

Hana/Blossom (2007)

SATBB

Difficulty rating: 4+

Duration: 3'45"

Premiere: C4, conducted by Karen Siegel, NYC, 11/17/07

Hana/Blossom was written for a C4 program entitled "Not Dead Yet", a concert of works based on re-imaginings of existing music.

The main inspiration behind my work is the isorhythmic motet, in particular that of the Medieval French composer Guillaume de Machaut. *Isorhythm* is a device whereby rhythmic and melodic patterns repeat themselves, not together, but rather at offset intervals, generating new music without sacrificing unity. Machaut was also fond of setting different texts, often in different languages, simultaneously in the same piece. My twist on this was to present a haiku in its original Japanese (sung by the men) simultaneously alongside its English translation (sung by the women). The differing textures of the two groups emphasize the otherness of the 2 languages: The men sing essentially a harmonically expanded 3-part isorhythmic motet; the women's part by contrast is more updated, comparatively homophonic, enhanced by slides and stutter effects. The two groups also sing in different keys for most of the piece. There is a brief moment of harmonic reconciliation, but it is fleeting, and the men end alone, quietly questioning perhaps the same text they are singing.

Hana no kage aka no tanin wa nakari keru/

Cherry blossom shade, never an utter stranger

--*Issa* (1763-1828)