AMERGIN AND CESSAIR

by

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A THESIS

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*Amergin and Cessair* is a musical setting of the text “Amergin and Cessair: A Battle of Poetic Incantation” by Michael Meade and Erica Helm Meade. The music takes the form of a dramatic “duet,” scored for double choir and chamber orchestra. It depicts an exchange of self-exalting verses proclaimed by the two demigods Amegin and Cessair. Cessair—an early inhabitant of Ireland—uses her verses to churn the sea and fend off ship-borne Amergin, who in turn calms the sea with his verses. Musically, the two characters are distinguished by their own unique melodic motives, harmonic sonorities, and instrumentations. The drama of the battle unfolds over the course of the fifteen-minute work, and ultimately Amergin is the victorious one. Overall, the work expresses the pride, determination, and intense emotionality of the two characters objectively, without taking the side of either one, and it is an allegory for cultural conflict.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. TEXT</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. AMERGIN AND CESSAIR</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF INSTRUMENTS

VOICES

Double Chorus
Soprano, Alto, Soprano, Bass Solos

CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

2 Flutes (Flute II Doubling Alto Flute)
Oboe
Clarinet in Bb (Doubling Bass Clarinet)
Bassoon

2 Horns
2 C Trumpets
Bass Trombone

Piano
Harp
Timpani
Percussion (Tam-tam, Bass Drum, Cymbals, Triangle, Chimes)

Strings
TEXT

Amergin and Cessair
A Battle of Poetic Incantation

Amergin:
I plant my foot on this land.
For I am Amergin
Son of Mil
Son of the People of the Sea
Peoples of ships and barks
Prince of the White Cave
Son of the builder of the Spiral Castle.
Focuss of the Womb of the Earth
Son of the Hag of Beara
Builder of the Tower of Bregon
Climber through the Needle’s Eye
Namer of names
Judge between combatants.

Cessair:
Here I stand
Daughter of the moon
Cessair.
Poet of Arianrhod
Daughter of Danae, the Mother and Queen
Keeper of the house of Sidh
Daughter of the Northwest Wind; I am
Cessair.
Navigator on water
Mistress on shore
Fair as a flower
Daughter of Darkness
Daughter of the House of Arianrhod.

Amergin:
Who fortells the ages of the moon?
Who brings the cattle from the sea and segregates them?
For whom but me will the fish of the laughing ocean make welcome?
Who but I knows the secret of the unhewn Dolmens?
Who shapes weapons from hill to hill?
Who but myself knows where the sun shall set?

Cessair:
I am the flash of sun on water.
I am the clash of battle swords.
I am the teeth in the sea-shark’s mouth.
I am the blood of wild beasts.
I am the fire in the witch’s hearth.
I am the evening sky ablaze—
The red of serpents’ tongues,
The black of deepest night.
I am a mare that knows no reins.

Amergin:
I am the roar of the sea.
I am a bull of seven fights.
I am a hawk on a cliff.
I rove the hills, a ravening boar.
I am lightning that blasts the trees.
I am the point of weapons.
I am thunder on the mountains.
I am a God that fashions fire for a head.
I am a dragon that eats the sky.
Cessair: I thread the stars across the sky.  
I am the kiss of lovers’ lips.  
I am the mortar and the stone.  
I am the song of my homeland.

Amergin: I am the wind on the sea.

Cessair: I am the bow of every ship.

Amergin: I am ocean waves.

Cessair: I am the foam upon the sea.

Amergin: I am a lake on a plain.

Cessair: I am the green of the fairest hill.

Amergin: I am a dewdrop, a tear of the sun.

Cessair: I am a lily on a still pond.

Amergin: I am the son of harmony.

Cessair: I am a word of skill.

Amergin: I am the silence of things secret.

Amergin’s verses adapted by Michael Meade from the traditional Irish Song of Amergin.  
Cessair’s verses written by Erica Helm Meade.  
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Score in C

Amergin and Cessair

Amergin’s verses adapted by Michael Meade
Cessair’s verses written by Erica Helm Meade

Amergin and Cessair

Driving, q = 88
2 Horns

2 Trumpets

Bass Trombone

Timpani

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Baritone

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

People of the Sea

People of the Sea

People of the Sea

People of the Sea

and barks

and barks
meno mosso

a tempo

2 Hn.

2 Tpt.

B. Thn.

Timb.

Perc.

S

A

T

B

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

pp
2 Horns (2 Hus)
2 Trumpets
Bar Tuba
Timpani
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello
Piano

Climb or through the Needle's Eye

Climb or through the Needle's Eye

Piano

"Needle's Eye"

"Climb or through the Needle's Eye"
ian rhod Daughter of

ian rhod Daughter of

ian rhod Daughter of
Who for tells the age

Choir 1: Amergin

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vo.

Ch.
Who shapes
wea - pons from his
where the sun shall set?
I am the fire in the witch's beasts.
The red of sky a blaze
The black of serpents' tongues,
deep est night.
I am a man but know no
I am a man but know no
I am a man but know no
I am a man but know no
I am a man but know no
accel.
I am a man but know no
accel.
I am a man but know no
accel.
I am a man but know no
accel.
I am a man but know no
accel.
I am a man but know no
accel.
I am a man but know no
Grave, $q = 52$

2 Hn.  | 2 Tpts.  | B. Tbn.  | Perc.


S     | A     | T     | B


Ch.  | Ch.  |

I am the point of weapons.
I am the
driver
of
the
train.

I am the
driver
of
the
train.

I am the
driver
of
the
train.

I am the
driver
of
the
train.

I am the
driver
of
the
train.
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Ob.
Ct.
Bsn.

Choir 2: Cessair

S.
A.
T.
B.
S. Vln. 1
S. Vln. 2

28 Slow, Lamenting \( \dot{\text{j}} = 56 \)

Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

P. F.

\( \sum \)
I am the kiss of lovers’ lips.
I am the kiss of lovers’ lips.
I am the kiss of lovers’ lips.
I am the kiss of lovers’ lips.

29
I am the song of my homeland.
I am the wind on the sea.

Choir 1: Amergin

Choir 2: Cessair
2 Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
2 Hns.
2 Tpts.
B. Tbn.
Timp.
Perc.
SA
TB
SA
TB
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

Choir 1: Amergin
Choir 2: Cessair

foam up on the sea.
I am the green of the
fair est hill.
I am the
green of the
fair est hill.

Choir 1: Amergin
Choir 2: Cessair
I am the silence
I am the silence of things
I am the silence of things

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

2 Hn.

2 Tpt.

B. Tbn.

Timp.

Perc.

SA

TB

SA

TB

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

Pno.

Choir 1:

Choir 2:

Amergin

Cessair

85
2 Fl.  
*pp*

Ob.  
*pp*

Cl.  
*pp*

Bsn.  
*pp*

2 Hns.  
*pp*

2 Tpts.  
*pp*

B. Tbn.  
*pp*

Choir 1:  
Amergin

Choir 2:  
Cessair

*molto rit.*