What to Listen For

Boulanger: Psalm 24

Here’s what to listen for in Boulanger’s choral Psalm setting, Psalm 24.

■ Tenor solo and SATB chorus with French texts; brass, harp, organ, and timpani accompaniment

This choral Psalm setting of a French text by Boulanger is performed by tenor solo, SATB chorus, brass, harp, organ, and timpani. Listen to the SATB chorus, brass, organ, and timpani in this excerpt: [2:03–3:24]. Listen to the tenor solo and harp in this excerpt: [1:11–1:36].

■ Conjunct melodies with small ranges

The melodies in Psalm 24 have small ranges (short distance between the lowest and highest pitches in the melody) and move in conjunct motion (a melody that moves primarily by small intervals). Listen to the small range and conjunct motion in the melody heard in this excerpt: [1:37–2:02]; and in this excerpt: [0:05–0:44].

■ Triple meter

Boulanger’s Psalm 24 is in triple meter (basic metrical pattern of three beats to a measure). Listen to the triple meter in this excerpt: [0:45–1:10].

■ Homophonic texture

The lyrics of this work can be heard clearly, due in part to the homophonic texture, texture with principal melody and accompanying harmony. Listen to the homophonic texture in this excerpt: [1:11–1:36].

■ Three-part form (A-B-A)

This work is in three-part form (A-B-A). The triumphant opening sound returns at the end of the piece. Listen to the opening section (A): [0:05–0:44]; now listen to the closing section (A): [2:03–3:24]. The middle section (B) offers a contrasting mood. Listen to the B section: [0:45–2:02].

So remember to listen for tenor solo and SATB chorus with French texts; brass, harp, organ, and timpani accompaniment; conjunct melodies with small ranges; triple meter; homophonic texture; and three-part form.