Asher Lurie

Ma Drie Racies ("after three decades")

for eight voices

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Instrumentation

SSAATTBB choir

Duration

6'

Program Note

Both of my parents are South African and immigrated to the United States in the early 1990s. The entire time they lived in South Africa was during apartheid and I've grown up seeing the dilemma that my parents have with the country they were raised in. While they lived with privilege as white people, they saw that the majority of the country, who was not white, did not have the same privileges as them. My parents realized the apartheid system was wrong, though it was all they knew, but they had little power to make lasting changes. I remember my mother telling me years ago about the young African boys who would jump over her fence to steal food from her fridge when she was a child. She allowed them to do this because she realized that they needed the food more than her, but there was nothing more she could do for them and the others in their position. She couldn't grant them the basic rights they did not have because of their skin color.

To further connect with my parents about their upbringing, I asked my mother to write a response to Nelson Mandela's Inaugural Address, a speech that in part marked a major societal, political, and cultural change in South Africa. To set her words, I decided to write a choral work based on the melodies of white African anti-apartheid activist and musician Johnny Clegg. Both of my parents grew up listening to Clegg's music and still remember it clearly to this day. I chose to use melodies from Clegg in a way that mirrors both the text that my mother wrote and the changing environment of South Africa from the start of colonization to the present day. Beginning with simple villages and nature, it quickly develops while becoming exponentially oppressive leading up to apartheid. This era suddenly reaches a breaking point and ends, but equality is still far away. However, many still can see peace in the future and fight every day to bring it sooner, just as they did to end the apartheid.

Na Drie Dekades is not exactly a work about apartheid, but rather about how the effects of it are still lasting. A visit to the country revealed this truth to me quickly. While laws no longer forcefully separate black and white people, they still have not begun to unite. The pain resulting from apartheid has made progress difficult. Now, South Africa is once again in a terrible state, as a corrupt government restricts the flow of essential resources while the rest of the country suffers. This will only change for good once all South Africans find a way to unite and work against the dark history of their country and the cycles that have created it.

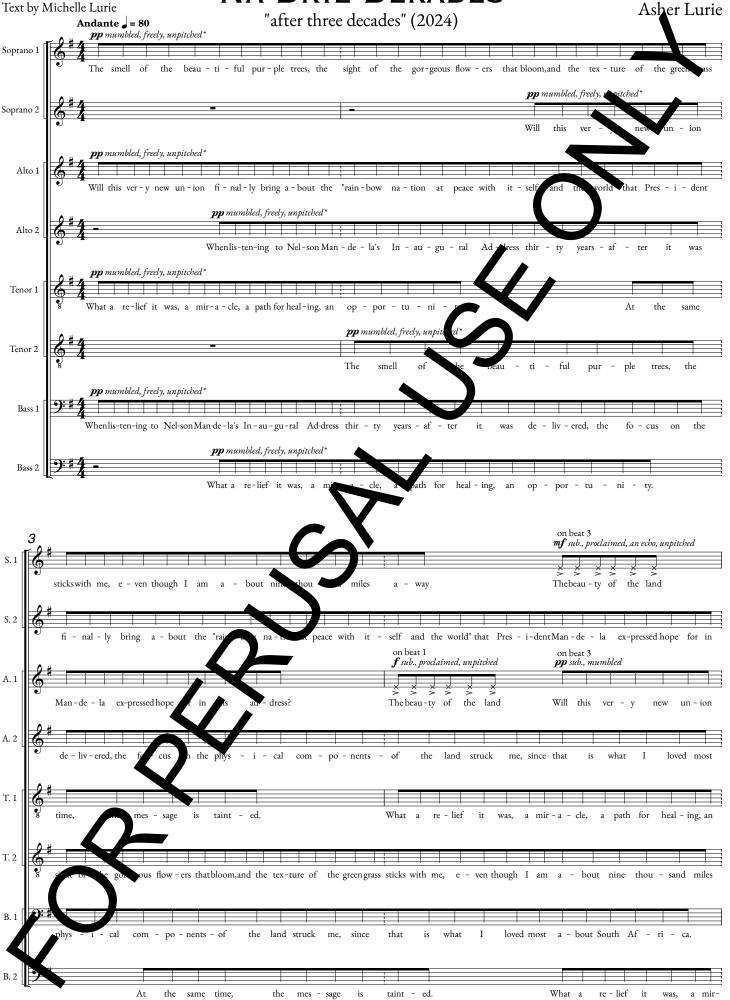


Original Text by Michelle Lurie

When listening to Nelson Mandela's Inaugural Address thirty years after it was delivered, the focus on the physical components of the land struck me, since that is what I loved most about South Africa. The smell of the beautiful purple trees, the sights of the gorgeous flowers that bloom, and the texture of the green grass sticks with me, even though I am about nine thousand miles away from the country of my birth. However, this makes the contrast between the beauty of the land and the pain that one experienced while living in a country governed by apartheid and racism even more glaring. What a relief it was when President Mandela took on the challenge of building peace in this country torn apart by divisions. To have President Mandela work together with Mr. F. W. de Klerk was a miracle and truly did open a path for healing and bridge building, an opportunity to establish a fair society where all individuals have access to fundamental human rights and dignities.

At the same time, the hopeful message of President Mandela's address is tainted when one considers the current state of South Africa. While after three decades, racial and gender discrimination has lessened, ongoing poverty and corruption continue. However, we seem to have come full circle as Nelson Mandela's African National Congress has now been forced to join with its primary opposition party, the Democratic Alliance. President Mandela expressed how there is no easy road to freedom and that we need to unite to achieve success. Will this very new union finally bring about the "rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world" that President Mandela expressed hope for in his address?





^{* -} text should be spoken in a natural rhythm, but remaining somewhat relative to where it is positioned within each measure to ensure that the choir stays together Copyright © 2024 by Asher Lurie (BMI). All rights reserved.

