Three Verses on Bunessan

for Carillon

Notes

Three Verses on Bunessan is a neo-contemporary setting of a familiar Scottish hymn tune. The original Gaelic melody was transcribed by Alexander Fraser from the singing of a wandering Highlands musician and first published in Songs and Hymns of the Gael, 1888. The tune takes its name from Bunessan, on the Isle of Mull in the Inner Hebrides; its first published version appeared in Songs of Praise (London, 1931) with the text, "Morning has broken."

The three verses are prefaced and separated by a series of triplet arpeggations, each one heralding a new tonic key, first from E-major to F-major, a half-step progression to a distant key relationship, and then with a return to the original tonic E-major for the third verse, concluded by a brief codetta that recalls the transitional arpeggations. The tune is sounded in the bass clef (pedal for carillon) in the first verse, in the soprano voice for verse two, and nominally in the soprano for the third verse as well. The closing chorded arpeggations call for alternating hands, a technique on the carillon that offers an alternative to rolled chords with widely splayed fingers and hand positions required to reach beyond the span of a major third. Arpeggations are intended to begin on the primary beat, and not before (clarified with variously applied accent marks over notes and chords).

N.B. The image appearing twice in this booklet is offered online (via the Internet) as a freeware portrayal of a traditional Scottish thistle in blossom.
Three Verses on
Bunessan

"Morning Has Broken"

Larghetto [♩·♩]

ma con moto

ritardando

a tempo

ritardando

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Three Verses on Bunessan

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17

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Larghetto [ ]
Three Verses on Bunessan

* N.B. Begin arpeggios on the main beat