

# Annette Olyslagers

## Ipswich Girls' Grammar School

### *Lesmurdie Falls*

#### Statement of Compositional Intent

*Lesmurdie Falls* is a contemporary Avant-Garde choral piece that features an SATB choir. The piece utilises several innovative features of the Avant-Garde period, as well as musical elements and compositional devices, to effectively portray the waterfall imagery. Text is based off a poem written (Fig. 1) and is represented musically using word painting, as a compositional device, and non-conventional notations, a reflection of the Avant Guard genre. Thus, by discerningly employing innovations, musical elements and compositional devices, the piece establishes the imagery of Lesmurdie Falls.

Duration is interpretive, with no time signatures or bar lines to indicate pulse, however, the *moderato* tempo suggests speed for performers. Due to lack of bar lines to indicate emphasis, accents are appropriately employed to enhance word painting ('crash,' 'rage,' 'run') and to evoke tension through suspensions ('rivers,' 'stilled and settled') that are resolved.

Expressive devices were chosen for contrast and word painting, specifically through dynamics.

Accented 'rage' sung *sforzando* contrasts with the *piano* 'whisper,' directed to use breathy vocal timbres. The crescendo from *mezzopiano* to *forte/fortissimo* on the 'water water everywhere' line builds tension through the ascending, accented and harmonically contrasting phrase, juxtaposed by the *mezzopiano*, homophonic, descending 'water calms down, flowing river' phrase that follows. The use of dynamics builds tension and communicates the waterfall imagery by contrasting different 'moods' of water and word painting.

Composing for an SATB choir allows for extended range and different timbres. While bass and tenor voices are low register with warm timbres, the alto and soprano voices are high register with bright timbres. The use of lower register voices in contrary motion ('down'/'without a sound, without a sound') creates a sonorous atmosphere through dissonance within the same register. Dissonant chords are employed throughout the piece for harmonic richness, and specifically in the final chord, the use of the major second A-B relationship reinforces the unclear tonality.

Unconventional notation is evident throughout the score as an innovative and stylistic feature. Direction for fluid vowel connections ('ee-ow-ah-oo') allows for a flowing atmosphere in the ad. lib repeated section. Following this, the non-conventional notation on the word 'twirl' employs word painting as performers are indicated to siren up and down to the arrival note, representing the 'twirling' imagery.

Therefore, by effectively realising innovations in the *Lesmuride Falls* composition and discerningly manipulating musical elements and compositional devices, the imagery of the waterfall is portrayed.

Figure 1: *Lesmurdie Falls* Poem

Water falls

Crash down

Without a sound

Rivers rage

And whisper, whisper

And they run

Fountains twirl

Water, water everywhere

Water calms down

Flowing river

Still and settled

Flowing on

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