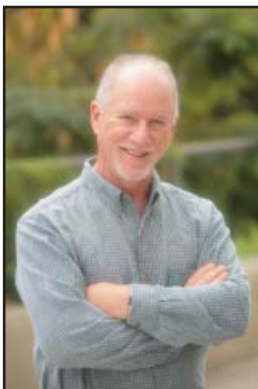


Performance and Historical Notes for “The Lake Isle of Innesfree”

William Butler Yeats was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1865. He spent his childhood in County Sligo on Ireland’s west coast, where his parents were raised, and in London. He returned to Dublin at the age of fifteen to continue his education and study painting, but quickly discovered he preferred poetry. Yeats became involved with the Celtic Revival, a movement against the cultural influences of English rule in Ireland during the Victorian period, which sought to promote the spirit of Ireland’s native heritage. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1923 and died in 1939 at the age of 73.

I did my best to honor Irish musical traditions in this setting. These elements include solo flute in a folk-style with many “slides” and “snaps” (short-long instead of long-short), a jig written in a fugal style, optional bodhran (Irish frame drum) and optional harmonic whirlyies (which symbolize the mythological faeries). Yeats writes that while walking on the clanking city streets of London at the age of 23 he was transported to his boyhood home of Sligo when he heard the sound of a fountain. Thus, the first verse takes place in London with the flute calling him back to Ireland. The “bee-loud glade” is a symbol of the peaceful and romanticized Irish countryside, so I wrote a jig for the bees to have some fun. Notice that the flute portrays the queen bee – always leading the way for the worker bees! The tempo of this jig should be a brisk walking tempo. The second verse takes place in Ireland and portrays the peaceful countryside. I apologize to the sopranos who are at rest during the first part of this verse! The flute imitates the sound of the linnets’ wings (finches). The flute solo ushers in the third verse and the return to London. The mood of this verse remains dreamy to reflect the text: ...”while I stand on the roadway and on the pavements grey, I hear it in the deep heart’s core.” The distant flute calling Yeats to Ireland is heard after the last words are sung.

Ron Kean



Dr. Ronald Kean, Emeritus Professor of Music at Bakersfield College, California, recently retired after directing choirs for thirty years. This has afforded Ron the time to complete three commissions and set aside time for two more. He is frequently called upon to conduct honor choirs, to adjudicate festivals, and to conduct his compositions. Recent trips include Ireland, Hawaii, and Bali. Pavane Publishing features both the Ron Kean Choral Series

and Multicultural Choral Series. His compositions and those of others in these series are widely performed throughout the United States and abroad.

