

Sure On This Shining Night Lauridsen

Sure on This Shining Night Lauridsen is a phrase that resonates deeply within the realm of choral music, evoking a sense of serenity, hope, and poetic beauty. This article explores the profound significance of "Sure on This Shining Night" by Morten Lauridsen, its musical composition, thematic elements, historical context, and its enduring impact on audiences and performers alike. Whether you're a seasoned musician, a choir director, or simply a lover of beautiful music, understanding Lauridsen's work can enrich your appreciation of this timeless piece.

Introduction to "Sure on This Shining Night"

Background and Composition

"Sure on This Shining Night" is a renowned choral piece composed by Morten Lauridsen in 1985. Inspired by James Agee's poetic text from "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men," Lauridsen crafted a work that captures the luminous beauty of a quiet, starlit evening. The composition is part of Lauridsen's collection "Nocturnes," which explores the themes of night, nature, and human emotion through lush harmonies and evocative melodies.

Text and Literary Significance

The lyrics, drawn from Agee's poem, evoke images of peace, longing, and transcendence:

1. "Sure on this shining night of star made shadows round,"
2. "Kindness must watch for me this side the ground,"
3. "The late year lies down the north,"
4. "All is healed."

This poetic language anchors the piece in a reflective, almost spiritual space, resonating with listeners on an emotional level.

Musical Characteristics of Lauridsen's "Sure on This Shining Night"

Harmonic Language and Texture

Lauridsen's composition is celebrated for its lush, Romantic harmonies and rich textures. The piece employs:

1. Extended chords and subtle modulations that create a luminous, shimmering effect.
2. Layered vocal lines that intertwine seamlessly, adding depth and warmth.

3. A gentle, flowing piano accompaniment that complements the choir without overpowering it.

These elements combine to evoke the night's serenity and the sense of transcendence conveyed in the text.

Vocal Writing and Range

The vocal lines are crafted to showcase the choir's blend and expressive capabilities:

1. Particularly suitable for SATB (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) ensembles.
2. Melodies that are lyrical, flowing, and accessible yet require nuanced interpretation.
3. Dynamic markings that emphasize the piece's tender, reflective mood.

Performers often describe the piece as both technically gratifying and emotionally moving.

Thematic and Emotional Significance

Themes of Night, Peace, and Transcendence

"Sure on This Shining Night" encapsulates themes of:

1. Night as a metaphor for introspection and spiritual awakening.
2. Peace and acceptance amid life's uncertainties.
3. The beauty found in fleeting moments of grace and kindness.

Lauridsen's music invites listeners to contemplate the quiet majesty of night and the hope it can inspire.

Emotional Impact on Audiences

Audiences often report feeling:

1. A sense of calm and introspection.
2. Profound connection to the poetic imagery.
3. A feeling of upliftment and hope, even in challenging times.

Performers, too, find the piece to be a moving experience, often describing it as a highlight in their repertoire.

Historical Context and Reception

Commission and Premiere

"Sure on This Shining Night" was commissioned by the Los Angeles Master Chorale and premiered in 1985. Since then, it has become a staple in choral repertoires worldwide.

Critical and Popular Reception

The piece has been widely praised for:

1. Its lyrical beauty and emotional depth.
2. Lauridsen's masterful use of harmony and voice leading.
3. Its versatility across various performance settings, from concert halls to community choirs.

Many critics regard it as one of Lauridsen's most significant works and a modern choral classic.

Performance Tips and Interpretation

Approach to Dynamics and Expression

Performers should focus on:

1. Creating a seamless blend of voices to achieve the luminous quality.
2. Using dynamics subtly to enhance the emotional narrative.
3. Emphasizing the natural flow of the melody to evoke the poem's serenity.

Conducting and Rehearsal Strategies

Effective rehearsal techniques include:

1. Focusing on tuning and balance to achieve the rich harmonic textures.
2. Encouraging singers to connect emotionally with the text.
3. Practicing with a focus on phrasing, breathing, and sustained tone.

A thoughtful approach can elevate a performance, allowing the music's luminous qualities to shine through.

Why "Sure on This Shining Night" Remains a Choral Favorite

Enduring Relevance and Beauty

Lauridsen's "Sure on This Shining Night" continues to enchant audiences because:

1. It captures universal themes of hope and peace.
2. Its musical language is both lush and accessible.
3. It offers performers a chance to explore expressive singing within a manageable technical framework.

Its Role in Modern Choral Repertoire

The piece is frequently performed in:

1. Concerts celebrating poetic or spiritual themes.

2. Competitions and festivals emphasizing contemporary choral music.
3. Educational settings where it serves as an example of modern Romantic choral style. Lauridsen's work bridges classical tradition and contemporary sentiment, making it a vital part of the choral landscape.

Conclusion

"Sure on This Shining Night" by Morten Lauridsen stands as a testament to the power of music to evoke emotion, inspire reflection, and connect us to universal themes of hope, peace, and transcendence. Its lush harmonies and poetic text continue to resonate with audiences around the world, securing its place as a modern choral masterpiece. Whether performed in a grand concert hall or a small community setting, Lauridsen's luminous composition invites all to experience the profound beauty of a shining night—a night that reminds us of the enduring light within and around us.

Sure on This Shining Night Lauridsen: An In-Depth Exploration of a Choral Masterpiece

Introduction: The Enduring Power of "Sure on This Shining Night"

In the landscape of contemporary choral music, "Sure on This Shining Night" by Morten Lauridsen stands as a luminous jewel—an evocative composition that transcends time and genre to touch listeners' deepest emotions. Since its premiere in 1985, this piece has become a cornerstone of choral repertoire worldwide, celebrated for its poetic lyricism, lush harmonies, and profound emotional resonance. This review aims to dissect the various facets that make Lauridsen's work a perennial favorite, from its poetic origins to its musical architecture, and its impact on performers and audiences alike.

Background and Composition History

The Poet and the Text

Lauridsen's "Sure on This Shining Night" is set to a poem by James Agee, an American novelist, film critic, and poet. Agee's lyrical words, originally part of his 1935 collection *Permit Me Voyage*, evoke a contemplative serenity and a profound sense of fleeting beauty. The poem's themes of transient grace, love, and the divine are perfectly suited for Lauridsen's musical sensibilities.

Composition Context

Lauridsen composed the piece in 1985, during a period when he was exploring the expressive potential of tone clusters and lush harmonies. The composition was initially commissioned for a choral festival, but its immediate popularity led to its inclusion in numerous choral programs globally. Lauridsen himself has often spoken of the piece's spiritual qualities and its role in elevating the human spirit.

Literary and Poetic Significance

Analyzing James Agee's Poem

The text of "Sure on This Shining Night" is a meditation on the ephemeral nature of beauty and love. The poem's imagery—"Sure on this shining night"—sets a tone of quiet wonder. Key themes include:

1. Transience of Beauty: The acknowledgment that all beautiful moments are fleeting.
2. Spiritual Connection: The sense that beauty and love are divine gifts.
3. Contemplative Serenity: An acceptance of life's transient nature with grace.

Poetic Language and Mood

Agee's words evoke a gentle, almost sacred atmosphere, inviting the listener into a contemplative state. The phrase "all is healed, all is health" suggests a transcendent peace, which Lauridsen amplifies through his musical setting.

Musical Analysis

Overall Structure and Form

"Sure on This Shining Night" is typically set as a through-composed piece, with subtle shifts in harmony and texture that mirror the poem's evolving imagery. Its length usually ranges between 3 to 5 minutes, depending on the interpretation.

Harmonic Language

Lauridsen's harmonic language in this piece is characterized by:

1. Lush Chord Clusters: Dense, resonant harmonies that create a warm, enveloping sound.
2. Modal Influences: Use of modes and tonal centers that evoke a timeless, sacred quality.
3. Chromaticism: Carefully placed chromatic notes that add emotional complexity without destabilizing the harmonic foundation.

Melodic Content

The vocal lines are lyrical, flowing, and often syllabic, allowing for expressive phrasing. The melody:

1. Emphasizes the poetic rhythm.
2. Incorporates gentle leaps and stepwise motion.
3. Uses wide, sustained notes that evoke serenity.

Text Setting and Phrasing

Lauridsen's approach to text setting is sensitive and deliberate:

1. Phrases are shaped to reflect natural speech patterns.
2. Dynamics and articulation underscore the emotional nuances of the poem.
3. The choir's blend and balance are essential in conveying the intimacy of the text.

Performance Considerations

Vocal Technique

Performers must focus on:

1. Blend and Balance: Achieving a unified sound where no voice dominates.
2. Expressive Phrasing: Capturing the poem's contemplative mood through dynamics and vibrato.
3. Vowel Shaping: Maintaining a warm, resonant tone to enhance the lush harmonic environment.

Conducting Approach

Conductors should emphasize:

1. Color and Dynamics: Gradual crescendos and decrescendos to mirror the poem's ebb and flow.
2. Tempo Flexibility: A flexible tempo allows for deeper emotional expression.
3. Phrasing: Clear shaping of phrases to highlight text and musical line.

Accompaniment and Ensemble

While often performed a cappella, the piece can be accompanied by piano or orchestra. In ensemble settings:

1. Balance: Ensuring the choir's blend complements the harmonic richness.
2. Resonance: Utilizing acoustics that enhance the warm, enveloping sound.

Significance in the Choral Repertoire

Artistic Impact

"Sure on This Shining Night" exemplifies how poetry and music can unite to produce a transcendent experience. It's frequently performed in:

1. Concert halls
2. Religious services
3. Choral festivals
4. Academic settings

Educational Use

The piece is often used as a teaching tool for:

1. Voice blending and balance

2. Expressive interpretation
3. Harmonic understanding

Awards and Recognitions

The composition has garnered numerous awards and has been recorded by prominent choirs, cementing its place in the canon of modern choral music.

Interpretations and Variations

Different Arrangements

Lauridsen's piece has been arranged for various ensembles, including:

1. Solo voice with piano
2. SATB choir with orchestra
3. SSA or TTBB arrangements

Each arrangement offers a unique interpretive opportunity, emphasizing different emotional facets.

Artistic Interpretations

Conductors and singers bring their own sensibilities to the piece:

1. Some emphasize the sacred, spiritual quality.
2. Others highlight the poetic lyricism.
3. Tempo choices can range from contemplative to more flowing, expressive tempos.

Cultural and Emotional Impact

Connection with Audiences

Listeners often describe feeling a sense of peace, hope, and transcendence during performances. The lyrical beauty and harmonic richness create a meditative atmosphere that resonates deeply.

Thematic Relevance

In times of turmoil or uncertainty, "Sure on This Shining Night" offers comfort through its message of fleeting beauty and divine grace.

Legacy and Continuing Relevance

Lauridsen's Influence

Lauridsen's mastery with this piece has influenced countless composers and arrangers. Its success underscores the power of choral music to communicate profound human truths.

Modern Performances

The piece remains a staple in concert programs and has been featured in numerous recordings, spanning from traditional choral groups to contemporary ensembles.

Adaptations and New Interpretations

Recent performances often explore innovative approaches:

1. Use of ambient soundscapes
2. Incorporation of multimedia elements
3. Collaborative projects blending classical and contemporary styles

Conclusion: A Timeless Reflection of Humanity’s Spirit

“Sure on This Shining Night” by Morten Lauridsen is not merely a choral composition; it is an emotional and spiritual experience that captures the transient beauty of life and the divine within. Its poetic text, lush harmonies, and expressive melodies continue to inspire performers and audiences worldwide, reaffirming the enduring power of music to elevate the human spirit. Whether performed in a grand concert hall or a small chapel, Lauridsen’s masterpiece remains a shining testament to the transcendent potential of choral art.

Questions & Answers About sure on this shining night lauridsen

N o	Question	Answer
1	What is the significance of 'Sure on This Shining Night' by Morten Lauridsen?	'Sure on This Shining Night' is a renowned choral composition by Morten Lauridsen that captures themes of hope, serenity, and the beauty of the night through lush harmonies and expressive melodies, making it a favorite in contemporary choral repertoire.
2	What are the main themes expressed in Lauridsen's 'Sure on This Shining Night'?	The piece explores themes of tranquility, wonder, and the profound beauty found in the night, emphasizing a sense of peace, reflection, and awe inspired by the natural world and human emotion.
3	Is 'Sure on This Shining Night' suitable for amateur choral groups?	Yes, 'Sure on This Shining Night' is often performed by high school, community, and amateur choirs due to its accessible yet expressive vocal demands, making it a popular choice for various levels of ensembles.
4	When was 'Sure on This Shining Night' composed and premiered?	Morten Lauridsen composed 'Sure on This Shining Night' in 2008, and it has since become one of his most celebrated works, frequently performed by choirs around the world.

5	What are some notable recordings of 'Sure on This Shining Night'?	Notable recordings include those by the Los Angeles Master Chorale conducted by Lauridsen himself, as well as performances by the Yale Glee Club and other acclaimed choral ensembles, available on various classical and choral music platforms.
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Lauridsen, Sure on this shining night, choral music, American composer, luminous choral piece, sacred music, poetic lyrics, atmospheric composition, evening music, vocal ensemble, contemporary choral works