

The Linnet

for SA Choir and Piano

Text by Robert Burns (1759-1796)

Music by Stuart P. O'Neil

about the music...

Robert Burns (1759-1796) is considered by historians as the single most important poet from Scotland. While *The Linnet* is indeed found in print, the text is actually an excerpt from a longer poem from 1787:

A Rose-bud by my early walk

A Rose-bud by my early walk,
Adown a corn-enclosed bawk,
Sae gently bent its thorny stalk,
All on a dewy morning.
Ere twice the shades o' dawn are fled,
In a' its crimson glory spread,
And drooping rich the dewy head,
It scents the early morning.

Within the bush her covert nest
A little linnet fondly prest;
The dew sat chilly on her breast,
Sae early in the morning.
She soon shall see her tender brood,
The pride, the pleasure o' the wood,
Amang the fresh green leaves bedew'd,
Awake the early morning.

So thou, dear bird, young Jeany fair,
On trembling string or vocal air,
Shall sweetly pay the tender care
That tents thy early morning.
So thou, sweet Rose-bud, young and gay,
Shalt beauteous blaze upon the day,
And bless the parent's evening ray
That watch'd thy early morning.

Burns did write in the Scots language, although much of his work – including this lovely poem – demonstrates his use of a “light Scots dialect” so as to be more accessible to larger English-speaking audiences.

Before rehearsing this piece, choir members should have a working understanding of compound meter as this will lead to them learning the individual parts more quickly and with more accuracy and independence. Once this understanding is in place, relax a bit and let the tempo become more rubato. The continued shifting between 6/8 and 9/8 should simply create a bit of an unmetred feel: someone humming a tune while lost in thought, perhaps daydreaming. The natural pulse of compound meter, along with the rolling texture of the piano accompaniment, should be enough to keep the ensemble together.

Singers should maintain a warm, relaxed tone throughout the song, and allow the dynamic shape of each phrase to gently rise and fall as the melodic line moves up and down. Unison singing tends to project more than harmony singing: m68 is the true high point of the piece, so take care that the unison passages at m27 and m58 remain mezzoforte. The “oo” sections should ideally be sung with staggered breathing, thus never breaking the continuous line. If necessary, however, the ensemble may breathe just prior to the points where the word “oo” is repeated.

The texture of the piano accompaniment is light and transparent; its repetitive nature should be gentle and somewhat hypnotic. *The Linnet* should maintain a sense of elegance and restraint throughout.

about the composer...

Stuart O'Neil has taught vocal and instrumental music for Kansas public schools since 1993. He received a Bachelor of Music Education from the University of Nebraska and a Master of Music Theory from the University of Kansas. In addition to his work as a teacher and composer, Mr. O'Neil serves as an arranger, accompanist, adjudicator, and conductor. He currently lives in Lawrence, Kansas with his family.

The Linnet

SA Chorus & Piano Accompaniment

For the Baldwin Elementary Choir
Katrina Jacobsen, Conductor

Text by Robert Burns

Music by Stuart P. O'Neil

Wistful, somewhat Hypnotic ♩. ca 60

mp * * * * *sim*

mp unis 9

With - in the bush, her co-vert* nest — A

poco dim

rit

lit - tle lin - net fond - ly prest; — The dew sat chil - ly on her breast, — Sae

rit

a tempo

18

ear - ly** in the morn - ing. —

a tempo *mp*

* pronounced *ko-vairt'*

mp

mp

mf 27

mf

mf

poco cresc *poco dim*

poco cresc *poco dim*

poco cresc *poco dim*

mf 40

She soon shall see her ten-der brood,— The

mf

mf

rit poco dim

pride, the plea-sure of the wood,— A - mang the fresh green leaves be-dewed— A -

rit poco dim

rit poco dim

a tempo 49

wake the ear - ly morn - ing.—

a tempo

mp

mp *poco cresc*

mp *poco cresc*

mf 58

mf *mp*

poco cresc *poco cresc*

poco cresc

68

f *poco dim*

f *poco dim*

f *poco dim*

poco dim *p*

poco dim *p*

poco dim *p*

79

rit *poco dim*

mang the fresh green leaves be-dewed A - wake the ear - ly morn - ing.

p *rit*