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AN EXAMINATION OF SELECTED RELIGIOUS COMPOSITIONS
BY TWENTIETH CENTURY COMPOSERS

By

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A Thesis

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INTRODUCTION

AN EXAMINATION OF SELECTED RELIGIOUS COMPOSITIONS
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INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem Stated and Explained.

It is the purpose of this thesis to examine various types of religious compositions written by twentieth century composers in order to determine their possible religious values for Christians of today.

Music has always played an important part in Christian worship. In the apostolic church, everyone took part in the singing of psalms and hymns.¹ But with the growth of sacerdotalism in the church, songs of praise by the congregation gradually gave way to music performed by a select group, a trained choir usually composed of the minor clergy. In the Western Church, this transformation was officially completed by the Council of Laodicea (about A.D. 360) which declared: "Besides the appointed singers, who mount the ambo and sing from the book, others shall not sing in the church."² Nevertheless, congregational singing did continue in many of the churches. In the West,

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1. Matthew 26:30; Colossians 3:16
Bettenson, Henry: Documents of the Christian Church, p.6.
2. Dickinson, Edward: Music in the History of the Western Church, pp. 50-51.

the hymns of St. Ambrose and other Latin fathers were extremely popular.¹ But by the reign of Gregory the Great (590-604) the liturgy of the mass was essentially completed and set to music. Edward Dickinson states:

This liturgic chant was made the law of the Church equally with the liturgy itself, and the first steps were taken to impose one uniform ritual and one uniform chant upon all the congregations of the West.²

The effects of this imposed uniformity were far reaching. Any progression, or the adoption of new musical forms, was made virtually impossible. Through the centuries folk and secular music changed greatly. Converts were made among the pagan tribes of northern Europe, and these people transferred their pagan dances to the celebration of Christian feasts, much to the horror of the Roman Church. As one medieval observer wrote, "As a cow which precedes the rest carries a bell on its neck, so the woman who sings and leads the dance has the Devil's bell bound to her neck."³ Still later, harmony in sixths and thirds appeared in secular music. Church musicians who began to make use of this new idiom were stopped by Pope John XXII who decreed:

. . . we command that no one shall presume to attempt such things (use of secular musical forms). . . Yet it is not our intention to forbid the use of . . . the

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1. McKinney, Howard D. and Anderson, W. R.: Music in History, p. 127.
2. Dickinson, op. cit., p. 68.
3. McKinney and Anderson, op. cit., p. 137.

eighth, fifth, and fourth . . . Intervals of this sort may be sung above the plain ecclesiastical melody, but in such a way that the integrity of the melody may remain unaffected. 1

Church musicians were able to evade even this decree by the invention of the faux bourdon, or false bass. At the Council of Trent (1545-1563) the Church Fathers were again concerned with church music which had become "far too elaborate and secular in style."² Palestrina's masses were considered by this Council as models for proper treatment of the liturgy. But even today "the Gregorian Plain Song remains the one officially recognized form of ritual music in the Catholic Church."³

With the Lutheran reformation, congregational singing became again the main form of musical worship within the Protestant churches. Ferguson states:

The simplicity and directness of these hymns doubtless helped to make more converts to Luther's belief than did all his sermons and writings -- save, of course, his admirable translation of the Bible. 4

Worship through listening to choirs of trained musicians still continued as well. The great composer of Protestant church music, Johann Sebastian Bach, wrote a cantata for every Sunday in the year, as well as numerous other religious and secular works. And Bach wrote for the people of

.

1. Ferguson, Donald N.: A History of Musical Thought, pp. 101-102.
2. McKinney and Anderson, op. cit., p. 244.
3. Dickinson, op. cit., p. 135.
4. Ferguson, op. cit., p. 174.

his day. "His circumstances compelled him to be practical, and his earnest desire was to give of his best in meeting his practical obligations."¹ Handel, composer of The Messiah and other oratorios, "seems almost of have¹ drawn the breath of musical life from his public."¹

As long as musicians, religious or secular, were dependent on their compositions for a living, their music of necessity was written for their church, or for their public. In the Middle Ages, as has been shown, the music of the Church and the music of the people differed greatly. With the later works of Beethoven, a difference begins to occur between the music of the people and the music of the composer. The deaf Beethoven stated: "I write for myself."² This attitude reached an extreme in Richard Wagner and the "New German" school. It is still with us today. Igor Stravinsky writes:

They (the public) cannot and will not follow me in the progress of my musical thought. What moves and delights me leaves them indifferent, and what still continues to interest them holds no further attraction for me . . . I live neither in the past nor in the future. I am in the present. I cannot know what tomorrow will bring forth. I can know only what the truth is for me today. That is what I am called upon to serve, and I serve it in all lucidity. 3

As a result of this attitude on the part of the composer, the gulf between his music and the music of

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1. Ferguson, op. cit., p. 310.
2. McKinney and Anderson, op. cit., p. 542.
3. Ewen, David: Modern Composers, pp. 73, 74.

the listening public has grown ever greater. As Eugene Goossens writes:

. . . it cannot be denied that the public as a whole is disappointingly allergic -- or, if you wish, apathetic -- towards what is being written and performed in the way of contemporary American music. 1

Aaron Copland states:

There seems to be no doubt about it -- after almost fifty years of so-called modern music there are still thousands of well-intentioned music lovers who think it sounds peculiar.2

Isaac Goldberg says simply: "It is not easy for the unprepared ear to take pleasure in modern music." 3

These statements stand in violent contrast to the words of St. Augustine:

How did I weep, in Thy Hymns and Canticles,
touched to the quick by the voices of Thy sweet-attuned
Church!
The voices flowed into mine ears, and
Thy truth distilled into my heart . .4

Is the only religious music which has value for contemporary congregations the music of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries? Outstanding serious composers of the twentieth century are writing "to the glory of God." 5
Are these twentieth century religious works of a nature that will inspire Christian worship? Is their religious

.

1. Goossens, Eugene: "The Public -- Has It Changed?", *Modern Music*, Vol. XX, Number 2, p. 75.
2. Copland, Aaron: "A Modernist Defends Modern Music", *New York Times Magazine*, December 25, 1949, p. 11.
3. Goldberg, Isaac: *Young Israel*, March 1929, p. 13.
4. St. Augustine: *Confessions*, p. 189.
5. Dedication of Stravinsky's Symphony of Psalms.

message Biblical, philosophical, or social? Is the music easily understood by the lay listener, or is it "modern", dissonant, and distracting? This thesis will examine selected religious compositions by outstanding twentieth century composers in an endeavor to discover their religious message and the musical form and idiom by which this is conveyed.

B. Delimitation of the Subject

It is impossible to know today which of the contemporary composers will be considered by future generations as having made the greatest contribution to the progress of music. It is impossible to know which compositions will take their place among the masterpieces of all time. But for the purpose of this thesis, three composers of different nationalities (although two are now living in the United States), who are now considered to be outstanding, have been chosen. The works selected to represent them were selected in order to demonstrate the varieties of musical form being used in religious compositions of today.

Religious will be defined as "Manifesting devotion to, or the influence of, religion . . ." ¹ and any music which may be so classified, regardless of the place of performance or the audience for whom it is intended, will

.

1. Webster's New International Dictionary, edition 2.

be considered religious.

C. Method of Procedure

As the composers whose works are to be studied are unfamiliar to many, a brief biographical sketch will be given before an analysis is made of the music. The composition will be analyzed as a whole to discover its overall structure and message. Important elements in the music and in the text will be isolated and reviewed. The religious contribution of the composition as a whole will be summarized, and the reaction of music critiques and audiences will be given wherever these are obtainable. The findings will be summarized and evaluated in the conclusion.

Musical illustrations which will be included are to explain or clarify the written analysis and to demonstrate the musical technique of the composer. Themes which the composer uses repeatedly, or which are important in the musical structure, will also be included.

D. Sources of Data

The analysis of each composition will be made from a first hand study of the score and recordings. The biographical material on the lives of each composer will be taken from biographical dictionaries and encyclopedias. The reactions and opinions of critiques and listeners are from current magazines and news articles.

CHAPTER I

THE ANALYSIS OF KING DAVID

THE ANALYSIS OF KING DAVID

CHAPTER I

A. Introduction

King David was written first as a drama by Rene Morax. In 1921 Morax approached several composers asking them to write a musical score for the performance which was to be given in the little Swiss village of Mezieres in May of that year, but all refused because of the short deadline. Ernest Ansermet and Igor Stravinsky recommended Honegger, and he readily accepted. Writing in 1951 Honegger stated:

The subject was immediately enticing for the Biblical composer I was just beginning to be; and, without evaluating the importance of the work, I accepted with delight. 1

For the first performance, the orchestra of necessity consisted of only seventeen musicians. The choruses were written first and sent to the publisher immediately so that the amateur choir could learn the music in time for the performance. The entire musical score was written between February 25 and April 23 of 1921.

Later, in order to make the work more suitable for concert performance, a narrator was added to bind the

.

1. Westminster recording, Explanatory notes.

twenty-seven separate pieces together. It was reorchestrated for full orchestra and organ.

The work is in three Parts: Part I contains fourteen pieces; Part II, only two; Part III, eleven.

B. The Composer

Arthur Honegger was born March 10, 1892 in Le Harve. He studied at the Zurich Conservatory and the Paris Conservatory with Widor and d'Indy. Living mainly in Paris since 1913, he was a member of the famous "Les Six". Honegger spent the summer of 1947 in the United States teaching at the Berkshire Music Center.

C. The Composition

1. Analysis of the Composition

Part I

1. Introduction

The Introduction is in two sections of fifteen measures each. The first, Animato, is characterized by an incessant, hollow, drum beat and the wailing of the oboe, lending both a primitive and an oriental air to the entire setting.

The second section continues the constant pulsation of the drums by a pedal point on A (key of D) in the harp and 'cello. Muted strings and horns give this section a calmed and peaceful mood. The oboe solo continues with a very flowery, ornamental line, lending an oriental atmosphere to this section as well.

Narrator: God sends Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint David¹
king. David, a shepherd, is guarding his flocks.

2. The Song of David, the Shepherd

This song is written as a simple twenty-eight measure Lied. The music is in ABA form and is scored for contralto solo, violins, and woodwind. The English horn, in particular, lends a pastoral mood to the song, the words of which are adapted from the XXIII Psalm.

Narrator: Samuel crowns David king. The Spirit of God rests on him.

3. Psalm: 'All praise to Him'

Tempo giusto, unison choir, and constantly moving lines in the orchestral parts (particularly noticeable in the brass) give this Psalm a very joyful and exuberant character. The words are in keeping with those of the LXXXIX Psalm, but it is doubtful if the text was taken from this. The last seven measures are completely orchestral, the brass predominating.

Narrator: In the valley of the terebinth, Saul has²
assembled the soldiers of Israel.

3a Fanfare

The Fanfare, eleven measures long, is scored for tympani (roll throughout on A), four horns in unison, and

.

1. Paraphrase of French narration from the full orchestral score.
2. In the score this narration follows 3a, but the recording places it here.

two trumpets. The fanfare of the horns begins first; it is written in B concert. The second trumpet enters on the third measure, playing in D minor. The effect of this polytonality on the listener is one of vivid realism -- three buglers playing in at least two different camps.

Narrator: The great giant, Goliath, defies the army of Israel.

Entry of Goliath

This is a trombone fanfare of four measures, beginning in E minor.

Narrator: David has killed the Philistine. The Israelites shout their victory.

4. Song of Victory

This is an exultant shout of victory, only thirteen measures long. It is scored for full choir and tympani. The tempo is Vivace. It ends with the famous words, "Saul has slain his thousands, and ten thousands David."

5. March

The victorious Israelite warriors march by. The scoring is for bass strings, four horns in unison, two trumpets, and three trombones in unison. This section is marked Andante. The dynamic level begins piano but ends fortissimo. The strings repeat constantly, in a steady 4/4 meter, A[♮], G, F, G without variation. The unison horns are in D minor concert, meter 4/4. Trumpets, playing intervals of a perfect fourth, are in A major, meter 12/8. The unison

trombones are in F[#] major, meter 4/4. (See Excerpt 1 below). The instruments end fortissimo on a chord of A⁴, C[#], F⁴, B⁴, and E⁴ concert.

Excerpt 1

4 hrs in F

Tpts in C

Tr.b.

Harp cello bass

The musical score for Excerpt 1 is written for four staves. The first staff is for 4 horns in F, the second for Trumpets in C, the third for Trombones, and the fourth for Harp, cello, and bass. The key signature is F# major (one sharp). The meter is 4/4. The score consists of two measures. The first measure contains a triplet of eighth notes in the horns, a continuous eighth-note melody in the trumpets, a similar eighth-note melody in the trombones, and a steady eighth-note bass line in the harp/cello/bass. The second measure continues the patterns, with the horns playing a triplet of eighth notes, the trumpets and trombones playing eighth-note figures, and the harp/cello/bass continuing the bass line. The piece ends with a final sharp symbol on the harp/cello/bass staff.

Narrator: David has gone to stay in the palace with Saul.

He plays his harp for him. But Saul becomes jealous and throws his lance at the harper.

6. Psalm: 'In the Lord I put my faith'

This song, taken from Psalm XI, is written as a tenor solo. It is very free in style and descriptive. The first phrase of the tenor is quoted in Excerpt 2 below.

Excerpt 2

The musical score for Excerpt 2 is a tenor solo in 4/4 time, F# major. It consists of two measures. The first measure contains the lyrics "In the Lord I put my faith" and the second measure contains "I put my trust." The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked with a 'P' (Piano) at the beginning.

The Psalm begins with quiet, sustained orchestra, solo in the horn. With the words, "Flee like any bird unto the

mountain", the vocal line soars and the woodwinds break forth in rapid trills and runs. Oboe and bassoon lend somberness to the words, "For behold, evil is here, and the wicked bend their bow". Immediately there is a rapid run in piccolo and flute with a harp glissando -- Saul throws his lance. With Tempo tranquillo, the first theme returns (Excerpt 2 above), ending pianissimo.

Narrator: David flees to the desert. His only hope is Jonathan whom he loves like a brother.

7. Psalm: 'O had I wings like a dove.'

Taken from Psalm LV, this setting is for soprano solo. The piece is marked Larghetto. The orchestration is again descriptive, viola and woodwinds playing a particularly important part. In the vocal melody there are two verses of four measures each, but the song is through-composed, the second verse being a new melody. The orchestral section which follows each verse is, however, identical both times.

Narrator: Saul sends envoys to capture David, but they find him with Samuel, prophesying.

8. Song of the Prophets

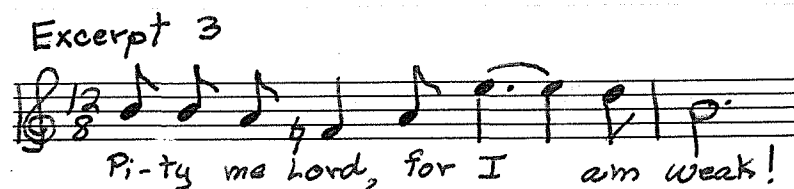
Only seventeen measures long, tenors and basses sing, "Man that is born of woman lives but a little while". At first the only accompaniment is the gong. There is a predominance of perfect fifths in the tenor and bass lines. The passage, "He cometh up like grass" is accompanied by

low woodwinds and strings. The tonalities are dark, and the mood one of extreme melancholy.

Narrator: David wanders through the wilderness. His heart is heavy with cares and distress.

9. Psalm: 'Pity me, Lord'

This Psalm, taken from Psalm LVII, is in two sections. The first (LVII:1) is dark and somber, Lento. The tenor solo sings Excerpt 3 below, accompanied by English horn solo, woodwinds, and strings. The first section is in ABA form, ending as it began with Excerpt 3.



The second section, taken from LVII:7-8, is joyous, marked Allegro marcato. The scoring is similar to the first section (brass are added at the end), but the mood is entirely different, similar in style to number 3.¹

Narrator: The Lord delivers Saul into David's hand, but as Saul is sleeping, David refuses to kill him.

10. Saul's Camp

The scene, set by woodwinds and bass strings, pianissimo and sostenuto, is one of a sleeping camp. But the warriors are soon awakened by the sound of the bugle: two trumpets in B minor, forte; one horn in C \sharp minor,

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1. Psalm: 'All praise to him', ante page 4.

piano; trumpet in E minor, forte; horn in C# minor, planissimo. This polytonality continues as the instruments enter one at a time, but continue to the end, forte, but still in three different keys. The effect again is one of different buglers, one at a great distance (the horn), awakening their camps.

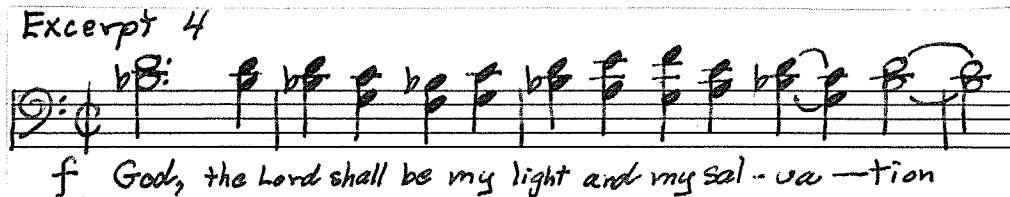
Narrator: David is with the Philistines and the army of Saul is in great distress. In vain the children of Israel call upon God to aid them.

11. Psalm: 'God the Lord shall be my light.

The text is from Psalm XXVII. The music begins with a sustained "A" in the bass instruments. Tenors and basses introduce the theme, marked Allegro singing Excerpt

4.

Excerpt 4



f God, the Lord shall be my light and my sal - va - tion

They continue softly, as an echo, "What cause have I to fear?" The orchestral pedal tone moves to "B". The full choir sings Excerpt 4 beginning now on C and E; this is followed again by a piano passage. Basses begin a new, moving line, "Though wicked enemies came", which is continued by tenors. Against this, sopranos and altos sing Excerpt 4 beginning on A^b and C, then B^b and D. The full choir and orchestra end fortissimo with the words "Yet their arm shall be stayed."

Narrator: Saul in vain seeks an answer from God. Finally, in desperation, he goes to the Witch of Endor and asks her to bring up Samuel from Sheol.

12. Incantation of the Witch of Endor.

The music begins with the directions, Largo, poco a poco piu animato. The orchestration is vivid and realistic; the vocal lines are spoken. Percussion begin, pianissimo. The sorceress speaks in a whisper. The intensity mounts. Instrument after instrument is added. Tempo and dynamics build constantly to a roaring, piercing climax. There is a deadening silence -- Samuel speaks, "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?"

Narrator: As Samuel predicted, Saul and his sons are killed and the army of Israel defeated.

13. March of the Philistines

The march is barbaric and violent in sound. Written pesante e marcato, the brass are forte or fortissimo, accented, throughout. The dissonances are extreme. The effect is one of grotesque primitivism.

Narrator: A messenger tells David of the death of Saul and Jonathan. David rends his clothes and weeps.

14. Lament of Gilboa

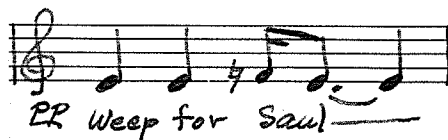
The mood is one of great sorrow. Alternating with an orchestral syncopation, the contralto soloist, sopranos, and altos follow, or join, each other in a moaning "Ah", very oriental in melodic line.

Excerpt 5



The narrator laments, "Gilboa! Gilboa!", in words taken from II Samuel 1:19ff. At rehearsal number 6, the woodwinds take up a new melody while altos and sopranos sing Excerpt 6 antiphonally.

Excerpt 6



The lament closes as sopranos and altos sing Excerpt 5 again in counterpoint, accompanied by celeste, harp, and woodwinds.

Part II

Narrator: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" David is king, and he longs to build a temple for God, a place where the ark may dwell in the midst of Israel.

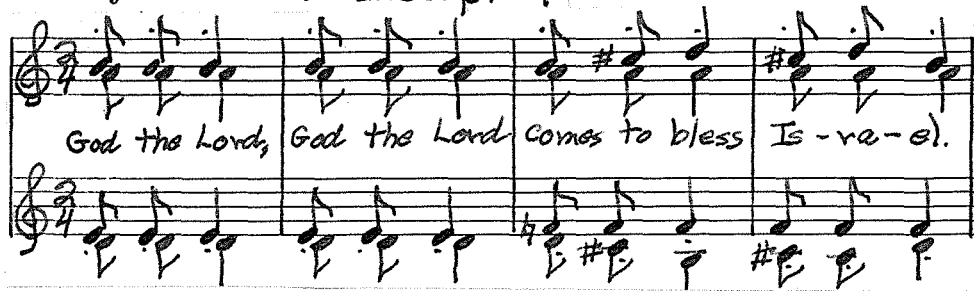
15. Song of the Daughters of Israel.

"The song is by young girls who move in a kind of gold dust of harps and tambourines."¹ This section is marked Allegretto, and the character throughout is light and joyful. The solo soprano sings her story with joyful ease. The sopranos and altos sing lightly Excerpt 7, repeating it again and again while the soloist sings freely

.

1. Westminster recording, op. cit.

above them. The accompaniment is by celeste and harp, occasionally woodwind. Excerpt 7



Narrator: Glory is ascribed to the most High. The King of glory is coming to dwell in his holy land.

16. The Dance before the Ark.

"In the greatest day of their history, an entire people rises toward their God, 'the light of morning and the brilliance of the noon'¹". The longest of the twenty-seven pieces, the Dance before the Ark will of necessity be treated in less detail than the other numbers. An attempt will be made to describe the main sections of this piece and show how they are related to each other. Each section leads to the next without break, and at times transitions are so gradual as to be barely noticeable.

Tranquillo: The orchestra is soft and sustained with a solo in the flute. The narrator speaks: All of the people worship in dance and song. David, the king, dances before the ark.

Poco piu animato: Instruments are added, the dynamic intensity grows, the music becomes marked and more

.

1. Westminster recording, op. cit.

rhythmic -- excitement is the key note.

Allegro moderato: The character is joyful and marchlike. The choir enters. The theme of their song is "Mighty God, be with us." The style of vocal writing here is very contrapuntal, in many aspects similar to the music of Handel. This section is very long, becoming pesante e molto marcato and ending largamente, sostenuto.

Allegro molto: The character is light and joyful. Sopranos sing softly, "Sing to the Lord, sing loud and long." On the words, "Let the sea roar", the orchestral background by crescendi and dimuendi gives the effect of the roar of the sea. This section ends with the choir singing antiphonally, "Praise to the Holiest" and "Saviour of Israel."

Piu allegro: This portion is mainly orchestral, light in quality. Near the end the choir enters, "Mighty God, be with us."

Tempo pesante: The orchestra plays marcato; the choir chants "He has shielded me from harm". The rhythmic structure is interesting here. The basses begin in quarter notes, tenors in eighth, sopranos and altos in sixteenth. The pitch begins on E^b (unison) and rises chromatically to G, each new pitch being treated in the afore-mentioned rhythmic manner.

Allegro molto: The meter is 12/4 and the rhythms are complex. The ending is molto allargando and

the full choir finishes in F major, fortissimo.

Moderato: An angel (soprano) tells David that he may not build the temple, but assurance is given that his son will. The celeste accompanies the soprano soloist.

Andante: Excerpt 8 is begun by the sopranos, but one by one the other parts enter, and finally, the soprano soloist. There is a full orchestral accompaniment. This section reaches forte, but ends piano. The mood is one of quiet, yet exultant, praise.



Part III

17. Song: 'Now my voice in song upsoaring'

This song is marked Allegro, and is joyous in mood. The choir in unison sings David's praise. The song is twelve measures in length; there are three verses. The trumpet and organ parts are outstanding in the orchestration.

Narrator: Good blessed David and made him great. But sin entered David's heart when he saw Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah.

18. Song of the Handmaid

The song of Bathsheba, sung by the contralto soloist, is marked Dolce sostenuto. The orchestral scoring is for woodwind, harp, violi, and viola solo. The song has

two verses, but is through-composed (similar in form to number 7).¹ In the solo viola, the introduction, interlude, and conclusion are ABA in form.

Narrator: David has Uriah killed and then marries Bathsheba. She has a son who becomes ill; David implores God's mercy for the child's life.

19. Psalm of Penitence

Both this Psalm and number 20 are taken from Psalm LI. The meter is 12/8; the mood, Grave. Tenors and basses introduce the four measure theme, of which the first measure is quoted below.

Excerpt 9



Sopranos and altos sing the theme again against a counter melody in the tenor and bass. The choir concludes, men and women singing Excerpt 9 antiphonally. Notice (Excerpt 9) that the pulsation of the 12/8 is actually four -- three eighth notes to each beat. Against this, the orchestra plays an unvarying pattern of six quarter notes to each measure, beginning forte, accented, and concluding crescendo to fortissimo. The effect of this apparent four against six is one of extreme distress and unrest.

Narrator: God sends Nathan to reproach David for his great

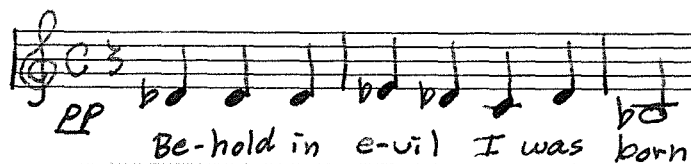
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1. Ante, p.7.

sin which caused the infant's death.

20. Psalm: 'Behold, in evil I was born'

This section is marked Adagio molto. A theme is quoted from Goudimel's setting in the Genevan Psalter of 1603. The Psalm is in two sections, Excerpt 10 forming the basis for the first section which is sung mainly piano and pianissimo. Excerpt 10



In the second section, a variation of Excerpt 9 is sung as a canon. At first the sopranos and tenors are in unison, followed one measure later by unison altos and basses. As the dynamic level reaches fortissimo, the four vocal lines enter separately, one-half measure apart. The orchestra constantly reiterates a rhythmic pattern of four quarter notes to each measure, the heaviness of these unvarying chords adding much to build up the intensity.

Narrator: Punishment strikes the house of David. Brother violates sister; brother kills brother; Absalom revolts and David flees.

21. Psalm: 'O shall I raise mine eyes unto the mountains?'

This through-composed tenor solo was inspired by the CXXI Psalm. The accompaniment is by woodwinds and strings. This section is marked Largo, and is only twenty measures in length.

Narrator: Absalom, his army defeated, has been killed by Joab. The people with great festivity flood Mahanaim.

22. The Song of Ephraim

Against unchanging orchestral harmonies (with the exception of the horn which moves from E^v to F concert), the soprano soloist and women sing a flowing melodic line, "O thou forest of grief". The soloist sings a four measure phrase with words, and the women echo one octave lower on "Ah". At the end, the "Ah" is sung by both soloist and women's choir antiphonally.

Narrator: The king weeps for his dead son who was killed by the victorious army.

23. March of the Hebrews.

With fanfare of bugles, the victorious Hebrews march by. Both brass and woodwind participate in the fanfares which are polytonal as before. In the march itself, strings also play an important part.

King David signals for the army to halt and speaks to them, "Ye warriors of Israel, ye are my brethern, ye are my bones and my flesh. Ye have established peace in the land. Receive my thanks!" The multitudes shout, "David be praised!", and the march continues as before.

Narrator: Delivered from all his enemies, David raises a Psalm of thanks.

24. Psalm: 'Thee will I love, O Lord'

The French text is taken from a vernacular translation of the Psalms by Clement Marot (1495-1544). It is apparently from Psalm XVIII:1-2. The piece is marked Andante ma non troppo; its form is ABA. The orchestral accompaniment is pianissimo, sustained, with solos in the horn and clarinet. The sopranos begin piano, "Thee will I love, O Lord, who art my fortress. Thou art my shield, the horn of my salvation." The altos respond on "Ah".

In the "B" section, the basses enter with a new melody, "In him I find the solace that I long for". The full choir sings, "When waves of death encompassed me" accompanied by sixteenth notes crescendi and dimuendi in the orchestra, adding descriptiveness to the words.¹

The "A" section returns, sopranos and tenors together singing the opening phrases, the altos and basses responding on "Ah".

Narrator: David is filled with pride and glory. He sins in numbering the people, and many are killed by the angel of death.

25. Psalm: 'In my distress'

Taken from Psalm XVIII:5-8, the character is agitato. The orchestra is violent and percussive, playing forte and marcato throughout. The choir is in unison with the exception of the last phrase which is in four parts,

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1. As in Number 16, ante p. 13.

fortissimo, accented, "So great the anger and wrath of the Lord!"

Narrator: David had promised to build a temple. He was refused, but in the coronation of his son, Solomon, he sees the fulfillment of all his dreams.

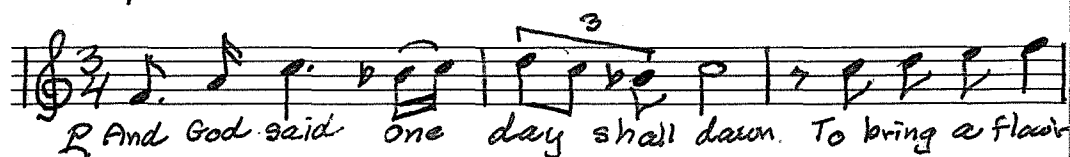
26. The Crowning of Solomon.

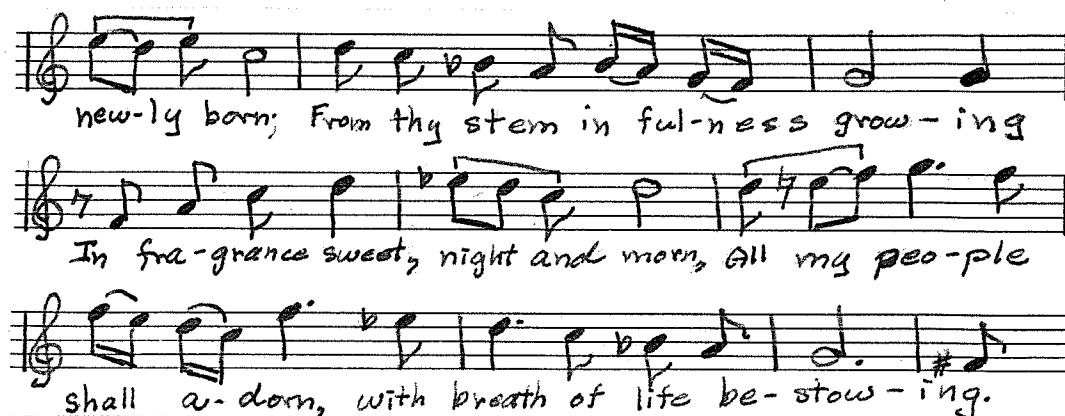
This piece serves as a short introduction to number 27 into which it leads uninterruptedly. The mood is quiet and sustained, maestoso. Solos in trumpet and trombone are piano, molto sostenuto e dolce. Nathan speaks, "Before all Israel and before Jehovah we anoint, as King, Solomon the son of David." The people shout, "God save King Solomon!"

27. The Death of David

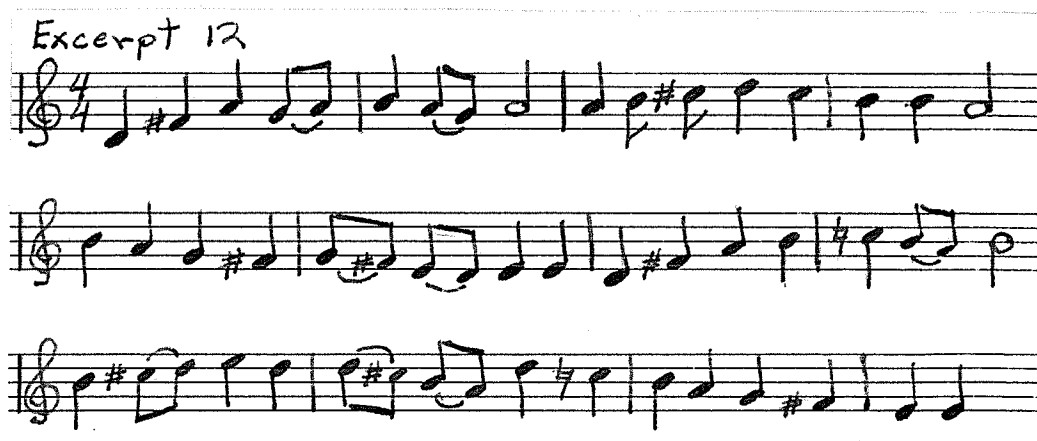
Narrator: The spirit of God has spoken through me, A day will come when the fear of God will reign over men. "How beautiful this life has been. I praise you who gave it me."

These words are spoken above a quiet and sustained orchestra, solos in the flute and 'cello. An angel (soprano) sings in prophecy of the rule of David's son (Excerpt 11). The meter is 3/4 and the key, F. Notice the freedom of the rhythm in Excerpt 11.





The choir, sopranos and altos first in unison, repeat this same melody pianissimo, but it is now in the key of D and in 4/4 meter, a chorale. The chorale version of this same song has been quoted in its entirety in order to make it possible for the reader to compare these two settings of the same words and melody.



As sopranos and altos sing Excerpt 12, tenors and basses chant, "Alleluia". Sopranos and then altos begin again the "Alleluia" of Excerpt 8.¹ Basses enter singing the chorale (Excerpt 12 above) in double time. Tenors now join the

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1. Ante p. 14.

women in singing "Alleluia". The scoring is now for full orchestra. As the basses complete the chorale, the dynamic level has reached fortissimo. The orchestra concludes joyously, the brass carrying the theme of Excerpt 8 to the end.

2. Musical Structure.

The music of King David is a pageant in contrasts. It seems almost impossible that two pieces as different in style as the barbaric March of the Philistines (number 13) and the beautiful chorale in The Death of David, for example, could have been written as parts of the same larger work. And yet these contrasts were intentional. Honegger states:

I have been accused of disunity for writing in two opposing styles. Certainly the score, written at one blow, is not as tight as I might have wished. Tightness is something for which I have striven in other works which have had a less easy path to the public ear. Nevertheless, I maintain that in King David I intentionally created this antagonism; in doing so I followed the painters who also sought for contrasts between the decorations and costumes of the Hebrews and those of the Philistines. For me the entire section of archaic Judah is treated in a rude and colored language, where as the Alleluias and the final Chorale are in that Protestant tradition of J. S. Bach that is for me representative of the music of Christianity. The contrasts are therefore planned and intentional. 1

The fact that King David was written first for the stage breathes through all the musical score, even in its concert version. This is seen primarily in the vivid descriptiveness of the music itself. For example, the

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1. Westminster recording, op. cit.

abundant use of fanfares as seen in numbers 3a, 5, 10, and 23. Also, the use of the English horn in number 2, the shepherd's song. Descriptive phrases in the songs are illustrated in the music, particularly in numbers 6,7, 16, and 24. The Incantation of the Witch of Endor is very vivid, needing almost no explanation other than the music itself. The speaking voice is used with great effectiveness in the Incantation of the Witch of Endor (12), the Lament of Gilboa (14), and the Crowning of Solomon (26). In other places, the vocal line is much more effective when sung, such as the angel's lines in numbers 16 and 27.

Much of the vividness of the musical score, as has been seen, was achieved by Honegger's use of the instruments at his disposal. When necessity limited him to only seventeen musicians, Stravinsky's advice to him was, "Imagine that you yourself wanted this arrangement of¹ seventeen musicians." Honegger did, and these were the instruments he chose: one double bass, two flutes, one oboe, two clarinets, one bassoon, two trumpets, one French horn, piano, harmonium and celeste. From the analysis previously made, it is easy to see why Honegger considered these particular instruments important. It is also interesting to note the important position given in the final scoring to instruments not included in the first

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1. Westminster recording, op. cit.

orchestration: the English horn in numbers 2 and 9, trombones in the Entry of Goliath and in number 5, the violi in numbers 7 and 18, and the percussion in numbers 1, 8, and 12.

As was indicated in Honegger's statement,¹ much of King David is in the style of early Protestant music. It will also be recalled that a number of the pieces are in ABA form,² a form as ancient as Gregorian plainsong. But there is also much in Honegger's music that marks it unmistakably as a "modern" composition: the harmonies of numbers 5, 8, 12, 13, and 15; polytonality, particularly noticeable in numbers 3a and 5; and polyrhythm, as found in numbers 5 and 19.

The short pieces are a masterpiece in simplicity of form and style; the longer pieces, such as numbers 16 and 27, show skilled handling of many themes and textures, usually polyphonically. The use of the Chorale in number 27, particularly in its combination with the Alleluia of number 16, is an outstanding example of this.

The music throughout seems to be in perfect keeping with the colorful drama for which it was written.

3. Religious Elements of the Text.

The text itself is of direct Biblical derivation,

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1. Ante p. 21.

2. Numbers 2, 9, and 24.

although not necessarily quoting from the Bible.

The original drama was in five acts or "stages" corresponding with the five stations in the life of David: shepherd, leader, war chief, prophet and king. In the musical setting, the first three stages have been combined in Part I.¹ The drama was staged with twenty-seven background panels.

A select number of the incidents in David's life have been chosen for this dramatization; many others are mentioned only briefly in summarizing passages by the narrator; large portions of his life are omitted completely. Eleven of the twenty-seven pieces are from the Psalms. Along with these, the Lament of Gilboa and the prophecies concerning David's son in numbers 16 and 27 indicate that the author desired to portray far more than the historical facts of David's life.

A review of the texts alone may clarify this point.

Number 2, The Song of David, the Shepherd, from Psalm XXIII:1-4, is an affirmation of faith in God's care. The English translation of the text follows. This setting is unlike the Biblical text and yet the spirit of the psalm has been kept.

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1. Westminster recording, op. cit.

God shall be my shepherd kind,
He will shield me from the wind,
Lead his lamb to pastures cool,
Guide me to the quiet pool.

He shall be my staff and rod,
Restore my spirit again,
E'en the darkest vale I trod
shall not be travell'd in pain.

He will keep me from alarm,
Tho' the lightning play around.
Save me with His mighty arm,
The while, shelter me from harm.

Comfort I have found.

Number 3, Psalm: 'All praise to Him', possibly from Psalm LXXXIX, praises God for his protection.

Number 4, The Song of Victory, is dramatic -- the joyful, victorious shout of the Hebrews over David's victory.

Number 6, Psalm: 'In the Lord I put my faith', from Psalm XI:1-2, affirms faith in God in spite of adversity. Most of this text has been given on page 6.

Number 7, Psalm: 'O had I wings like a dove', from LV:6, cries out to God in despair for there is nowhere else to turn.

Number 8, The Song of the Prophets, bemoans the shortness of man's life on earth.

Number 9, Psalm: 'Pity me, Lord', preserves the contrast in Psalm LVII:1 and 7-8. David seeks refuge in the Lord, and then praises God in joy for the answer to his cry.

Number 11, Psalm: 'God, the Lord shall be my light', from Psalm XXVII:1-2, looks to God for protection from all enemies.

Number 12, the Incantation of the Witch of Endor, is an original dramatic text in which Samuel is called from Sheol. When he appears, his response is scriptural.¹

Number 14, The Lament of Gilboa, is taken from II Samuel 1:19 ff. The narrator, speaking as David, expresses his grief over the defeat of Israel and the death of Saul and Jonathan.

Numbers 15, Song of the Daughters of Israel, and 16, The Dance before the Ark, are designed as one unit, the two numbers to be joined without pause. The theme of the first is, "Never hath God forsaken us"; the second is a petition, "God be with us".² Honegger writes:

This is the most important section of the score. It ends with the appearance of the Angel who announces the coming of Christ who is to be the son of David, and the Alleluias.

The angel's words seem to be quite local in context, but evidently they far transcend the local situation in the composer's mind. The prophecy states:

Give ear, 'tis not for thee as king to build an house unto my name. Behold a child is born to thee, and I will set him on thy throne. And he shall be my son, and I

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1. Ante, p. 10.

2. The details of number 16 are found on pages 12-14.

will be his Father. Then shall he build a house for my name. And Solomon he shall be called, That over Israel peace may reign!

"Alleluia! Alleluia!"

Number 17, 'Now my voice in song upsoaring' is in praise of King David. The third verse is prophetic:

God will send thee sons to cherish,
Who shall inherit in their turn,
Thy name in glory shall not perish,
And all the people as their pastor
Shall announce thee Master.

Number 18, Song of the Handmaid, is the love song of Bathsheba.

Numbers 19 and 20, from Psalm LI, are to be performed as a unit. The distress of the psalmist is indicated not only by the musical setting,¹ but also in the text itself by the repeated use of the phrases, "Pity me God, in my distress!" and "Pardon, Lord, the evil I have done!" The canon form, which is used in numbers 19 and 20, intensifies this even more.

Number 19:

Pity me God, in my distress!
Turn not away, but heal me again!
Wash me of sin and cleanse me of shame
And in thy hot displeasure, O chasten me not!²
Pardon, O Lord, the evil done!
Pity me God, in my distress!³

Number 20:

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1. Ante, p. 16.
2. These four lines are repeated again in two part canon.
3. This phrase is repeated four times.

Behold, in evil I was born,
And in iniquity conceived.
For thou desirest truth and goodness,
And in the hidden part great wisdom.
I have sinned, I have sinned, yea heavily transgressed.
I have been shown the path to follow,
And I have wandered from thy footsteps.

Pity me God, in my distress!
Pardon, Lord, the evil I have done!1

Number 21, Psalm: 'O shall I raise mine eyes unto the mountains' Psalm CXXI:1,3-4 affirms, "The Lord shall guide thy steps, going and coming." And again, "The Lord who is thy keeper neither slumbers nor sleeps."

Number 22, The Song of Ephraim, is a song of remorse and grief, "And must this be the price and forfeit of a kiss?"

Number 24, Psalm: 'Thee will I love, O Lord', quoted from Psalm XVIII:1-2 of Morat's translation, is an affirmation of adoration.

Number 25, Psalm: 'In my distress', continues, "then I cried to my God." It is from Psalm XVIII:5-8.

Number 26, The Crowning of Solomon, was previously quoted on page 19.

Number 27, The Death of David, is "a climax colored by the dawning of Christianity." ² The details of this number are given on pages 19-21.

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1. These two lines, by their musical setting, are here repeated five times, the entire number ending with yet another repetition of "Pity me, God, in my distress!"
2. Westminster recording, op. cit.

Of the twenty-two pieces with vocal texts, thirteen concern God directly, dealing in praise, faith, or prayer. Only the Incantation of the Witch of Endor (number 12) can be said to be truly "on the spot" action, although number 26, The Crowning of Solomon, might possibly be so classified.

The message therefore which seems to be of utmost importance to the author is David's faith in God and the promise of the coming Messiah.

D. Religious Contribution of the Composition

The musical setting given the text by Honegger heightens the dramatic elements in the text. This is particularly true in the early scenes dealing with warfare, marching, etc. In fact, the addition of the musical score almost equalizes the proportion of those sections which deal with dramatic action and those which are concerned with subjective reflections. The text comes to life in the atmosphere of the colorful, descriptive music. The reflections, by contrast of musical setting, gain even more importance. This is particularly true in the case of the Messianic prophecies both of which are followed by extended Alleluias. Indeed, the last prophecy, which forms the text of the Chorale, because of its musical treatment is repeated three times, becoming the climax of the entire "Symphonic Psalm".

Because of this treatment of the Biblical account

it may be said that King David is a dramatic portrayal of selected portions in David's life and his reaction to these experiences. The climax of the entire composition is the promise of the Christ who is to come, David's son.

The reactions of critiques and audiences to King David are quite favorable:

Le Roi David, a biblical and modern work, varied, youthful, captivating, strong and sweet, wild and religious like Bach, but where everything blends into majesty and grandeur.¹

"The beauty of these works will live a long time -- because it is a spontaneous and honest beauty."² "A more unified work, and more focused and intensely moving work, we have rarely heard."³ After a Town hall concert which was admittedly attended by an audience of the socially and musically elect, the following report was given:

It may be said at once that this work . . . was very cordially received. At every opportunity there was prolonged applause. It is not often that a new work by a young modern is given such a welcome.⁴

Writing in 1951, Honegger himself evaluated the work as follows:

From a vantage point of thirty years, I can look at this work very objectively. I do not disown it, but I see its faults quite clearly. It is the work of a beginner, but it is written with complete spontaneity and without any regard for the fashionable. It is possible to trace in it the influences of musicians of my time

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1. Pro Musica Quaterly, 1928, p.6.
2. Ewen, David: The American Hebrew, Jan. 4, 1929.
3. International Musician, May 1952.
4. Downes, Olin: New York Times, Oct. 27, 1925.

and above all, undisguised, that of the greatest of the masters, J. S. Bach.

Its reception after the first performance confirmed me in my opinion and in my intentions to create an art that addresses itself directly to everyone, trained musicians as well as the listeners who make up the great mass of the public. That both of these groups will pardon my shortcomings, if the work as a whole finds their approval, is my only wish.¹

E. Summary

King David is the musical setting of selected dramatic incidents in the life of David and portions from the psalms which reveal his character and his reaction to these events. It is based on a drama by Rene Morax, and was set to music in 1921 by Arthur Honegger.

The work is in three parts and is composed of twenty-seven pieces. These pieces are held together by a narrator who gives the historical settings of the various numbers.

Two distinct musical styles are used: the music describing the Philistines and Hebrews is dissonant and intentionally coarse; the Alleluias and the final Chorale are in the style of J. S. Bach. Both polytonality and polyrhythm are used for dramatic effect and descriptive vividness. The instrumentation is also descriptive.

The text is biblical, but very selective. Eleven of the twenty-seven pieces are taken directly from the

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1. Westminster Recording, op. cit.

psalms. Great stress is also placed on the two messianic prophecies.

In the work as a whole, the pieces portraying dramatic incidents in David's life are almost equally balanced by those which portray his inner spiritual reactions. From this it has been concluded that David's faith in God and the promise of the coming Messiah are foremost in the composer's mind.

Audience responses as a whole have been quite favorable to performances of King David.

CHAPTER II

THE ANALYSIS OF SYMPHONY OF PSALMS

SYMPHONY OF PSALMS

CHAPTER II

A. Introduction

The Symphony of Psalms was composed in 1930 and dedicated "to the glory of God" and "to the 'Boston Symphony Orchestra' on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary." The world premiere was in Brussels, December 13, 1930; the Boston performance was December 19 of the same year. It is scored for chorus and orchestra, the latter without violins or violas. It is in three parts, the text taken from the Vulgate: Part I, Psalm XXXVIII:13, 14 (King James, Psalm XXXIX:12, 13); Part II, Psalm XXXIX:2, 3, 4 (King James, Psalm XL:1, 2, 3); Part III, Psalm CL.

B. The Composer

Igor Stravinsky was born June 17, 1882, in Oranienbaum, Russia. He studied law at the University of St. Petersburg, but in 1902 abandoned law to study with Rimsky-Korsakof. His most famous works are Firebird (1910), Petroushka (1912), and Le Sacre de Printemps (1913). In 1925, Stravinsky came to America, and in 1942 he became an American citizen. He now resides in Hollywood, California.

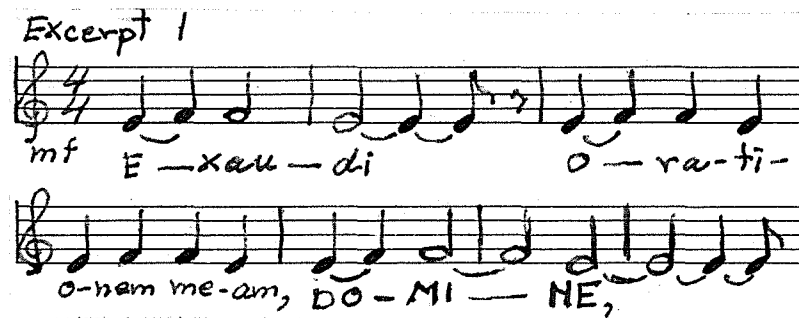
C. The Composition

1. Analysis of the Composition

Part I

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.¹

The orchestra begins with a percussive E minor chord, followed by a passage of running sixteenth notes in the oboe and bassoon. The orchestra continues in this fashion (alternating the E minor chord with the running sixteenth notes) for twenty-five measures. The altos enter, accompanied by continuous eighth notes in the orchestra, singing Excerpt 1. Notice the simplicity of this melody.



This is followed by the full choir singing Excerpt 2.



The orchestra continues for four measures, running sixteenth notes, and then the altos sing Excerpt 1, mezzo-forte,

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1. Psalm XXXIX:12, 13 King James Version.

to the words, "Auribus percipe lacrimas meas." The orchestra accompanies with the moving eighth notes, as before. The E minor chord follows, and tenors continue, forte on A, "Ne sileas, ne sileas ", the altos joining them on the repetition. This is followed again by the E minor chord. Accompanied by the clarinet, bassoon, and trombones, the choir sings Excerpt 3. Notice the progression from perfect intervals to chords with seconds.

Excerpt 3

The image shows two systems of handwritten musical notation. The first system is for the vocal line, with a treble clef and a 3/2 time signature. The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are "Quo-ni-am ad-ve-na e-go". The second system is for the piano accompaniment, with a bass clef and a 3/2 time signature. It features chords and moving lines. The lyrics are "sum a-pud te et".

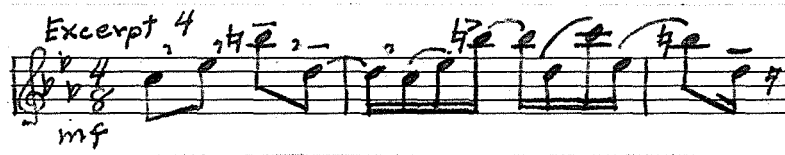
The passage begins with woodwinds and brass, crescendo. As the section progresses, it is scored for full orchestra, reaching fortissimo, as the choir sings (also fortissimo, accented, in unison), "Remitte mihi." This is followed by a subito piano in the orchestra, but the choir continues to repeat these same words forte diminuendo. This passage is contrapuntal in style; the principle melody, sung first by tenors and then sopranos, is similar to Excerpt 1. Part I ends fortissimo, the choir singing "amplius non ero" in

parallel major chords, reinforced by the full orchestra.

Part II

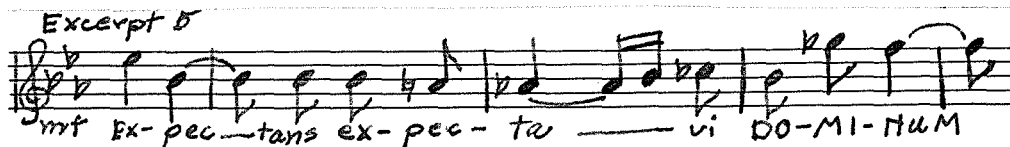
I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.¹

Part II commences with a double fugue, one in the orchestra and one in the choir. The subject of the orchestral fugue, Excerpt 4, is introduced by the first oboe, followed by the first flute, second flute, and second oboe in order. The metronomic indication is $\text{♩} = 60$.



This opening section of the orchestral fugue continues for twenty-eight measures.

Sopranos then enter with the subject of the vocal fugue.

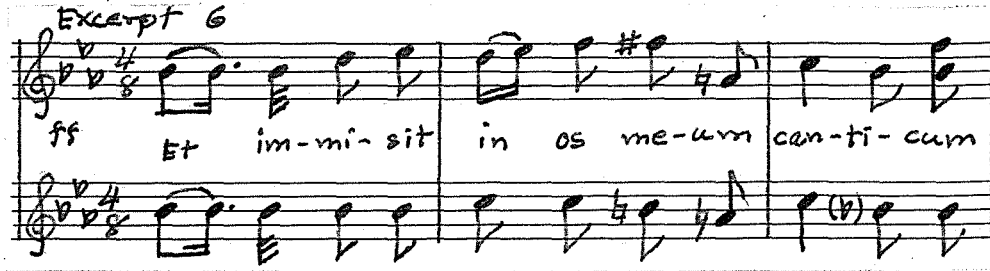


This is sung against Excerpt 4 in the cellos and basses. The new subject is taken in turn by the altos, tenors, and basses. Variations of Excerpt 4 reappear repeatedly in the orchestral accompaniment.

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1. Psalm XL:1,2,3 King James Version.

Continuing this fugal section, orchestra and voices burst forth with Excerpt 6.



The four parts (and orchestra) continue fortissimo to the words, "et sperabunt" at which point there is a subito piano. Part II ends with voices piano unison on E flat, "in DOMINO." The soprano woodwinds accompany this, also piano.

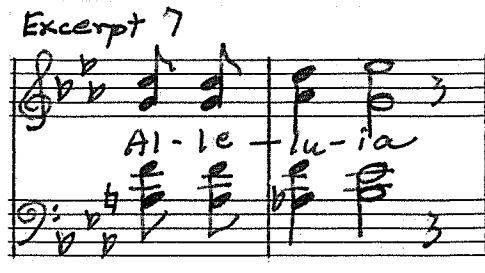
Part III

Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.
Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.
Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.
Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.
Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.
Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.
Praise ye the Lord. 1

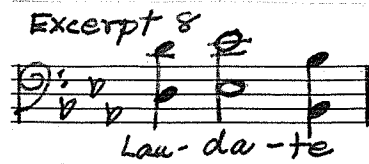
The tempo is ♩ = 48. The orchestra begins with sustained chords, piano. The voices enter singing, "Alleluia," in beautiful four part harmony.

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1. Psalm CL King James Version.



Immediately tenors and basses continue, piano.



This is sung three times, sopranos and altos entering on the second repetition, full choir ending on unison C, "DOMINUM". "In sanctus Ejus" follows, sung in parts; the strings accompanying in a slow, dignified syncopation. Excerpt 8 is repeated, still piano, and then the full choir in parts sings, "Laudate Eum in firmamen to virtutis Ejus". Excerpt 8 follows again, and then the unison, "DOMINUM", as before.

The tempo changes suddenly to $\text{♩} = 80$. The orchestra is very excited, a marked rhythm predominating, the dynamics reaching fortissimo. After twenty-nine measures of this rhythmical orchestral section, there is a subito piano, and sopranos, followed by altos, sing, "Laudate, laudate in virtutibus Ejus". This is a two part counterpoint, the dynamics reaching forte crescendo. A subito piano follows, and altos and tenors chant, in staccato, syncopated rhythm, "Laudate DOMINUM in virtutibus Ejus laudate DOMINUM in sanctis Ejus." Basses continue, now

forte, "Laudate Eum secundum multitudinem magnitudinis Ejus" in half and whole notes, the woodwinds continuing the staccato, rhythmical chant against this. Altos and tenors enter "sforzando subito piano" with the words "Laudate Eum secundum" on the bass's word, "magnitudinis". While altos and tenors continue their phrase, "multitudinem" etc., sopranos and basses sing, forte, "Laudate Eum in sono tubae, Laudate Eum."

The next section returns to Tempo I; sustained chords, piano, in the orchestra are followed by Excerpt 7.¹ Immediately following this the tempo changes to $\text{♩} = 80$. The orchestral dynamics are forte and fortissimo, the rhythm is staccato and accented. The choir sings in octaves syncopated and strongly accented. Excerpt 9.

Excerpt 9

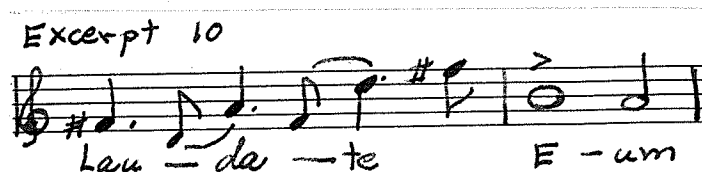
The musical score for Excerpt 9 is written for a choir and piano. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system shows the vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and the piano accompaniment. The lyrics are "Lau-da-te DO-MI-NUM". The second system shows the vocal parts and piano accompaniment continuing the phrase "te E-um." The piano accompaniment consists of sustained chords. The vocal parts are syncopated and strongly accented.

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1. Ante, p. 39.

The orchestra continues for four measures in moving staccato eighth notes, the choir chanting "Laudate DOMINUM" on a C major chord. The bass instruments are playing a quarter note pattern of F sharp, G, and then A flat against this chord -- the orchestra is scored so fully at this point that it is difficult to hear the voices. The orchestra continues for five measures, and the choir repeats again, "Laudate DOMINUM", still in C major. Four measures later, the chant is repeated in E major, followed one measure later, still in E major, with "Laudate Eum." The orchestra is now forte; the soprano instruments are moving in triplets, and the bass instruments in quarter notes, ben marcato. The choral chant and the orchestra continue to alternate; the final choral words are in B flat major. The orchestra ends this section, subito piano rallentando.

A new tempo is introduced, $\text{♩} = 48$. Sopranos begin, tranquillo, cantabile to sing Excerpt 10. The orchestra is now piano moving in half notes, sustained.



The basses follow the sopranos one measure later, starting on B. Sopranos continue with the same figure, now starting on G, to the words "in timpano et choro, laudate Eum laudate Eum". Tenors and altos enter at this point, and, with the basses, sing contrapuntally a variation of Excerpt 10. Against this the sopranos sing an ascending line, Excerpt 11.

Excerpt 11

Poco a poco crescendo

Lau-da-te DO-MI-NUM, Lau-da-te E-um in
cor-dis et or-ga-no;

This leads immediately into a passage of beautiful, sustained harmony, subito piano e ben cantabile.

Excerpt 12

Lau-da-te E-um in cym-ba-lis
be-ne-se-nan-ti-bus

At this point, the orchestra begins a pedal point of moving half notes, E^b, B^b, F, B^b, E^b, etc. which continues without variation, but with mounting intensity until eight measures before the end, where Excerpt 7 occurs again. The choir continues with this same melody, the harmony slightly different, "laudate Eum in cymbalis jubilationibus". Excerpt 9 follows, but now piano, beginning on

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1. Post, p. 43.
2. Ante, p. 40.

B flat. Excerpt 12 follows immediately to the words, "Omnis omnis spiritus laudat, laudat Eum." The orchestra continues, as before with Excerpt 12, for six measures. Excerpt 7, Excerpt 8, and "DOMINUM" follow, as at the beginning of Part III, the orchestra ending piano on C and E.

2. Musical Structure

In the composition as a whole the orchestra predominates. There are many sections devoted to orchestra alone; there are very few sections devoted to choir a capella. In sections where both choir and orchestra are together, the orchestra frequently predominates over the choir.

Part I

The principle elements used by Stravinsky in Part I are the E minor chord, the running sixteenth notes¹ in woodwinds and piano, and the choral theme (Excerpt 1) with its accompaniment of moving eighth notes. The orchestra plays thirty measures without the choir; there are no a cappella passages. The forte passages are "Et de precationem . . ."² and "Ne sileas, ne sileas".³ The section beginning "Quoniam advena . . ."⁴ builds constantly until a climax, fortissimo and full orchestra, is reached at the words "Remitte mihi".⁵ These same words are repeated,

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1. Ante, p. 35.
2. Excerpt 2, ante, p. 35.
3. Ante, p. 36.
4. Excerpt 3, ante p. 36.
5. Ante, p. 36.

subito piano in the orchestra, building constantly to the second climax which is reached at the end of Part I, full orchestra and choir fortissimo, senza diminuendo.

Part II

Part II begins as a double fugue, one in the orchestra and one in the choir, and parts of the two subjects appear throughout this section. This is particularly true of the first measure of the first subject.¹ Nevertheless, Stravinsky does not hesitate to introduce new material into the fugue, such as the unison chant with which Part II closes.² An example of the intricate weaving together of these two subjects follows. While the choir (melody in the soprano section) sings variations of the third and fourth measures of the choral subject,³ trombones and tubas, then 'cellos and basses,⁴ repeat accented the first measure of the orchestral subject. This excerpt is taken starting the sixth measure after the beginning of Excerpt 6, ante page 38.

Excerpt 13

S
Trb.
Tubas

DE-O no-stro
Ur-de-kunt

.....

1. Excerpt 4, ante, p. 37.
2. Ante, p. 38.
3. Excerpt 5, ante, p. 37.
4. Excerpt 4, ante, p. 37.



There are thirty-seven measures for orchestra alone; seven for choir a cappella. The dynamic climax of Part II is Excerpt 6 and the section immediately following.¹

Part III

The unifying elements of this section are the "Alleluia"² and "Laudate",³ particularly when this "laudate" is followed by the chanted "DOMINUM".⁴ An overall view of the structure of Part III follows:

"Alleluia"

verse 1, "in sanctis Ejus . . . in firmamento virtutis Ejus"⁵

"Laudate DOMINUM"

verses 2 and 3, "Laudate Eum in timpano . . . et ergano"⁶

"Alleluia"

"Laudate DOMINUM, Laudate eum", etc.⁷

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1. Ante, p. 38.
2. Excerpt 7, ante, p. 39.
3. Ante, p. 39.
4. Ante, p. 39.
5. Ante, p. 39.
6. Ante, p. 39.
7. Ante, p. 41.

verse 4, Excerpts 10 and 11 1
verses 5 and 6, "Laudate Eum in cymbalis . . . Omnis spiri-
tus laudat, laudat Eum" (Excerpt 12) 2 This section is
AABAA in form.

"Alleluia"

"Laudate, laudate, laudate DOMINUM"

Although there are several passages in which
the dynamic level rises to forte or fortissimo, the climax
seems to be in the quiet restraint of Excerpt 12³ and in
the last "Alleluia. Laudate, laudate, laudate DOMINUM",
which is sung softly.

3. Religious Elements of the Text

The Symphony of Psalms, as has been stated, is
taken from the Vulgate, Psalm XXXVIII:13,14, Psalm XXXIX:
2,3,4, and Psalm CL. At the beginning of the analysis of
each part, the English translation of the same passage
(King James version of the Bible) has been quoted. The
text, then, is Biblical. But Stravinsky repeats words and
phrases of the Vulgate at will; in Part III one phrase of
the Vulgate is omitted completely. A separate study of
the text will now be made in order to show the differences
in the Vulgate and the musical text. Words in the musical
text which do not occur in the Vulgate will be underlined.

Part I

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1. Ante, p. 41.
2. Ante, p. 42 and 43.
3. Ante, p. 43.

13. Exaudi orationem meam, DOMINE, Et deprecationem meam. Auribus percipe lacrimas meas. Ne sileas, ne sileas. (Be not silent.) Quoniam advena ego sum apud te et peregrinus, sicut omnes patres mei.
14. (full choir) Remitte mihi, ("O spare me")
(altos and tenors Remitte mihi ut refrigerer Prius --
(during this phrase, sopranos and basses have repeated Remitte mihi still again) quam abeam et amplius non ero.

Both "Ne sileas" and "Remitte mihi" are cries of supplication.

Part II

2. (sopranos) Expectans expectavi DOMINUM et intendit, intendit mihi.
3. Et exaudivit preces meas: et eduxit me de lacu miseriae, et de luto faecis.

These are the words of the choral fugue. Each section, upon entering with the subject, sings these words with a repetition here and there or an omission. All variations from the Vulgate at this point seem to be for purposes of musical structure.

Et statuit super petram pedes meos: et direxit gressus, gressus meos.

The sopranos also begin this passage, the other sections entering in order, each one quarter later. Again, variations from the Vulgate seem to be due to the musical structure; for all four parts end together.

4. Et immisit in os meum canticum novum, carmen DEO nostro. Videbunt multi, videbunt ("see it") et timabunt: et sperabunt, sperabunt ("trust") in DOMINO.

The repetitions of "videbunt" and "sperabunt" seem to be for emphasis.

Part III

1. Alleluia. Laudate, laudate, laudate (praise),
DOMINUM in sanctis Ejus. Laudate, laudate, laudate.
Eum in firmamento virtutis Ejus. Laudate DOMINUM.
2. Laudate, laudate Eum in virtutibus Ejus.
(chant) Laudate DOMINUM in virtutibus Ejus laudate
DOMINUM in sanctis Ejus.
Laudate Eum secundum multitudinem magnitudinis Ejus.
3. Laudate Eum in sono tubae. Laudate Eum. (At this
point Stravinsky omits the "in psalterio, et cithara"
of the Vulgate.) Alleluia. Laudate DOMINUM, Laudate
Eum. Laudate DOMINUM, laudate Eum.
4. Laudate Eum in timpano et choro, Laudate Eum (soprano)
Laudate Eum in cordis et organo, Laudate Eum (alto, tenor)
(Sopranos and basses repeat Laudate Eum during this alto
and tenor passage.)
5. Laudate Eum in cymbalis benesonantibus, laudate Eum
in cymbalis jubilationibus (jubilationis, Vulgate)
Laudate DOMINUM Laudate DOMINUM, Laudate Eum.
6. Omnis omnis spiritus laudat DOMINUM, Omnis spiritus
laudat, laudat Eum. Alleluia. Laudate, laudate, lauda-
te, DOMINUM.

The word "laudate" alone occurs twenty-four times more in the Stravinsky setting than in the Vulgate. In some cases, this repetition (and that of "Alleluia" and "DOMINUM") may be due to the musical structure.¹ But the repetitions are so numerous that it gives the text one central, impelling thought -- "Praise ye the Lord . . . Praise him . . . Praise him . . ." The instruments of praise are so unimportant by comparison that they may even be omitted (as in the case of "psalterio" and "cithara"). All that is important is, "Laudate, laudate, laudate DOMINUM. Alleluia."

D. The Religious Contribution of the Composition

Part I

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1. Ante, p. 45.

The percussive E minor chord, the running sixteenth notes, the incessantly moving eighth notes of the orchestral accompaniment, give a constant feeling of uneasiness and unrest. There is no peace, "for I am a stranger with thee."

The prayer begins as a humble petition -- quietly, almost monotonously (the melody of two notes). Then the suppliant breaks forth, "Et deprecationem mea"! Again the quiet petition, another restless orchestral interlude, and then the cry, "Ne Sileas, ne sileas"!

The prayer is again quiet, but builds constantly in emotional intensity to the climax, "Remitte mihi"!

"Remitte mihi", the choir repeats and again the emotional tension increases to the last, piercing cry, "et amplius non ero".¹ This is the restless, despairing cry of one who has not yet found peace in God. The musical setting in particular gives this feeling of wandering uneasiness. There is no pause, no breath -- only a ceaseless search and cry for the yet unknown God.

Part II

The slow, relaxed, and yet constantly moving subject in the woodwinds creates the mood, "I waited patiently for the Lord". The choir tells the story quietly, deliberately. But at the recollection, "he hath put a new

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1. The Vulgate has been quoted here as the King James Version does not translate this portion exactly.

song in my mouth", the music bursts with praise and joy. "Many shall see it, and fear", is sung loudly. Then suddenly soft with the restraint inspired of worship and awe, the choir chants, "and shall trust in the Lord." The Lord has answered prayer. The feet of the psalmist are no longer wandering, but are planted firmly upon the rock. He has found the One Whom he can trust.

Part III

In Part II the psalmist sang, "And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God"¹. Part III is this song of praise.

The mood is one of utter joy and awe, so quiet and restrained in character that the expression of it is barely audible. "Alleluia. Laudate, laudate, laudate, DOMINUM". This mood is sustained even in the passage, "praise him in the firmament of his power". "Laudate DOMINUM."

Suddenly, but quietly, the mood is changed to one of excitement and anticipation. The choir enters singing loudly, "Praise him for his mighty acts." "Laudate DOMINUM. Laudate eum". "Praise him according to his excellent greatness. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet."

But suddenly again the mood is quiet, "Alleluia". Then the choir and orchestra burst forth again singing,

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1. Ante, p. 37.

"Laudate DOMINUM"! "Laudate eum"!

The beautiful song-like passage, "Praise him with timbrel and dance" is relaxed and light in quality. The words "in stringed instruments and organs" build again to a climax -- the listener anticipates the dynamic peak at the words "Praise him upon the loud cymbals". But instead, these words are sung softly and quietly, with the same restraint with which Part III began. "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord", is sung to the same melody, softly.

"Alleluia. Laudate, laudate, laudate DOMINUM"-- this almost inexpressable longing of adoration ends the composition. The praise expressed in Psalm CL by this musical setting takes on a deep and quiet spiritual quality. The moment of supreme joy and adoration is the quiet moment with God.

These three psalms, and the order in which they are placed, form a wholeness of experience. Although they can be performed separately, no part is truly complete by itself. The cry of deprecation, "Hear my prayer, O Lord" (Part I), is answered by the assurance, "He inclined unto me and heard my cry" (Part II). The response follows naturally, "Alleluia" "Praise ye the Lord" (Part III).

The New York Times, in its music column March 16, 1947 stated:

Stravinsky's Symphony de Psaumes (is) one of its composer's most deeply impressive creations . . . His own

. . . is the idea of making only the central section of a setting of so joyful a text as the 'Laudate Dominum' exultant. Yet nothing in the symphony is as affecting as the solemn, sustained mood with which this great exhortation to praise the Lord comes to its termination in this work.

Lawrence Gilman of the New York Herald Tribune expressed this opinion: "Stravinsky, in short, has given us a masterpiece. It is his excelling work."¹

The work is, however, modern enough in style to prove difficult listening to the average layman. The Musical Courier in praising the work stated, "the majority of the audience . . . did not appear to share this opinion."² Arthur Berger, in the Saturday Review, also expressed the opinion that the Symphony of Psalms would be a challenge to "almost any listener who is not an habitual follower of current trends."³

E. Summary

The Symphony of Psalms was composed by Igor Stravinsky in 1930 "to the glory of God". It is in three parts; the text is from the Vulgate. Part I is from Psalm XXXVIII:13, 14, Part II from Psalm XXXIX:2, 3, 4, and Part III from Psalm CL.

Part I is the expression of one who has not yet found peace in God. The words and music express unrest and despair.

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1. Gilman, Lawrence: Music, NYHT March 6, 1931.
2. Stravinsky's Symphony of Psalms Given by Boston Musical Forces, May 2, 1936.
3. Berger, Arthur: Dissonance Disguise, Saturday Review, January 24, 1948.

Part II, musically in the form of a double fugue, is the expression of answered prayer. The psalmist will sing praise, for his trust is in the Lord.

Part III is the song of praise. The words of supreme joy and praise are sung quietly in awe and adoration.

These three parts form a unity of religious experience. First, restlessness and despair apart from God. Then, rest and assurance as trust is placed in Him. Finally, adoration and praise, the expression of a heart that has lived with God.

The Symphony of Psalms has been praised by critics as a truly great work, but it is admittedly difficult listening for those who are not accustomed to modern music.

CHAPTER III

THE ANALYSIS OF AM AHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS

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CHAPTER III

A. Introduction

Amahl and the Night Visitors was commissioned by NBC television in 1951 and was given its world premier by the NBC Television Theater December 24 of that year. Giano-Carlo Menotti wrote both the words and music of this one act opera and also directed the premier performance. The opera is scored for orchestra, a chorus of shepherds and villagers, and six soloists: Amahl (a crippled boy of about 12), boy soprano; his Mother, soprano; King Kaspar (slightly deaf), tenor; King Melchior, baritone; King Balthazar, bass; and the Page, bass.

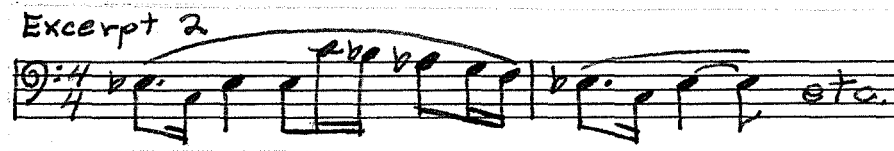
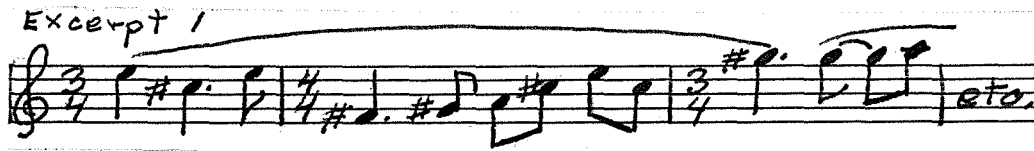
B. The Composer

Gian-Carlo Menotti was born in Cadigliano, Italy, July 7, 1911. He wrote his first opera, The Death of Pierrot, at the age of six. While in Italy, he studied at the Milan Conservatory. In 1928 his mother brought him to the United States where he was enrolled as a scholarship student at Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. His most famous works are The Old Maid and the Thief (commissioned by NBC radio in 1938), The Medium, The Telephone, and The Consul. Menotti is currently living in Mount Kisco, New York, and teaches at the Curtis Institute.

C. The Composition

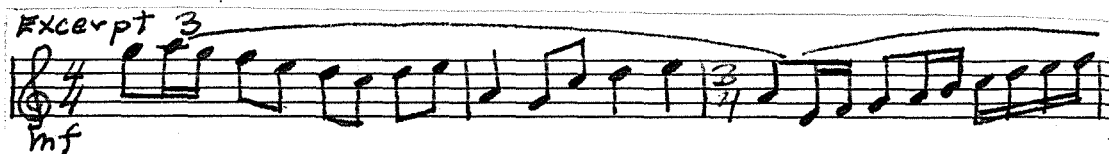
1. Analysis of the Composition

The orchestral introduction of twelve measures, Andante Sostenuto, is scored for strings, pianissimo, dolcissimo. The two main themes of this introduction follow, and are used throughout the opera.



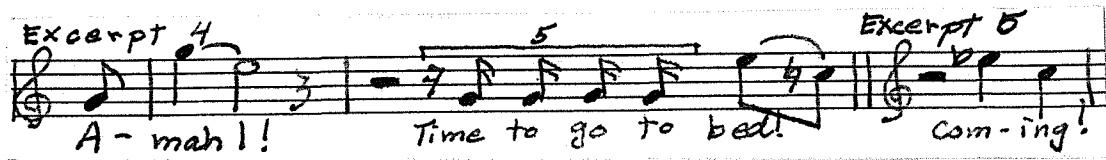
The curtain rises upon a poor cottage furnished only with a bench and a pallet of straw. Outside the night sky is crystal clear with the Eastern Star flaming brightly. Amahl sits on a stone near the cottage door playing his shepherd's pipe. His crutch lies on the ground beside him. The Mother is inside the house, busy with her household chores.

As the curtain rises, the oboe, which is used to represent the shepherd's pipe, plays excerpt 3.

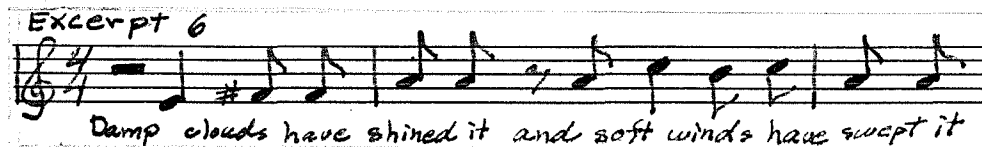


This continues for twenty measures, and then the Mother calls, answered by Amahl. This is illustrated in Excerpts 4 and 5. Notice how Menotti imitates the inflection and

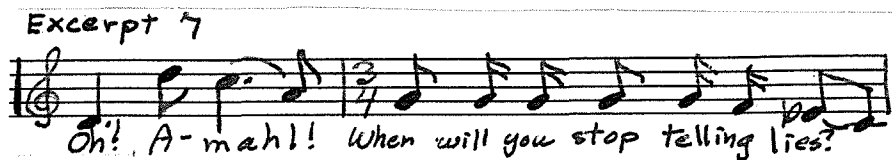
rhythm of the vocative. The minor third, for example, is used three times: once on the syllable, "...mahl"; again on the word, "bed"; and finally on the word, "coming".



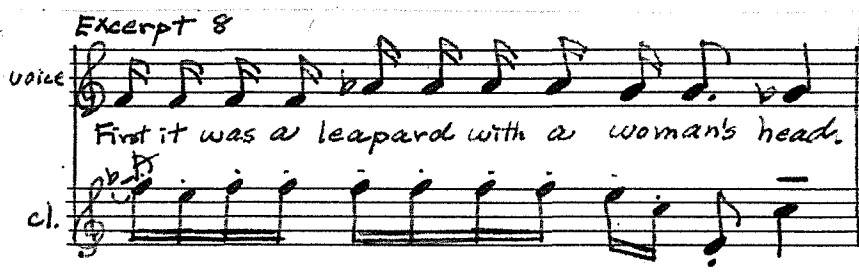
But Amahl continues to sit and play. The Mother calls again, "Amahl!" He again answers, "Coming!", but shrugs his shoulders, and continues to play. Finally his Mother becomes impatient and sings sharply, "How long must I shout to make you obey?" This brings Amahl into the cottage, but not first without much teasing and coaxing, "But, Mother, let me stay a little longer!" His Mother asks, "What was keeping you outside?" And Amahl sings, "Oh, Mother, you should go out and see! There's never been such a sky!" The "A" theme of Amahl's short aria follows:



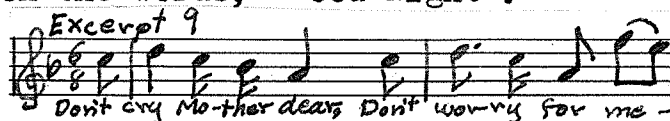
The Mother listens patiently until the words, "... there is a star as large as a window, and the star has a tail, and it moves across the sky like a chariot on fire." At this she bursts out singing Excerpt 7.



A conversation between Mother and son continues for eighteen measures, and then the Mother begins Excerpt 8, accompanied by the clarinet.



She finally concludes, "Poor Amahl! Hunger has gone to your head . . . Unless we go begging how shall we live through tomorrow? My little son, a beggar!" She begins to weep, but Amahl strokes her hair and sings Excerpt 9 tenderly. This is a short aria which ends as a duet, Mother and son singing in canon, finally ending together in thirds on the words, "Good Night".



At the conclusion of this aria, Amahl goes to his pallet of straw, and the Mother, after snuffing out the tiny oil lamp and covering Amahl with his cloak, lies down on the bench.

In the distance, the voices of the three Kings are heard singing Excerpt 10. Notice the predominance of perfect intervals, which is also carried out in the orchestral accompaniment.

Excerpt 10

pp From far away we come and far-ther we must go. How far, how far, my Crys-tal star?

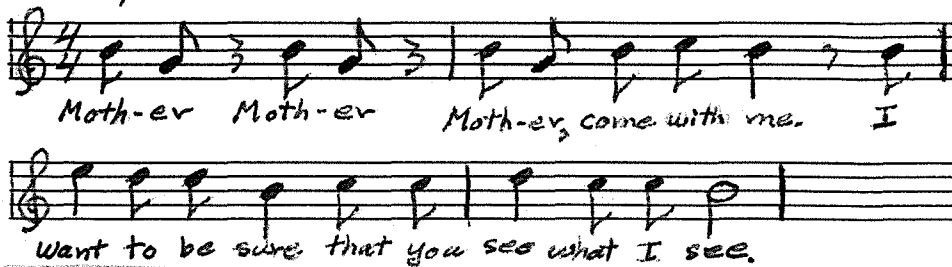
The voices of the Kings come closer, and then the Kings approach the cottage door and knock. The Mother sings, "Amahl! Go and see who's knocking at the door." Amahl goes to the door and opens it a crack. Then, quickly shutting it, he runs to his Mother. Excerpts 11a and b show the orchestral accompaniment which is used to describe Amahl's action.

Excerpt 11a

Excerpt 11b

Amahl sings Excerpt 12, here in E minor, and then proceeds to tell his unbelieving Mother that outside the door "there is a King with a crown".

Excerpt 12.

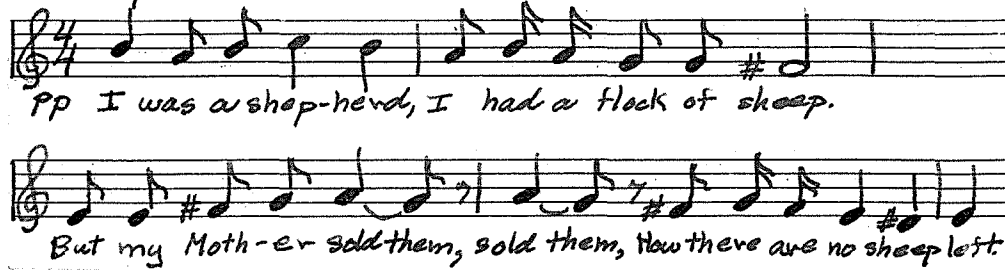


The Mother threatens to spank him if he lies any more and sends him to the door again (Excerpt 11a, this time starting on A). Amahl opens the door a crack, stares, and returns to his Mother (Excerpt 11b, starting on D), and again sings Excerpt 12, this time in F minor. Then he tells his Mother that there was not a King after all -- "there are two Kings!" His Mother is furious and sends him to the door for a third time (Excerpt 11a, beginning on B). He again opens it a crack, stares, and returns to his Mother (Excerpt 11b, beginning on D), singing Excerpt 12 in G minor. Amahl, hesitatingly, reports to his Mother, "The Kings are three, and one of them is black." In utter disbelief, the Mother goes to the door herself, followed by Amahl (Excerpt 11a, starting on low G, written in cannon, the second voice starting three eighth notes later in bass clef).

Upon opening the door, the orchestra strikes an E major chord, and the Kings sing, "Good Evening!" They are invited into the cottage, and proceed with much ceremony. An orchestral march of thirty-four measures accompanies this action. When they are settled as comfortably as possible, the Mother leaves to gather wood, with parting instructions to Amahl, "Don't be a nuisance." But Amahl immediately begins to ask questions. Balthazar tells him

of his black marble palace, and then asks, "And you, little boy, what do you do?" Amahl answers, in an aria beginning as Excerpt 13.

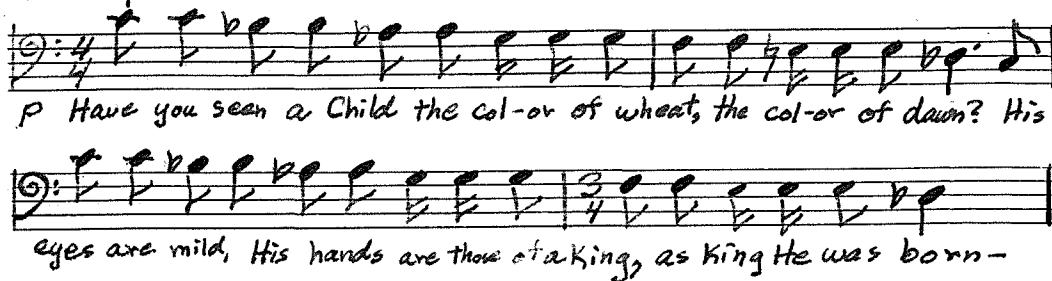
Excerpt 13

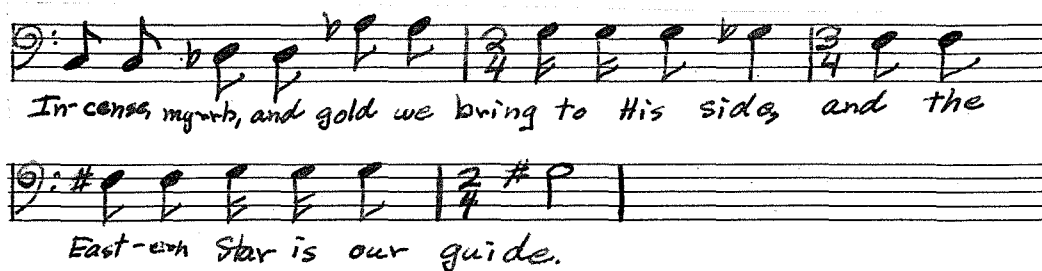


At the conclusion of this song, Amahl tries to engage the deaf Kaspar in conversation. After much effort, he succeeds in getting Kaspar to tell about his box (a thirty-two measure aria), and is rewarded with a piece of licorice.

The Mother returns, and sends Amahl to the shepherds to bring food for the Kings, as there is nothing in the house to set before them. He hurries out to the music of Excerpt 11a, and the Mother engages the Kings in conversation. She discovers that all of these gifts are meant for a Child whom the Kings do not even know. Melchior sings Excerpt 14, thus introducing the main theme of this number which ends as a quartet.

Excerpt 14





The Mother answers Melchior, pianissimo, as though to herself (Excerpt 14, starting now on E), "Yes, I know a child the color of wheat, . . . But no one will bring him incense or gold, though sick and poor and hungry and cold. He's my child, my son, my darling, my own." Melchior and Balthazar continue together (Excerpt 14, in thirds), "Have you seen a Child the color of earth, the color of thorn? His eyes are sad, His hands are those of the poor, as poor He was born." The Mother answers (Excerpt 14, beginning again on E), singing of Amahl, as though this description also fit her son.

The music changes as the three Kings sing:

MELCHIOR

The Child we seek holds the seas
and the winds on His palm.

KASPAR

The Child we seek has the moon
and the stars at His feet.

BALTHAZAR

Before Him the eagle is gentle,
the lion is meek.

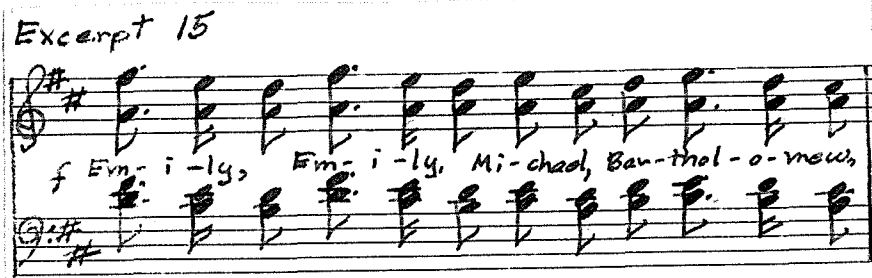
Together they continue singing Excerpt 14 in descending triads to the following words:

Choirs of angels hover over His roof
and sing Him to sleep.

He's warmed by breath,
He's fed by Mother
who is both Virgin and Queen.
Incense, myrrh, and gold
we bring to His side,
and the Eastern Star is our guide.

The Mother at the same time sings an ascending counter melody, ending on high A, fortissimo, "Amahl".

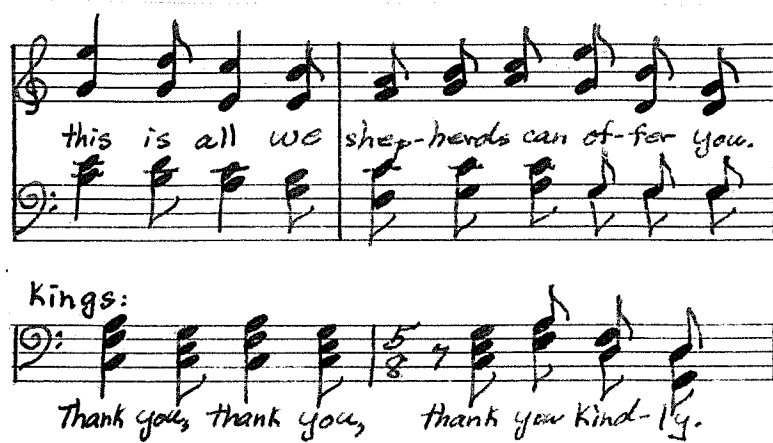
The silence that follows is broken by the call of the shepherds. The Mother opens the door wide, and the shepherds begin to appear from all directions, falling into line behind Amahl, singing a capella as they come Excerpt 15.



Once at the doorway, however, they are struck dumb by the sight of the Kings. After much urging, they enter shyly, crowding into one corner of the room. There is still more shoving and embarrassment until one of the shepherds boldly lays his gift before the Kings. The others, gathering courage, bring their gifts, singing Excerpt 16, the Kings answering. Excerpts 15 and 16 are illustrative of the simplicity and grace of Menotti's harmonies.

Excerpt 16

pp Ol-ives and quinc-es, ap-ples and raisins,
nut-meg and myr-tle, med-lars and chest-nuts,



At the conclusion of this chorus, the Mother asks the shepherds to dance for the Kings. As usual, they are bashful, but as Amahl and an old shepherd take out their pipes and play, the dancers begin. The dance itself takes approximately five minutes. At its conclusion, Balthazar thanks the dancers, and the shepherds depart.

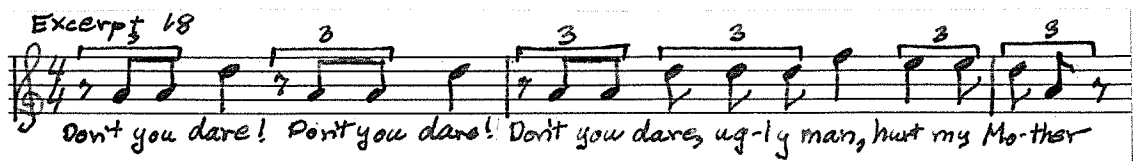
The Kings, the Page, Amahl, and his Mother settle down to rest. The orchestra plays again its opening twelve measures, and then the Mother, who cannot sleep, sings an aria the main theme of which is quoted in Excerpt 17.

Excerpt 17



The thought that these gifts are for an unknown Child, and the realization of her own son's desperate need, overwhelm the Mother. She drags herself across the floor, whispering

over and over again. "For my child . . . for my child . . ." Her hand reaches out and touches the gold. The Page is instantly aroused. He seizes her arm, shouting, "Thief! Thief! . . . She's stolen the gold! Give it back or I'll tear it out of you! . . . Give it back! Give it back!" By now Amahl is on his feet. Awkwardly hurling himself upon the Page, he hits him hysterically and pulls his hair, singing Excerpt 18.



At a sign from Kaspar, the Page releases Amahl's Mother. And then Melchior, in one of the most beautiful arias of the opera sings:

Oh, woman you may keep the gold.
The Child we seek doesn't need our gold.
On love, on love alone
He will build His kingdom.
His pierced hand will hold no scepter.
His haloed head will wear no crown.
His might will not be built on your toil.
Swifter than lightning
He will soon walk among us.
He will bring us new life and receive our death,
and the keys to His city belong to the poor.
(turning to the other Kings)
Let us leave, my friends.

But the Mother, falling on her knees before the Kings, pleads, "Oh, no wait . . . take back your gold! For such a King I've waited all my life. And if I weren't so poor I would send a gift of my own to such a child." Amahl responds, "But, Mother, let me send him my crutch. Who

knows, he may need one, and this I made myself." Amahl lifts the crutch to hand it to the Kings. In doing so he takes a step. He can walk! He almost whispers, "I walk, Mother" -- incredulously. He takes another step and then another.

Against a slow descending pizzicato in the lower strings, the Kings sing, pianissimo, chromatically ascending:

BALTHAZAR	He walks	(on low B [♭])
MELCHIOR	He walks	(B [♭] -B [♮])
KASPAR	He walks	(B [♮] -C)

The Mother (in treble clef, beginning on C-D[♭]), repeats over and over again the same words, "He walks", the line still ascending, and reaching fortissimo as the Kings together join in:

It is a sign from the Holy Child.
We must give praise to the newborn King.
We must praise Him.
This is a sign from God!

Amahl begins to run and jump around the room, finally turning a "clumsy pirouette" which sends him sprawling on the floor. Still exuberant he sings, "Look, Mother, I can fight, I can work, I can play! Oh, Mother, let me go with the Kings! I want to take the crutch to the Child myself." The Kings join in urging the Mother to let Amahl go with them, and the Mother, after securing promises from Amahl to wear his hat, wash his ears, and not tell lies, finally consents. Together they sing, "I shall miss you very much", and bid each other goodbye. Amahl hurries to catch the departing Kings and takes his place

at the end of their procession, playing his shepherd's pipe as he goes (Excerpt 1). The Mother stands alone at the door of the cottage, waving goodbye.

2. Musical Structure

The unifying themes of the opera are introduced in the orchestral opening. These are Excerpts 1, 2, and 3.¹ Excerpts 1 and 2 are found in the introduction; in the orchestral interlude while Amahl, his Mother, the Kings, and the Page quietly sleep;² and in the orchestral counter-melody to Melchior's aria, "Woman, you may keep the gold".³ Excerpt 3 occurs in the introduction as the curtain rises and at the end as Amahl joins the three Kings in their journey, playing as he goes.⁴

Typical of Menotti's style are the recitative passages in which the natural speaking inflections and rhythms are imitated.⁵ The simplicity and beauty of Menotti's melodic lines are demonstrated in Excerpts 9, 13, and 14.⁶ The descriptiveness of his orchestration is seen in Excerpts 8, 11a, and 11b.⁷ The clarity and simplicity of his harmonic writing is shown in Excerpts 15 and 16,⁸ of his counterpoint in the quartet described on pages 62 and 63,

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1. Ante, p. 56.
2. Ante, p. 64.
3. Ante, p. 65.
4. Ante, p. 56 and above.
5. Ante, p. 57.
6. Ante, pp. 58, 61, 62.
7. Ante, pp. 58, 59.
8. Ante, pp. 63, 64.

the relation of orchestra and soloist in Melchior's aria described on page 11, and in the passage where Amahl discovers that he can walk, described on page 66. There are also places where the harmony is quite close. Examples are the relation of orchestra to the vocal melody in Excerpts 6 and 17.¹ But the music cannot be said to be "modern" or dissonant to any great degree.

3. Religious Elements of the Text

Amahl and the Night Visitors had its origin in the Italian celebration of Christmas. For in Italy there is no Santa Claus; the children's gifts are brought by the Three Kings. This opera was written for children, and its inspiration was from Menotti's own childhood. For example, Menotti's brother would not always receive all of the Christmas gifts for which he had asked from King Kaspar. He concluded that either Kaspar had not understood or that he had not heard. In the opera, King Kaspar has been portrayed as "a little crazy and quite deaf."² As has been stated, Menotti had been commissioned to write an opera for NBC television early in 1951,³ but in November of that same year he still did not have the needed inspiration. He described his experience as follows:

One November afternoon as I was walking rather gloomily through the rooms of the Metropolitan Museum, I chanced

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1. Ante, pp. 57, 64.
2. RCA LP recording, libretto, p. 5.
3. Ante, p. 55.

to stop in front of the Adoration of the Kings by Hieronymus Bosch, and as I was looking at it, suddenly I heard again, coming from the distant blue hills, the weird song of the Three Kings. I then realized they had come back to me and had brought me a gift. 1

From this remembrance of his childhood, Menotti created the story of Amahl.

As the story is told simply, and is admittedly a
2
children's story, a detailed analysis of the text would detract from, rather than add to, the religious impact of the story itself. The Christology of the opera is conveyed
3
in the song of the Three Kings and in Melchior's aria.
4
The Child is presented as the upholder of the universe, the author of peace, the King of love, the Savior, the author of life, and the friend of the poor. There is also an element of the Roman Catholic teaching concerning Mary in the
5
words, "Mother who is both Virgin and Queen."

But the great religious truths which Menotti seeks to convey are within the story itself. Melchior's forgiveness of the Mother, and his words, "O, woman, you
6
may keep the gold", emphasize with great emotional force the teachings of Christ concerning forgiveness. The greatest impact of the story is its portrayal of the true

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1. RCA recording, op. cit., p. 6.
2. Ibid., p. 1.
3. Ante, pp. 61, 62.
4. Ante, p. 65.
5. Ante, p. 63.
6. Ante, p. 65.

meaning of giving. The Three Kings give of their wealth; the shepherds give of the works of their hands; the Mother longs to give, but has nothing; Amahl, for the Child, gives all that he has -- his crutch. The value of his gift, springing from selfless love, is rewarded by health and a trip to see the Child with his own eyes.

D. Religious Contribution of the Composition

The music is the conveyor of the story. As Menotti is author of both text and music, it is to be expected that they perfectly compliment each other. Indeed, as was seen in the Analysis of the Composition, the text and music are inseparable, neither complete or wholly meaningful without the other. Melchior's aria, for example, is the turning point of the opera. Before this, the Mother's attention has been centered wholly on Amahl and his needs. But as she learns of the Christ Child, who he is and all that he will be, her love goes out to this Child whom she has never seen. The emotional impact of Melchior's aria comes from the music as much as from the words. The vocal line and the dynamic level rise constantly to a climax on the words, "His might", and then rapidly descend, the orchestral counterpoint heightening this movement. Again, in the climax of the entire opera when Amahl discovers that he can walk, it is the music rather than the words that convey the emotional impact of what has occurred. But the impact of selfless love in Melchior's forgiveness and

in Amahl's spontaneous gift lies in the story itself.¹

Critiques and listeners are alike in their com-
mendation of the opera.² Olin Downes in the New York Times wrote, "A New opera . . . was heard and seen by millions of people throughout the nation, and the work proved worthy of the occasion." The Cleveland News stated, ". . . as a Christmas feature, it was an inspiration. As an opera, it was superb." Writing again, Downes stated, "Mr. Menotti with rare art has produced a work that few indeed could have seen and heard last night save through blurred eyes and with emotions that were not easy to conceal."

E. Summary

Amahl and the Night Visitors was written by Gian-Carlo Menotti in 1951. It is a one act opera and was commissioned by NBC television for a Christmas Eve performance in that same year.

The story is of a crippled boy named Amahl and his widowed Mother, both poverty stricken. They are visited by the Three Kings on their journey to Bethlehem to see the Christ Child. When Amahl discovers who it is that the Kings are taking their gifts to, he gives them his only possession, a crutch, to take with them as his gift to the Child. In so doing, Amahl discovers that he has

.

1. Ante, p 66.

2. All quotations are from the NBC advertising pamphlet, Amahl and the Night Visitors, New York, 1951.

been miraculously cured.

The religious contribution of the opera lies in the story itself, and is concerned primarily with the true meaning of giving. The Kings give of their wealth to the Christ Child. The Mother, once she has discovered who the Child is, loves him, but cannot give. Amahl spontaneously gives all that he has and is miraculously cured.

The opera has been well received by both listeners and critics.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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It has been the purpose of this thesis to examine selected religious compositions by twentieth century composers in order to discover their religious values for audiences of today. The problem was presented of the growing gulf between the music of the listening public and the music of the contemporary composer. In this study, a contemporary oratorio, a symphony of psalms, and a television opera were chosen for more detailed examination in order to determine their musical structure, their religious message, and the effect of their performances on contemporary audiences.

King David was written by Arthur Honegger in 1921. It was based on a religious drama by Rene Morax. The text itself is Biblical and is composed of selected psalms, messianic passages, and certain dramatic passages from the life of David. These selections, twenty-seven in number, are connected by a narrator who summarizes briefly the events occurring between each piece. Five stages in David's life are portrayed: shepherd, leader, war chief, prophet, and king.

The music is in two distinct styles. Portions which portray the life of waring Israel, particularly

those sections in which the Philistines are presented, are quite barbaric and dissonant. Polytonality and polyrhythm are used with great effect in the bugle calls and fanfares which describe the scenes of warfare. The other musical style is that of early protestant music. Honegger has intentionally utilized the style of J. S. Bach in his Alleluias, the messianic promises, and some of the psalms.

The religious contribution of King David seems to lie primarily in the psalms and other passages which reveal David's inner thoughts and his trust in God through all of the outer circumstances and difficulties of his life. Proportionately more both of text and music are devoted to portraying David's inner life than to the dramatic action involving his outward circumstances. The messianic prophecies and the extended Alleluias which follow them become by their musical setting the climaxes of the entire drama.

In available reports, audiences and critiques have responded favorably to performances of King David, but the audiences have admittedly been of the musical and social elect.

The Symphony of Psalms was written by Igor Stravinsky in 1930 for the fiftieth anniversary of the Boston Symphony orchestra. It is dedicated to "the glory of God". The work is in three parts; the text is taken from the Vulgate. Part I is from Psalm XXXVIII:13, 14:

Part II from Psalm XXXIX:2, 3, 4: and Part III from Psalm CL.

The choir is subordinate to the orchestra in this work. The orchestral style is percussive and barbaric in Part I and in sections of Part III. In the choral harmonies, chords of perfect intervals are succeeded by those of extreme dissonances repeatedly within the same passage.

Part I is the cry for help of one who is a stranger with God. The main vocal melody is based on two notes, E and F; the harmonies are dissonant. Rapidly moving orchestral lines and repeated percussive chords give a feeling of restlessness throughout.

Part II is musically in the form of a double fugue, the first fugue in the orchestra and the second in the choir. The words testify that God has heard and answered prayer, and that He has put a song of praise in the mouth of the psalmist.

The theme of Part III is, "Alleluia. Laudate Dominum." These words of praise are repeated over and over again, and by this repetition become far more important than the numerous instruments of praise which are mentioned in this Psalm. The mood of Part III is one of awe and adoration, very subdued and very quiet, although there are short sections of exuberance and orchestral barbarity in it. Unity is achieved musically by repeated melodic and harmonic passages, such as on the word "Alleluia", and by

a single unchanging pedal point which continues without variation throughout the final section of Part III.

Musically these three parts are to be performed without pause. Religiously they form a unity of experience with God. In Part I, the psalmist is described as a stranger with God. He cries to Him in despair. In Part II, his prayer is answered; God has taken him from the "horrible pit" and set his feet "upon a rock". Part III is the song of praise of one who has come to know, to love, and to trust God. Much of the effectiveness of this Part lies in the subdued quality of its setting, in contrast to the exuberant and boisterous setting which might be expected to accompany Psalm CL.

The critiques have praised the Symphony of Psalms as a truly great work. Audiences as a whole have not been able to grasp its significance or its beauty. It is admittedly difficult listening for one who is not accustomed to "modern" music.

Amahl and the Night Visitors was written in 1951 by Gian-Carlo Menotti for NBC television. The first performance was on December 24 of that year. Menotti wrote both the words and the music of this one act Christmas opera.

The story concerns a crippled boy named Amahl and his widowed Mother, both extremely poor. They are visited by the Three Kings on their journey to Bethlehem bearing gifts to the Christ Child. The Mother is amazed

to discover that these gifts are intended for a Child whom the Kings do not even know while her own son, who is in such desperate need, receives nothing. In bitterness and despair the Mother attempts to steal some of the gold, but she is caught. Melchior, realizing the situation, readily forgives her and then tells her of the Christ Child for whom the gifts are intended. The Mother, overcome, longs to send a gift herself, but she has nothing. And then Amahl, with spontaneous love for the Child he has never seen, offers his crutch, and in so doing he is miraculously cured of his lameness.

The characteristic quality of the music is its descriptiveness. This is particularly true of the orchestration which describes the action on stage, sets the mood, and even imitates the singers. The recitatives are imitative of normal speech in inflection and rhythm. Melodic lines, harmonic structures, and contrapuntal passages are clear and easily grasped. Musical climaxes occur in Melchior's aria in which he describes the Christ Child, and in the short passage where Amahl discovers that he can walk.

The Christ Child is presented as the upholder of the universe, the author of peace, the King of love, the Savior, the author of life, and the friend of the poor. But the greatest religious impact of the opera lies in the story itself: in Melchior's forgiveness of the Mother, and

in the opera's portrayal of the true meaning of giving. This is seen in the Three Kings and in the Mother, but its climax is in Amahl, spontaneously giving all that he has to the Christ Child.

Amahl and the Night Visitors has been acclaimed by critiques and audiences alike as a truly great Christmas story and as good opera.

A comparison of these three compositions reveals a few similarities and many differences. All three bear a resemblance to standard musical forms, and yet each has taken to some degree a new and modern form. King David, classified by some as an oratorio, is called a symphonic psalm by its composer. This places it in the same category as Stravinsky's Symphony of Psalms, and yet the two works are entirely different in structure and content, and neither is, technically speaking, a symphony. Amahl and the Night Visitors is an opera, but it is an opera written for television rather than the opera house.

All three compositions are scored for both orchestra and voices. In King David and Amahl and the Night Visitors choral and orchestral parts are quite evenly balanced, but in the Symphony of Psalms the orchestra is dominant.

In text it was found that King David is biblical, but seldom quotes, and is to be performed in the vernacular. The Symphony of Psalms quotes directly from the Vulgate and is always sung in Latin. Amahl and the Night

Visitors is an original story based on a religious event, and is always sung in the vernacular.

The religious elements in the Symphony of Psalms are almost wholly subjective, relating the inner spiritual experiences of the psalmist. In King David, almost as much attention is given to dramatic action as to David's inner thoughts and struggles. But in Amahl and the Night Visitors', the primary concern is in the outward actions of the characters. Inner thoughts and motives are important only as they lead the character to act.

Stravinsky has stated that he writes for himself; he is not concerned with the tastes or interests of the listening public. And it was found that the Symphony of Psalms was praised by critiques, but that the listening public was not able to grasp its full meaning or beauty. Honegger desired to write in a way that would be meaningful to all listeners, trained musicians and general public alike. Available reports indicate that he succeeded in doing this. Menotti wrote on commission for the television public, and his work has been accepted and applauded by them as well as by trained musicians and critiques. This indicates that a talented, trained composer is able to write music that addresses itself immediately to the listening public and that is understood by them. In this respect the contemporary composer is like Handel and Bach who of necessity wrote for their immediate public (or

congregation). But there are also contemporary composers who write for themselves, as did the deaf Beethoven and Wagner. The works of these men were immediately appreciated only by a few trained musicians, but came to be loved and understood by many. Perhaps this will also be true of the music of Igor Stravinsky.

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