

Quieta nox: mysterium

(Silent Night: a mystery*)

Text by
Joseph Mohr

For SATB Voices, unaccompanied

Music by
Franz Gruber
Arr. by Daniel Jackson

$\text{♩} = 70$

S.A. 1 2 3 4 5

T.B.

Si - lent night! Ho - ly night! All is

6 7 8 9 10

calm, all is bright round yon vir - gin

11 12 13 14 15

moth - er and Child, ho - ly In - fant so ten - der and

16 17 18 19 20

mild. Sleep in heav - en - ly peace,

*You may want to refer to this piece as "An Aleatoric 'Silent Night.'" Please see the program notes on page 4.



21 22 23 24

sleep in heav - en - ly peace.

25 26 27 28 29

begin improvising

S. **Si - lent night!*

A.

T. *begin improvising*
**Si -*

B. *begin improvising*
**Si - lent night! Ho - ly night!*

For Review Only

30 31 32 33 34

S. ho - ly night! All is calm, all is

A. *begin improvising*
**Si - lent night!*

T. - lent night! Ho - ly night! All is

B. All is calm, all is bright. Sleep in

*See the program notes on page 4.

35 36 37 38

S. bright. Sleep in heav - en - ly peace,

A. Ho - ly night! All is calm,

T. calm, all is bright. Sleep in

B. heav - en - ly peace. Sleep in

39 40 41 42

S. Sleep in heav - en - ly peace.

A. all is bright. Sleep in heav - en - ly

T. heav - en - ly peace. Sleep in

B. heav - en - ly peace.

43 44 45 46 47

S. peace. Sleep in heav - en - ly peace.

A. peace. Sleep in heav - en - ly peace.

T. heav - en - ly peace.

B. heav - en - ly peace.

Quieta nox: mysterium (Silent night: a mystery)

Program Notes

Aleatoric/Chance Music is not a new concept. John Cage states, “I can’t understand why people are frightened of new ideas. I’m frightened of the old ones.” “Quieta nox: Mysterium” captures the essence of the “Silent Night” text with the use of chord clusters and dissonance.

When singing this version of “Silent Night,” the choristers sing verse one in the traditional manner. I recommend the choir uses American Sign Language (ASL) for a more dramatic effect. You can find a few ASL motions required on many internet sources.

When the choir sings verse one the second time, the singers are given the musical freedom to “create” by improvising the tempo and rhythms on their individual vocal part. Choristers sing their respective parts with individual rhythms and the speed of the sign language is adjusted to the tempo they choose. Most singers perform the aleatoric verse at a slow speed with sustained pitch from their respective parts.

The bass section starts out first, followed by the soprano, tenor, and alto sections approximately 5-10 seconds after the previous part begins. Each part enters together then about 1/3 of the section begins improvising the rhythm and tempi on beat 2. Another 1/3 begins improvising the rhythm and tempi on beat 3. The remaining 1/3 begins improvising the rhythm and tempi on beat 1 of the following measure. This enables the aleatory to build gradually. When each part reaches the end of the piece, singers hold their last pitch until everyone concludes on a major chord.

For singers who are insecure about improvising tempo, I suggest creating a series of 6-10 graphs that can be distributed to each section of the choir. It is important that every singer has a different rhythm and speed from the rest of their section. A sample graph is provided below. The length of the line represents the duration of each note in their respective parts.

Si- _____ lent _____ Night _____

Ho- _____ ly _____ Night _____

All _____ is _____ calm _____

All _____ is _____ Bright _____

Sleep _____ in _____ heav- _____ en- _____ ly _____

Peace _____ Sleep _____ in _____ Heav- _____

en- _____ ly _____ Peace _____

Note, I have omitted “round yon virgin mother and child, holy infant so tender and mild” during the aleatoric verse. Choristers should not look at the conductor and may face in various directions to aid in the dramatic effect of the presentation while signing the text. Furthermore, the eyes of the singers should follow the motion of their hands. The conductor will simply bring in each part during the aleatoric verse and signal the *morendo* and release at the end of the arrangement. *Daniel Jackson*

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