

JS 051
4 minutes, 15 seconds

The Minstrel Boy

SATB, a cappella

*Irish air,
Arranged by
Joshua Shank*

*Text by
Thomas Moore*

Note from the arranger

The story in Thomas Moore's 1813 patriotic song is perfectly suited for a piece of music: a lone minstrel boy is mortally wounded in combat in the defense of his country and refuses to let his harp be taken by the enemy. He tears the strings out of the instrument and, with his dying breath, pays tribute to it. Moore claimed to have set his text to an Irish air called "The Moreen." However, there is no previous record of that tune and multiple scholars over the last 200 years haven't been able to pin down an original source, so perhaps Moore may have simply written it himself (which may account for why the poem and music seem so well-suited for each other). In any case, the song—and its sentiments—became popular and well-known enough that, years after it was originally published, an unknown author added a third verse in reference to the American Civil War. In my arrangement, I tried to tell the story of the minstrel in a way that communicates the emotion of the poem to the singers and audience.

The Minstrel Boy was commissioned by the Hudson High School Chamber Choir under the direction of Tony Mudra. It is dedicated to my good friend, Dan Johnson, who inadvertently showed me this folksong while watching an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (inspiration comes in many guises!).

Performance notes

- This probably goes without saying but, when the harmonies are closer, shore up the vibrato where possible to let stuff shimmer a bit.
- For the sake of a cleaner score, I left off some slurs and text underlay for the passages with neutral vowels. It should be fairly intuitive as to what you'll need to do, and those passages should use stagger breathing.

The text

The Minstrel Boy

By Thomas Moore (Ireland, 1779-1852) and Anonymous

The minstrel boy to the war is gone,
In the ranks of death you'll find him;
His father's sword he hath girded on,
And his wild harp slung behind him;
"Land of Song!" cried the warrior bard,
"Tho' all the world betrays thee,
One sword, at least, thy right shall guard,
One faithful harp shall praise thee!"

The Minstrel fell! But the foeman's steel
Could not bring that proud soul under;
The harp he lov'd never spoke again,
For he tore its chords asunder;
And said, "No chains shall sully thee,
Thou soul of love and bravery!
Thy songs were made for the pure and free
They shall never sound in slavery!"

U.S. Civil War verse

The minstrel boy will return, we pray,
When we hear the news we all will cheer it.
The minstrel boy will return one day,
Torn perhaps in body, not in spirit.
Then may he play upon his harp in peace,
In a world such as Heaven has intended,
For all the bitterness of man must cease,
And every battle must be ended.

Commissioned by the Hudson High School Chamber Choir
Tony Mudra, Conductor

The Minstrel Boy

for Dan Johnson

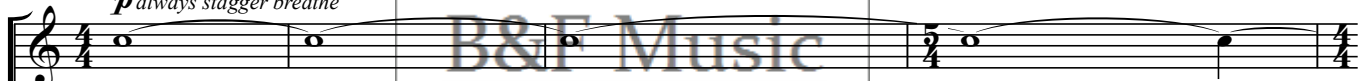
Text by
Thomas Moore
and Anonymous

Irish air,
Arranged by
Joshua Shank

♩ = ca. 80

p always stagger breathe

Soprano



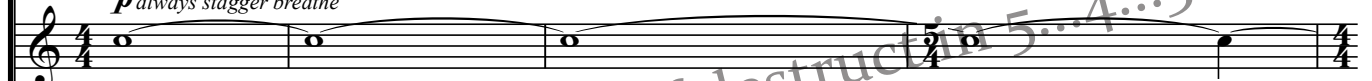
ooh

Alto



ooh

Tenor

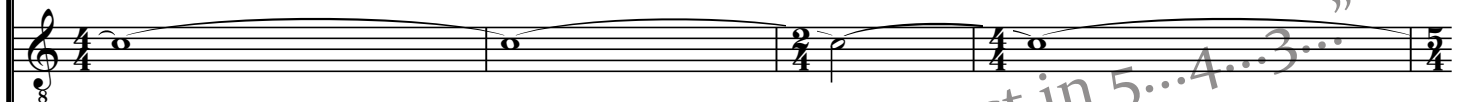
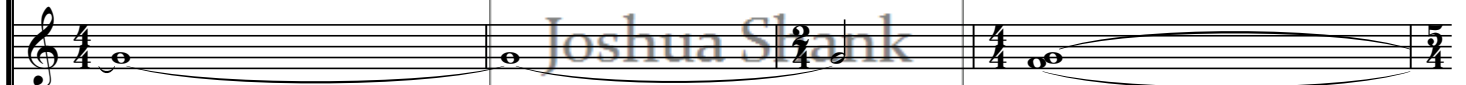


ooh

Bass



The min - strel boy to the war is gone, In the



ranks of death you'll find ____ him; His fa - ther's sword he hath

9

gir - ded on, And his wild harp slung be - hind ___ him; ___

B&F Music
Joshua Shank

13

ooh "Tho' all the world be - trays

ooh "Tho' all the world be - trays

mf bring out
"Land of Song!" cried the war - rior bard, "Tho' all the world be - trays

mp always stagger breathe
ooh "Tho' all the world be - trays

B&F Music
Joshua Shank

18

17 *mp*
 thee, One sword, at least, - thy = right shall guard, One

mp
 thee, One sword, at least, thy right shall guard, One

mp
 thee, One sword, at least, thy right shall guard, One

mp
 thee, One sword, at least, thy right shall guard, One

24

21 *mp*
 faith - ful harp shall praise thee!" ooh

mp
 faith - ful harp shall praise thee!" The Min - strel fell!

mp
 faith - ful harp shall praise thee!" ooh

mf
 faith - ful harp shall praise thee!" The

26

mp ooh

mp ooh

mf foe-man's steel *f* Could not

f Min-strel fell! But the foe-man's steel *f* Could not

32

mf

mf bring that proud soul un - der; _____ The harp he lov'd ne - ver

mf bring that proud soul un - der; _____ The harp he lov'd ne - ver

36

spoke a - gain, For he tore its chords a -

40

42

sun - der; And said "No chains shall
 ooh And said "No chains shall
 sun - der; And said "No chains shall
 sun - der; oh
 sun - der; oh

43

46

S
sul - ly thee, Thou soul of love and

A
sul - ly thee, Thou soul of love and

T
8
Thou soul of love and

B
Thou soul of love and

f

f

B&F Music
Joshua Shank

"This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

47

49

mp

S
bra - ve - ry! Thy songs were made for the pure and

A
mp
bra - ve - ry! Thy songs were made for the pure and

T
8
mp
bra - ve - ry! Thy songs were made for the pure and

B
mp
bra - ve - ry! Thy songs were made for the pure and

B&F Music
Joshua Shank

"This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

51

52

free They shall ne - ver sound in sla - ve -

free They shall ne - ver sound in sla - ve -

free They shall ne - ver sound

free They shall ne - ver sound

mp

mp

mp

mp

B&F Music
Joshua Shank

57 ♩ = ca. 110

ry!" The min - strel

ry!" The min - strel

lai de* dai dai lai de dai dai

lai de* dai dai lai de dai dai

f triumphantly

f triumphantly

mf continue pattern

mf continue pattern

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Joshua Shank

* This is just an unstressed schwa.

62

boy will re - turn, we pray, When we hear the

boy will re - turn, we pray, When we hear the

8

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Joshua Shank

68

69

news we all will cheer it. The min - strel

news we all will cheer it. The min - strel

8

B&F Music
Joshua Shank

75

“This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3...”

76

boy will re - turn one day, Torn per - haps in

boy will re - turn one day, Torn per - haps in

8

B&F Music
Joshua Shank

82

83

bo - dy, not in spi - rit. oh lai de* dai dai lai de dai dai

bo - dy, not in spi - rit. oh lai de* dai dai lai de dai dai

8

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Joshua Shank

88

lai de dai dai dai Then may he play up - on his

lai de* dai dai dai Then may he play up - on his

ff triumphantly

ff triumphantly

90

This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3...

dai ___ doh ___

lai de dai dai ___ dai ___ doh ___

8 harp in peace, In a world such as Heav'n has in - ten -

harp in peace, In a world such as Heav'n has in - ten -

98 Gently, with rubato ($\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 60$)

This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3...

lunga *mp* For all the bitt - er - ness of man must cease, ___

lunga *mp* For all the bitt - er - ness of man must cease, ___

8 ded, For all the bitt - er - ness of man must cease, ___

lunga *mp* ded, For all the bitt - er - ness of man must cease, ___

mp And ev - 'ry bat - tle must be end - - ed. *rit.*

mp And ev - 'ry bat - tle must be end - - ed. *rit.*

mp And ev - 'ry bat - tle must be end - - ed. *rit.*

mp And ev - 'ry bat - tle must be end - - ed. *rit.*

B&F Music
Joshua Shank

Burnsville, August 2005

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