

An Overview of the Choral Music of Hannes Taljaard

Rudolf de Beer

Between 1993 and 2020 Hannes Taljaard's contribution to new music composed is admirable in both quantity and quality. His choral music amounts to about an eighth of his total creative output as composer. None of these works are published though some have been performed by choirs and singing ensembles. Most of these are arrangements of folk melodies, and as with composers such as Bartok and Kodály, most of the arrangements have been reworked to such an extent that it could be referred to as studies on folk melodies. The composer feels that he could reach the audience through the arrangements of melodies which are known to them. Furthermore, he wanted to contribute to the choral repertoire in South Africa's strong choral tradition. From a work list provided by the composer, the choral genre was not his first engineered establishment as composer. Not only did instrumental music precede this vocal genre, but lieder for solo voice also laid the path for his exploration of choral compositions. Reference to conversations with the composer presents the background, composing techniques and history of the works, while analytical examples of the works itself highlights different examples of Taljaard's techniques of creating music for singing ensemble.

1. Introduction

For this commemorative publication on the 50th birthday of South African composer Hannes Taljaard, I provide an overview of his choral compositions.

Between 1993 and 2020 Hannes Taljaard's contribution to new music was admirable, especially in the unique outputs of what he calls 'cognitively rich' music. His choral music accounts for about an eighth of his total oeuvre. According to the composer, these works were composed mainly in his home town of Potchefstroom, where most of his compositional activity takes place. Although the scores can be

obtained directly from the composer, none of his choral compositions have been published. Most of these works are arrangements of folk melodies. Taljaard (2019) describes them as 'melodies that I knew and loved for many years before arranging them'. Similar to the music of composers such as Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, the melodies of most of Taljaard's arrangements have been reworked to such an extent that one could refer to them as studies on folk melodies. Through these folk melodies, Taljaard feels that he could 'be almost assured that choir music will touch the audience', the reason for so many arrangements of melodies that the audience might know.

It is personal music, quite intimate and the style of the music was a result of my choices to create something that resonates in my own inner world, and that I imagined would resonate also with others. I see my choir music as an attempt to create music that can connect people, the choir singers with each other, and the choir with the audience. The themes, texts and style(s) are all part of this intention. I've never felt drawn to write monumental or dramatic choral music. (Taljaard 2019)

The composer also wanted to contribute new repertoire to the strong South African choral tradition 'with pieces that [have] some individuality and that create a special sound world'.

According to Taljaard's list of compositions, choral works were not the first genre of works in his compositional output. However, according to the composer, his oldest choral composition, withdrawn from the list of works, is *Nova Cantica Sacra*, composed while Taljaard was singing in the West Transvaal Youth Choir, though it was never performed (Taljaard 2021c).

Not only did instrumental music precede this vocal genre on the official list of works, but *lieder* for solo voice also initially paved the way for his exploration of choral compositions. In terms of works that have been performed, Taljaard tried his hand at this genre in 1996 with an arrangement of three of the parts of J.S. Bach's cantata BWV 26, *Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig* (*Ah how fleeting, ah how insubstantial*) for organ and treble voices.¹ This arrangement is not listed in the current list of works and has presumably been withdrawn. The same applies to *Uittelbrympies* (*Counting Rhymes*), which is in rondo form and which was completed in 1999. This setting was for instruments and two-part children's choir; the composer is currently reworking the composition under a new title, *Harlekyne* (*Harlequins*). *Rymelary* (*Rhyming Games*), a work consisting of three pieces, and which 'received a prize' (Taljaard 2019), refers here to the Vice-Chancellor's Prize for composition awarded by the North-West University

in Potchefstroom (NWU), was also withdrawn. One choral composition dates back to the mid-1990s: *Thula Sthandwa* (*Hush Dearest*) for female voices. Although it was also withdrawn, the arrangement 'informed the current version, which is contained in the collection *Thu*' (*Hush*)' (Taljaard 2019).

The data for this article were assembled through personal email communications with the composer and comparative analyses of the compositions. I present a qualitative, descriptive overview and explanation of the compositional processes of, and the rationale for, the choral works written by Taljaard. The aim of this article is to give an overview of the choral works, while highlighting some compositional approaches. The limited scope of this article does not permit an analytical stylistic report on Taljaard's choral works.²

2. Overview of selected choral compositions

In the list of works containing compositions that have not been retracted, *Kammakammaland* (*Fantasy Land*) *Book 1*, composed between 2003 and 2004, appears as the first of Taljaard's compositions for choir. This mini-anthology is a set of six arrangements of Afrikaans folk songs and one original work for a six-part mixed-voice choir, and is approximately 13 minutes in length. The cycle was completed after discussions with the Boulevard Harmonists, a group of singers consisting mostly of students at the North-West University in Potchefstroom. Taljaard (2019) recalls: 'I was already working on sketches for some of the arrangements before I spoke to them'.

The individual pieces are as follows: *Al lê die Berge nog so blou* (*Even if the mountains still appear blue*), *Bootjie na Kammaland* (*Little Boat to Fantasy Land*), *Caledonse Liefdesliedjie* (*Love Song from Caledon*), *Kwaggarondo*, *Liewe Maan* (*Dearest Moon*) and *Waa met die Wiepie* (*Fan the flames*). The text has been clearly realised in the music, not only in the handling of rhythm and metre with changing time signatures in some pieces, but also in the harmonic and contrapuntal presentation of the material with semitone shifts where

the composer wished to enhance the meaning through indistinct tonal alteration.

The second composition from the list of works, *Thu'* (2011), is available both for high (or treble) voices and for mixed choir. It consists of only two pieces: *Thula Sthandwa* and *Thula Thu'*. The two settings have small differences. In the first of the two pieces, the mixed version is for six voice parts, while the version for treble voices has only four parts. The second piece is set for three voice parts in the treble version and for four voice parts in the version for mixed choir. The setting for mixed voices is about two minutes longer than the four-and-a-half-minute duration of the version for treble voices. Apart from the indeterminate ending in the mixed version of *Thula Thu'*, the characters of the different versions are consistent and Taljaard handles the distribution of the different voices well. The character of the lullabies is soundly captured in the repetitive feel of both rhythm and harmony. These melodies were also employed in other compositions: *Thula Sthandwa* and *Thula Thu'* for piano solo were composed in 2001 and 2010 respectively. The latter of these two works is also arranged as the last work in the composition *Zwikhumbu Zwingana?* (2010) (*How many Calabashes?*) for solo piano.

Kleine Mensie, Liewe Kindjie (*Little one, dear child*) is the third composition for choir, and dates from 2012. This work of three minutes, also a lullaby, is composed for eight-part mixed voices with the option of adding cello and double bass *ad libitum*. It was composed in common time and the Afrikaans text uses material from the Zulu lullaby, *Thula Thu'*.

The fourth choral work is *Pages from a small diary*. It is a memoir reflecting on Taljaard's travels, and he can also speak all three of the languages used in the four pieces. The first, *Wide Water* was a 'result of a discussion [...] with a group of singers in Stockholm' (Taljaard 2019). Pieces one and two, *Wide Water* and *Slapikanini* (*Sleep little child*), were written in 2014, the third piece, *Für die Zeit, anderswo* (*For the Time, elsewhere*) in 2018, and *Christine Wiegeli* (*Christine's Lullaby*) in 2021. The first three pieces are arrangements

of folk songs from England, South Africa and Germany, while the last one is newly composed. Each piece is less than five minutes in length. The German work is for mixed choir, while the first two works allow the performers the freedom to adopt different ensemble possibilities. *Wide Water* utilises different time signatures, while all three of these arrangements honour the original emotion of the folk melodies.

The last of the choral compositions is *Kwetterjoel* (*Chirping bird songs*) (2020). It consists of six works divided into two sections and is for treble voices in different versions, either *a cappella*, with piano accompaniment, or with piano and high and low instruments with optional percussion. The ornithological themes appear consistently in all six sections. The three works of section 1 of about 13 minutes are *Piet-my-vrou* (*Cuckoo*), *'n Swerm Hadedas* (*A flock of Hadedas*³) and *Die Koggelhaan* (*The Rooster*), while the works of the second section of about 19 minutes are *'n Swetterjoel* (*A Flock*), *Oupa Uil* (*Grandpa Owl*), and *Groot Lyster* (*Big Thrush*). At the time of writing this article, the composition was still in progress (Taljaard 2019) and I received only the completed vocal parts. Taljaard informed me of the status of this work:

Some of the pieces will have a vocal version, a version with piano, and also a version with piano and small ensemble. Some of the pieces will not have a version that is only vocal. They will have versions with piano, and versions with piano and small ensemble. (Taljaard 2019)

The cycle *Uittelbrympies* (*Counting Rhymes*) that was completed in 1999 is not on Taljaard's list of works. Taljaard (2019) indicated that he wants to 'revise it before placing it on [the] work list'. According to the composer, it is a short rondo with a refrain called *Harlekyn* (*Harlequin*) in which 'the instruments and voices work together to create the material'. Taljaard is of the opinion that the vocal parts for two-part children's choir are satisfactory, but 'the parts for the instruments (currently piano, flute, violin and piano)

do not function well [and that he] will most likely completely rewrite the accompaniment'. I will therefore not discuss this piece further.

Listed under 'Vocal Works' is a 2015 setting for vocal quartet and piano, *Brahms Wiegenlied (Brahms Lullaby)*. However, this setting can be performed by a choir also and reminds us of Brahms's compositions for the same ensemble setting. The vocal parts are an extended four-part arrangement of the original Brahms setting while, according to the composer, the piano part consists of material from Brahms's Sonata for two pianos Opus 34b (Taljaard 2021b). This work was composed on request for a concert of Brahms lieder by the School of Music of the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. The work was never performed.

3. Compositional approach

Taljaard explained that, like many composers, his compositions have been influenced by his years of experience as teacher in theoretical music subjects at university.

Pitch patterns, or tonal structures, are – specifically regarding my choral pieces – very strongly influenced by many years of studying harmony and counterpoint, and also by my experiences of teaching harmony and counterpoint. When I am working on choir music, specifically, I have the feeling that those hundreds of harmony exercises are bearing fruit. I do not think that I would have developed this kind of style if I had not started at a young age with harmony and counterpoint, and if I had not done as many exercises. The influence of music analysis on this aspect is smaller, I think, although I did analyse a few choir pieces. (Taljaard 2019)

He has also travelled widely, which brought him into contact with many different styles. Taljaard asserts

that the Nordic sound and composers from especially Sweden and Norway have had a huge influence on his work. A more detailed account of influences on Taljaard's music in general is provided in the interview that is part of this node. As mentioned before, most of Taljaard's works were composed in his hometown; however, he 'had the habit of working on sketches while travelling, [and] it is possible that some work was done in Europe' (Taljaard 2019). It is not clear if most of the choral works were sketched out or composed in Europe.

His impulse to write music for choir derives from his love of the melodies with which he grew up, discussions with performers, as well as requests from vocal ensembles and choirs. Taljaard was also a choir singer in his younger years and later during his study tours and travels; this gave him a better insight into choral music from the perspective of the performer.

As noted by the composer himself, his choral works are not as complex in structure as his instrumental works and therefore did not require the same amount of planning. The exception is the two cycles, *Kwetterjoel* and *Thula Sthandwa*, from *Thu*. He emphasises, however, that the composition process of his choral works was not unsystematic. He 'made a lot of sketches and rewrote parts and wholes of most pieces quite often, so that evaluation and planning were always part of the process' (Taljaard 2020b). Taljaard's aim to realise the sound ideal he has in mind is evident in these works as well, but on a less complex level. Both the works in *Thu* specifically originate from the pieces for solo piano. Taljaard (2019) elaborated on these two works: 'The reworking of these two pieces [was] done because of the potential that I heard in various versions, and because musicians [...] were interested in new versions.' Not all the material is borrowed from the folk genre and some melodies are original, even though imitating aspects of the folk melodies. With regards to employment of texts, Taljaard mentions that he has 'used only traditional texts in the common domain, or texts that [he] wrote'.

Taljaard (2020c) states that his method of composing these choral works derives from hearing

something in his mind which can either ‘work with specific chords’, or which consists of ‘a certain texture [that] will be interesting’. These inspirations can have ‘sounds’ or ‘movements’ or ‘shapes without sounds’, where ‘the text leads, sometimes the expression, and sometimes the sound patterns’. This is followed by sketches on paper that he would sing or play on the piano. After repeatedly revisiting the initial ideas, he expands on them ‘while improvising and working at the piano’. He confirmed that the parts composed initially influenced the progression and direction of the rest of the work. He mentions that he can either vaguely plan the direction, or just see how the work unfolds while working with the material. The process is navigated through this ‘planning or reflection’ or ‘thinking in action’. In contrast with his instrumental compositions, Taljaard feels that the compositional process for his choral works has ‘mostly been flowing and, in a way, easy’. This can be ascribed to his superb competence in composing in tonal language, fluently creating rather than spending time on generating material from a post-tonal language, which is more time-consuming. He mentioned that aspects such as ‘harmonic progressions’, ‘interval sequences’ and ‘rhythmic patterns’ were not planned in advance and, in some instances, he ‘mostly [does] not have a clear idea’ of the length or general shape of his choral pieces.

When utilising the languages he knows, Taljaard says that his strategy is ‘to experience the text in as many different ways as [he] can think of, and to approach it from as many perspectives as possible’. Even if most of these compositions are in his mother tongue, Afrikaans, he ‘took effort [in] working with the texts’. Some techniques of working with texts are ‘speaking, clapping, walking, writing it down, analysing it in terms of stresses and durations of syllables, reading it in [his] mind, trying different ways [and] memorising it’. He explained that for the folk songs based on isiZulu texts, he ‘relied on the folk melody, and on experiences of hearing students singing the folk songs, and singing the songs with them’.

Taljaard believes that his ‘interest in the

phonetic level of languages, phonetics and phonology [and] prosody’ influences the rhythmic and harmonic structure of his choral compositions. This technique of ‘playing’ with diverse rhythmic options for the texts is, according to him influenced by existing methods of music analysis, a subject that he is well acquainted with through many years of teaching. Furthermore, the ‘many years of studying harmony and counterpoint, and also experiences of teaching harmony and counterpoint’, influenced especially the ‘[p]itch patterns or tonal structures’ of these works. He feels, however, that the latter influences are stronger than any influence of an analytical approach. Yet, in his words, he was ‘always shaped by a strongly analytical approach to the music’ when he sang in choirs. Thus, the influence of music analysis is linked to performance rather than to his teaching or studying the subject. For him ‘[e]xperiences in music analysis shape an awareness of what is possible in terms of structure, and, for example, the kinds of rhythmic patterns that one can create’. Yet he also states ‘that methodologies of analysis have shaped the style of [his] choir music until now’ and that it ‘certainly did allow [him] to imagine a space within which the style of the music can grow’ (Taljaard, 2020c).

The fact that he still revisits completed compositions in order to revise them with new ideas speaks of his determination to present the best possible outcome. This is an approach one sees throughout when studying his works.

4. Samples of composition ‘building blocks’ from the choral compositions

The following are illustrative examples of some composition techniques from each of the choral works in chronological order.

4.1. *Kammakammaland Book 1*

The six pieces of *Kammakammaland Book 1* each displays noteworthy composition techniques, briefly discussed here to offer a better insight into his style and approach.

In the first work, *Al lê die Berge nog so blou*, a distinction between the textures of the higher and lower voices is obvious. Parallel movement guides the

direction of the voices, while suspensions colour the emotive content of the text. These phenomena are clear in, for example, bars 8-10, shown below.

Example 1: Hannes Taljaard *Kammakammaland Book 1 (Al lê die Berge nog so blou)*, bars 8-10. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

Bootjie na Kammaland presents the melodic line in the tenor voice, while the other voices are given vocalised accompaniment. The long legato lines in the middle

to low registers of the accompanying voices allow the tenor melody to be heard in the forefront.

Example 2: Hannes Taljaard *Kammakammaland Book 1 (Bootjie na Kammaland)*, bars 24-28. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

Caledonse Liefdesliedjie commences with the same compositional device as the previous work, only this time with the melody in the alto voice and the second sopranos in harmony against the altos. From bar 16,

the texture evokes of that of *Bootjie na Kammaland*, with the basses carrying the other voices on longer note values.

11

Soprano
oe

Mezzo
Ek wou van die lief - de wy - ke, maar dit druk my vas met smart! mm

Alto
Melody
hart! Ek wou van die lief - de wy - ke, maar dit druk my vas met smart! mm

Tenor
Maar dit druk my vas met smart.

Baritone
oe

Bass
oe

16

Smart met lief - de saam ver - bon - de hou my in ge - dag - te -

oe

Lief - des - ban - de in ge - dag - te -

Lief - des - - - ban - de in ge -

Lief - des - - - ban - de in ge -

Example 3: Hannes Taljaard *Kammakammaland Book 1 (Caledonse Liefdesliedjie)*, bars 11-19. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

Kwaggarrondo is a medley arrangement of three Afrikaans folk songs, namely *Rokkies wou sy dra*, *Daar kom Tant Alie*, and *Dis 'ie Linne*, while the fourth,

Kwagga, is an original work. This piece evidences of two distinct textures in terms of voice distribution. In one texture the male voices rhythmically accompany

the lower two female voices, for example, in bars 16-19. To form the second texture, the voices divide into three groups, each with a different rhythmic and melodic

texture, for example, in bars 20-22. In bars 45-56 only the tenor and bass voices are heard.

16

Sopr. - - - - -

Mezzo
Gog - ga - bie. Ou Jan - nie se naam is Gog - ga - bie. Mooi is sy nie le - lik.

Alto
Gog - ga - bie. Ou Jan - nie se naam is Gog - ga - bie. Mooi is sy nie le - lik

Tenor
Gog - ga - bie Kwag - ga. Gog - ga - ba - ba - gog - ga. Gog - ga - bie - ba - ba. En is hy dan glad nie

Bar.
Gog - ga - bie Kwag - ga. Gog - ga - bie - ba - ba. Gog - ga - bie - ba - ba. En hy is dan glad nie

Bass
Gog - ga - bie Kwag - ga. Gog - ga - bie - ba - ba. Gog - ga - bie - ba - ba. En hy is glad nie so

Example 4: Hannes Taljaard *Kwaggarondo*, bars 16-19. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

20

Sopr.
Lok - kies dra sy nou met strik - kies bont en blou. Sy vra ou Jan - nie gou of

Mezzo
Lok - kies dra sy nou met strik - kies bont en blou. Sy vra ou Jan - nie gou of

Alto
le - lik. Sy het geen af - fro en sy sal nie van

Tenor
le - lik? Sy het geen af - fro en sy sal nie van

Bar.
le - lik nie? Sy wil nie nou 'n af - fro of square cut of

Bass
le - lik niet Sy wil nie nou 'n af - fro of square-cut or

Example 5: Hannes Taljaard *Kwaggarondo*, bars 20-22. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

45

Sopr. - - - -

Mezzo - - - -

Alto - - - -

Tenor
 ek van - aand om die hoe - kie loer dan foe - ter sy vir my met die kof - fle - moer. Oom

Bar.
 ek van - aand om hoe - ke loer dan - foe - ter sy vir my met die kof - fle - moer. Oom

Bass
 ek van - aand om hoe - ke loer dan foe - ter sy vir my met kof - fle - moer. Oom

Example 6: Hannes Taljaard *Kwaggarondo*, bars 45-48. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

Kwaggarondo is primarily diatonic with some small exceptions of chromaticism, especially in bars 53-55.

53

Sopr. - - - -

Mezzo - - - -

Alto - - - -

Tenor
 dan tog nog om die hoe - kie loer dan mo - ker sy vir my met die

Bar.
 dan tog nog om hoe - ke loer dan don - ner sy vir my met die

Bass
 dan tog nog om hoe - ke loer dan foe - ter sy vir my met die

Example 7: Hannes Taljaard *Kwaggarondo*, bars 53-55. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

The composer distorts harmonic clarity to highlight the emotive content of the text. Another example is found in the fifth piece of *Kammakammaland Book 1*, *Liewe*

Maan, where the text *o hoe wreed is tog die noodlot* (*oh, how cruel is this fate*) is expressed through chromatic colouring of the harmony.

12

Soprano
baan. O hoe wreed is tog die nood - lot: nooit sal ek na jou kan gaan! Lie - we

Mezzo
baan. O hoe wreed is tog die nood - lot: nooit sal ek na jou kan gaan! Lie - we

Alto
O hoe wreed is tog die nood - lot: nooit sal ek na jou kan gaan! Lie - we

Tenor
Die nood - lot nooit sal ek na jou kan gaan! Lie - we

Baritone
Die nood - lot nooit sal ek na jou kan gaan! Lie - we

Bass

Example 8: Hannes Taljaard *Kammakammaland Book 1* (*Liewe Maan*), bars 12-16. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

In the same work the composer also alternates the meter of the original folk song, the German *Guter Mond*, to further honour the melancholic meaning of the text. In the next example, beat two in the second bar is

shortened by one crotchet from the original folk song. In the original, the text is lengthened by a minim on beat two.

Guter Mond, du gehst so stille

Transcribed: Rudolf de Beer

Example 9: Guter Mond, du gehst so stille (own transcription of traditional melody).

Andantino (♩ = 56)

Soprano
Lie - we maan, jy seil so lang - saam deur die a - wend - wol - ke

Mezzo
Lie - we maan, jy seil so lang - saam deur die a - wend - wol - ke

Alto
Lie - we maan jy seil so lang - saam deur die a - wend wol - ke

Tenor
Lie - we maan jy seil so lang - saam deur die a - wend wol - ke

Baritone
Lang - saam a - wend - wol - ke

Bass
So lang - saam a - wend - wol - ke

Example 10: Hannes Taljaard *Kammakammaland Book 1 (Liewe Maan)*, bars 1-3. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

Similar to the second piece in the composition, the melody in *Waai met die Wiepie* is presented in the soprano line, complemented by vocal accompaniment

in the other voices. This piece ends the whole work with a rhythmic climax; no rallentando is indicated.

25 Melody

Sopr.
kom van-aand by die huis sy huis is blink ge - verf. Sy vrou die stap in 'n sis - rok soos 'n

Altos
sis - rok vel - skoën bol - kuil klap - broek Kyk net! Hier stap 'n

Tenors
sis - rok vel - skoën bol - kuil klap - broek sis - rok vel - skoën

Basses
sis - rok vel - skoën bol - kuil klap - broek sis - rok vel - skoën

Example 11: Hannes Taljaard *Kammakammaland Book 1 (Waai met die Wiepie)*, bars 25-27. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

In these arrangements, Taljaard succeeded in adding colour to the meaning of the text and the original melodic flow without discarding the character of the folk songs. The alteration of material between the different voices enhances the textural transparency of the sound colour.

4.2. *Thu'* for High Voices and for Mixed Voices

Thu' consists of arrangements of the two isiZulu folk songs, *Thula Sthandwa* and *Thula Thu'*.

Thula Sthandwa employs the melodic material of the known folk song through a regular four-time pattern with sporadic lengthening of the meter to five or six crotchets in a bar. Suspension of the harmony and delayed resolutions are applied in the accompaniment.

Thula Sthandwa

Transcribed: Rudolf de Beer



Example 12: *Thula Sthandwa* (own transcription of traditional melody).

The image shows a musical score for 'Thula Sthandwa' from bars 10 to 12. The score is written for six voices: Soprano, Mezzo, Alto, Tenor, Baritone, and Bass. The time signature changes from 4/4 to 5/4 at the end of bar 11. The lyrics are: 'ngo - ma u - me - bi - le, lo - wo e - ngi - mtha - nda - yo...' (Soprano: mgen - nhli - zi - yo - ya - mi). Annotations include 'Altered meter' in blue above the Soprano staff at the start of bar 12, and 'Delayed resolution' in blue above the Tenor staff at the start of bar 12. The tempo marking 'Mm.' is present below the Tenor, Baritone, and Bass staves.

Example 13: Hannes Taljaard *Thu'* (*Thula Sthandwa*), bars 10-12. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

The second piece, *Thula Thu'*, is also known as *Thula baba* in South Africa.

Here Taljaard experimented to some extent with controlled indeterminacy techniques, referred to by some choral composers as collective improvisation (Eriksson, 1995). The performance note for the choir reads as follows:

From here to the end, the choir divides into three mixed choirs, more or less equal. The first of the small choirs sing the music as notated to

the end. The second of the small choirs sustain the chord marked as '1' while the first small choir continues with the music. The second of the small choirs sustain the chord only until their breaths run out, and then remains silent. The third of the small choirs start with chord '1', then sing chord '2' and sustain the chord while the first choir sings the music, and while the second choir sustains chord 1. They also sustain the chord until their breaths run out, and then remains silent.

From here to the end, the choir divides into three mixed choirs, more or less equal.
 The first of the small choirs sing the music as notated to the end.
 The second of the small choirs sustain the chord marked as '1' while the first small choir continues with the music. The second of the small choirs sustain the chord only until their breaths run out, and then remains silent.
 The third of the small choirs start with chord '1', then sing chord '2' and sustain the chord while the first choir sings the music, and while the second choir sustains chord 1. They also sustain the chord until their breaths run out, and then remains silent.

Example 14: Hannes Taljaard *Thu'* (*Thula Thu'*), bars 33-41. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

4.3. Kleine Mensie, Liewe Kindjie

In this composition, the composer paraphrases the main

motif of the isiZulu folk song, *Thula Thu*, the second work of *Thu*. Aspects of fragmentation are applied in developing the material.

Example 15: Hannes Taljaard *Kleine Mensie, Liewe Kindjie*, bars 4-8. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

Augmentation of the motive in some voices as accompaniment, carrying the main melodic material, is clearly evident in the first few bars.

Example 16: Hannes Taljaard *Kleine Mensie, Liewe Kindjie*, bars 1-5. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

4.4. Pages from a Small Diary

As mentioned under the heading ‘Overview of selected choral compositions’, three of the four works are dedicated to three different choirs. The other work is dedicated to Professor Herbert Lauermaann, with whom Taljaard studied in Vienna from 2019 to 2021.

The first piece, *Wide Water* gives the performers freedom with regards to rhythm as well as voice distribution. This is reflected in the performers’ notes:

The melody can be sung by a solo voice or performed on an instrument. The rhythm should be free. The other parts can be sung by a mixed choir, or by a male choir. Men should sing in falsetto whenever necessary, in order to ensure that sounds in the higher ranges do not become tense. The parts can be sung by choir or vocal ensemble. The lower parts are sung on

different vowels. Each singer should change vowels to ensure that as many different vowels as possible are sung at the same time by the different singers. The lower parts can also be performed on instruments. The composition should be sung through only once.

Chromatic tones cleverly disguise the tonality in bars four and five.

Musical score for Example 17, showing Soprano, Soprano, and Bass parts. The lyrics are: nei - ther have I wings to fly. So give me a boat. The score includes a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure of the Soprano part.

Example 17: Hannes Taljaard *Pages from a Small Diary (Wide Water)*, bars 3-5. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

In *Slapikanini*, alternation of the melody between different voices presents the melody in the different vocal colours.

Musical score for Example 18, showing Soprano, Mezzo, and Alto parts. The tempo is marked *Larghetto* with a quarter note equal to 63. The lyrics are: Slaap Pi - ka - ni - ni, ons vee's in - nie kraal, slaap, slaap, slaap, slaap. al ons ou ska - pies en bok - kies. Doe - doel! A blue arrow points to the word 'slaap' in the Soprano part.

Example 18: Hannes Taljaard *Pages from a Small Diary (Slapikanini)*, bars 1-8. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

Für die Zeit, anderswo displays obvious characteristics through parallel movement between the soprano, alto and tenor lines and open harmony in the range between the different voice parts.

19

Soprano
wenn i dirs zehn - mal sag, das i di lieb, du

Alto
wenn i dirs zehn - mal sag, das i di lieb, du

Tenor
wenn i dirs zehn - mal sag das i di lieb, du

Bass
Zehn - mal sag, i di lieb, du

Example 19: Hannes Taljaard *Pages from a Small Diary (Für die Zeit, anderswo)*, bars 19-22. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

Christine Wiegeli is a short lullaby on three twelve-tone rows. The middle voices present the first series, after which they continue with another series while the high voices present the first series. After two sets of repeats, the cello presents the third series, which relates to the first a tone lower and with different note values.

Christine Wiegeli

Pages from a small Diary

Hannes Taljaard 2021

Rustig

Sopranos
(or female voices)

Alto
(or high male voices)

Slap... Slap... my kind - jic, slaap...

Rustig

Example 20: Hannes Taljaard *Christine Wiegeli*. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

Cello Section

5

Slap... my kind-jie, slaap...

12

Slap... my kind-jie, slaap...

18

Slap... my kind-jie, slaap...

The melody was composed as a gift to Christine Pichler (who also composed a twelve tone lullaby), and the three-part choral piece was composed as a gift to Prof. Herbert Lauer mann. mdw, June 2021.

Example 20, continued.

4.5. Kwetterjoel ⁴

4.5.1. Part 1

In the first work, *Piet-my-vrou*, two techniques are prominent. Firstly, combined movements between two or four voice parts alternatively, either in parallel

movement or in opposite directions, create harmonies that are distantly related to common practice. Secondly, melodic material in one voice part with vocal accompaniment in the other three voice parts creates more familiar harmonies.

Example 21 shows a four-part vocal setting. The vocal parts are labeled S1, S2, A1, and A2. The lyrics are in Afrikaans. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: 'n Kou-e, gou-e, flou-e vrou-e-pou. Piet-my-vrou, Piet-my-vrou, waar-om?

Example 21: Hannes Taljaard *Kwetterjoel Part 1 (Piet-my-vrou)*, bars 22-26. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

Example 22 shows a four-part vocal setting. The vocal parts are labeled S1, S2, A1, and A2. The lyrics are in Afrikaans. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: meent-eend? Met 'n skou-pou? Wat van 'n dans-gans? Pam-pam-pam pam. Pam-pam-pam pam. Pam-pam-pam pam.

Example 22: Hannes Taljaard *Kwetterjoel Part 1 (Piet-my-vrou)*, bars 53-57. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

Harmonically, Taljaard thus alternates between clear diatonic chordal writing and chromatically coloured chordal writing. His interest in language prosody, mentioned before, is clear in the rhythmic setting of the text.

In the second work, *'n Swerm Hadedas*, four-part mirror harmonies (which can be considered as mild atonal writing) are also utilised. Here, Taljaard presents two groups of two voices in inversion, with each group in mainly tonal parallel lines against each other. The axis of symmetry is A.

Example 23 shows a four-part vocal setting. The vocal parts (S1, S2, A1, A2) are written in a homophonic style. The lyrics are: dra van weë die me de ly. Die me de ly.

Example 23: Hannes Taljaard *Kwetterjoel Part 1* (*n Swerm Hadedas*), bars 64-69. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

The third work, *Die Koggelhaan*, presents another kind of four-part writing, one that does not always result in tetrachords, as well as unison writing as two additional techniques.

Example 24 shows a four-part vocal setting. The vocal parts (S1, S2, A1, A2) are written in a homophonic style. The lyrics are: en hul lyk kwaad. Saam laat hul hoor.

Example 24: Hannes Taljaard *Kwetterjoel Part 1* (*Die Koggelhaan*), bars 130-139. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

Example 25 shows a four-part vocal setting. The vocal parts (S1, S2, A1, A2) are written in a homophonic style. The lyrics are: Moe - nie kog - gel! Moe - nie boe - lie nie! Moe - nie terg nie! Moe - nie pla!

Example 25: Hannes Taljaard *Kwetterjoel Part 1* (*Die Koggelhaan*), bars 150-153. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

The composer's understanding of text rhythm also plays a major role in the rhythmic placement of the words. A clear example is seen in bars 24-27, where the text 'groot geroggel koggel die koggelhaan' is presented with

silences between the words to convey the stuttering sound of the grunting (*roggel*) mocking (*koggel*) of the bird (*koggelhaan*).

Example 26 shows a musical score for four vocal parts (S1, S2, A1, A2) in Afrikaans. The lyrics are: "Met 'n groot, groot ge - rog - gel kog - gel die kog - gel - haan die gog - ga oor sy bog - gel." The score includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words like "gog - ga" and "bog - gel" appearing to be onomatopoeic or mimetic sounds.

Example 26: Hannes Taljaard *Kwetterjoel Part 1 (Die Koggelhaan)*, bars 21-30. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

4.5.2. Part 2

This part uses the techniques utilised in part 1, only here the composer adds different sound textures in the beginning of the first work, 'n *Swetterjoel*.

Example 27 shows a musical score for four vocal parts (S1, S2, A1, A2) in Afrikaans. The lyrics are: "Kwet-ter, kwet-ter, kwet-ter." The score includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words like "Kwet-ter" appearing to be onomatopoeic or mimetic sounds.

Example 27: Hannes Taljaard *Kwetterjoel Part 2 ('n Swetterjoel)*, bars 4-5. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

Additional examples of playing with the text rhythm are found in, for example, bars 71-75, where the sound of many birds together is presented in a staggered rhythmic pattern.

Example 28: Hannes Taljaard *Kwetterjoel Part 2* (*'n Swetterjoel*), bars 71-75. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

In *Oupa Uil*, the vocal six-part distribution gives an opportunity for a chordal writing style characterised by intense clusters which, together with the slow meter, honours the unhurried measured character of the owl

to which the text refers. This is an extension of the technique of mirror chords found in the first part. Here the axis is E.

Example 29: Hannes Taljaard *Kwetterjoel Part 2* (*Oupa Uil*), bars 1-7. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

In the last piece of this work, *Groot Lyster*, an additional technique is added by the composer. Here a unison chromatic line in two of the voice parts leads to the note of the contrasting pedal point in the other two

voices. This pedal point on the note D not only assists in creating rhythmic and pitch stability for the choir, but also leads harmonically to the resolution tone.

73 **And faster** ♩ = 148

S 1
Waar-om gro - te, ou - e ly - ster sien > ek daar - die wit - te plei - ster? Waar-om gro - te, ou - e ly - ster sit jy op die kou - e y - ster?

S 2
Waar-om gro - te, ou - e ly - ster sien > ek daar - die wit - te plei - ster? Waar-om gro - te, ou - e ly - ster sit jy op die kou - e y - ster?

A 1
Waar-om gro - te, ou - e ly - ster sien > ek daar - die wit - te plei - ster? Waar-om gro - te, ou - e ly - ster sit jy op die kou - e y - ster?

A 2
Waar-om gro - te, ou - e ly - ster sien > ek daar - die wit - te plei - ster? Waar-om gro - te, ou - e ly - ster sit jy op die kou - e y - ster?

Example 30: Hannes Taljaard *Kwetterjoel Part 2 (Groot Lyster)*, bars 72-75. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

The last example from this composition presents an interesting technique of echoing between two pairs of voices in inversion.

106 Repeat several times, with fade-out.

S 1
plei - ster, op y - ster met plei - ster. O ly - ster met plei - ster. O

S 2
plei - ster, op y - ster met plei - ster. O ly - ster met plei - ster. O

A 1
op y - ster met plei - ster op y - ster. O ly - ster op y - ster.

A 2
op y - ster met plei - ster op y - ster. O ly - ster op y - ster.

Example 31: Hannes Taljaard *Kwetterjoel Part 2 (Groot Lyster)*, bars 106-115. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

4.6. Brahms Wiegenlied

This is a remarkable setting of the well-known Brahms lullaby, *Guten Abend, Gut' Nacht*, where Taljaard juxtaposed and rearranged the original material, while rhythmically and harmonically presenting the listener with an outcome that is more of a new composition than an arrangement. The harmonic world, the textures and the colour of this composition are different from

those of Taljaard's other choral works, specifically because of the complex piano accompaniment.

In the first part of the work a pedal point in the soprano and bass lines, which relate to the piano part, hovers against the other voices. The melodic material is given mainly to the alto, with the tenor in parallel movement.

The image displays a musical score for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The lyrics are: "A - bend, gut' Nacht, Gu - ten mit Ro - sen be - dacht, mit gut' Nacht." The piano part features a complex accompaniment with a prominent pedal point in the bass line. The vocal lines are written in treble clef, while the piano part is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The score is marked with a '5' at the beginning, indicating the start of the example.

Example 32: Hannes Taljaard *Brahms Wiegenlied*, bars 5-8. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

In the last part of the work an interesting texture is heard when the soprano is given most of the melodic

material and the other voices the harmonic material, against the Brahmsian polyrhythmic style in the piano.

Example 33: Hannes Taljaard *Brahms Wiegenlied*, bars 45-48. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

The work concludes with a striking unison in all parts as well as in the piano, after which the piano solo presents a short epilogue, the material for which is derived from the Intermezzo in A Major, Opus 118, No. 2 by Brahms.

Example 34: Hannes Taljaard *Brahms Wiegenlied*, bars 57-65. Copyright: Composer, used with permission.

Example 34, continued.

5. Conclusion

Since Taljaard's compositions are not published, it can be difficult to compile an overview of his music, style and compositional approach. This article presented an overview of specifically his choral works, which consist of arrangements of folk music as well as newly composed material. The influence of folk music is apparent in both Taljaard's arranging style and his original works.

The rationale for the creation of the works is twofold. It is to be found in either inspiration or requests from ensembles and choirs, or from the composer's wish to compose or arrange for this genre because of his love of the folk music or for ensemble singing itself. Taljaard (2019) has stated quite explicitly that '[a]ll the works were composed because [he] wanted to create them and [that he] gained a lot of joy working on them.' However, some choral compositions followed from requests and discussions, as mentioned by Taljaard (2019).

I am currently working on *Kwetterjoel*. It contains parts from the earlier piece *Rymelary*, and is the result of discussions with Christelle Engelbrecht, conductor of the North-West Children's Choir. This work is also the result of a two-way request for cooperation. Christelle asked me sometime in 2019 or 2018 (after they performed *Slapikanini* from *Pages from a small Diary*) if I had any compositions, and although I did not have compositions ready, I was planning to work on *Kwetterjoel*. When she showed interest, I started to work on the composition.

References to conversations with the composer present some background, composing techniques and background history of the works, while analytical examples from the works themselves highlighted

different examples of Taljaard's techniques of creating music for singing ensemble. It has been illuminating to include the composer's opinions and experiences in this article, presenting insights from his point of view.

The choral works have been performed by ensembles such as the Boulevard Harmonists, the North-West Children's Choir, the North-West Youth Choir, the NWU Conservatory Choir, the Molen Kórus, the Music Students' Choir from the National University of Quilmes, Argentina and a small group of students at the Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst, in Vienna, where he studied.

Not specifically concerned with the publication of his compositions, Taljaard values performances of the works highly. He mentions that 'imagining the performances' energises his writing, while listening to his choral 'compositions in performance has mostly provided good experiences and motivation to work more' (2019). He has nevertheless 'written a few pieces without a guarantee of a performance (which were) also rewarding experiences'. He adds that if it were not for the performances, he would have composed fewer works. Taljaard also mentioned that he is invested in the composition of choral music and he would like to create dance music for choir and dancers in the future: 'Something that will interest me in future is the creation of dance music for a choir that will also be dancers.' Although Taljaard is fifty years old, he has certainly not reached the peak of his creative output. I look forward to many more works that can be added to this overview of choral works.

Endnotes

¹ This arrangement was done at my request as the founder and first conductor of the North-West Children's Choir; it was recorded by the choir in the Endler Hall, Stellenbosch, for the choir's second CD release.

² Regarding knowledge of, and dealing with, the influence of music analysis on his writing, the composer asserts: 'I do not see a guiding influence of analytical methods', although '(t)here are certainly many interesting things to be discovered through music analysis'.

³ A hadeda is an ibis.

⁴ At the time of the article the work was still in progress, and the author only received the vocal parts for analysis.

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Author's Biography

Rudolf de Beer holds a Master's in choir conducting and musicology from the University of Oslo and completed his Doctorate in the same discipline through a joint venture between the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth (South Africa) and the Norwegian State Academy of Music in Oslo. His dissertation focussed on African Neo-Traditional Choral Music. Some of his research articles and compositions have been published by Hal Leonard (USA), Norsk Musikforlag, Cantando Musikkforlag (Norway), and Cambridge University Press (UK).