging for mercy. Our Mother is begging us for love, knowing that if we fail in love, those engines of greed too will consume us.

FW