Sonnet 29

Matthew Carlson '13, Gettysburg College
Sonnet 29

Authors
Matthew Carlson ’13, Gettysburg College

Keywords
music, choir, a capella, Shakespeare, sonnet, SATB

Abstract
"Sonnet 29" is an a capella choral piece written for the Gettysburg College Choir in the Spring of 2012. Dr. Robert Natter, director of the College choir, asked me if I would like to write a piece with text of Shakespeare, as he was planning to program a concert that consisted entirely of Shakespearean text. I chose this particular sonnet because it has a great metaphor of transformation which lends itself well to being set to music. In the first half of the piece, the speaker is in utter despair, and I bring this out with clustered harmonies, quiet dynamics, and a somber atmosphere. Then, about halfway through the piece, the speaker has a change of heart after thinking of someone that he loves. His utter despair turns to utter joy, which is reflected by a change in texture, harmonic language, and volume. Upon first read of the text, one might assume that the speaker is an entirely different person than he was at the onset of the poem in that his despair has completely vanished. With the ending of my piece, I question if human emotion really works that way. To underscore this dichotomy, I combine the close harmonies of the first half of the piece with the new harmonic language of the second half to create an ending that is not entirely resolved.

Comments
Ensemble: Gettysburg College Choir
Performance Date: March 24, 2012
Conductor: Robert Natter
Location: Christ Chapel at Gettysburg College

This composition is available at The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College: http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/student_scholarship/5
Sonnet 29
For The Gettysburg College Choir

William Shakespeare

Freely, Guided by the text

\( q=42 \)

SOPRANO

When, in dis-grace with for-tune and men's eyes, I a lone be weep

ALTO

When, in dis-grace with for-tune and men's eyes, I, a lone be weep

TENOR

When, in dis-grace with for-tune and men's eyes, I a lone be weep

BASS

When, in dis-grace with for-tune and men's eyes, I a lone be weep

my out-cast state and trou-ble deaf hea-ven with my boot-less cries

S. | A. | T. | B.
---|---|---|---
4  | pp | p | 3
  | pp | p | 3
  | p  | 3
  | p  | 3
  | p  | 3
  | p  | 3

poco rit.
look upon myself and curse my fate, wishing me like to one more rich in

hope, featured like him, like him with friends poss’d,-

siring this man’s art and that man’s scope,
Yet, Yet, Yet in these thoughts my self-al-

Hap-ly I think on thee, and then my

most de spi-sing, Hap-ly I think on thee, and then my

state, like to the lark at break of day a ri-sing from sull-en earth,

*Gradually open to ah vowel
S. A. T.
sings hymns at heaven's gate;
earth sings hymns at heaven's gate;
earth sings hymns at heaven's gate;
earth sings hymns at heaven's gate;

For thy sweet love re-mem-bered such wealth brings that then I scorn to change my state with kings.

Much slower

mm-oo - oh - ah - - - - brings then I scorn to change my state with kings.