

Soldier's Prayer – Program Notes

The text of the Stabat Mater - of Mary standing near the cross watching her son die - has always touched me deeply. While contemplating this text I came across the Joyce Kilmer poem as the writer served as a soldier in World War I. He wrote this shortly before he was killed in action. Because the two settings take place at the cross, as well as of a soldier in a field, I chose to interweave the texts. The Stabat Mater, sung in Latin, is a sighing gesture; as if one is trying not to cry, which is first introduced by the pipe organ. The other image is that of a soldier in battle miserable from the cold, the terror, the suffering, trying to be brave, juxtaposed against Jesus Christ's suffering on the cross. The soldier realizes his bravery could never compare to the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus made.

--*Anne Kilstofte*

Musical Forces Required

This piece is for SATB choir, large or small, with organ accompaniment. The solo can be performed by a number of singers in unison if a soloist is not available; the solo can also be performed by a baritone, a tenor, or a soprano one octave higher. The importance is that the piece is flexible for usage for any choir to meet their individual needs and to engage the congregation or audience listening to this solemn prayer.

Latin text translation:

Stabat Mater dolorosa

(There stood the mother grieving.)

Juxta crucem lacrymosa,

(Beside the cross weeping,)

Dum pendebat Filius,

(While on it hung her Son.)

Cujus animam gementem,

(Whose saddened soul,)

Contristatam et dolentem,

(Sighing and suffering)

Pertransivit gladius.

(A sword pierced through.)

Latin Pronunciation Guide:

Stá - bat	Má - ter	do - lo - ró - sa
Stah baht	mah teh	do - lo - *(d)o - sah (doff, cough) *or (hd)o
Jux - ta	crú - cem	la - cry - mó - sa
Yooks ta	k(doo) chem	lah k(d)ee moh - sah
Dum	pen - dé - bat	Fí - li - us
Doom	pehn deh baht	fih**- lih oos or *fee - lee- oos
Cú - jus	á - ni - mam	ge - mén - tem
Koo yoos	ah nih mahm	jeh mehn tehm
Con - tri - stá - tam	et	do - lén - tem
Kon t(d)ee stah tahm	eht	doh lehn tehm
Per - tran - sí - vit	glá - di - us	
Peh(d) t(dahn) *sih viht	glah dih oos	

My preferences: Don't use a pure *ee sound unless in tenors or basses, use an ih for sopranos and altos to utilize vowel formants (the vowel needs to be modified as one moves higher in range).

I suggest using the *(d) or *(hd) for 'r' sounds. It gives the singer a harder consonant, which offers a better beginning or ending of that syllable.

The 'O' sound can be open or closed, depending on preference. Here it gives an 'oh,' almost an ah sound to open up the mouth and avoid closing the mouth too much, resulting in less sound.

It is important that you as the conductor use your own interpretation. I rely heavily on your musicianship and interpretation to bring this piece to life. You know your choir better than I do.

A. Kilstofte