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The central aim of this study is to demonstrate a unified approach to the analysis of settings of scripture which includes the disciplines of Biblical criticism, liturgical history and practice, and music theory and analysis. To accomplish this, the text of the Magnificat is examined in a purely Biblical hermeneutic framework. Three settings of the Magnificat are analyzed in their historical and musical contexts. The settings analyzed are by J. S. Bach, Charles Villiers Stanford, and Arvo Pärt. The aim of the analyses is to integrate Biblical hermeneutic approaches to the texts with the composers' musical approaches to the texts in order to surmise the spiritual and theological import which the composer places on the text. In other words, to find out where the composer is performing *exegesis* and where the composer is performing *eisegesis*. Conclusions include practical uses of such a method in the programming of choral music for ensemble performance.

EXEGESIS AND EISEGESIS: THE CHORAL COMPOSER AS SCRIPTURAL
INTERPRETER WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO SETTINGS OF THE *MAGNIFICAT*

by

Michael P. Dougherty

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Committee Chair

To my parents for their support and encouragement. To my wife, Hannah, for her help and tolerance, and to our son, Leo, for his wonderful life-fulfilling ways.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of
The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair _____

Committee Members _____

Date of Acceptance by Committee

Date of Final Oral Examination

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CHAPTER I
DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

Thesis Statement

The composition of musical settings for the singing of sacred texts is the central activity of a complicated process of hermeneutics. The compositional act is considered central because the process of Biblical-canonic creation comes before it, and the complementary processes of musical performance and reception later. Each stage of this communicative effort has accretions of personal, symbolic, practical, social, and theoretical baggage which may or may not change either the meaning of the actual verbal texts themselves, or the way in which these texts are understood. Biblical scholars use two terms to describe opposite actions of the interpreter: *exegesis*, which is the “reading out” of an interpretation from a sacred text, and *eisegesis*, which is the imposition of the reader’s own agenda onto the text. The central aim of this study is to demonstrate a unified approach to the analysis of settings of scripture which includes the disciplines of Biblical criticism, liturgical history and practice, and music theory and analysis. To accomplish this, the text of the Magnificat will be examined in a purely Biblical hermeneutic framework. Then several settings of the Magnificat will be analyzed in historical and musical contexts. The aim of the analyses will be to integrate Biblical hermeneutic approaches to the texts with the composer’s musical approaches to the texts in order to surmise the spiritual and theological import which the composer places on the

text – in other words, to find out where the composer is performing *exegesis* and where the composer is performing *eisegesis*.

Justification

While a great deal of research has been carried out on solo vocal music and the relationship between words and music, very little has been done on these specific relationships in choral music. The research which has been done is only hinted at in biographies of composers, descriptions of works, and program notes. In addition, a majority of choral music in the Western Art tradition is written for the church and based on sacred texts. These texts require a specific approach which includes Biblical hermeneutics because they are sacred in character and content. In addition, the style of many composers is often described in religious or quasi-religious terms. For example, Arvo Pärt is referred to as a mystic. In what ways does his music reflect mysticism? How does it refer to things mystical? Is there a certain sound which embodies or describes mysticism?

The importance of analysis is, of course, to help us understand fully the communicative structure and content of a piece of music. All musical analysis reveals the structure that the composer has put down on paper. However, the reception of that content can change, sometimes drastically, with the passage of time. For example, it is difficult to ignore the anti-Semitic character of Bach's *Passion According to St. John*. The question is, was this Bach the Lutheran anti-Semite, or was this Bach setting the words of St. John the anti-Semite, or was this Bach setting the words of St. John who was

writing a Gospel to a people who were being persecuted in Jewish lands?¹ The answer may completely change the conception of the piece of music for a conductor. These questions are not normally addressed by traditional musical analysis.

Status of Related Research

This subject is interdisciplinary. Therefore, there is a great deal of research tangentially related to the specific material. Specifically music-related research can be broadly grouped and defined under two headings:

Music and textual studies

Music and textual studies are exemplified most clearly in the work of the International Association for Word and Music Studies (WMA). The WMA was founded in 1997 to promote transdisciplinary scholarly inquiry devoted to the relations among literature, verbal texts, language and music.² The Association publishes *Word and Music Studies*, generally on an annual basis, which includes “theme-oriented volumes, documenting and critically assessing the scope, theory, methodology, and the disciplinary and institutional dimensions and prospects of the field on an international scale.”³

Studies published by the WMA are based on close analysis of musical works and also on

¹ David E. Garland, *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the First Gospel* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1993) writes that the Gospel writer was writing within a Jewish community that was hostile to Christian views. See especially the Introduction, pp. 1-10.

² The website of the International Association for Word and Music Studies 2007. <http://www.wordmusicstudies.org/index.htm> (accessed 1 October 2007).

³ Walter Berhnhart, Steven Paul Scher, and Werner Wolf, eds., *Word and Music Studies: Defining the Field* (Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1997, vol. 1) ii.

philosophical ponderings related to the fields of linguistics, poetics and aesthetics.

Representative articles are “Speaking Melody, Melodic Speech” by Lawrence Kramer, “Musical and Verbal Counterpoint in Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould” by Deborah Weigel, and “Schubert’s Strategies in Setting Free Verse” by Jürgen Thym.⁴

In addition, such studies would include some composer-specific works.

Specifically, these would include work like Robin Leaver’s “J.S. Bach and Scripture: Glosses from the Calov Bible Commentary.”⁵ This publication actually does attempt to make explicit the relationship between Bach’s understanding of scripture (as written in glosses in his copy of the Calov Bible Commentary) and his composition of notes to fit the words.

Finally, this category would include any of the numerous analyses of music included in composer biographies, program notes, and music history books which hint at a relationship between the musical setting and the theological and political intent of the words. Except for the works about Bach, few of these are substantial enough to provide a true theological understanding of the composer’s music and compositional practice.

Studies of a theology of music

There are a number of gifted musicians who write about the theology of music.

However, most of these works concern the ontology of a theology of music and the use of

⁴ All published in *Word and Music Studies* Vol. 7.

⁵ Robin Leaver, *J.S. Bach and Scripture: Glosses from the Calov Bible Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing house, 1985).

music in worship.⁶ As a consequence, most of these border on mystical descriptions of music along the lines of Boethius. Heavy on theology, these studies tend to give very little attention to the structure of music and how it either informs or is informed by theological considerations of the text.

Two particular authors who ask the questions posed in this paper are Don Saliers and Jeremy Begbie.⁷ Saliers poses three pertinent theses:

Music confers upon human language addressed to God the appropriate silence and mystery required by prayer. Music is the language of the soul made audible especially as music is the performative mode of the prayer and ritual engagement of the community.⁸

Music is intimately related to the narrative quality of human experience, presenting our temporality in symbolic form, but always bodily perceived through the senses. Ritual contexts activate the formative and expressive power of sound with respect to the deep patterning of human affections.⁹

Synaesthesia (the engagement of the several senses, triggered by one of them) is required for spiritual maturation. If we only take in the literal surface of what we hear in word and song, the awakening of the deeper dimensions of reality and of the soul are prevented.¹⁰

These theses present different forms of the problem. First, they point to the temporality of human existence and, therefore, the time-sensitive nature of musical

⁶ In this case, ontology asks the questions of how music and theology relate in a broad sense, not how a specific piece presents theology.

⁷ Jeremy Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Don E. Saliers, *Music and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007).

⁸ Saliers, 4.

⁹ Saliers, 7.

¹⁰ Saliers, 9.

settings. In other words, the musical setting of a text expresses the composer's views at the composer's time and the composer's place. This is musically obvious, as the music of Baroque composers sounds Baroque, the music of Classical composers sounds Classical, and so on. However, this is not as theologically obvious, as two composers may point to different interpretations within the same historical-musical language.

Second, these theses present the communal and ritual nature of music. All intentional musical performance involves some type of ritual. This is obvious within the context of sacred worship. Ritual is also present within the context of concerts. When attending a concert we dress up; we are shown to our seats; the lights go down and the audience quiets; at appropriate times we show our approval (or disapproval) of the concert in culturally regulated ways. This is ritual. Might the ritual action inherent in such a concert setting change the meaning of a piece of music meant for a sacred ceremony? At the very least, the culturally normative understanding of theological views cannot be assumed to be the same in two different performances by the same person, nor by two people at the same performance.

Finally, these theses present the sensual nature of musical cognition and understanding. It is just this sensual nature with which many cultures have struggled when confronted with questions regarding proper music for divine worship. The "literal surface" is only the beginning of understanding what a piece means, and, though the performative nature of any single performance of a work does not change, the actual meaning to each person may change or be negated within the confines of the cultural norms of philosophical, musical and theological understanding. For each person, this

adjustment of meaning is understood as either emotion or “the deeper dimensions... of the soul.”¹¹

Studies which fall into this category do not use musical analysis to prove their theses. Likewise, studies which fall into the first category do not use theology to prove their theses.¹² This study attempts to bridge the gap and approach the question of musical meaning in specific works from a more structured approach akin to systematic theology.¹³ In the end, this approach can be used to investigate and articulate the meanings of specific works, of a composer’s oeuvre, and of stylistically unified time periods and how the composers approach sacred works within those time periods. Though this paper will deal specifically with Christian works, the process can be broadened to include music of any cultural or religious time.

Procedures

The procedures for this document include reading relevant articles and books and selecting relevant musical works. The text of the works (all Magnificat settings) then will be analyzed from a Biblical hermeneutic perspective. The musical works will be

¹¹ Saliers, 9.

¹² The major exception to this is the very good interdisciplinary work that has been done on the music of J.S. Bach. For example, see Robin A. Leaver, ed., *Johann Sebastian Bach and liturgical life in Leipzig* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), and Stephen A. Crist, “Bach, Theology, and Harmony: A New Look at the Arias” in *Critica musica: Essays in Honor of Paul Brainard*, John Knowles ed. (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1996).

¹³ Broadly speaking, systematic theology is a discipline of theology which attempts to approach theological understanding in an ordered and rational way. For example, a systematic theology of music can be attempted by analyzing all of the scriptural references to music and the relationship the sayings imply about the divine. The subsequent understanding of music and the divine would be a systematically derived theology of music. Erik Routley, *The Church and Music* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1967) is an example of such a study. However, it relies heavily on music history and not on theology.

analyzed from musical, textual, historical-ritual, and historical-theological perspectives.

A final presentation of the analytical outcomes will then be provided.

The reason that the Magnificat has been chosen is that this text has a somewhat unusual place in the Lukan narrative; to some writers it seems out of place within the Gospel narrative. In addition, the broader theology of the text emphasizes the exceptional nature of the person of Mary. This is the crux of many historical arguments regarding the divinity of Mary. In spite of disagreements, the Magnificat holds a central place in the prayer life of Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians; it serves as the central musical piece in the service of Vespers. It is assumed that composers setting this text must confront the theological discussions which are current in their day.

CHAPTER II

ASSUMPTIONS FOR CHORAL COMPOSITION

This study is predicated on five broad assumptions. Each of these assumptions represents an area of inquiry in musical study that already has volumes written on it. In some cases (music and culture, for example) the assumption represents an entire field of musicological or anthropological research. It is not the aim of this study to represent fully the entire possible range of arguments within each of these areas of inquiry, but rather to present the broadest possible assumption that comes to bear on the outcome of this study. The next sections present these assumptions.

Assumption 1: Composers are concerned about the words they are to set

The first assumption is that composers struggle with the words they are to set. This struggle includes the sound of the words as exemplified in each individual phoneme (vowel and consonant), the rhythm and meter of the words in context, and the meaning of the words. This threefold effort often marks the qualitative difference between two settings of the same text. In addition, it is assumed that if composers did not struggle with the words in these ways, the use of words would be unnecessary to the finished musical work.

The importance of the actual sound of words to composers has changed throughout the centuries. This importance has moved from purely practical concerns to more aesthetic concerns. Examples of the practical concerns include: issues of vowel

formation and modification – is it possible to sing a specific vowel that high in such a way that will allow the word to be understood? Another example is the problem of word intelligibility within the texture – can all of the words be understood within a highly imitative contrapuntal texture, or is that a necessary consideration? And yet another example: do the consonants within the text allow for a musical phrase appropriate to the sense of the text?

Today these practical concerns have mutated so that composers can actually use individual phonemes for purely expressive and musical purposes. Humming, “ahh”-ing, and using consonants as percussive effects are all ways in which composers today use phonemes for purely musical purposes. In Western music, this is a relatively new phenomenon.

The rhythm and meter of the words as spoken is also an important consideration for composers. Spoken languages have an incredible variety of rhythms used freely by native speakers. This variety has proved difficult for musical notation. Composers have resorted to *recitativ* and difficult-to-render tuplets to overcome the shortcomings of notation. In addition, when singing in their native tongue, singers are sometimes confused by musical lines in which the composer places syllabic emphasis on the incorrect syllable. In some cases, the consideration of rhythm and meter is the defining characteristic of a composer’s ability to compose. There can be little doubt that composers like Purcell and Britten had complete mastery of the intricacies of the English language and how it could be properly set to music.

Finally, composers must deal with the meaning of the words. This seems obvious, but if the meaning of the words is not considered, then the act of setting words

to music becomes nothing more than an act of “prettying up” the words. In fact, there are many examples of this – just about any children’s song is nothing more than a pretty setting of a poem. In the case of children’s songs, if the text is happy, set it major, and if the text is sad, set it minor; that is as deep as the rhetoric goes. However, a great composer will make decisions based on the intricacies of the meaning of the text. The rhetorical decisions that are made work within both the language-rhetorical and the musical-rhetorical frames.

Assumption 2: Composers compose within cultures that regulate their activities

The second assumption is that composers compose within a culture that in some way regulates the activities of the composer. This regulation gives the music meaning and significance. A composer whose music lies outside of the culture’s circumscribed “norm” would be considered of little or no value. Likewise, when dealing with texts, composers must accept or reject the culture’s regulated meaning of the text before they can add anything of value to the text through music. What the composer adds may uphold the culture’s normative meaning of the text or may change that meaning.

In the Preface to *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Leonard Meyer presents the problem in this way:

Meaning and communication cannot be separated from the cultural context in which they arise. Apart from the social situation there can be neither meaning nor communication. An understanding of the cultural and stylistic presuppositions of a piece of music is absolutely essential to the analysis of meaning.¹⁴

¹⁴ Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1956), ix.

At some level this seems self-evident. However, much musical analysis disregards the minutiae of cultural meaning, and, for example, seemingly lumps together all music of the Common Practice Era. However, an understanding of the cultural and stylistic presuppositions of a composer is absolutely necessary. This cultural understanding is particularly important when music is wedded to words – an importance exacerbated when the words are sacred scripture. The differences in the ways in which any two composers approach sacred texts are as informative as the ways in which they use harmony.

In the case of much sacred music, the questions of culture are not only questions of textual meaning but also questions of contextual use and the meaning that derives from these contexts. For Patricia Shehan Campbell, the statement: ““People make music meaningful and useful in their lives”” becomes a “framing perspective for thinking about music.”¹⁵ In the case of much sacred music, the original intent of the music was to provide background noise to ritual actions happening in other parts of the room. These ritual actions are as much enculturated as are the specific theological approaches to the texts themselves.

¹⁵ Patricia Shehan Campbell, *Teaching Music Globally: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), xv.

Assumption 3: Listeners listen and hear within a culture.

The third assumption is the opposite side of the same culture coin; not only do composers compose within a culture, but listeners also hear within a culture. Musical understanding at this point is predicated by exposure and, possibly, education. There is a story of an African cleric who attended a concert of a symphony composed by a nineteenth-century European composer. When it was finished, the cleric turned to his host and asked, "That is very nice, but where is the rhythm?" In this instance, understanding music pits the rhythmic intensity of African music against the harmonic intensity of nineteenth-century European music.

In society a listener's understanding of music is also informed by the listener's inherent understanding of the purpose of music. For Marcello Sorce Keller, the answer is quite clear:

If [music] were solely something we make, perform, and listen to with more or less gratification simply depending on how skillfully it is concocted, then it would have been a relatively unimportant phenomenon in the history of mankind.¹⁶

Therefore, Keller continues, whereas

the extraordinary importance recognized as belonging to music by historians, philosophers, and social scientists is largely independent from its quality... the extraordinary importance attributed to music in the course of history has much more to do with its uncanny potential to attract, catch, and collect symbolic meanings of various kinds in a magnet-like fashion.¹⁷

¹⁶ Marcello Sorce Keller, "Why Is Music So Ideological, and Why Do Totalitarian States Take It So Seriously? A Personal View From History and the Social Sciences," *Journal of Musicological Research* 26 (2007), 92.

¹⁷ Keller, 93.

Keller's exposition of the difference between these approaches to musical understanding brings up the question of ideology. Keller defines ideology as "a coherent set of ideas brought together not for strictly intellectual purposes but, rather, in the service of some strongly held communal beliefs or values."¹⁸ While Keller is speaking of the use of music by totalitarian regimes, ideologies are not less important to music in the service of religion.

The idea that one must understand the culture of composer and listener is usually regarded as the domain of ethnomusicology, and, outside of the dry historiographic studies of composers, it is left out of musical analyses. The assumption seems to be that the culture of a musical style only needs to be studied or explored if the culture is not the same as the person doing the study. However, one must observe that the "culture" of the twenty-first-century United States is as different from the "culture" of eighteenth-century Germany as it is from the "culture" of twenty-first-century China. Yet most musical analyses presuppose the understanding of eighteenth-century German culture while analyses would present relevant bits of Chinese culture.¹⁹ Understanding the culture of composer, original listener and contemporary listener is imperative if one is to completely understand the communicated content of a piece of music.

¹⁸ Keller, 93

¹⁹ I use quotes because the culture of a country or historical period is distinctly difficult to define because of the multitude of sub-cultures included within any country or time period. In addition, one must realize that the difference between Baroque German culture and contemporary US culture is even more pronounced when a text happens to carry theological significance.

Assumption 4: The meaning of texts changes over time

The fourth assumption is that the meaning of texts can change over time. Such a change in meaning does not presume a change in the meaning of the words, but rather with a change in the cultural milieu surrounding the texts and their reception. For example, in the case of Biblical understanding, the Hebrew Bible is reinterpreted by Christians through the understanding of Christology. The words of the Hebrew Bible do not change, but the cultural understanding of the stories does.

The assumption that a person's culture can change the meaning of a text is evident in the post-structuralist approach to textual analysis, an approach which is still relevant in today's modernist or postmodernist society. To the post-structuralist, "texts tended to become mirror images of the readers who assumed into their textual readings their own values as explicit modes and strategies for their reading processes."²⁰ Such an approach to texts allows for personal reflections of the reader's feelings, dogmas, social constraints and so forth, onto the texts. So, for example, one text may be interpreted or understood in different ways when perceived through various "isms" – feminism, neo-conservatism, fundamentalism, and so on.²¹

Assumption 5: Music can change the meaning of words

The fifth assumption is that music can in some way change the meaning of the words which are set musically. As with other types of meaning, such musical rhetoric is

²⁰ Robert P. Carroll, "Poststructuralist approaches: New Historicism and postmodernism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, ed. John Barton (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 50.

²¹ This is a main component of the act of *eisegesis*.

also culturally regulated. However, this regulation can be more subtle, and it points to the difficulty that philosophy has in dealing with the actual performative power of music. A simple and clear example of this type of meaning change is found in a hymn by Charles Wesley. “O Thou Who Camest From Above” has traditionally been published in British Methodist hymnals with two different tunes. Examples 1 and 2 show the first verse of the text with each tune. When one sings through them it is difficult to overlook the change in sense that the tunes impart on the texts themselves. It is this subtle type of change in meaning with which composers most often deal.

This fifth assumption enters the realm of the philosophy of music. Leonard Meyer distills the philosophical arguments of the early twentieth century into two broad camps. On one side are the absolutists which believe that “musical meaning lies exclusively within the context of the work itself.”²² On the other side are the referentialists which “contend that, in addition to these abstract, intellectual meanings [contained within the works themselves], music also communicates meanings which in some way refer to the extramusical world of concepts, actions, emotional state, and character.”²³

These two musico-philosophical positions are complemented by the

aesthetic positions which are commonly called “formalist” and “expressionist”.... The formalist would contend that the meaning of music lies in the perception and understanding of the musical relationships set forth in the work of art and that meaning in music is primarily intellectual, while the expressionist would argue that these same

²² Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, 1.

²³ Meyer, 1.

relationships are in some sense capable of exciting feelings and emotion in the listener.²⁴

O Thou who cam - - est from a - - bove

The first line of musical notation for the hymn. It consists of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff contains the vocal line with lyrics: "O Thou who cam - - est from a - - bove". The bass staff contains the piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C).

The pure ce - les - - - tial fire to im - part,

The second line of musical notation. The treble staff contains the vocal line with lyrics: "The pure ce - les - - - tial fire to im - part,". The bass staff contains the piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C).

Kin - dle a flame of sac - - red love

The third line of musical notation. The treble staff contains the vocal line with lyrics: "Kin - dle a flame of sac - - red love". The bass staff contains the piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C).

On the mean al - - - tar of my heart.

The fourth line of musical notation. The treble staff contains the vocal line with lyrics: "On the mean al - - - tar of my heart.". The bass staff contains the piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C).

Example 1. Charles Wesley's "O Thou Who Camest from Above" vs. 1 set to the tune WILTON.

²⁴ p. 2-3.

In fact, all of these distinctions operate along a continuum. The manipulation of the communicative ability represented by this continuum is one of the ways in which composers (albeit unknowingly) propel musical forms and offer self expression.

O Thou who cam - est from a - bove The pure ce - les - tial
fire to im - part, Kin - dle a flame of sac - red
love On the mean al - tar of my heart.

Example 2. Charles Wesley's "O Thou Who Camest from Above" vs. 1 set to the tune HEREFORD.

The philosophical problems inherent in the understanding of the communicative content and process of music are compounded when music is attached to texts. How and to what extent music means or offers extra meaning to a text is not the focus of this study.

Instead, this study assumes the communicative powers of music and language unite in music with texts to create an artwork which is otherwise incomplete.

CHAPTER III

PARALLELS BETWEEN BIBLICAL CRITICISM AND MUSICAL ANALYSIS

In his article “How We Got Into Analysis, and How to Get Out,” Joseph Kerman points out the distinction between what musicians call “theory and analysis” and what every other artistic discipline calls “criticism.” Kerman states,

Analysis sets out to discern and demonstrate the functional coherence of individual works of art, their “organic unity,” as is often said, and that is one of the things – one of the main things – that people outside of music mean by criticism.²⁵

This definition certainly pertains to the fields relevant to the present study: musical analysis and Biblical criticism. This chapter illuminates the similarities and differences between the processes of musical analysis and Biblical criticism.

One of the main differences between Biblical criticism and musical analysis is the relevant corpus of material studied. Theological and political forces have defined the Bible as a work consisting of a definite (and finite) number of books which make up the sacred Scripture. All other works which are studied as part of Judeo-Christian theology are not part of this canon. Music, on the other hand, has no authoritative body which has outlined and defined any canon of music relevant for musical study. However, while the canon of Scripture is set in size, musicians are forced into choosing which works to study

²⁵ Joseph Kerman, “How We Got Into Analysis, and How to Get Out,” *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Winter, 1980), 312.

and perform, and out of this culture of necessary choice has emerged a branch of criticism which, as Kerman states,

takes the masterpiece status of its subject matter as a *donnée* and then proceeds to lavish its whole attention on the demonstration of its inner coherence. Aesthetic judgment is concentrated tacitly on the initial choice of material to be analyzed then the analysis itself, which may be conducted with the greatest subtlety and rigor, can treat of artistic value only casually or... not at all. Another way of putting it is that the question of artistic value is at the same time absolutely basic and begged, begged consistently and programmatically.²⁶

So, while the Biblical scholar may choose which part of the Bible to study and then bring to bear the required hermeneutic tools, this choice does not state any preconceived notion of the relative quality of the passage in question. On the other hand, when musicians approach a piece of music, the choice of the piece itself is an indication of the analyst's orientation toward that piece in relation to all other pieces. In effect, the analyst is saying "this piece is worth my time to study." This is a qualitative judgment of a sort which would have no place in Biblical study.

Although the selection of musical pieces and Biblical-textual sections do portray different qualitative judgments, choice may also betray certain predispositions on the part of the analyst. For example, a staunch adherent to the principles of Schenkerian analysis would be more likely to choose a piece of music written by the German composers between the mid-to-late eighteenth century and the nineteenth century than would a

²⁶ Kerman, 313-314.

theorist versed in the principles of Fortean set-class analysis.²⁷ Likewise, a Biblical scholar well-versed in the process of form criticism may be more drawn to the stories of the Old Testament whose long oral tradition molded intricate narratives full of different genres (forms) of literature. Identifying these forms is an important step in understanding the meaning of the texts themselves.

In most cases, Biblical scholars and music analysts do not use only one set of principles for their work. Schenkerian analytical technique is somewhat limited in usefulness because a fundamental purpose of the technique was to prove the greatness of the literature on which it was based by demonstrating that the piece conforms to the background structures on which the technique itself relied. So, while fundamental structures of Schenker can be observed in the music of Stravinsky, for example, the techniques of Fortean set-class theory may be more appropriate to reveal relationships between surface structures. Likewise, the Biblical scholar's recognition of a section of text as a hymn (a form-critical technique) may dictate the use of canonical critical techniques and questions of *how* the section was used by the community at large.

The integration of analytical/critical techniques is at the heart of the thesis of this paper and highlights the most important similarity between Biblical criticism and musical analysis. Neither Biblical critics nor musical analysts (performer) stops their work with research, but continues with answering questions of meaning: "what does the Bible

²⁷ An introduction to Forte's set-class analysis can be found in Allen Forte, *The Structure of Atonal Music* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973). Briefly, the technique requires that harmonies be given numerical values which become teleological entities which can be compared within a given piece.

mean,” “what does this piece of music mean,” “how does this selection of the Bible or music relate to the other related literature.”²⁸

²⁸ This last question is posed from a Biblical perspective in John Barton, ed., *Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHORAL COMPOSER AND THE VERBAL TEXT

Composers use and manipulate text at various levels in order to inform the musical setting. These levels are architectonic levels ranging from the overall form of the text down to the single word. Some of the choices composers make at these levels are dependent solely on the texts themselves; other choices are required by the way the texts are used (for example, in worship versus in concert), and still other choices are left to the composer. This section will present these levels and discern composer choices.

The largest architectonic level is the overall choice and form of the text. In many cases the overall form lends its name to the setting: for example, *Magnificat*, *Mass*, or *Requiem*. In many cases, the composer has little choice in the overall form of these pieces. A *Mass* setting generally has five movements; otherwise it is a *Missa Brevis* or an anomaly. Sometimes, however, the composer does exercise certain freedoms that influence the actual meaning of the overall piece. These freedoms include choice of text, addition of text(s) to an already codified text, and a complete change of texts from the already codified text²⁹.

Certain musical forms allow the composer to freely choose the texts to set to music. The most common English-language sacred-music form of this type is the

²⁹ Throughout this paper I will use the term codified texts. This is used to refer to texts which are in some way normative in churches. For example, scriptural texts, mass texts, and canticle texts are all codified. Texts of hymns, modern anthems, and chorales (though presumably sanctioned) are not codified.

anthem. These prose texts began as English versions of the Latin antiphon – a text which was sung before and after the appointed Psalm and, if appropriate, helped unify the Psalm with the other readings. By the mid-sixteenth century, English had replaced Latin as the language of the then-young Anglican Church, and with it slowly arose the anthem as a new form separate from the Psalm and distinct from the hymn. The texts often were selected from the lectionary reading for the service, but were usually shortened by the composer. For example, Weelkes' *Alleluia, I Heard a Voice* sets part of the text of Revelation 19: verses 1 and 6. The King James Version of the Bible presents the text:

1. And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: 6. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Weelkes only sets part of this text and adds an interpolation:

Alleluia. I heard a voice as of strong thund'rings, saying Alleluia.
Salvation and glory and honour and power be unto the Lord our God, be unto the Lord our God, and to the Lamb forevermore.

The choice of text and the addition of “and to the Lamb forevermore” makes the anthem much more about praise of God than about the singular experience of the writer.

In other instances, composers have freedom to take an already codified text and add texts to it. *Passion* settings are a good example. In his *St. Matthew Passion*, J. S. Bach sets the entire text of the passion narrative as presented in Matthew's Gospel, and

interpolates into it arias and chorales with texts written by Picander.³⁰ In every case these texts tie in very specific theological themes which comment on the action of the narrative. For example, in the chorale “Ich bin’s, ich sollte büßen” (“It is I who should repent”) the chorus (and congregation) reflect on the upcoming betrayal of the disciples and answer the question personally and affirmatively.

Composers sometimes add extra texts to codified texts in order to change the meaning of the codified texts or to give the codified text a different philosophical focus. The best example of such text usage is Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem*. The combination of the traditional Requiem texts with poems by Wilfred Owen gives the work a philosophical stance which is not about the Church’s dogmatic understanding of life and the afterlife, but rather about the atrocities of war.³¹ The most striking example of this type of philosophical change is in the “offertorium.” The story is told of Abraham and Isaac on the mountain of sacrifice. In the Biblical story, Abraham and Isaac proceed to the mountain and Abraham prepares to sacrifice Isaac. An angel intervenes, a ram is provided, and Abraham is lauded for his willingness to obediently sacrifice his only son.

Britten’s setting which uses Owen’s texts is somewhat different. The choir sings the traditional Latin text “which Thou did promise to Abraham and his seed,” while the soloists sing the words of Owen’s poem ““offer the ram of pride instead of him.’/ But the

³⁰ Picander is the pen-name for Christian Friedrich Henrici, the German poet who lived and worked in Germany 1700-1764.

³¹ Wilfred Owen was an English poet who served as a soldier in the First World War. He was born in 1893 and was killed in action at the Battle of the Sambre in 1918 just one week before the war ended. His poetry portrays the horror of war.

old man would not so, but slew his son,/ and half the seed of Europe, one by one.” As this last line is sung, the boys of the choir sing “sacrifice and prayers we offer thee, Lord.”

In this instance, Owen’s amendments to the words of the Biblical story found in the book of Genesis completely changes the focus of the Biblical story from one of faithful obedience to a social commentary on the futility of war. Britten’s juxtaposition of this text with the traditional texts of the Requiem lays on the already thick social commentary of the Owen poem an even deeper association and commentary of tradition, church and creed. If the listener knows the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac, and if the listener understands the texts of the Requiem, then the disjunction between the understood theology of these texts and the final version of the *War Requiem* with its juxtaposed texts is even more poignant. In addition, the music Britten uses for the soloists in this section is the same as his *Canticle II* which is a setting of the correct story as found in Genesis, in which Abraham offers the ram instead of Issac. The entire *War Requiem* is replete with such intra-, inter- and extra-opus associations.

Another form of text choice is evidenced in Johannes Brahms’ *Ein Deutches Requiem*. In this piece Brahms uses the title “requiem” but does not use the Latin texts of the Requiem. Instead he uses scriptural texts which are pastoral in nature and eschew the traditional eschatological Requiem texts with their imagery of “days of wrath” and the final judgment. While the traditional texts are a prayer on behalf of the dead, Brahms’ texts provide comfort for the mourner.

The next architectonic level is the division of the texts once chosen. Like the selection of the larger textual forms, many decisions regarding textual division are mostly

a matter of codification or convention. For example, the Mass has five sections, each treated separately as a self-contained movement. The ritual requirements of the non-musical portions of the Mass usually dictate the decision to retain the five distinct movements. In every case, a composer's musical treatment of each section is dependent upon the emotional qualities of the text which the composer wishes to emphasize and the theological understanding which the composer has of the texts themselves. Once again, the codified, and therefore official, understanding of the texts may limit the composer's choices.

In addition to the ritual requirements, there exist other mitigating factors for the division of the texts. Many of these are of a practical nature. For example, to split a text into smaller units requires more music and subsequently more time. If a composer chooses to split the "Creed" of the Mass into small units such as textual phrases, the piece would last far too long to be practical in a service of worship. Although, this would not necessarily impede the ritual, it would just last too long.

The final architectonic level, the single word, is the level at which the composer can make the most overt and obvious statements. Textually, repeating a word can bring emphasis. Musically, madrigalisms and characteristic motives such as the sigh motive directly reflect the meaning of the text in an onomatopoeic way. Often a single word can also influence the entire texture of a musical setting including instrumentation and general mood or emotion. Conversely, the musical texture can influence the text and give emphasis to a single word within it. In this way, this is the level at which the composer's desired emotional statements come into play.

These three architectonic levels – textual choice and form, textual division, and the single word – are the playground of a rich dialogue between history, theology, philosophy, music, and meaning. Once made, the textual choices allow the composer to interpret the textual meaning through the medium of music. The combination of text and music creates a tapestry which is more complete than either the text or the music alone. The combination also allows the composer to comment on the theological and emotional meaning of the words in order to add to or subtly change the meaning of the text.

CHAPTER V

MUSICAL MEANING, THEOLOGICAL IMPORT AND AN ANALYSIS

The relations of theology, musical meaning, emotion, and creativity allow for a rich understanding of music's communicative ability. Many analytical studies of music exist which ponder the relation of music and texts, and these probe the depths of history to the very beginnings of writings about music. The specific analyses are usually presented as either a dialogue between composer and text or a dialogue between composer and listener through the text. Sacred music adds a layer of complexity with the issue of codification; composers do not compose in a vacuum, but rather uphold and reinforce, or criticize and challenge the teachings, rubrics, and dogmas of the institution in which they compose. Therefore, the institution's hierarchy is added into the dialogue between composer and text. The mitigation that the institution's understanding of a text has is normative on the way that composers can portray the texts. In other words, given two composers in close geographical and temporal proximity composing within the same institution, a similar musical setting would be expected by the two composers if they were to set the same text.

But what is meant by "a similar music setting"? How do the notes that constitute a musical setting reflect sameness in a text, or alternatively, change the meaning of the words? These complex questions have no single correct answer, but rather a complex web of possible answers. I am going to follow Peter Kivy's lead and sidestep the referentialist and formalist philosophical debate presented in Chapter II and say only that

when composers set texts to music, composers use the music to present the desired emotion of the text.³² Whether that emotional meaning comes from the form of the work itself or from the references that music makes to the emotions themselves has no bearing. So, the central philosophical standpoint is that music uses or expresses emotion to portray meaning. In this case, the understanding of the ways in which music (1) uses or expresses emotion and (2) the outcome of the emotion in the listener differentiate opposing philosophical points of view.

If this assertion is accepted, then emotion is the starting place for understanding the complex association of music, theology and text. In the communicative chain, there are many different emotional states which bear on the communicative effort. In textless music, the composer somehow ascertains the emotion which the composer wishes to portray. The listener then hears the music within a certain emotional state, and the listener is then moved to an emotional response to the music. The listener's response is mitigated by current mood, previous knowledge of or contact with the piece, and the knowledge of the stylistic traits of the piece.

A musically simple example will elucidate the beginning principles of the process of musical textual interaction and the analytical techniques used to ascertain the multifold meanings of the interaction. Hymns are musically simple because the resources are four-part singers and, usually, keyboard accompaniment. Therefore, many of the most obviously denotational elements of music are absent or at least unspecified; there are no

³² Peter Kivy, *The Corded Shell: Reflections on Musical Expression* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), Chapter X.

trumpets to signify joy, drums to signify marching, or oboes to evoke images of countryside.³³ Instead there is, basically, harmony, melody, and meter.

Charles Wesley's hymn text "O Thou Who Camest from Above" was presented with two different hymn tunes in examples 1 and 2. The text of this verse is:

O Thou who camest from above
The pure celestial fire to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love
On the mean altar of my heart.

The hymn is in long meter with eight syllables per line, and the iambic foot remains constant throughout the verse. A slight anomaly is found in the second line in which the word "to" is inserted, causing an extra syllable and a break in the iambic-foot pattern.³⁴

The rhyme scheme of the text is AB AB.

This verse has several particularly evocative words which are underlined in the text presented above. The connection of these words for most Christian believers would be of sacrifice – both literal and figurative. In addition, the author of this text was Charles Wesley, whose brother John was saved from a fire as a child. In adulthood, John referred to himself as a "brand picked from the burning."³⁵ John also reported that his

³³ Such denotation is historically part of the organist's job; however, that is not notated in the musical score.

³⁴ Strangely, some American hymnals (including the *United Methodist Hymnal*, 1989, p. 501) have added a syllable to the final line of the verse so that it reads "upon the mean altar of my heart." Though this does make the verse regular with an 89 89 syllabic pattern, it is not Wesley's original, nor does it conform to the other verses of the hymn which are invariably Long Meter. Single lines with differing syllabic count are not rare in Wesley's hymns.

³⁵ Robert G. Tuttle, Jr., *John Wesley: His Life and Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1978), 42.

heart was “strangely warmed” at his conversion. Together, John and Charles started the movement which became the Methodist Church; it is difficult for Methodist Christians to separate faith from fire.³⁶ When taken apart from each other, the important words of this verse can mean many different things. For example, fire can be very hot, or it can be cooling embers waning in heat, or kindling just ignited and waxing in heat. The emotional charge of these words is highly evocative and rich for the possibility of added musical meaning.

Musically, consider only the first measure of the tune HEREFORD (example 3). In $\frac{8}{4}$ meter, the initial anacrusis tonic is left by a leap in the bass that creates an incomplete neighbor $\frac{8}{4}$ resolving to a V^7 which moves to vi . The immediate motion away from tonic on the strong beat of the first measure creates a quiet and wistful character which is underpinned by the strong stepwise voice-leading $\frac{6-5}{8-7}$ into the second beat of the first measure.

G: I $V^{\frac{8-7}{6-5/4-3}}$ vi

Example 3. HEREFORD, m. 1 with roman numeral analysis.

³⁶ See, for example, The United Methodist Church’s logo referred to as “the Cross and Flame” <http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?mid=1563>.

Compare this with the first measure of the tune WILTON (example 4). In $\frac{4}{4}$ meter, the initial anacrusis chord is restated on the downbeat of the first measure. The melody remains completely static throughout the measure, harmonic motion created only by the stepwise ascent of alto and bass through passing motion to I^6 . Both alto and bass return to the original voicing of tonic on beat four.

Example 4. WILTON, m. 1 with roman numeral analysis.

The foregoing analyses of only the first measures demonstrates an important point: a hymn tune's character and the meaning it expresses are immediately apparent. The difference between the ready use of dissonance, specifically downward resolving suspension, in HEREFORD and the force of restatement in WILTON gives to the listener direct information about the tune. When coupled with the text "O Thou," these first notes then give the words different interpretations – gentle pleading and forceful statement respectively. In the case of these hymn tunes (as with most hymn tunes, which, as a genre, are musically uncomplicated) the character of the hymn tune stays generally the same throughout. Likewise, in Western music, sections of a piece usually contain a singular expressive content until the composer actively changes that content through

manipulation of the musical material. This seemingly obvious statement is the primary vehicle which composers have to impress musical meaning on the texts of vocal music.

Continuing the analyses of these hymns will elucidate this point more fully (example 5). In HEREFORD the melody's 6-5 suspension found on the first beats of the first measure becomes a relevant melodic motive. It is repeated at the beginning of the second textual line transposed up a third, this time as a 7-6 suspension. The third textual line begins with this same melodic figure appearing in the bass voice. Against the soprano, the bass suspension becomes a 2-3 suspension. The bass-suspension figure is repeated immediately in the next measure. The first chord in this iteration is a V_2^4 which resolves to a I_3^6 . The bass motion supports a leap of a fourth in the soprano which is a defining moment as the climax of the melody. The final textual line begins with what is expected to be the same figure in the soprano. However, this time, the resolution of the suspension is avoided completely, and the soprano leaps down a fifth to create an incomplete root position vi chord with tripled third.

Another striking motivic parallel in this hymn tune is the cadential figure which mirrors the suspension figure of the first three notes of the melody. The cadence of the second phrase contains the same suspension figure as the first three notes, but this time cadential, rather than neighboring: V_{4-3}^{6-5} . The final cadence of the hymn is related but further embellished. The cadential $_4^6$ is placed on beat two of the bar, thus allowing an extra tonic suspension. The resulting progression is $V_{4-3}^{6-5} V^7 I_{4-3}^{9-8}$. Though slightly different, the cadence of the first phrase is related. In this instance, the cadential $_{4-3}^{6-5}$

G: I V_{4-3}^{8-7} vi ii⁶ vii^{o6} i⁶ ii⁹⁻⁸₇₋₆ V_{4-3}^{6-5} I⁹⁻¹⁰₇₋₈ V^6 IV⁷⁻⁶ $\frac{6}{4}$ IV vii^{o6}₄ I⁶

ii V^6 I V_{4-3}^{6-5} V ii⁹⁻¹⁰₆₋₆ $\frac{4}{2}$ V_2^4 I⁶ vi ii⁴⁻³₇ V⁷

I⁴⁻⁵₇₋₈ V^6 vi⁷ ii⁷ V⁷ V_{3-2}^{7-6} iii IV V_{4-3}^{6-5} I⁹⁻⁸₇₋₈

Example 5. HEREFORD with complete roman numeral analysis

precedes an upwardly resolving I_{7-8}^{9-10} suspension. This inverts the melodic unit of the first three notes. The cadence of the third phrase is most unlike the others. This cadence does not contain a cadential⁶₄ but proceeds ii⁷ V⁷ I⁷⁻⁸₄₋₃. The suspension and neighbor figure above the ii chord adds interest and provides another way to lead into the three-note melodic motive figure.

Now consider the rest of the hymn tune WILTON (example 6). The first measure's passing tone figure in bass and alto is repeated in measure two. This time,

however, the passing tone is harmonized as a V_3^6 of V. The cadence is achieved through a root position IV (predominant) and a strong cadence, $V_{4-3}^{\frac{8}{4}-\frac{7}{3}}$ to I. The strength of the cadence arises from the downward motion of all of the suspending voices and the addition of the chordal seventh. Phrase two begins with the same passing figure and proceeds with a related applied dominant. However, this applied dominant tonicizes D Major, and proceeds toward a stronger cadence in D Major which doubles the length of each member of the cadential suspension, and reserves the chordal seventh until the final beat preceding the tonic resolution, thereby causing a heightened sense of closure.

The third phrase restarts on the dominant of G Major, the outline of the V^7 pushing the melody toward its climax. The phrase ends with another half-cadence, again using the cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ at the cadence. The final phrase departs from the previous phrases by not repeating the anacrusis chord, but rather moving to the subdominant. The bass motion remains the same as in measure one with a passing tone under static upper parts. The final cadence mirrors the cadence of the first phrase, but the inversion of the upper parts allows for a perfect authentic cadence.

In form these two hymns are very much the same, but the minor differences at the major points of articulation are enlightening. Obviously, both are four phrases and accommodate the four-line text. The cadence pattern of HEREFORD is: authentic cadence, half cadence, authentic cadence, perfect authentic cadence. The cadence pattern of WILTON is: perfect authentic cadence, perfect authentic cadence on the dominant (half cadence within the major form), half cadence, perfect authentic cadence. The

O Thou who cam - est from a - bove
 The pure ce - les - tial fire to im - part,
 Kin - dle a flame of sac - red love
 On the mean al - tar of my heart.

G: I 6 $^{\frac{5}{3}}$ V V/V V^6 I IV $V^{\frac{8-7}{4-3}}$ I
 I 6 $^{\frac{5}{3}}$ D: I $V^{\frac{3}{3}}$ I 6 ii 6 $V^{\frac{6}{2}}$ $^{\frac{5}{3}}$ 7 I
 G:V 7 I ii 6 $^{\frac{5}{3}}$ ii $^{\frac{9-8}{7-3}}$ $V^{\frac{6}{4-3}}$
 I IV 6 $V^{\frac{6}{5}}$ I 6 ii 6 $V^{\frac{8-7}{4-3}}$ I

Example 6. WILTON with complete roman numeral analysis.

difference between the relatively weak non-perfect authentic cadences found in
 HEREFORD and the goal-directed perfect authentic cadences in WILTON support the
 initial emotional content stated before, gentle pleading and forceful statement respectively.

Viewing the complete harmonic and formal analyses, one can clearly see the penetration of the initial measure's statements throughout each hymn tune. The harmonic scheme of the initial beats is the harmonic language of the entire hymn. The harmonic language also makes certain demands on the melodic language and contour. For example, the downward resolution of suspension requires a downward melodic motion. Therefore, if the melody of HEREFORD can ever achieve an upward ascent, then it must meander to break the downward flow. WILTON does not require this, and direct linear motion is more prevalent.

Now consider a few of the single words in the text and how they relate to the music. A purely practical matter is that each tune absorbs the extra syllable of the second line in different ways. HEREFORD requires the last quarter note of m. 7 to be split. In practice this note is usually divided into two eighth notes. WILTON absorbs this extra syllable by assigning it to a note that was already part of a melisma. Neither tune obscures the musical meter because of the way the metrical foot of the text is amended; the addition of the unaccented syllable textually allows the tune to absorb the required extra note between the musically strong beats.³⁷ On a more interpretive level, the word "flame" in the third line is treated in similar fashion in both tunes. In both, the word is melismatic and contains the highest note of the melody. HEREFORD approaches the word from the beginning of the phrase with little motion. WILTON, on the other hand, approaches with an arpeggiated V⁷ in a very strong linear move.

³⁷ The concept of *tactus* is important in instances like this because the *tactus* is unobscured while the rhythm is changed.

In her article “A Cognitive Theory of Musical Meaning” Candace Brower uses a schema map to trace melodic and harmonic motion.³⁸ The schema map for the first phrase of each of these hymns is shown in figure 1. These schema maps in figure include only pitch material and motion to and from those pitches. They record the high points and low points of melodic motion in the phrase, and give a clear view of the melodic motion of the music. Adding the harmonic information to this would not change WILTON, but it would change HEREFORD drastically because every note of the melody would need to be included in the map, because every melodic note has a harmonic function, either suspension or resolution. In some instances, the lower notes would also be the notes with the least tension. Brower’s maps are not meant to be multi-dimensional in this way, but used along with the harmonic analysis, they become very rich with multi-dimensional meanings.

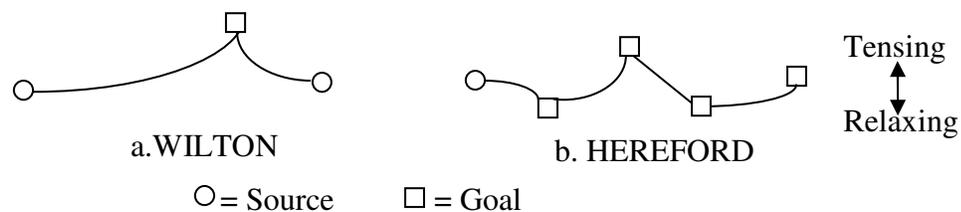


Figure 1. Source-goal schema for the melodies of the first phrase of WILTON and HEREFORD.

In her article, Brower uses these melodic maps to explore the notions that “thinking consists, at least in part, of matching patterns of thought to patterns of experience... [and] that much of thinking consists of mapping patterns of bodily

³⁸ Candace Brower, “A Cognitive Theory of Musical Meaning,” *Journal of Music Theory*, vol. 41, no. 2 (Autumn, 2000), 323-379.

experience onto patterns in other domains,” and relating these notions to a theory of musical meaning.³⁹ In this sense, the quest for understanding musical meaning and the influence these meanings have on texts is a form of analogy drawing. There are many ways in which the analogy between musical sound and experience can be drawn. For the hymn tunes currently under consideration, examples of hypothetical questions are “how do the musical resources change the inflection of the text, just as a speaker inflects his voice to change the meaning of a text?” or, “how does the meandering melody of HEREFORD relate differently to the experienced world than the driven melody of WILTON?”

This is the point at which exegesis, reading out the meaning material of a text, meets eisegesis, imposing on a text an interpreter’s preconceived meaning. In the case of hymn tunes, the interchangeability of texts and tunes often comes many years after both the text and tune were written down. An editorial board decides which tunes are paired with which texts; and in the final use, a music director can change the tune to more accurately represent the required meaning of the text. In the hymn tunes presented above, HEREFORD presents a deity, “O Thou,” that is sought after and requested, and a fire which will keep its warmth. On the other hand, WILTON presents a deity that is known and directly addressed for a fire that will blaze brightly.

There are several major difficulties with this type of interpretation. First of all, this is one person’s understanding of the interchange of text and music. Though there are normative understandings, two people very well may understand the interchange differently. Second, this type of interpretation takes music from the realm of musical

³⁹ Brower, 323.

meaning and translates it into words, an act which is, in itself, imbued with the possibility of exegesis and eisegesis. And, finally, different experience levels with both the theological and musical materials will change the meaning. A person who knows nothing of the relevance of fire to Christian believers may have a completely different understanding of the ways in which the texts interact.

How is this activity of interpretation with sacred texts different than any other text, for example art song? It is different because the texts themselves are meant to form and influence the understanding of a community of believers. Therefore, when these texts are set to music, there are normative requirements on the settings to which any of these texts can be put. In addition, the use to which these texts are put by the community can influence the texts in the ways presented in the assumptions of Chapter II.

CHAPTER VI
REPRESENTATIVE ANALYSES OF THE *MAGNIFICAT* SETTINGS
OF BACH AND STANFORD

The text of the Magnificat is found in the Gospel According to Luke 1:46-55. Its common title comes from the incipit of the Latin Vulgate version of the text (table 1 with its English translation), and it is also called The Song of Mary and Canticle of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is one of three canticles found in the book of Luke (Benedictus, Luke I: 68-79, and Nunc Dimittis, Luke 2:29-32 are the others) and forms a theological bridge with the Old Testament as it closely parallels the song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1-10, and makes allusion to many Psalms.⁴⁰

In Luke's narrative, Mary visits Elizabeth and tells her that she is pregnant, and is to bear Jesus, the savior. Elizabeth is also pregnant and both of these pregnancies are miracles. Mary is a virgin, and learned of her pregnancy through the miraculous visit of an angel. Elizabeth, who is barren and "getting on in years" (Luke 1: 18b), learned of her pregnancy by a miraculous visit of an angel to her husband. Elizabeth is pregnant with John the Baptist, described in all of the Gospels as the one who came before to foretell of the coming kingdom and the Messiah. Mary utters the Magnificat as a response to Elizabeth's joyful reception of Mary's news. The plot of this story, and the rest of Luke's

⁴⁰ For a partial list see Wayne A. Meeks, general ed., *The Harper Collins Study Bible New Revised Standard Version* (Harper Collins: New York, 1993), 1956 ff.

Table 1. The text of the Magnificat from the Latin Vulgate and the English Book of Common Prayer.

Latin Vulgate	English from Book of Common Prayer
<p>Magnificat anima mea Dominum, et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salvatore meo, quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae.</p> <p>Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes, quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est,</p> <p>et sanctum nomen eius, et misericordia eius in progenies et progenies timentibus eum. Fecit potentiam in brachio suo, dispersit superbos mente cordis sui;</p> <p>deposuit potentes de sede</p> <p>et exaltavit humiles; esurientes implevit bonis</p> <p>et divites dimisit inanes. Suscepit Israel puerum suum, recordatus misericordiae, sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham et semini eius in saecula</p>	<p>My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.</p> <p>For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden</p> <p>For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath magnified me and holy is his Name.</p> <p>And his mercy is on them that fear him throughout all generations. He hath shewed strength with his arm he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.</p> <p>He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble and meek. He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich he hath sent empty away.</p> <p>He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.</p>

Gospel, are “driven by the divine necessity of Jesus’ mission.”⁴¹ This divine necessity requires that Jesus be placed within the context of the salvation history of Israel, and the interpolation of the Magnificat text ties Mary directly with the Old Testament through its many allusions to the Old Testament.

The text of the Magnificat resides in a world of past and future together and in a world that requires re-ordering. For Christian believers it is a prophetic hymn that tells

⁴¹ Meeks, 1954.

the story of what Mary's child will be. She says "Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed" (1: 48) and ties this blessing within the Old Testament story "according to the promise he [God] made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever" (1: 55). Mary is praising God for the promises that God gave in the past, and what this means in the future. It has also been regarded as a hymn of protest and empowerment for the downtrodden: "he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts" (1:51b), "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty" (1:52-53).

Interestingly, though, the canticle itself neither mentions the name Jesus nor any part of the actual salvation history within which Mary is placed so squarely. In fact, viewed outside of the context of Luke's narrative, it is just a hymn of praise to God that anyone could sing at any time. Even the line which alludes to Mary's place within the salvation history ("all generations will call me blessed," 1: 48b) is not confined to association with Mary. In the final analysis, the hymn is not even particularly Christian. Therefore, the canticle has three aspects: the poem itself, the poem within the context of the story, and the poem within Luke's theological purposes.⁴²

The poem itself is a song of joy and thanksgiving pronounced by a person grateful to God. It recounts the good things which God has brought the speaker individually, and it expounds the mighty acts God has done for the community at large and which God promises to do in the future and forever. Within the narrative, the poem is a

⁴² In his narrative, Luke includes two other canticles, the Song of Simeon (2: 29-32), and the Canticle of Zachariah (1: 68-79). Both of these fit very neatly into the narrative, and comment directly on the actions which have taken place.

crystallization of all that is the salvation history and legacy of Jesus Christ. It is Mary who sings the song and thanks God for the good things God has done in her life because he has chosen her. She recounts the mighty acts of God in the community only as a reminder that God is good and that God's goodness extends to all. Luke uses the poem to tie Mary and Jesus into the salvation history of the Hebrew people and to prove how Jesus' life is a fulfillment of scripture.

To these three aspects of the poem, the Church has added a fourth aspect through its use in communal worship. In the early sixth century, *St. Benedict's Rule for Monasteries* codified the daily pattern of prayer for his central Italian monastic community.⁴³ Based upon earlier models of daily prayer, it would be "adopted in monasteries throughout the Western Church" and would become the model of daily prayer services even into the twentieth century in both monastic and non-monastic communities.⁴⁴ Along with the other two Lukan canticles, the Magnificat is used in the main services which frame the monastic order of daily prayer. The collection of eight prayer services is called the Divine Office. The Magnificat is sung daily at the main evening service called Vespers (from the Latin *ad vespertas* meaning at evening or dusk), which is the final service of the daylight hours. Its basic format would serve as the core of reformed liturgies including Anglican Evensong and Lutheran Vespers.

⁴³ Leonard J. Doyle, translator, *St. Benedict's Rule for Monasteries* (The Liturgical Press: Collegeville, MN, 1948). Chapters 8-20 are specifically about daily worship.

⁴⁴ John Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century: A Historical Introduction and Guide for Students and Musicians* (Clarendon: Oxford, 1996), 73.

The early adoption of the Magnificat into the evening service implies the high esteem in which the canticle was held. This high esteem was due to those theological points outlined above, and also to two related things: 1) Luke, the Gospel writer's overarching purpose, and 2) the general nature of the text itself. As Luke Johnson says of Luke's writing,

Luke grasps the meaning of Jesus and the church for the world in a single vision, and he tells that story so that what happens with Jesus foreshadows the church's experience and what happens in the church finds meaning as the continuation of Jesus' story.⁴⁵

The general nature of praise which is inherent in this text and this vantage point of Luke's make this song, (which, to the Christian, is uttered at the point of the beginning of the continuation of God's act of salvation) the perfect vehicle for the prayers and celebrations of the community of believers.

However perfect the text itself may be to act as prayer and praise for a community, it is not perfect. It is still not specifically Christian. In practice the Church has appended the Lesser Doxology ("Gloria Patri et filio...") to texts to make them specifically Christian.⁴⁶ The Divine Office includes the Lesser Doxology at the end of every Psalm for that reason. So too, it is prescribed in worship books and tradition to add the Lesser Doxology to the end of the Magnificat and to all of the canticles of the Office.

⁴⁵ Luke T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1986), 199.

⁴⁶ The Greater Doxology is the "Glory to God in the Highest."

The text which remains and which is set by composers almost always includes the “Gloria Patri.”

Composers compose within this overarching theological and liturgical understanding of the text of the Magnificat whether or not they realize all of these subtle associations. When Bach composed his settings of the Magnificat he was working within the Reformed Lutheran liturgical practices. German was the language used most frequently for these services, and congregational singing was held as a most important vehicle for communal praise.⁴⁷ The Order for Vespers at the Leipzig main church during Bach’s tenure includes four congregational hymns.⁴⁸ In addition, on most Sundays, the Magnificat was sung in German (“Meine seele erhebt den Herren”) as a congregational hymn (see table 2).⁴⁹

On festal occasions, the Magnificat was set and sung in an appropriate festival manner. For Bach, this meant an extended polyphonic setting in Latin and included the use of an orchestra larger in size than normal. Bach’s original setting of the Magnificat was “the first larger-scale composition for the Leipzig main churches, [and] was performed at a small festival of sacred music during Bach’s first Christmas season in his new city.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ See Robin Leaver, “Liturgical Music as Corporate Song 1: Hymnody in Reformation Churches” in *Liturgy and Music: Lifetime Learning*, Robin A. Leaver and Joyce Ann Zimmerman, editors, (The Liturgical Press: Collegeville, MN, 1998), 283 ff. for a complete explanation of the hymn in Lutheran worship and Luther’s own thought.

⁴⁸ These churches included St. Thomas’s and St. Paul’s and Bach would have provided primary leadership for these two churches.

⁴⁹ Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician* (W. W. Norton & Company: New York, 2000), 259.

⁵⁰ Wolff, 288.

Table 2. Order of Vespers at the main Leipzig Churches⁵¹

Congregation and Organ	Choir	Preacher and Ministrants
Organ Prelude		
	Polyphonic Hymn Polyphonic Motet Cantata (repeat from morning service)	
Prelude Hymn		Psalm The Lord's Prayer
Prelude Hymn		Sermon Prayers, Collect, Benediction
Prelude	Polyphonic Magnificat during Festal seasons	
German Magnificat Hymn during Regular Sundays		Responsory, Collect, Benediction
Hymn: Nun danket alle Gott Organ Postlude		

The work exists in two forms which differ in several details. The first form of the work (BWV 243a) is in E-flat major and includes four interpolations of hymns (called *laudes*) specific to the Christmas season. The practice of interpolating hymns was a Leipzig custom, which had begun in the Middle Ages and was practiced by Bach's predecessors.⁵² The four hymns which Bach uses are "Vom Himmel hoch" (in German),

⁵¹ Adapted from Wolff, 259; and Malcolm Boyd, ed., "Vespers" in *Oxford Composer Companions: J. S. Bach*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1999), 490.

⁵² Wolff, 289.

“Freut euch und jubiliert” (in German), “Gloria in excelsis Deo” (in Latin), and “Virga Jesse floruit” (in Latin).⁵³ English translations are printed below.

After “Et exultavit”

From heav'n on high I come to you, I bring to you glad tidings new;
I bring to you good tidings new;
Of that good news I bring so much,
Thereof both sing and tell I will. (Text by Martin Luther)

After “Quia fecit”

Rejoice with triumph glad;
In Bethlehem revealed hath been
The darling little Jesus-child,
That shall to you joy and pleasure bring. (Author unknown)

After “Fecit potentiam”

Glory be to God on high! And on earth peace to men of good will! (Text from Luke 2:14)

After “Esurientes implevit”

Jesse's maid then fruit did bear,
Emanuel our Lord appeared to us;
Himself in mortal flesh he put,
A child most pleasing he became;
Alleluia. (Text by Paul Eber)⁵⁴

⁵³ An exhaustive history of these interpolations can be found in Robert M. Cammorota, “The Sources of the Christmas Interpolations in J.S. Bach’s Magnificat in E-flat Major (BWV 243a),” *Current Musicology*, 36 (1982), 79-99.

⁵⁴ Texts and translations from Ambrose, Z. Phillip <http://www.uvm.edu/~classics/faculty/bach/>.

It is important to note two things about these interpolations. First of all, two are sung in German and two in Latin, making the overall text of the first version of Bach's *Magnificat* a macaronic (using more than one language) combination of scripture and traditional German and Latin hymnody. Secondly, and most importantly, the inclusion of these texts makes the *Magnificat* specifically a Christmas text. In fact, these texts act in exactly the opposite way that Luke uses the canticle itself. In the Gospel the canticle is a song of praise which expounds the overall virtues of God. The inclusion of these texts takes the canticle from this lofty perch, and sets it in the actual activity of the birth narrative as found in the Gospel. Mary sings "And my spirit rejoices in God my savior," and the angel responds with the "glad tidings."⁵⁵ Later, we hear "for He that is mighty has magnified me," and in response we are told that the magnifier is a baby yet to be born. Each interpolation puts a particularly Christian and, more specifically, Christmas emphasis on the texts that come before and after.

As interesting as these text interpolations are, Bach actually excised them from the final version of the setting (BWV 243). Along with removing these *laudes* texts, he also changed the key to D major, a more natural key for trumpets and drums. In removing the Christmas interpolations, Bach took the text back to its origins as a song of praise, and thus made it appropriate for use on any festival day, not just in the Christmas season. The D-major version is the version most often performed today, and the forthcoming analysis will refer to this version only.

⁵⁵ Notice that this is backwards from the actual birth narrative. In the Gospel, Mary has already heard the news and she sings, at least partially, in response to this good news. The listener familiar with the story would have no problem making the relationship even though it is backwards.

Bach's setting is in twelve movements, each movement treating only one or two verses of the text (see table 3). The overall form of the piece is predicated on the concise parsing of the text into these short textual phrases. This parsing further enables each phrase of text to be set musically in an appropriate emotional way. This both follows convention for the Baroque period settings of this text, and affords ample opportunity for the exercise of *affektenlehre* or the Baroque doctrine of the affections.⁵⁶ The final movement is the customary addition of the Lesser Doxology which gives the entire text a Christian focus.

The tonal organization of the work is concise and shows only two movement-to-movement key-center motions which are not adjacent on the major/minor circle of fifths. These shifts divide the text according to the orientation of the speaker. The first section (including numbers 1-5) is about the speaker: my soul and spirit rejoice because He has regarded me favorably, and all generations will remember how blessed I was, because He has made me great. The second section (numbers 6-9) concerns the telling of the deeds that God has wrought through history: He is merciful to those who fear him, he has showed his strength, he has taken away the thrones of the mighty and has sent the rich away empty while he has given the hungry food. The final section (numbers 10-11 and 12) is about the glorious deeds which God has done specifically to Israel, and with the

⁵⁶ David Schulenberg states that in the concept of categorizing emotion in music, as the Doctrine of the Affections would have it, and that each composition "should express only a single affect, is rare or unknown in writings of Bach's time, nor do his musical works provide consistent evidence for the existence of such a doctrine" (*Oxford Composer Companion*). Nonetheless, the *Magnificat* does have specific emotions presented in each movement which do say something about Bach's intended meaning of the text.

Table 3. An outline of the text and key structure of the Bach *Magnificat* in D Major, BWV 243.

	Text	Key of movement and number of sharps in (implied) signature			Special Notes on Key
1	Magnificat anima mea Dominum	I	D major	2	
2	Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutaris	I	D major	2	
3	Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae	vi	B minor – F# minor of next movement.	2	ends dominant of F# minor and elides into no. 4.
4	Omnes generations	iii	F# minor	3	
5	Quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est, et sanctum noem ejus	V	A major	3	
6	Et misericordia a progenie in progenies timentibus eum	ii	E minor	1	
7	Fecit potentiam in brachio suo, dispersit superbos mente cordis sui	IV-I	G major – D major	1-2	
8	Deposuit potentes, et exaltavit humiles	iii	F# minor	3	
9	Esurientes implevit bonis, et divites dimisit	II	E major	4	
10	Suscepit Israel puerum suum, recordatus misericordiae suae	vi	B minor	2	
11	Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham etsemi in saecula	I	D major	2	
12	Gloria Patri Filio et Spiritui Sancto! Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper, et in saecula saeculorum, Amen.	I	D Major	2	Starts on V

addition of the Lesser Doxology, to the Christian Church.⁵⁷ The work begins as a solid song of praise. The first oboe begins with a melodic leap up from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{1}$, in sixteenth note

⁵⁷ These sections are also demarcated by the inclusion of two of the texts of the *laudes*. Whether or not the shift in key was caused by the inclusion of the *laudes* texts is immaterial, because the hymn tunes as set are in the key of the movement which preceded it. Therefore, the next movement is still a non-adjacent movement in major-minor key space.

rhythm, clearly establishing D major, as the rest of the orchestra plays the D-major triad (example 7). Trumpets enter immediately with a further arpeggiation of the tonic triad. Intensity comes from the scalar descent of the oboes against the chordal ascent of the trumpets. The upper pedal tone in the flutes provides the consonant base against which the quickly moving melodic notes of the oboe are clearly dissonant.

The musical score for Example 7 consists of four staves. The top staff is for the Trumpet in C, showing an arpeggiated D major triad. The second staff is for the Traverse Flute, featuring a sustained chord. The third staff is for the Oboe, with a descending scalar line. The bottom staff is for the Continuo, showing a bass line with a triplet in the final measure.

Example 7. Mm. 1-2 of BWV 243, mvmt. 1

The bass (not root) motion of the first three measures prefigures the overall root motion of the first four major key areas of the work – D B F# A. The motion also provides an interesting set of harmonization possibilities for the first measure as the melodic material of m. 1 repeats in m. 2, and then again for the first two beats of m. 3. The final beat of the third measure is a dominant seventh which leads into the final measure of the first four-measure articulation. This four-measure phrase serves as the model of the opening thirty measure orchestral introduction.

The main melodic fragments which are easily identified in this introduction are the melodic leap, the quick-moving oscillation of neighbor notes (oboe I, m. 1, b. 3), the scalar descent, and the pedal tone (flute). These melodic figures are complemented by the downbeat articulation of the triad, including an octave leap in the bass and the arpeggiation of the governing triad. These melodic fragments are used throughout the introduction and shared between various combinations of instruments. In mm. 27 and 28 the continuo (including bassoons) uses the main melodic material of m. 1 to intensify the feeling of harmonic motion and lead to a nearly unison orchestral pronouncement leading into the choral entrance (example 8).

The chorus uses all of the same melodic figures as the orchestral introduction. The scalar and oscillation patterns are used frequently. The original melodic leap is also evident, but in its first use it is disguised. The syllabic stress of the word “magnificat” allows for the introduction of another figure, this one rhythmic. The second and third syllables are set most often to a dotted-eighth sixteenth note pattern. The forward propulsion this creates allows the iambic foot of the word to fall on strong beats in almost every instance. The few places where this does not happen (for example, m. 38, b. 1, soprano voice and m. 39, b. 1, bass voice) are all for practical reasons, in this case, the introduction of the next word of the text and its first melodic motive. Still, the iambic stress of the word is not broken.

Example 8. Mm. 27-31 of BWV 243, mvmt. 1

The choral entrance itself is an elaboration of the orchestral introduction (example 9). The first two measures the chorus sings act as a transition back to the beginning. The chord progression which begins at m. 33 is nearly the same as the orchestral introduction. The twelve measures which begin with m. 33 correspond to mm. 1-12. Bach keeps the structure the same, but changes the textures by leaving instruments out. The next two measures (45-46) are again inserted as a choral bridge, and the articulating dominant key area of the orchestral opening (m. 13) is repeated. As with the first twelve measures, Bach repeats the section; however, this time he repeats only the first four measures of the section. At this point, Bach deviates from the harmonic structure of the orchestral opening, and provides what is the most striking part of the entire movement (Example 10). Measure 51 begins a ten-measure section in which harmonization, choral texture, and melody

units propel all of the major melodic material; an orchestration which is forceful, using differing elements in combination to create forward-moving and energized phrases; a harmonic structure which constantly reinforces the tonic while exploring closely related keys; and an architectural structure that is solidly framed by repeated material.

Musically, the structure demands at least a slight deviation from the total explication of joy. The short tonicizations of minor key areas offer that deviation, while serving as introduction to the manifold expressions of emotion to come.

It should be clear from the foregoing analysis that the structure of the movement, while containing musical-rhetorical devices, is more musical than textual. The single word that is used as text is explored in a way that is musically probing. While the first movement uses little text to explore manifold meanings, the text of the third movement, “Quia respexit,” exposes several different emotional states which Bach portrays musically in his setting of the text. The states can be seen in a quick analysis of the orchestral material that introduces each section. The introduction (mm. 1-5) presents a melody that uses the harmonic minor scale, with its characteristic augmented second between $\hat{6}$ and $\hat{7}$, to wind through a phrase that has at its heart a falling pattern (*catabasis*⁵⁹) that traverses an octave, each time transposed to and supported by a different chord function (dominant, m.2; pre-dominant, m. 3; dominant, m.4). The effect is one of a gently rising melodic sequence, though the pattern is not strictly sequential.

⁵⁹ *Catabasis* is the name given to a falling pattern by some eighteenth-century theoretical works. See Eric Chafe, *Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of J. S. Bach* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) for a complete discussion of the use of tonal allegory in most of the vocal music of Bach. Contrary to its name, the book includes no reference to the *Magnificat*.

Harmonic motion increases in the last measure to create a strong cadence in B minor on beat three. The oboe rises to beat four to hand off the melodic line to the soprano soloist. A harmonic analysis of this section is presented in example 11.

The image shows a musical score for Oboe and Bass, measures 1-5 of BWV 243, mvt. 3. The Oboe part is in the treble clef and the Bass part is in the bass clef. The key signature is B minor (two sharps). The time signature is common time (C). The score is annotated with harmonic analysis below the bass line.

Harmonic analysis for measures 1-5:

- Measure 1: $b: i$
- Measure 2: V^6
- Measure 3: V
- Measure 4: V^7/iv
- Measure 5: $ii^{\circ 7}/iv$
- Measure 6: V^7/iv
- Measure 7: iv
- Measure 8: $ii^{\circ 7}/iv$
- Measure 9: $vii^{\circ 7}/V$
- Measure 10: V
- Measure 11: i^6_{-3}
- Measure 12: $V^{\sharp 4}_{-3}$
- Measure 13: i

Example 11. Mm. 1-5 of BWV 243, mvmt. 3

Also inherent within the harmonic minor scale are the half steps created by the inflected scale degrees. Half-steps occur between scale degrees 8 and 7, 6 and 5, and 3 and 2. Bach uses this tendency within the melodic lines to create the sorrowful feeling of slowly falling in two ways. First, in m. 2 he places the upper member of the half-step off of the beat, creating an unaccented upper neighbor. The lower member is always supported harmonically. When the voice enters, the members reverse, and the line becomes a chain of accented dissonances with the upper member of the half-step interval dissonant.

The second section of the movement begins in m. 15. This three measure orchestral interlude also uses a pattern which resembles a sequence, this time to support a

key change to the relative major. The melody includes a falling pattern that travels a fifth before beginning to leap and turn. Harmonic motion is quicker in this interlude than the introduction, and it leads to a rhythmically more stable cadence on beat one of m. 18 in which the soprano enters. A harmonic analysis is presented in example 12.

Oboe

Continuo

D: vi IV vii°7 ii⁷ V⁷ iii⁷ vi ii V⁷ iii⁶ vi ii⁶ V⁷ I

Example 12. Mm. 15-17 of BWV 243, mvmt. 3

The text of this movement is two phrases: “For He hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden,” and “Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.” The image the text presents is one of dichotomy. Turning the phrases around slightly makes the dichotomy clear: “All generations will know me, in spite of my lowliness.” This rendering of the text is what Bach endorses musically. In the first phrase, the soloist’s melodic material includes downward scales on the word “humilitatem” which is both evocative of emotion and word painting. This emotion is heightened by the fact that the scale also includes the difficult-to-sing downward leap of an augmented second and the inherent half-steps mentioned earlier.

The second textual phrase is more declamatory and the music follows suit. At its first utterance, the word “ecce,” behold, is set with a harmonically functional leap of a perfect fourth from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{1}$. The humility which the speaker feels in the first phrase is balanced by the realization that, somehow, she is special, and she is going to tell all who

can hear. The seven measures portray a person who is getting more excited about the realization of her place, and the phrase's melodic motion and goals is upward. Even as excitement builds, however, the listener is reminded of the humility as the oboe restates the original motive in several different guises. As this short section progresses, the soloist adds words to the original "behold." The text is set completely syllabically in the first six measures. The fifth measure includes the only melodic half-note of the entire movement. The upward resolution of its dissonance serves to propel the phrase forward to the final measure which includes the soloist's longest melisma and a restatement of the descending harmonic minor scale, this time in F# minor. The energy this descent creates serves as a powerful transition to the answer and affirmation of "all generations."

The next section sets only two Latin words "omnes generationes." It proceeds directly from the previous movement and transforms the harmonic minor descent into a descent using the upwardly inflected version of melodic minor. The dense counterpoint begins by pairing voices for the first entrance of soprano II and tenor against the alto and bass in what becomes an elaborate permutation fugue. These pairings present the two primary melodic figures used throughout the movement (example 13). Soprano I's entrance restates the original bass motive in a declamatory manner which begins a rapid set of entrances highlighting the repeated eighth-note figure of the first two beats of the motive which begin the fugue subject. The repeated eighth-note figure occurs at the beginning of the subject, and again at the end when the line is elided into a restatement of the subject. After using this feature of the subject to state tonic and dominant, Bach uses this feature to create the elaborate permutation fugue beginning with the alto F# in m. 5.

Every two beats the fugue subject is repeated raised by one pitch class. The step progression travels up the octave, the ninth time (G#, m. 9) not stated but instead transformed into the leading tone of the relative major and cadencing in A major. At this point, Bach states the tonic and proceeds around the circle of fifths (A, m. 10; E, m. 10--11; B m. 11-12; F# m. 12-13; C# m. 13-14; G#, m. 15).

Example 13. Mm. 1-2 of BWV 243, mvmt. 4

Bach again starts the permutation entrances of the fugue every two beats, this time proceeding up from G# to C# (m. 21). The B# of m. 20, approached by an augmented second, acts as a strong melodic leading tone to the C# of mm. 21. The four measures 21-24 are an extended dominant pedal, the orchestra restates the dominant while the voices enter on every beat with a transfigured and more insistent rhythmic statement of the theme (example 14), which ends on a fermata dominant seventh. The chorus then

enters with the theme in canon, SSAT entering two beats before the bass, to bring the movement to a conclusive close.

This section, however inventive, is not without its questions. These questions are raised and answered by Robert Cammarota in an article entitled “On the Performance practice of ‘Quia respexit... omnes generations’ from J. S. Bach’s *Magnificat*.”⁶⁰ His arguments surround the fact of current performance practice that has the “omnes generationes” played at approximately twice the speed of the preceding “Quia respexit.” In Cammarota’s opinion, the Bach manuscripts available of both the E-flat-major and D-major versions of the piece do not warrant such a reading, because the fugue follows on directly from the preceding aria with no indication of change in tempo.⁶¹ He concedes that there is only one tempo indication in the E-flat-major version (at the “fecit potentiam”), but notes that when Bach revised the score for the D-major version, he added a tempo indication for the “quia respexit” but not for the “omnes generationes.”⁶² According to Cammarota, the custom of changing the tempo “developed as a result of the 1862 publication of the *Magnificat* by the Bach-Gesellschaft, from which a number of performing editions were subsequently prepared.”⁶³ It was this edition that first split the fugue from the aria and numbered the two separately. Immediately after this publication, Robert Franz

⁶⁰ Cammarota, 458-489.

⁶¹ Cammarota also quotes Donald Tovey as saying “I see no ground, either in tradition or in the musical sense, for the prevalent custom of taking this as a quick movement, or even as one appreciably faster than the aria of which it finishes the words. Donald Francis Tovey, *Essays in Musical Analysis*, vol. 5, *Vocal Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 55.

⁶² Cammarota, 459-462.

⁶³ Cammarota, 459.

What does this change in tempo do to the meaning of the movement (or movements)? In the words of Robert Franz, “the extremely energetic theme, first heard in the bass, alternately sounds in the second soprano, alto, and tenor. The other entrances of the theme follow in rapid succession at the distance of a half-measure, steadily drawing a powerful, wildly excited motive behind it.”⁶⁵ Such a hearing requires the speed of a fast fugue, not the quiet insistence of the preceding adagio. What Bach meant may be harder to uncover, but it is not impossible.

The answer may lie in the theology of Martin Luther. Michael Linton observes that the “omnes,” with its subject-dominated fugue, quite literally paints the ideas of Luther’s understanding of the text as presented in his *Commentary on the Magnificat*.⁶⁶ The obvious word-painting is that all generations (the whole chorus as opposed to a soloist) sing about “all generations.” However, for Bach, the meaning goes deeper than that: it includes not just all generations, but all generations in succession. Luther writes that “the Virgin Mary means to say simply that her praise will be sung from one generation to another so that there will never be a time when she will not be praised.”⁶⁷ This certainly gives a clue to Bach’s idea of the necessity for an elaborate permutation fugue. Unfortunately, it does not answer the question of choice of tempo.

⁶⁵ As translated and quoted by Cammarota, p. 480.

⁶⁶ Michael Linton, “Bach, Luther, and the *Magnificat*,” *BACH: The Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute*, 17, no. 2 (April, 1986), 3-15.

⁶⁷ Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Magnificat* (trans. By A. T. W. Steinhauser), Luther’s Works, vol. 21 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), p. 298, as quoted by Linton, p. 12.

In fact, and obviously, the choice of tempo, while rhetorical, is also an act of interpretation. It is not however, just a musical interpretation, but rather a textual, scriptural and theological interpretation. The question with which the conductor is faced is what type of praise we want to express, a “powerful, wildly excited” praise like that espoused by Franz, or an insistent never-ending praise like that implied by a slower tempo (and presumably espoused by Cammarota).

The question is complicated by performances that have consistently played the fugue faster. The collective musical consciousness seems to require a faster tempo if the musical meaning content of the piece is to remain what is regarded as normal. However, the theological content which Bach meant to include in the piece seems to require a slower tempo. In the end, the conductor has the ultimate choice of which wins – the musical or the theological. Nonetheless, the choice will always be measured against the listener’s preference. A slow tempo might be regarded as an incorrect interpretation.

Bach’s grounding in Lutheran theology is well-known and very well documented, even to the point that he is referred to as the fifth evangelist.⁶⁸ Many studies have been made of his works in relation to theological and musical understanding. However, many other composers have also set the words of the Magnificat canticle. What do these composers bring to the text?

Charles Villiers Stanford, the Irish-born, Cambridge-educated composer, is credited with helping to “forge the new standards of the so-called ‘renaissance’ in British

⁶⁸ While this is commonly used as a title to refer to Bach, I have not been able to locate a single source for its first documented use to refer to Bach.

music at the end of the nineteenth century.”⁶⁹ He is best known for his church compositions and his ability as a teacher. His pupils including some of the most important figures of twentieth-century British music: Frank Bridge, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, George Dyson, Herbert Howells, John Ireland, and Ralph Vaughan Williams among them. He also strove for excellence as a composer of opera, but actual fame in that area eluded him.

In 1904, Stanford wrote his G Major *Evening Service*, Op. 81. The Anglican Church’s Evening Prayer Service together with the Morning Service distills the eight services of the Divine Office to only two. The groupings of all of the services into only two times during the day had been practiced in Europe already. It was in his *Book of Common Prayer* of 1538 that Cranmer went further and deleted all of the lesser services completely.⁷⁰ The outcome was the combination of Vespers and Compline into one service. This service includes both the Magnificat and Nunc dimittis canticles. It has come to be known as Evening Prayer or Evensong which, contrary to its name, is not always sung. The musical settings of the canticles, often published together, are known as the Evening Service.

Cranmer’s *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) was officially published in 1549 and then went through many revisions until 1662 when it was finally adopted by action of

⁶⁹ Jeremy Dibble, “Sir Charles Villiers Stanford,” in *Oxford Music Online* (accessed October 1, 2008).

⁷⁰ G. J. Cuming, “The Office in the Anglican Communion” in *The Study of Liturgy*. Cheslyn Jones, et al, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 441-446. This date is an approximation because the writing of the actual worship scheme is in doubt.

Parliament.⁷¹ Because the BCP is approved by an act of Parliament, its contents are law. Therefore, the mandate that priests recite the services daily, and that these services be said in English, are also law and have an impact on the practice within these services.⁷² The cathedrals and colleges which had choral foundations were able to pay for the setting of the texts to music and had the forces to perform these regularly. Still today, most choral foundations sing at least the Evening Prayer Service six nights each week. Musically these mandates required short settings of the canticles, which were, as the law states, in English. The addition of other musical portions to the service, for example an anthem “in quires and places where they sing” or hymns was assumed, and allowed for the inclusion of foreign language pieces.⁷³

Stanford’s setting conforms to this standard – a short 132-measure English setting using the BCP words. In performance length it runs to just over four minutes. Harmonically it exemplifies Stanford’s diatonic style which features long and well-shaped melodic phrases with quick modulations. It is scored for soprano soloist (meant for a boy soprano), four-part chorus, and organ.⁷⁴ Stanford uses the vocal forces to create a dramatic telling of the canticle rather than a theological reflection on the canticle. Figure 2 presents a visual outline of this analysis. The organ begins in G major with a

⁷¹ The 1662 Book of Common Prayer is still the official prayer book of the Anglican Church, but it has been superseded in practice by *Common Worship* which was first officially used in Advent of 2000.

⁷² See for example, *Book of Common Prayer 1662* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1968), viii-x.

⁷³ *Book of Common Prayer*, 24.

⁷⁴ Stanford orchestrated this setting in 1907, but the norm for Anglican Evensong is for chorus and organ alone.

Figure 2. A graphic presentation of the analysis of Stanford's Opus 81.

Key To Text:

Italics — sung by soprano soloist alone

Normal — sung by chorus alone

Bold — sung by chorus and soloist together

Organ mm. 1-2



G:
I IV ii V

Organ *♩*s intermittent

b:
ii^{o7} V⁷₄₋₃ i

G pedal

B pedal

5

13

19

♩
Allegro

*My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Sav-
iour*

For behold from henceforth

**For He hath regarded the lowli-
ness of His handmaiden**

Soprano Solo mm. 4-13



Soprano Solo mm. 27-36



Figure 2 (cont.)

Compare with mm. 1-4

D:	G:		B:
$V^{\sharp 4} = 7$ I ii ⁶ of G	I IV ii V ⁷		vii ^{o7} /iv I
22	29	34	39

all generations shall call me blessed
 For he that is mighty hath magnified me: and Holy is His Name
 And Holy is his name, Holy
 And his mercy is on them that fear Him,
 Chorus mm. 37-39

Blessed, blessed;
 Organ mm. 33-36 showing sequence. Next expected E_b

Organ
Doubles
Chorus

The organ accompaniment consists of three staves: two treble clefs and one bass clef. The first two staves show a sequence of chords and melodic lines, with an annotation pointing to a specific note. The vocal lines are in a four-part setting (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) with lyrics: 'Ho - ly is His Name.' The organ part features a sequence of chords and a melodic line that is annotated with 'Organ mm. 33-36 showing sequence. Next expected E_b'.

Figure 2 (cont.)

in the i-ma-gi-na-tion of their hearts.
 in the i-ma-gi-na-tion of their hearts.

G:

See m. 1

44	48	52	54	60	63
			B ₄ ⁶ c# ^{o7}	c ₄ ⁶ D ₅ ⁶ ii ⁷ V ₅ ⁶	I IV ii V

Throughout all generations.
 Throughout all generations.

Chorus Sop. Start imitation m. 43

He hath shewed strength with His arm,

a capella, homophonic chorus and soloist

He hath scattered the proud in the imaginations of their hearts

He hath put down the mighty from their seat

And hath exalted the humble and

Soprano soloist mm. 62-66 compare to mm. 4-7

And hath ex - alt - - - ed the
 hum - ble and meek.

Figure 2 (cont.)

G Major over F

Chorus, organ and soloist in "dialogue"

C: a: D: Sequence Ab:

(G:) IV⁷ V | V₂⁴ I V₂⁴ V₃⁴ P₄⁶ V₃⁶ vii^{o6}₃ i⁶ iv⁷ V | V₃⁴ P₄⁶ V₃⁶ vii^{o6}₃ P₄⁶ vii^{o7}

66 71 73 75 77 79 81 86

meek. **He hath filled the hungry with good things** and the rich He hath sent empty away *He remembering His mercy, hath holpen His servant, Israel* He remembering His mercy hath holpen His servant Israel.

Mm. 71-80

The musical score consists of four staves. The top two staves are vocal lines (soprano and alto/tenor), and the bottom two are piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is G major (one sharp). The tempo is marked 'meek.'. The lyrics are: 'He re-mem-ber-ing His mer-cy hath and the rich he hath sent emp-ty, emp-ty a-way, He re-mem-ber-ing His'.

Figure 2 (cont.)

Organ mm. 95-96

Organ mm. 101-102

	C:		G:		
		← See m. 1 →			
88	c G d ⁷ G ⁷ (V ⁷) I IV iii V ⁷		IV ⁷ ii ^b I vi ii ⁷ V ⁷		
90	95	101	104		
	<i>As he promised to our forefa-</i>	Abraham and his seed	<i>Forever</i>	<i>Forever</i>	He promised for-
	<i>thers</i>				

As He promised to our forefathers

Silence
a capella chorus and soloist

Soprano section and soprano soloist mm. 102—108.

Compare to mm. 5-11.

Figure 2 (cont.)

75

		G:	C:	a:	C:	G:
IV ⁷⁻⁶ I			V ⁷ I ⁶	V ⁴⁻³	I IV I IV I IV vii ^{o7} I	
110		116	118	123	128	
ever.		Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,			world without end. Amen.	

♩
Andante

Organ mm. 122-123 showing the motion to a minor

The musical notation shows two measures in 3/2 time. Measure 122 features a G major triad (G-B-D) in the right hand and a G major bass line (G-B-D) in the left hand. Measure 123 shows a chromatic descent: the right hand plays G-A-B-A-G, and the left hand plays G-A-B-A-G, illustrating the transition from G major to G minor.

quick-flowing accompanimental figure that begins as a quasi-ostinato. The progression of the ostinato figure is I IV ii V all over a G pedal. The solo soprano enters on the fourth beat of the second ostinato with an anacrusis $\hat{\text{♩}}$ to a downbeat $\hat{\text{♩}}$. The melody is a gently falling line which descends to the final cadence in the ninth measure of the melody (m. 13).

The altos, tenors, and basses of the chorus sing the second textual line as if to point out why the soloist is singing. The chorus is completely homophonic, and will remain so throughout the piece with very few but notable exceptions. The chorus sings over another pedal G and effects a change to B minor when the organ moves to a $\text{vii}^{\circ 7}$ by moving the pedal to a C \sharp underneath the chorus's otherwise diatonic E minor triad.

The soloist takes up the next line of text with an upward octave jump $\hat{\text{♩}}$ to $\hat{\text{♩}}$ in the new key and continues with another flowing melody which changes the key to G major after going through a two-measure tonicization of D major. The chorus enters again, but instead of singing new text, twice repeats the single word "blesséd." Before the chorus cadences in G major, the soloist enters again with the next line of text, and is joined by the altos, tenors, and basses to sing "Holy is His name." The soprano soloist sings the line twice in alternation with the altos, tenors and basses of the chorus before the soprano section enters for a third statement. The altos sing in a different rhythm, imitating the line of the soloist, while the tenors and basses sing only "and Holy" twice. The final statement of the textual phrase is homophonic by the chorus, doubled by the organ.

One beat before the chorus enters with the first "And Holy" (m. 33), the harmonic pattern begins a decorated sequence pattern G: I I $^{\circ}$ V F: I I $^{\circ}$ V. Instead of going on to the

next iteration of the sequence, which should be $E\flat$, Stanford enharmonically equates the expected $E\flat$ with a $D\sharp$, making that note the root of a $vii^{\circ 7}$. That chord resolves to an E-minor triad, repeats the pattern, and then the E-minor triad resolves to B major. Effectively, the progression is: B: $vii^{\circ 7}/iv$ $vii^{\circ 7}/iv$ I.

The organ then plays one beat with no vocalists, the first time since the soloist entered, and then the lower three parts of the chorus continue with the next line of text “And His mercy is on them that fear Him” (m. 40). Three measures later the sopranos of the chorus enter with the same text followed one measure later by the soprano soloist in an imitative fashion. The harmony in this phrase toggles between a B-major triad and an E-minor triad resulting from a modal mixture with the parallel minor. The phrase closes with a strong V_{4-3}^{6-7} I cadence. The organ registration increases during another short transition without vocalists and the lower three parts of the chorus enter with the next line of text, “He hath shewed strength” (mm. 48-51).

The text continues with the next phrase, “He hath scattered the proud,” adding the soprano section and soloist. At the words “in the imagination of their hearts,” the organ drops out completely, leaving the unaccompanied chorus and soloist in five independent parts. The harmony prolongs the dominant $\frac{6}{4}$ of m. 53 by using a $C\sharp$ diminished seventh chord, again borrowed from the parallel minor ($ii^{\circ 7}$), to create a wedging-neighbor motion that leads to a highly decorated perfect authentic cadence.

Immediately the four-part chorus continues with the text, “He hath put down the mighty from their seat,” in strict homophonic half-note rhythm (mm. 57-63). The word

“down” is set to a diminished seventh chord which is indeterminate in tonic orientation.⁷⁵

A common-tone modulation revolving around the enharmonic Eb/D# turns that note into the third of a C-minor triad in second inversion. Descending stepwise motion in the bass interprets the C-minor triad as a passing chord (iv₄⁶) borrowed once again from the parallel minor of G major as the chord resolves into a V₃⁶ of G major. The four-part chorus descends appropriately enough to the cadence.

Before the chorus reaches the cadence, however, the soprano soloist enters with the words “And hath exalted the humble and meek” (m. 62-65). The melody mirrors that of the soloist’s opening phrase. This time the melody is shared between the soloist and choral sopranos, the choral sopranos adding a bridge with the words “He hath filled” before the rest of the chorus and soloist enter with the entire phrase. The harmony of this section (mm. 62-70), while still strictly diatonic, is more involved as the organ does not hold the pedal tone as it did in the first section. The chorus, soloist and organ have a very similar cadence to that found in mm. 10-12; however, the organ foils the cadence by playing an F# in the bass. This relates the chord as a dominant seventh in 3rd inversion of C major. The short three-beat organ phrase is answered by the chorus singing “and the rich,” the organ repeats the phrase with a different bass line, and the chorus then proceeds with the text “He hath sent empty away” (mm. 71-77). This phrase moves through A minor, the soloist entering with the next text “He remembering His mercy” as the organ

⁷⁵ The Galaxy Music Corporation (No. 1.5136) publication of the anthem has the chord spelled two different ways in the organ part alone: either as a D#^o₃ or as an F#^o₆.

evades the cadence and adds a minor seventh to the A-major triad, effectively transposing to D major.

The soloist inflects the melodic E with the D \sharp below, and when the organ re-enters (m. 79), the chord is another vii $^{\circ 7}$ in first inversion, this time with C \sharp as the root. This chord moves through a passing $\frac{6}{4}$ chord to the same diminished seventh in root position. The resolution keeps all of the common tones, and moves all other notes by stepwise motion to create an ornamented B \flat dominant seventh resolving to an ornamented E \flat triad (B \flat $\frac{6}{4}$ $\frac{7}{3}$ E \flat $\frac{9}{4}$ $\frac{8}{3}$). These two measures serve as the model for a six-measure descending thirds sequence, ending in A-flat major on the third iteration of the sequence. During the sequence, the choir sings the next line of text “hath holpen his servant Israel” (mm. 83-87), the soloist joining after a two-measure break. The phrase ends with a thinning of the texture in which sections drop out in ascending pairs, leaving only the soprano soloist and a two-note chord in the organ.

In mm. 88-89, a three-beat silence is notated before the chorus altos, tenors and basses take up the next words “As he promised to our forefathers.” The basses enter three beats later and the soprano soloist one measure after the basses. The organ does not enter until the cadence, which is in C major. The figure which the organ plays is an echo of the figure at the beginning with harmonies slightly changed. The chorus proceeds immediately in m. 97 to the words “Abraham, and his seed” and modulates back to G major. The organ enters in m. 101 with another echo of the opening figure, and the chorus enters one measure later with an echo of the soloist’s opening melody. The

oscillating figure over the tonic pedal has changed slightly; the progression is now I vi ii⁷

I. The texture slowly thins leaving only the organ to punctuate the cadence.

The cadence is final enough to set the “Glory be to the Father” off as a separate movement. This short seventeen-measure section in $\frac{3}{8}$ time treats each word only once. The harmony moves much more quickly than the preceding music, and it is driven more by the organ than the chorus. The chorus, now without soloist, begins singing in unison over the quickly moving harmonies of the organ. The introduction of an F \sharp in m. 3 causes a modulation to C major. Measure 122 drives toward a cadence in G major, making the preceding four measures feel like a tonicization of the subdominant. However, after a 4-3 suspension on the dominant, the harmony adds a G \sharp which the ear interprets as the leading-tone of A minor. Stanford never supplies a root position A-minor triad, but continues evading the cadence until m. 128 when he finally supplies a C-major triad; the A-minor section serving as a prolongation of the relative minor of the subdominant. Thus, the entire middle section (interpreted within C major) becomes a prolongation of a plagal cadence which happen in a decorated fashion in mm.131 to 132. This actually mirrors the plagal cadence found in mm. 110-111 which closes the Magnificat text itself.

The confines of the Anglican Evensong Service demand short settings of the canticles that portray the emotions and meanings of the texts quickly and move on. Stanford’s setting exemplifies this. In relation to Bach’s setting, Stanford’s entire setting is approximately twenty percent longer in terms of measures than is Bach’s first

movement which sets only the first four words of the Latin text. Stanford accomplishes appropriate emotional settings while maintaining musical cohesion through facile modulation using common-tone, common-chord, sequential, and ambiguous chord modulations.

Stanford also uses changes in texture to create a dramatic effect. The soprano soloist, chorus, and organ are sometimes stating things together (“Holy is His name”), sometimes in dialogue (“and the rich He hath sent empty away”), and sometimes merely complementary with the organ supporting the voices. The soloist is most often in an independent role that seems to present a person telling the story. The required soprano would suggest an allusion to Mary. The soloist joins the chorus in an entire phrase of homophony only twice – the first time from mm. 51 to 56 at the words “He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.” The force created by this texture and the melodic change to the stepwise wedge is rhetorical, but not necessarily obvious. The second section of homophony is at the words “He hath filled the hungry with good things.” This phrase is the last point of harmonic stability before we enter the highly-charged section of constant modulation and sequence in mm. 71-86.

Stanford does little in the way of actual word painting. The organ often provides the emotional foundation. For example, the lightly articulated arpeggiation at the beginning can certainly be regarded as joyful, which is then refined by the soloist with the upward leap and the beautifully flowing diatonic melody. Stanford does evoke the idea of generation moving to generation with a very short imitation, between the soprano section and soloist, of the words “throughout all,” and he does allow the chorus to

traverse downward while singing the text “He hath put down the mighty from their seat” (mm. 57-63).

One of the most remarkable things about Stanford’s *Magnificat* is the self-sufficiency of the canticle text without the “Glory be.” Of his seven published Evening Services, none has as conclusive a cadence at the end of the Magnificat as his Op. 81. This articulation is the only articulation in the entire piece which allows the feeling of a new section. The “Glory be” is tied to the preceding section by the close harmonic link through the plagal relationship of the cadences. The *Magnificat* itself obtains unity from the constant recurrence of melodic pieces and the organ texture of arpeggiated eighth-notes supported by legato chords.

Direct comparison of the Bach and Stanford *Magnificat* settings are indeed easy to make. Bach’s *Magnificat* allows much time to delve into the detail of each word of the text. The Baroque *Affektenlehre* (doctrine of the affections) suggested that this was an appropriate way to create artworks. Stanford, on the other hand, needed to move through the text quickly. Whereas Bach wrote whole musical movements to support the text, Stanford needed to make a single unified statement, which quickly sums up the essence of each phrase. As a consequence, Bach could spend more time setting each word with musical gestures appropriate to both the word and the context.

Consider the first word of the Latin text, “magnificat,” and the equivalent word in the English text, “magnify.” Stanford sets this English word to exactly three notes with appropriate text declamation and syllabic stress in this rhythm: ♩ ♪ ♩. Bach gives the Latin word thirteen notes on its first statement alone, and proceeds to create ninety

measures to go along with it. The relative freedom of the form allows Bach to explore many different facets of the meaning of this word. A turn to the minor (m. 52) may create in the listener the sense of cautious delight in praise, which makes the triumphant reentry of the bass in the major even more glorious. The Anglican requirements for Evensong dictate that Stanford cannot delight in such musical feasting, but must take each word as it comes, and in short time. Each word has importance at its own time, but not too much can be made of it. In the few places in which Stanford does repeat words, it is not for musical purposes. For Stanford, a fugue is not appropriate, but the repeat of the words “blessed” (m. 26) or “Holy is His Name” (m. 33 ff.) helps to underscore the relevance of the object of worship.

The question for the musical interpreter and the listener is whether these are merely musical devices or theological and rhetorical statements within the language of music. An explanation of this point is necessary. Peter Kivy, when discussing the philosophical basis of text and music, states a basic philosophical point that “music is *expressive* in a nonspecific sense: perhaps emotive without an emotion, or expressive without being expressive of anything in particular.”⁷⁶ This allows, for example, the strophic text of a hymn or song to be appropriately set in every verse even though the emotional content of the text itself changes. In Kivy’s view, this means that in some music it is a “measure of the composer’s skill not that he is able to contrive music expressively appropriate” to every word, but “that he is able to contrive music of no

⁷⁶ Kivy, *The Corded Shell*, 98, italics his.

expressive character whatever, and let his poem do the rest.”⁷⁷ What Kivy does not state is that the meaning content (emotion) of a piece is necessarily completed by the listener, based upon previous knowledge and experience. The listener takes in the musical work, relates it to the other musical works he has heard, and relates that to his immediate surroundings and the uses to which the music is put. In the case of music with texts, this musical meaning is added to the accumulated meaning of the text. When the texts are sacred in content and regulated by an institution (the Church, for example), then the received meanings, taught through centuries, are also added to the meaning of the texts.

Consider again the Bach and Stanford settings of the Magnificat. At the largest levels of form, the two settings are very different, not just in length and division of text. The endings are very different as well. Bach plays an age-old trick of setting “sicut erat in principio” (“as it was in the beginning”) to the same music that was at the beginning. This creates a de facto unification of the musical setting at the largest level. It is the restatement of the joy which opened the work, and it is definitely appropriate for the words found at the end of the “Gloria.” Stanford could also have used such a unifying theme, restating the opening phrase of the soloist to the new words and setting them for full chorus, for example. Musically he does not need such a device; because the listener can easily recall the beginning of the work. However, his doxological statement is also of a different emotional character than that found at the beginning of the work. His setting is not cyclical; the sense of praise builds to the final statement of the doxology.

⁷⁷ Kivy, 111.

When the received meaning of a scriptural text is changed or challenged it also changes the way that musical settings of those texts are received and understood. An example of a challenge to the received doctrinal understanding of scripture can be seen in the feminist movement of the twentieth century. Until the feminist movement, the ideals of femininity had been subjugated in most of Protestantism to levels in which women were almost if not completely excluded from leadership in churches. In the classic book, *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Tradition*, Rosemary Radford Reuther brings together a collection of essays that confront the issues of women in the Judeo-Christian Bible and in the Church.⁷⁸

One issue that the Church has struggled with through history has been an appropriate femaleness of the divine. For most of Christian piety this was found in the divinity of Mary, which blossomed, quite early, into what is now called the cult of Mary. The Reformers, including Luther, excised the practices of the Marian cult in their zeal to remove all things papist. The divinity of Mary was never lost in the Eastern and Roman churches, but the idea was vilified in the Protestant churches. As Joan Arnold Romero points out, “orthodox Protestantism in eliminating the Virgin Mary has also succeeded in eliminating feminine elements in God.”⁷⁹ The extent to which the practices of the early church, through the daily recitation of the Magnificat, helped or hindered the understanding of Mary as divine is questionable; the canticle was not used as a tool to promote the Marian cult, but rather as a tool to praise God that happened to be spoken in

⁷⁸ Rosemary Radford Reuther, ed., *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Tradition* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974).

the Bible by Mary. What is not questionable is how a changing understanding of Mary and the place of women in church and society can change the ways in which we understand the texts.

In the case of Bach and Stanford, the doctrinal understanding of Mary for both of their communities is as a central figure in the divine redemptive act found in the Gospels and accomplished through Jesus. The feminist movement brought a reassessment of the role of women in Church life, and through that a reassessment of the role of Mary. Though the Protestant theological debates have never raised Mary to divine status, they have raised questions regarding the appropriate way to view the role of Mary in contemporary devotion. As a consequence, the Cantic of Mary is now used as an appropriate vehicle for the expression of strength for oppressed peoples, including women. The document *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* puts it this way: “Mary’s song mirrors the song of Hannah, broadening its scope so that Mary becomes the one who speaks for all the poor and oppressed who long for God’s reign of justice to be established.”⁸⁰ If a person attending a performance of Bach or Stanford’s *Magnificat* has such a post-modern view of the text itself, then the sense of the musical appropriateness of the settings will be different from that of the people attending the first performance.

⁷⁹ Reuther, 333.

⁸⁰ This document is the result of a joint study between the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches of their common understandings of the role of Mary in modern Christian devotion. It was published on May 16, 2005. The study can be accessed at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20050516_mary-grace-hope-christ_en.html . The quote above can be found at paragraph 15.

CHAPTER VII
SOCIAL MEANING OF SCRIPTURAL TEXTS IN THE *MAGNIFICAT* OF
ARVO PÄRT AND CONCLUSIONS

An aggregation of understanding as presented in the preceding chapter also works conversely; a changing understanding can change the manner in which texts are treated by composers. For example, consider the *Magnificat* setting of Arvo Pärt. It is written using Pärt's tintinnabuli technique. Briefly described, this technique is a set of guiding principles that "emanate from the central principle of vertical and horizontal combination which lies at the heart of tintinnabuli composition."⁸¹ The Webster's New World Dictionary defines tintinnabuli as "little bells," and the technique is structured by modeling, in various ways, the sounding of bells. The outcome of the procedures is that

we hear individual bells in some pieces, but we may not notice that the music as a whole is somehow similarly structured, that the form of some tintinnabuli compositions... resembles the way in which a bell sounds. But the connection also extends into the more complex manner in which sounds are combined and repeated to make a musical composition.⁸²

Paul Hillier describes the tintinnabuli procedure as a two-part texture written note against note, in which a melodic voice (M) moves mostly by step from or towards a

⁸¹ Paul Hillier, *Arvo Pärt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 93.

⁸² Hillier, 20.

central pitch, and a “tintinnabuli” (T) voice sounds the notes of the tonic triad.⁸³ Proper construction of each voice limits the possibilities of vertical combinations which can happen in the course of a piece. In practice the T-voice can have more than one note sounded at a time. For Pärt, the technique itself is a deep philosophical and religious expression. Hillier writes

the M-voice always signifies the subjective world, the daily egoistic life of sin and suffering; the T-voice, meanwhile, is the objective realm of forgiveness. The M-voice may appear to wander, but is always held firmly by the T-voice. This can be likened to the eternal dualism of body and spirit, earth and heaven; but the two voices are in reality one voice, a twofold single entity.⁸⁴

The tintinnabuli style was a result of a period of study in which Pärt explored the act of writing a melody using only a few notes, especially examining Gregorian chant and early polyphony. He did not attempt to mimic the style of this music but sought to understand how the devices used by the music served “the expressive function of the text.”⁸⁵ This period of study was characterized by a relative musical silence brought about by a personal crisis that was “not only a musical one, but reached into all aspects of his life at once.”⁸⁶ The period began in 1968 partially as a response to the poor reception of his work entitled *Credo*, which received official displeasure in his Russian-occupied

⁸³ Hillier, 92-93. The entirety of Chapter 5 is devoted to the technique, its history and its principles.

⁸⁴ Hillier, 96.

⁸⁵ Hillier, 86.

⁸⁶ Hillier, 32.

Estonian homeland because of its title. In the ensuing decade Pärt married his second wife, who was Jewish, and joined the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1980 the Pärts left the Soviet Union, eventually acquiring Austrian citizenship and then settling in Berlin.

Pärt composed his *Magnificat* in 1989 for mixed choir and soprano soloist, some thirteen years after formulating the tintinnabuli style. Hillier states that it “is one of the happiest meetings of tintinnabuli technique and words of a non-penitential character.”⁸⁷ Pärt uses the Latin text, divides it roughly by verse, and alternates each verse between varying forces in a relatively predictable manner. The initial texture is a two-voice texture in which a solo soprano recites the text solely on C, and this voice is joined by a different voice in each textual line. The alternate texture is three voices with the M-voice on the bottom.⁸⁸ The melody of the M-voice is constructed such that the number of notes in a word corresponds directly to the number of syllables in the word. In the first word, the stressed syllable takes the note which is the pitch center of the phrase, and that pitch center is approached by step. The next word’s stressed syllable then takes the furthest note from the pitch center and is approached by step, with the accented syllable changing the melodic direction. The words continue to alternate (table 4). This guiding principle is used throughout the work, though Pärt does not make it a rule. For example, the third word, “mea,” should start on C, but Pärt chooses not to, most likely for melodic reasons.

⁸⁷ Hillier, 185.

⁸⁸ This three-voice texture can also be accomplished with six vocal parts with three voices doubled at the octave.

Table 4. Division of text of Pärt's *Magnificat* with notes on measure numbers and textures.

Text division	*Mm.	Texture	Notes
Magnificat anima mea Dominum,	1-4	SS	Recited C
et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salvatore meo,	5-12	TTB	
quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae.	13-17	S solo T	Recited C
Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes,	18-26	STB	
quia fecit mihi magna,	27-30	S solo B	Recited C
qui potens est,	31-33	SSA	
et sanctum nomen eius,	34-37	SATB	All octave doubling
et misericordia eius in progenies et progenies timentibus eum.	38-46	SSATTB	<i>forte</i> , octave doubling between parts SI-TI, SII-TII, A-B
Fecit potentiam in brachio suo,	47-51	S solo B	Recited C
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui;	52-56	SSA	Rests in T-voice
deposuit potentes de sede	57-60	S solo A T	Recited C with A drone on G
et exaltavit humiles;	61-63	ATB	
esurientes implevit bonis	64-66	S solo S	Recited C
et divites dimisit inanes.	67-70	TTB	Rests in T-voice
Suscepit Israel	71-72	S solo SATB	<i>forte</i>
puerum suum,	73-77	SSATTB	<i>forte</i> , no doubling between parts
recordatus misericordiae suae,	78-83	S solo S	Recited C
sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,	84-89	STTB	S holds G
Abraham et semini eius in saecula	90-93	S solo ST	Recited C with SII drone on G
Magnificat anima mea Dominum.		SATB add S solo last word	

*Pärt bars the music so that each measure contains only one word, so the number of measures also conforms to the number of words

In terms of larger structure, the text does not include the “Gloria.” The piece was not written for a specific service or church; therefore, Pärt did not need to conform to dogmatic rubrics. Instead, he repeats the incipit “magnificat anima mea Dominum.” The overall texture of the piece is one of quiet calm, a hallmark of the tintinnabuli style, which harkens to the sounds of both early polyphony, and Eastern Orthodox chanted forms. As Hillier points out, “only twice does the work reach forte, and conspicuously *not* at points where the text speaks of power or putting down the mighty.”⁸⁹ These two places are “et misericordia eius in progenies et progenies timentibus eum,” and “Suscepit Israel, puerum suum, recordatus misericordiae suae.”

The conspicuousness of these musical statements requires that they be interpreted, and it is difficult to interpret them outside of the social conditions which were a part of the creation of the tintinnabuli style itself. This new technique was born from a period of personal frustration at least partly created by the power structure of the occupiers of his homeland. The idea that God’s mercy may be on all “who fear Him from one generation to the next” is a powerful image for oppressed people. In addition, Pärt’s emigration from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was partially required by his wife’s religion; Jews were leaving the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics during this period in order to go to Israel. Certainly, Pärt would have felt this pain as well, and he seems to reflect it in his setting of this line of text.

If it is true, as Hillier states, that Pärt’s *Magnificat* setting “is one of the happiest meetings of tintinnabuli technique and words of a non-penitential character,” then one of

⁸⁹ Hillier, 187, italics his.

two things (or both) may be true.⁹⁰ Either the text of the Magnificat itself is not wholly festive, or Pärt did not approach it in this way. In fact, while the text does lift up the lowly, which would be joyous for the lowly, it also puts down the mighty, which would clearly not be joyous for the mighty.⁹¹ To sing these words is to relate to two ways of being in society, two ways which have been reflected and exercised as polar opposites in modern and post-modern society: the haves and have-nots, the politically connected and the politically cast out, the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, to name just a few of these dichotomies. These dichotomies are not new to modern and post-modern society, but they have been reshaped and made more prominent by a post-Enlightenment, post-industrial society which values equalities in new and different ways.

The multi-faceted nature of the Magnificat text itself and the uses to which it has been put by the Church make it a fertile place for composers to explore theology. In so doing, composers are also making socially-conscious statements based upon social conscience. This is true because of the dogmatic nature of the text which the Magnificat shares with all sacred and scriptural texts. As a consequence, in the settings of scripture the social commentary runs deeper, though it may be hidden more, than in other forms of texted music.

This has strong implications for the use of sacred choral music, and by sacred I do not refer only to Christian music. If sacred music is socially constructed, then that music is a window into the society in which it was constructed and can serve as a powerful

⁹⁰ Hillier, 185.

⁹¹ In *Music and Theology* Saliers also recognizes the socially conscious aspect of the Canticle text.

catalyst for the study of that society. For example, the figure of Mary is a prominent figure in Christian scripture, but her name is actually mentioned more times in the Qur'an.⁹² Through creatively programming and fully unpacking the theological significance of the woman named Mary, the music can be the catalyst for further understanding about everything from women's rights to societal understanding of childbirth and virginity.

The foregoing analyses employ theological, scriptural, musical, liturgical and historical analysis to present an understanding of a single text from scripture. Applied to other scriptural texts, this synthesis of analyses can help the performer to understand the points at which composers are setting texts in musically and theologically received ways, and at which points they are imprinting their own theological and ideological meaning on the texts. Though the conclusions may never be concrete, the conclusions can serve as a way to further establish a musical reading of the piece. In addition, the conclusions can help to relate the piece of music to its wider musical and social background; thus enabling a clearer understanding of the meaning of the piece of music.

⁹² Chapter 19 of the Qur'an is actually named "Mary" and retells the story of Mary and Jesus from an Islamic point of view. An online, searchable, full-text version can be found at <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/>.

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