

Katherine Ryan Ayres

# Aokigahara

for 8 singers



# Explanation of Text

The text of Aokigahara is composed of individual phonemes. The following is an English reference table of how to form these sounds.

<b>mm</b>	isolated "m" consonant, as in the word "make"
<b>nn</b>	melded "m" and "n" consonants - closed lips as in the word "make" and with the front of the tongue touching the roof of the mouth as in the word "natural"
<b>nn</b>	isolated "n" consonant, as in the word "natural"
<b>hmm</b>	melded "h" and "m" consonants, as in the confused interjection
<b>ng</b>	melded "n" and hard "g" consonants, as in the word "hang"
<b>mng</b>	melded "m", "n", and hard "g" consonants - closed lips as in the word "make", with the whole of the tongue hugging the roof of the mouth
<b>aw</b>	jaw slackened, opened chamber of the mouth, as in the word "law"
<b>ahh</b>	brighter, unobstructed open vowel, as in the exalted interjection "ah!"
<b>mah</b>	as in the word "mall"
<b>ff</b>	isolated "f" consonant, as in the word "fact"
<b>ss</b>	isolated "s" consonant, as in the word "side"
<b>shh</b>	as in the word "shine"
<b>hhch</b>	as in the name "Bach"

*Note: Consonant sounds which are inherently unpitched/noise-based (ff, ss, shh, hhch) are notated on different staff lines for the sake of convenience. These sounds do not contain any pitched material.*

## **Performance Notes**

- The piece should, as much as possible, be performed without vibrato.
- If possible, perform this piece with the musicians standing close together, hidden from view of the audience either by placement or the use of a physical barrier between them.

## **Program Note**

*Aokigahara* (2015) is a meditation for chamber choir. Aokigahara is a forest at the northwest base of Mount Fuji in Japan. The density of the trees shuts out all sound but the immediate rustlings of the forest itself. The forest, also known as the Sea of Trees, is a popular tourist destination for its ice caves. Aokigahara is perhaps best known in Japanese culture for being a tragically and notoriously common site for suicides. The forest has long been associated with death, ghosts, and angry spirits. Despite its natural beauty, these darker cultural associations with death cast a grim shadow over the forest, giving the silence of the Sea of Trees an eerie, unsettling character.



# Aokigahara

for 8 singers

Katherine Ryan Ayres (2015, rev. 2023)

Suspended, Motionless ♩ = 58

*ppp senza vib.*

*pp*

Musical score for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B) parts, measures 1-4. The score is in 3/4 time. The Soprano and Alto parts are marked *ppp senza vib.* and *pp*. The Tenor and Bass parts are marked *mm* and *mn*. The Soprano and Alto parts have a melodic line starting on a whole note in measure 1, followed by rests in measures 2 and 3, and a half note in measure 4. The Tenor and Bass parts have whole rests in measures 1, 2, and 3, and a whole note in measure 4.

A

Musical score for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B) parts, measures 5-8. The score is in 7/4 time. The Soprano and Alto parts are marked *p* and *pp*. The Tenor and Bass parts are marked *mm* and *mn*. The Soprano and Alto parts have a melodic line starting on a whole note in measure 5, followed by rests in measures 6 and 7, and a half note in measure 8. The Tenor and Bass parts have whole rests in measures 5, 6, and 7, and a whole note in measure 8.

B

Musical score for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B) parts, measures 9-12. The score is in 7/4 time. The Soprano and Alto parts are marked *pp* and *ppp*. The Tenor and Bass parts are marked *pp senza vib.* and *mm*. The Soprano and Alto parts have a melodic line starting on a whole note in measure 9, followed by rests in measures 10 and 11, and a half note in measure 12. The Tenor and Bass parts have whole rests in measures 9, 10, and 11, and a whole note in measure 12.

13 *pp* *pp*

S *mn* *hmm*

A *mn* *hmm*

T *mn* *hmm*

B *pp senza vib.*  
*hmm*

17 **C** *div.*

S *mm* *ff* *mm* *ss*

A *mm* *mm*

T *mm*

B *div.* *ff*

21 *p* *n* **D** *ppp*

S *ng* *aw* *hnn* *ff*

A *p* *n* *div.* *ppp*

T *ng* *unis.* *hnn* *ff*

B *p* *n* *ng*

25 *pp* unis. *pp*

S *mm* *ff* *mm* *mng*

A unis. *pp* div. *pp*

*mm* *mng*  
*ss*

T *pp*

*mm* *mng*

B *pp*

*mng*

29 div. *ppp* *pp* *n* **E** unis. *pp*

S *mn* *shh* *aw*

*ppp* *pp* *n* *pp*

*mn* *shh* *hhch*

T *ppp* *pp* *n*

*mn*

B

33 *pp* *ppp* *p* *n*

S *aw* *hmm*

unis. *pp* *ppp* *p* *n*

A *aw* *hmm*

div. *pp* unis. *ppp* *p* *n*

T *ss* *hhch* *hmm*

*ppp* *p* *n*

B *ff*



49 *p* *n* *pp* *mp*

S mah mm ng - - aw

A mah ng - - aw

T mah unis. ng - - aw

B mah ng - - aw

53 *mf* *mp* *p* *n*

S ahh mm

A ahh mm

T ahh mm ff div.

B ahh mm ss

57 *pp* *n* *pp* *n*

S nn ng

A nn ng

T nn ng div.

B nn ng hhch

61 *ppp* *n* *ppp* *n*

S *nn* *mm*

A *ppp* *n* *ppp* *n*  
*nn* *mm*  
*div.* *ss*

T *div.* *ppp* *n* *ppp* *n*  
*nn* *mm*  
*ff*

B

65 *ppp* *n* *ppp* *ppp*

S *ng* *nn - - ng*

A *ppp* *n* *ppp* *ppp*  
*ng* *nn - - ng*

T *ppp* *n*  
*ng*  
*hhch*

B

69 *ppp* *n* *ppp* *n*

S *hmm* *mm*

A *ppp* *n*  
*ss*

T

B