

BEAUTY SPEAKS

SSATBB choir & piano

Text and music by Craig K. Sandford

Beauty Speaks

Pain, fear, grief,
Suffering, war, death.

Beauty speaks,
Beauty speaks truth.
Beauty speaks joy,
Beauty speaks hope,
Beauty speaks love, grace, kindness, life, mercy, peace,
Beauty speaks God.

ABOUT THE PIECE

In talking to a loved one who lives with chronic anxiety and panic, she explained to me that when these conditions peak, it is like having the volume turned up on all the pain and suffering in the world, while the volume is turned down on everything that is good. Pain and joy both exist around us, but when struggling with a surge of mental illness, she can only hear and see the negative; the good in the world becomes silent and invisible for a time.

One mediator between these contrasting voices and the volume at which they speak to her has been beauty. Beauty in the natural world is often able to reach our physical senses regardless of what our mind is telling us, and thus can interrupt the deafening cacophony of hurt and suffering to speak a different truth into the storm. When all seems lost and hopeless, a ray of beauty can penetrate the dark, reminding our embattled minds of other truths that have gone quiet in the moment, truths such as joy, hope, love, peace, and the presence of the divine.

"Beauty Speaks" explores these experiences of struggling with mental illness, particularly the tension between two extremes dynamically at war. The lower voices in the chorus (TBB) represent the inner narrative, the voices that speak from within the mind. The upper voices (SSA) portray the external beauty which seeks to penetrate and transform the mind's focus on grief and suffering. Sometimes these speak independently, sometimes they intertwine and conflict. The piece opens by considering the voices of anxiety; then, hovering over their chaos comes the interruption of beauty. There is friction between these throughout the piece, and dynamic contrast is a key element, as the opposing voices swell and diminish at different times, surging over each other and seeking preeminence. Midway through the piece, the mind heads toward desperation as the lower voices increase and the tempo quickens, but beauty's intercession is persistent and unyielding, eventually overcoming the anxiety and shifting the inner narrative. The piece concludes with the internal voices joining the external to acknowledge beauty as that which points us to look beyond the limits of our perspective, to look heavenward.

The piece is dedicated to the dear loved one whose personal description it depicts, and is offered in support of all who struggle with mental illness and hope for a better day.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

The piece is essentially for SSATBB chorus, although it splits frequently into more or fewer voices. The choral parts are notated on five staves instead of six because the two soprano parts can easily share a staff, whereas the lower voices feature more independence and would have been more complicated to reduce. Conductors should assign voices as necessary to keep good balance between the parts during divisi passages (e.g., some lower tenors may need to move down to cover the upper baritone part during a 4-way split).

Unless otherwise marked, the quarter note remains steady when moving between different meters (e.g., 4/4 to 3/2).

Conductors should follow their instincts with regard to tempo changes. Specific markings are offered, with frequent slight ritardando appearing throughout, but these may be adjusted as needed according to ensemble and performance space.

Beauty Speaks

for SSATBB Chorus & Piano

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Deeply expressive (♩ = c. 84)

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Baritone

Bass

Piano

p *mp* *p* *mp*

fear fear (n...)

grief grief

Pain pain (n...)

p *mp*

scd. *pedal ad lib

poco rit.

mf *sfp* *f* *mf* *sub. p*

fear, grief, suf-fer-ing, war, death.

mf *sfp* *f* *mf* *sub. p*

pain, fear, grief, suf-fer-ing, suf-fer-ing, war, death.

pain, fear, grief, suf-fer-ing, war, death.

mf *f* *mf* *sub. p* *poco rit.*

8va

Performance time: c. 3'45"

A little faster (♩ = c. 88)

Beau - ty speaks, Beau - ty speaks truth.

fear, war,

pain, suf - fer - ing, war,

p *f* *f* *f*

This system contains the first vocal and piano accompaniment staves. The vocal parts are in treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a 4/4 time signature. The piano accompaniment is in bass clef. Dynamics include piano (*p*) and forte (*f*). The lyrics are: "Beau - ty speaks, Beau - ty speaks truth." followed by "fear, war," and "pain, suf - fer - ing, war,".

A little faster (♩ = c. 88)

f

This system shows the piano accompaniment for the second system. It features a forte (*f*) dynamic and a melodic line in the right hand with a crescendo leading to a fermata.

A little faster (♩ = c. 88)

Beau - ty speaks, Beau - ty speaks truth, truth, truth,

Beau - ty speaks, Beau - ty speaks truth, truth,

mp *mf* *mp* *mp* *mf* *mp*

This system contains the third vocal and piano accompaniment staves. The vocal parts are in treble clef. The piano accompaniment is in bass clef. Dynamics include mezzo-piano (*mp*) and mezzo-forte (*mf*). The lyrics are: "Beau - ty speaks, Beau - ty speaks truth, truth, truth," and "Beau - ty speaks, Beau - ty speaks truth, truth,".

A little faster (♩ = c. 88)

mp *mf* *mp* *p*

This system shows the piano accompaniment for the fourth system. It features dynamics of mezzo-piano (*mp*), mezzo-forte (*mf*), mezzo-piano (*mp*), and piano (*p*). The piano part includes a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

24

p Beau - ty speaks,

p Beau - ty speaks

mp *cresc.* *f*

grief, pain, fear, death, war, suf - fer - ing. fear, grief,

mp *cresc.* *f*

grief, pain, fear, war, suf - fer - ing pain, grief,

mp *cresc.* *f*

grief, pain, fear, death, suf - fer - ing. pain, grief,

24

cresc. *f*

29 *cresc.* *mf* *poco rit.* *A tempo* *f*

beau - ty speaks, beau - ty speaks truth, Beau - ty speaks joy.

cresc. *mf* *f*

truth, Beau - ty speaks truth, Beau - ty speaks truth, Beau - ty speaks, Beau - ty speaks

decesc. *p*

war, death, grief, suf - fer - ing, death.

decesc. *p*

suf - fer - ing, death, fear, suf - fer - ing, death.

decesc. *p*

suf - fer - ing, death, pain, suf - fer - ing, death.

29 *mp* *mf* *poco rit.* *f* *A tempo*

34

Beau - ty speaks hope, Beau - ty speaks love, joy, Beau - ty speaks hope, speaks love, grace,

34

39

kind - ness, life, mer - cy, peace, Beau - ty speaks God.

kind - ness, life, mer - cy, peace, Beau - ty speaks God.

39

46 **A tempo** (♩ = c. 88)

p *cresc.* *molto accel. - - -*

Beau - ty, Beau - ty speaks, Beau - ty speaks

Beau - ty, Beau - ty speaks, *cresc.*

mp *cresc.*

fear, grief, suf - fer - ing, war, death, pain, fear, *cresc.*

mp *cresc.*

grief, suf - fer - ing, war, (war,) death, fear, pain,

mp *cresc.*

pain, fear, grief, suf - fer - ing, war,

46 **A tempo** (♩ = c. 88)

p *cresc.* *molto accel. - - -*

51 **With spirit, moving forward** (♩ = c. 138)

f *f* *f* *f*

truth, Beau - ty speaks truth, truth, Beau - ty speaks truth,

Beau - ty speaks truth, Beau - ty speaks truth, Beau - ty speaks truth, Beau - ty speaks

war, grief, fear, pain, suf - fer - ing, pain, suf - fer - ing,

grief, fear, pain, suf - fer - ing, grief, suf - fer - ing, *cresc.*

death, pain, suf - fer - ing, fear, Beau -

51 **With spirit, moving forward** (♩ = c. 138)

f *f* *f*

6

57

Beau - ty speaks *mf* truth, Beau - ty speaks truth, Beau - ty speaks *poco rit.*

Beau - ty speaks, Beau - ty speaks truth, truth, Beau - ty speaks

mf

truth, truth, truth, beau - ty speaks truth, speaks

p

war, Beau - ty, Beau - ty speaks truth, Beau - ty speaks

p

war, Beau - ty, Beau - ty, Beau - ty, Beau - ty speaks

ty, Beau - ty, Beau - ty, Beau - ty speaks

57

mf *poco rit.*

62

$(\text{♩} = \text{♩})$ truth, *rall.* **Relax tempo, as before** ($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 88$) *f*

truth, Beau - ty speaks joy, Beau - ty speaks hope,

truth, Beau - ty speaks, Beau - ty speaks joy, Beau - ty speaks

mf *f*

truth, (truth,) truth, joy, *like bells!* joy, joy, hope, hope,

mf *f* *like bells!*

truth, truth, joy! joy! joy! joy! hope, hope,

mf *f* *like bells!*

truth, truth, joy! joy! joy! joy! hope, hope,

62

$(\text{♩} = \text{♩})$ *8va* *rall.* **Relax tempo, as before** ($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 88$) *f*

8va

67

Beau - ty speaks love, love, grace,
 hope, speaks love, love, love, grace,
 hope, love, love, grace,
 hope, love, (love) love, love, grace,
 hope, hope, love, love, grace,

ff *poco rit.* *a tempo*

67

ff *poco rit.* *a tempo*

71

kind - ness, life, mer - cy, peace, Beau - ty speaks
 kind - ness, life, mer - cy, peace, Beau - ty speaks
 kind - ness, life, mer - cy, peace, Beau - ty speaks
 kind - ness, life, mer - cy, peace, Beau - ty speaks
 kind - ness, life, mer - cy, peace, Beau - ty speaks

mp *p*

71

p

76 *poco rit.* **mf** **A tempo** (♩ = c. 88) **p**

God. truth, _____

God. Beau - ty speaks truth, Beau - ty speaks

God. Beau - ty speaks truth, Beau - ty speaks

God. Beau - ty speaks truth, Beau - ty speaks

God. Beau - ty speaks truth, Beau - ty speaks

76 **mf** *poco rit.* **A tempo** (♩ = c. 88) **p**

God. Beau - ty speaks truth, Beau - ty speaks

81 *poco rit.* **Deliberately** (♩ = c. 76) **pp** *rit.*

love, Beau - ty speaks God.

love, Beau - ty speaks God.

love, Beau - ty speaks God.

love, Beau - ty speaks God.

love, Beau - ty speaks God.

81 *poco rit.* **Deliberately** (♩ = c. 76) **p** *rit.*

pp

