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POSTMINIMALIST CHORAL MUSIC: A PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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POSTMINIMALIST CHORAL MUSIC: A PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS PROJECT

A DMA Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts in the College of Fine Arts at the University of Kentucky

By
Joshua John Chai

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Jefferson Johnson, Professor of Music

Lexington, Kentucky

2019

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ABSTRACT OF DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS PROJECT

POSTMINIMALIST CHORAL MUSIC: A PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

After the strict processes of mid-twentieth-century minimalism, a new musical style has emerged which retains extensive use of repetition, but is generally more aurally accessible, based in non-functional triadic harmony, and flexible in its compositional structure. Frequent use of non-minimalist resources, musical resources from multiple styles in a single composition, and quotation from previous historical periods define this flexibility.

American choral music has many popular compositions that exhibit characteristics of this new musical style, in part because of its accessibility relative to earlier minimalist styles, and in part because it adapts easily to the choral setting. At the same time, teaching this music to choirs requires resources that are not in standard-practice choral pedagogy textbooks or peer-reviewed choral journals.

This monograph utilizes newer research in musical analysis and several recent writings attempting to generalize the postminimalist style to develop a definition of choral postminimalism. Then, this monograph also suggests analytical approaches and resources for choral warm-ups, score preparation, and other pedagogical tools for three pieces: Arvo Pärt's *The Beatitudes*, Nico Muhly's *Bright Mass with Canons*, and Tarik O'Regan's *The Ecstasies Above*.

KEYWORDS: Postminimalism, Choral Pedagogy, Arvo Pärt, Nico Muhly, Tarik O'Regan

Joshua Chai

April 17, 2019

Date

POSTMINIMALIST CHORAL MUSIC: A PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph is divided into two parts. Part I is an application of recent trends in the analysis of postminimalism to the pedagogy of choral music. Part II is comprised of program notes for recitals conducted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctoral of Musical Arts degree.

Part I is divided into 6 chapters: an introduction, a summary of analytical paradigms of postminimalist music, a chapter each for a choral work which benefits from postminimalist analysis (by Arvo Pärt, Nico Muhly, and Tarik O'Regan, respectively), and a summary. Part II contains the programs and program notes for two recitals conducted at the University of Kentucky, as well as one lecture-recital conducted at Concordia University in Austin, TX. The lecture-recital does not have program notes, as it is on the same topic as Chapter 3 of Part I.

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**PART I:
POSTMINIMALIST CHORAL MUSIC: A PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Choral warm-ups, rehearsal techniques, score preparation, and analysis often strongly imply functional tonality and a common-practice musical style derived from late-Renaissance through Romantic music. Choral warm-ups, singer placement, rehearsal strategies, and score preparation often imply traditional harmonic structure, counterpoint, and harmony. Rhythmic training emphasizes standard symmetrical beat division and patterns. While these techniques certainly do not prevent the successful performance of choral music that uses different compositional resources, modern trends in musical analysis suggest new ways to describe and therefore teach music of modern resources.

In choral pedagogy texts, the inclusion of twentieth century style often focuses on serial atonality, music involving elements of indeterminacy, or other easily codified resources popular in the first half of the twentieth century. However, there seems to be a “middle-ground” of compositional style, which employs often non-functional but triadic harmonic resources and a rhythmic and contrapuntal style which intentionally limits motivic material, pointing to a use of some of the tools of minimalism. Some recent trends in choral composition show a similar trend away from atonality involving high degrees of dissonance and toward an accessibility of rhythmic and harmonic resources, often in music containing a high degree of repetition.

Some of the most-performed modern choral pieces find their harmonic roots in extended non-functional diatonicism, with recent trends towards the resources of

minimalism or postminimalism.¹ Minimalism, as the American art music style of the mid-20th century that utilized extremely limited musical materials and a tightly controlled rate of change, has little choral music written in its original style and even less commonly performed.² Postminimalism, on the other hand, seems to be an emerging style in choral composition over the last several decades, beginning in the last decade or so of the twentieth century and continuing to present day.

Postminimalism borrows some of the processes of minimalism, but not its aesthetic: postminimalist music is an intentional intersection of genres and styles, adapting strict processes of variation and repetition to more flexible processes allowing for greater use of non-minimalist resources. The choral postminimalist style is based on three characteristics, which I will explain in the second chapter: first, that the use of repetition is volitional and is meant to communicate rather than achieve a structure alone; second, that postminimalist music features a tight control of the rate at which musical parameters change, but with a flexibility in this change at the textural level; third, that postminimalist choral music allows for flexibility in choral realization.

Generalizing the postminimalist style has led to new methods of analysis, and new theories of how we learn and perceive music, especially music with significant use of minimal pitch sets, ostinato, and other well-recognized minimalist tropes. Singing these minimalist and postminimalist techniques is challenging for the modern chorus, and could use some new pedagogical resources. This monograph examines trends in choral composition that may be effectively analyzed through these new developments,

¹ See especially Jonathan Bernard's "Minimalism, Postminimalism, and the Resurgence of Tonality in Recent American Music," as well as the resources in the bibliography by Kyle Gann, discussed in Chapter 2.

² Some examples of this original form of minimalism for voices would be Steve Reich's *Tehillim*, or some of the opera music of Phillip Glass.

particularly through three choral pieces of Arvo Pärt, Nico Muhly, and Tarik O'Regan. Incorporating recent approaches in music theory, analysis, and choral pedagogy, this monograph suggests augmentations to choral techniques.

Limitation of Scope

Choral pedagogy incorporates both analysis and perceptual theory. The breadth of choral pedagogy involves a diverse series of fields: acoustics and perception, intonation theory, modern resources of rhythmic analysis, music learning theories, traditional and non-traditional harmony and analysis, and others. A thorough survey of any single field above would be beyond the scope of this monograph.

A complete analysis of representative composers of choral works is also not feasible. Several composers listed above have dissertations and articles written about their choral output and influences, which allows for research to build upon. However, the diversity and wealth of choral music using the harmonic and structural techniques named above makes limiting composers and compositions challenging. Some established composers who seem to fit this practice—John Adams, for example, or Eric Whitacre—would benefit from a much more thorough analysis of style given the prevalence, influence, and diversity of their choral output, and so have been excluded from this study.

Methodology

This monograph begins with a survey of several analytical methods for postminimalism, and their applicability to choral methods. This study will then devote a chapter each to three choral pieces which can benefit from postminimalist analysis and

pedagogy. Three research questions generate a four-step process for analysis and pedagogy.

The first research question: what musical elements can generalize the postminimalist style in a choral context? While there is no generally-recognized definition, the monograph uses as a starting basis Kyle Gann's definition of postminimalism, which characterizes postminimalism by including a steady pulse, a generally diatonic but non-functional pitch language, an avoidance of rapid change in dynamic, and a general avoidance of formal design. As an antithesis of serialism, Gann makes a compelling case for a generalization of the postminimalist style as a movement in American music. The applicability in the choral context is widespread, and elements of this style are identifiable even outside of compositions which utilize repetition as a formal element.

The second research question: what analytical resources would be useful to postminimalist choral music? Beginning from a brief description of postminimalism, especially given minimalism and its origins in visual art and the use of (and resistance to) the term in the twentieth century, this monograph summarizes musicological and analytical research in postminimalism, suggesting several which will provide context for the third research question. The investigation of musical parameters—particularly the balance of stasis versus development in managing musical cohesion—informs the musical analysis of these three works, especially in analyzing the relationship of repetition to its musical contexts.

The third research question: what extensions and adaptations to choral pedagogy can be developed given the first two research questions? Given a generalization of

postminimalist style in a choral context, this monograph suggests exercises, rehearsal strategies, and other choral techniques for use in preparing a choir to sing postminimalist repertoire. This is organized into the four steps given at the end of chapter 2:

1. Assigning Meaning: What does the music do? Especially, how do we interpret the intersection of all the musical resources, and how does the type and use of repetition change the meaning of the music?
2. Determining Individual Agency: How does each singer experience and execute the music to allow for the most complete choral realization?
3. Defining Choral Technique: As a choir, what consideration must be given to the interaction of parts in the context of all this repetition?
4. Applying Pedagogy: What techniques does a conductor need to effectively teach music in the postminimalist style?

The three choral pieces analyzed using these four steps have similar postminimalist techniques. The use of ostinati, canons, extensive use of parallel motion at fourths and fifths to avoid contrapuntal and tonal significance, and minimal pitch sets all point to minimal techniques, increasing the accessibility of the composition while allowing for a modernist approach to harmony.

The three pieces analyzed in this monograph are:

- Pärt, Arvo. *The Beatitudes*
- Muhly, Nico. *Bright Mass With Canons*
- O'Regan, Tarik. *The Ecstasies Above*

Review of Current Literature

Style, Analysis, and Pedagogy

Several authors, beginning in the 1990s, attempted to describe the emergence of a postminimal style in American music. Critical to this study are Kyle Gann's writings on New Music Box,³ Jonathan Bernard's 2003 article in *American Music* on this subject,⁴ and the writings by several authors contained in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Minimalist and Postminimalist Music*,⁵ which summarize the efforts of some authors to codify and generalize this style. Some analyses of choral music, including James E. Brown's 2013 dissertation on Tarik O'Regan,⁶ and Kathleen Biddick Smith's 2009 dissertation on the music of Michael Torke,⁷ draw from these writings, as well.

Recent authors have made attempts at analyzing and classifying the minimalist and postminimalist styles. Rebecca Leydon's 2002 article "Towards a Typology of Minimalist Tropes,"⁸ Dan Warburton's 1988 "A Working Terminology for Minimal Music,"⁹ as well as the resources described in the previous paragraph form the basis of this part of the study.

³ Kyle Gann, "Minimal Music, Maximal Impact: Minimalism's Immediate Legacy: Postminimalism." <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/minimal-music-maximal-impact/>.

⁴ Jonathan W. Bernard, "Minimalism, Postminimalism, and the Resurgence of Tonality in Recent American Music," *American Music* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 112-33.

⁵ Keith Potter, Kyle Gann, and Pwyll ap Siôn, ed, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Minimalist and Postminimalist Music* (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Routledge, 2013).

⁶ James E. Brown, "Portrayal of Life and Death: An Analytical Study of Tarik O'Regan's the Night's Untruth, the Ecstasies Above, and Triptych" (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 2013).

⁷ Kathleen Biddick Smith, "Musical Process in Selected Works by Michael Torke" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2009).

⁸ Rebecca Leydon, "Towards a Typology of Minimalist Tropes," *Music Theory Online* 8, no. 4 (December 2002).

⁹ Dan Warburton, "A Working Terminology for Minimal Music," *Intégral* 2 (1988): 135-59.

In addition to these analytical approaches, this monograph extends some methods of parametric analysis to postminimalist music. Recent similar approaches that intersect with choral music include analyses of parameters which focus on timbre such as Leydon's 2012 article in *Music Theory Online*,¹⁰ approaches which re-examine linear voice leading based on non-harmonic principles, including Huron's article "Tone and Voice: a Derivation of the Rules of Voice Leading from Perceptual Principles,"¹¹ or on recent approaches to the analysis of rhythm, especially in a minimalist or postminimalist context.

Because repetition is a unifying musical characteristic of postminimalism, the analysis of the transformation of repetition is also useful to this study. Several articles of the bibliography are specifically focused on this parameter, but especially including Gretchen Horlacher's 1992 article on rhythmic reiteration in the music Stravinsky,¹² and Hanninen's 2003 article on phenomenal transformations of repetition in *Music Theory Spectrum*.¹³

The perception and performance of melodies that do not fit classical models is well-researched, particularly in the late twentieth century, beginning with Lars Edlund's *Modus Novus* of 1963,¹⁴ and continuing through studies in atonal musical perception

¹⁰ Rebecca Leydon, "Clean as a Whistle: Timbral Trajectories and the Modern Musical Sublime," *Music Theory Online* 18, no. 2 (June 2012).

¹¹ David Huron, "Tone and Voice: A Derivation of the Rules of Voice-Leading from Perceptual Principles," *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 19, no. 1 (2001): 1-64.

¹² Gretchen Horlacher, "The Rhythms of Reiteration: Formal Development in Stravinsky's Ostinati," *Music Theory Spectrum* 14, no. 2 (Autumn 1992): 171-87.

¹³ Dora A. Hanninen, "A Theory of Recontextualization in Music: Analyzing Phenomenal Transformations of Repetition," *Music Theory Spectrum* 25, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 59-97.

¹⁴ Lars Edlund, *Modus Novus: Studies in Reading Atonal Melodies* (Stockholm: Edition Wilhelm Hansen, 1963).

including Dowling/Fujitani's 1971 article on pitch recognition in melodies,¹⁵ Friedmann's 1990 textbook on ear training,¹⁶ and Croonen's 1994 article on the effect of tonal structure on recognition in tone series¹⁷. Choral dissertations from the middle of the twentieth century echo this development, especially Robison's 1969 dissertation on contemporary choral literature and his "recommendations for the improvement of choral reading skills" which model the extension of choral pedagogy using these models.¹⁸

Composers

The composers of the three main pieces in this monograph are all the subject of specific scholarly work to some degree. The music of Arvo Pärt is well-known, and writings on his larger choral works are contained in dissertations like Ross Bernhardt's dissertation on his *Berliner Messe* and *Litany*¹⁹ and Stuart Greenbaum's dissertation on his *Te Deum*,²⁰ as well as journal articles like Simon Allen's article on his *Magnificat* in *The Choral Journal*²¹ or Benjamin Skipp's more general article on the tintinnabuli style.²² More general resources include writings from practitioners, including Paul

¹⁵ W.J. Dowling and Diane Fujitani, "Contour, Interval, and Pitch Recognition in Memory for Melodies," *Journal of the Acoustic Society of America* 49 (1971): 524-31.

¹⁶ Michael L. Friedmann, *Ear Training for Twentieth-Century Music* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).

¹⁷ W.L.M. Croonen, "Effects of Length, Tonal Structure, and Contour in the Recognition of Tone Series," *Perception and Psychophysics* 55, no. 6 (1994): 623-32.

¹⁸ Richard William Robison, "Reading Contemporary Choral Literature: An Analytical Study of Selected Contemporary Choral Compositions with Recommendations for the Improvement of Choral Reading Skills" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1969).

¹⁹ Ross Bernhardt, "The Interrelationships of Text, Musical Form, and Tintinnabuli Technique in Arvo Pärt's *Berliner Messe* and *Litany*, and Their Implications for Choral Rehearsal and Performance" (DMA diss., Michigan State University, 1997).

²⁰ Stuart Greenbaum, "Arvo Pärt's *Te Deum*: A Compositional Watershed" (Ph.D. diss., University of Melbourne, 1999).

²¹ Allen H Simon, "Deterministic Techniques in Arvo Pärt's *Magnificat*," *The Choral Journal* 37 (October 1996): 21-24.

²² Benjamin Skipp, "Out of Place in the 20th Century: Thoughts on Arvo Pärt's Tintinnabuli Style," *Tempo* 63, no. 249 (July 2009): 2-11.

Hillier's monograph on the composer²³ or his shorter article entitled "Some Observations on the Performance of Arvo Pärt's Choral Music" in the *Ashgate Research Companion to Minimalist and Postminimalist Music*.²⁴

The compositions of Tarik O'Regan are more recent and lesser-known, and are the subjects of fewer academic writings. Research into O'Regan includes James Brown's 2013 dissertation,²⁵ and especially Dominic Gregorio's 2012 dissertation incorporating a postminimalist context for O'Regan's work.²⁶ O'Regan's composition "Scattered Rhymes" is the subject of a 2012 article by Cameron LaBarr in *The Choral Journal*.²⁷

Nico Muhly is the youngest composer in this group, and has perhaps the least academic writing dedicated to his choral compositions. A 2014 dissertation by Lee Hyunjong includes Muhly in a group of three in analyzing the contribution of pop music to three American composers.²⁸ Perhaps most usefully, a 2016 *New Music Box* interview "Defining Nico Muhly" by Molly Sheridan includes some autobiographical descriptions of his compositional process.²⁹

²³ Paul Hillier, *Arvo Pärt (Oxford Studies of Composers)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

²⁴ Paul Hillier., "Some Observations on the Performance of Arvo Pärt's Choral Music," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Minimalist and Postminimalist Music*, ed. Keith Potter, Kyle Gann, and Pwyll ap Siôn, (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Routledge, 2013), 389-390.

²⁵ James E Brown, "Portrayal of Life and Death: An Analytical Study of Tarik O'Regan's *The Night's Untruth*, *The Ecstasies Above*, and *Triptych*" (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 2013).

²⁶ Dominic Gregorio, "An Analysis of Two Choral Compositions with Strings by Tarik O'Regan" (DMA diss., University of Southern California, 2012).

²⁷ Cameron F. LaBarr, "Tarik O'Regan's 'Scattered Rhymes' and its Compositional Relationship to Machaut's 'Messe de Nostre Dame' and the Music of 'The Who'," *The Choral Journal* 52, no. 7 (February 2012): 8-21.

²⁸ Lee Hyunjong, "The Influence of Pop Music in the Works of Three Contemporary American Composers: Steven Mackey, Julia Wolfe, and Nico Muhly" (Ph.D. diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2014).

²⁹ Molly Sheridan, transcribed by Dave Allen. "Defining Nico Muhly," interview 23 January, 2007, <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/defining-nico-muhly/>.

Choral-Specific Resources

There are no *Choral Journal* articles that focus on postminimalism, none that I have found which generalize minimalist or postminimalist compositional style in a choral context, and very few other than the two notated above which focus on compositions widely recognized to draw from minimalist or postminimalist sources.

Standard choral pedagogy textbooks do not include a discussion of preparing choirs for musical minimalism or postminimalism. An exhaustive search pre-2000 could only at best include early minimalism, and while the resources of choral pedagogy for mid-twentieth century music is informative (serialism, aleatoricism), there is little that is generalizable to music which employs the resources of postminimalist structure.

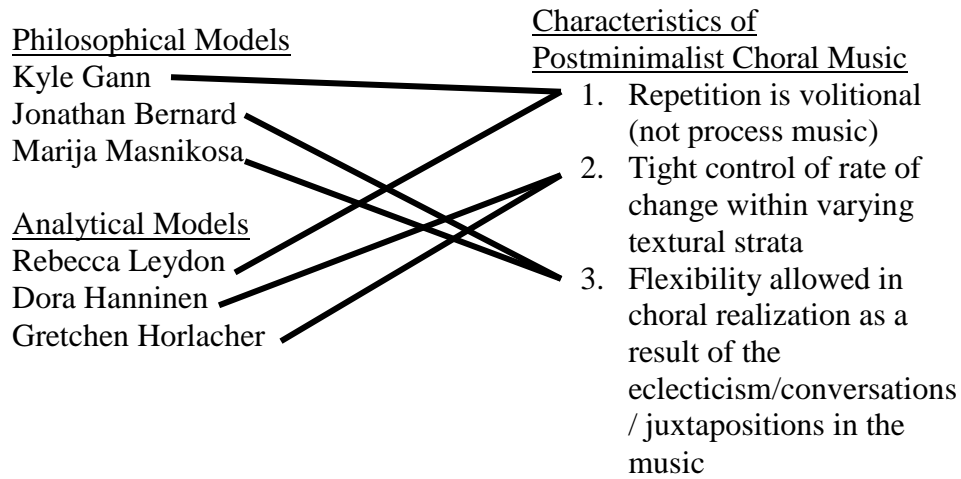
CHAPTER 2: ANALYTICAL PARADIGMS OF POSTMINIMALIST CHORAL MUSIC

This chapter first identifies recent definitions of postminimalist music by Kyle Gann, Jonathan Bernard, and Marija Masnikosa. Then, applying these definitions to choral music, this chapter introduces three characteristics of choral postminimalism which will be applied to each of the pieces in this monograph. Finally, building on three models of musical analysis of repetition by Leydon, Horlacher, and Hanninen, I present a four-step pedagogy of preparing to teach postminimalist music to choirs: Assigning Meaning, Determining Individual Agency, Defining Choral Technique, and Applying Pedagogy.

Postminimalism: Models and Definitions

The historical proximity of these compositions makes generalization and classification of their style difficult, because there is no commonly accepted definition of minimalist or postminimalist music, and no standard-practice analytical model for music involving continuous repetition. In addition, the heterogeneous combination of musical and textual elements that appears to be organized by a strict compositional process, but which applies that structure with more flexibility, creates music that seems to prevent analysis based only on the classification of one dimension of musical elements. Therefore, many of the analytical approaches cited in the section below are based in “intersections,” “grids,” “relations,” and other metaphors that signify the investigation of interaction rather than a taxonomy of parts.

Example 2.1: The relationship between the philosophical and analytical models below with the three characteristics of postminimalist choral music.



Gann and Bernard: Heterogeneous Combination or Pastiche?

The ways repetition and non-minimalist elements interact is cited as both postminimalism’s unifying characteristic and its greatest flaw, which is evidenced in the writings of Kyle Gann and Jonathan Bernard, respectively. Kyle Gann declares interaction in postminimal music as “a big melting pot in which all the world’s musics swim together in unobtrusive harmony.”³⁰ In describing the music as “the exact antipodal opposite of serialism,” Gann writes that postminimalist composers are attempting, much like the serial composers of the early twentieth century, to generate a consistent musical language, but “where serialist [technique] was abrupt, discontinuous, angular, arrhythmic, and opaque, postminimalist syntax is precisely the opposite: smooth, linear, melodic, gently rhythmic, comprehensible.”³¹ Postminimalism, to Gann, involves the combination of diverse musical elements in a way that is aurally comprehensible. In

³⁰ Kyle Gann, “Minimal Music, Maximal Impact: Minimalism’s Immediate Legacy: Postminimalism,” accessed May 12, 2016. <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/minimal-music-maximal-impact/>.

³¹ Gann, “Minimal Music, Maximal Impact.”

a later article, Gann states that this aural comprehension often “is not entirely accessible to left-brain analysis or turns out to be a deliberate illusion.”³² He places a priority on intuitive and aural impact, which suggests approaches like parametric analysis rather than the discrete methods of, for example, pitch-class set theory.

In contrast, Jonathan Bernard writes of postminimalism as a step backward, a deliberate abdication of compositional technique in the service of the same kind of accessibility that Gann describes, and this therefore represents a failure of “minimalism and its offshoots... to live up to their initial promise to radically reinvent American art music.”³³ He specifically mentions the music of Philip Glass and Michael Torke, which “tells another and sadder story altogether, in which the simple (sometimes extremely simple) harmonic patterns repeat over and over without anything like the rigorous rhythmic structures of minimalism to motivate them: a true triumph of manner over substance.”³⁴ For Bernard, the combination of diverse musical materials and compositional techniques represents a pastiche instead of an interconnected, layered composition; he suggests that postminimalism as a current term and classification does not deserve historical survival, because “while postminimalism does mean *something*, in the end it can serve only as a placemaker for more precise terms, the coining of which probably awaits greater historical perspective on this period.”³⁵

³² Kyle Gann, “A Technically Definable Stream of Postminimalism, Its Characteristics and Its Meaning,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Minimalist and Postminimalist Music*, ed. Keith Potter, Kyle Gann, and Pwyll ap Siôn (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Routledge, 2013), 60.

³³ Jonathan W. Bernard, “Minimalism, Postminimalism, and the Resurgence of Tonality in Recent American Music,” *American Music* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 131.

³⁴ Bernard, “Minimalism, Postminimalism, and the Resurgence of Tonality in Recent American Music”, 131.

³⁵ Bernard, “Minimalism, Postminimalism, and the Resurgence of Tonality in Recent American Music”, 130.

Masnikosa: Intertextual Dialogues

It is on this change from rigidity of formal process found in minimalism towards a relaxation of structure and a diversity of materials that Marija Masnikosa builds a theoretical model of postminimalism. Masnikosa identifies the philosophical transition from modernism to postmodernism as the core of music's transition from minimalism to postminimalism. The strictness of modernism (including serialism, minimalism, and other twentieth-century techniques), which involves a drastic simplification of musical materials and the use of a strict process to create a self-referential system, transforms into a postmodern style based on "intertextual 'dialogues'" — a "subtle 'crossing' of minimalist (repetitive) discourse with the discursive paradigms of other, older, or by genre different musics."³⁶

For Masnikosa, the classification of postminimalist music is defined in the intersection of three "disciplinary 'axes': musicological, semiotic, and theoretical. Stated another way, Masnikosa claims postminimalist music can be classified as such by categorizing its musical influence and resources, investigating the signals it uses to generate meaning, and analyzing the interaction between its musical elements. Masnikosa claims the analysis of a postminimalist work occurs in the intersection of these parts, not just in their individual methods. Therefore, to Masnikosa, postminimalist works borrow the postmodern principle of combining materials that may have been thought to be incompatible (diatonicism and rigorous rhythmic process, for example).

³⁶ Marija Masnikosa, "A Theoretical Model of Postminimalism and Two Brief 'Case Studies'," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Minimalist and Postminimalist Music*, ed. Keith Potter, Kyle Gann, and Pwyll ap Siôn (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Routledge, 2013), 301.

Choral Postminimalism: Three Characteristics

These three perspectives — Gann’s “melting pot” of aurally coherent but intuitively derived materials, Bernard’s principle of derivative repetition enshrined in less than meaningful structure, and Masnikosa’s dynamic intertextuality in the crux between modernism and postmodernism — are useful in investigating the classification of postminimalism in choral music. Arguably, all choral music is intertextual along Masnikosa’s axes: the interpretation of compositional practice (musicological) is embodied in the gesture and agency of the individual singer’s musical line (semiotic) within the context of the choir’s practice, which is often a conscious blend of vocal and musical practices from many eras (theoretical). The quotation and intertextuality of postminimalism that Masnikosa cites are common in choral music of many historical periods, particularly the Renaissance. Analytically, Gann’s identification of a “smooth, melodic, gently rhythmic” foreground/background patterning in an aesthetically pleasing combination is far easier to accomplish in a choral setting than the strict, angular self-referentiality of “hard-core” minimalism. Bernard’s rejection of postminimalism’s less rigorous compositional process at the expense of aural coherence is the transformation away from minimalism that makes postminimalism more accessible to choirs—practically speaking, the philosophical resources of minimalism are too self-referential to be accessible or interesting to the individual singer.

Incorporating minimalist resources into choral music presents unique challenges, and therefore choral postminimalism developed without the history of minimalist experimentation than in, for example, chamber music. The technical challenges of tightly controlling musical variables of timbre, attack, and even pitch with a large group of

human voices challenge the realization of minimalist technique in a choral context. At the same time, a reaction against the extended chromaticism and dissonance of early twentieth-century choral music and the explosion of compositional resources of the twentieth century generated an environment which produced a similar “smooth” accessible style identified by Gann.

Gann and Bernard, cited above, both consider postminimalism to be a continuation of minimalist technique. Masnikosa’s model incorporates an intersection with postmodernism but still begins from the musical resources of minimalism. However, if American choral postminimalism developed without the same thorough exploration of minimalist technique as in chamber and other instrumental music, then it is worth considering how choral postminimalism adapts and synthesizes minimalist technique.

Characteristics of Postminimalist Choral Music

Kyle Gann’s summative *New Music Box* article on minimalism and postminimalism cited above references William Duckworth’s *Southern Harmony* as a seminal postminimalist work; the work is for choir a cappella. Quoting an interview with Duckworth, Joanna Smolko’s 2009 dissertation notes that Duckworth himself identifies *Southern Harmony* as a postminimalist work, and it brought together his “various musical interests for the past 20 years, including the use of rhythm to generate form.”³⁷

Extensive use of repetition is common to all postminimalist works, albeit in varied ways. The particular challenges of adapting first-generation minimalist techniques of repetition to the eclecticism of postminimalism and its accessibility of style is evident

³⁷ Joanna Ruth Smolko, “Reshaping American Music: The Quotation of Shape-Note Hymns by Twentieth-Century Composers” (Ph.D diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2009), 175.

in choral postminimalism, generating a coherent set of characteristics to which choral postminimalism of the early twenty-first century seems to adhere.

1. The use of repetition is volitional; in other words, the music itself is meant to do something, in contrast with the experimentalism and primacy of process in first-generation minimalism. This “will” inherent in the music allows for the appearance of a strict process where one does not exist, so long as the use of repetition itself generates effect.
2. These pieces feature a tight control of the rate at which parameters change, like minimalism, but this control varies at textural levels, especially in the foreground, and the context for this slow rate of change is often shifted to create progression and development.
3. Some flexibility in choral realization (e.g., tone, timbre, vowel, use of vibrato) is allowed, in contrast with early minimalist techniques, and this reflects the eclecticism and historical juxtapositions within the musical characteristics of the score.

Analytical Models

Because the aim of this study is pedagogical, it is useful to understand how postminimalist music functions so materials can be developed to accurately teach the appropriate musical concepts. This section utilizes three analytical models: an identification of minimalist tropes of repetition (Rebecca Leydon), an investigation into the interaction of repeating strata (Gretchen Horlacher), and a model of recontextualization in music of repetition (Dora Hanninen). These three models are summarized here and utilized in later chapters.

Leydon: Minimalist Tropes and Musical Subjectivity

The first of the three characteristics cited above draws on Rebecca Leydon's investigation of musical subjectivity when repetition is used as a primary device.³⁸ In particular, Leydon's methods are applicable to postminimalist music because of the assumption and attempted typology of a musical subject. Instead of repetition being used to prevent change, Leydon notes that "these techniques are frequently described in terms of 'stasis,' and interpretation often links them with an outright *loss* of subjectivity. But in musical practice, repetition techniques clearly serve a much wider variety of affective purposes."³⁹ In addition, in a choral context, the individual line seems to experience none of the loss of identification common in the first generation of minimalism, where the process becomes the only aurally identifiable attribute. Leydon notes that both the ostinato and its underlying process, if present, "can suggest a subject with particular kinds of volitional attributes."⁴⁰

Leydon quotes Richard Middleton's model, which divides repetition into "discursive" and "musematic" types. Discursive repetition uses at its basis syntactically complete units (like "phrase," leading to a repetition form called "period" or other common-practice form), whereas musematic repetition utilizes short motivic fragments, placed into a single level "groove."⁴¹ Notably, discursive repetition requires an investment of energy, whereas musematic repetition achieves a kind of "psychic

³⁸ Rebecca Leydon, "Towards a Typology of Minimalist Tropes," *Music Theory Online* 8, no. 4 (December 2002).

³⁹ Leydon, "Towards a Typology of Minimalist Tropes," 6.

⁴⁰ Leydon, "Towards a Typology of Minimalist Tropes," 9.

⁴¹ Leydon's summary and language is used here as it leads to her typology of minimalist tropes; the original discussion is in Richard Middleton, "'Lost in Music'? Pleasure, Value and Ideology in Popular Music," in *Studying Popular Music* (Open University Press, 1990).

resonance” for listeners. The volitional element of repetition strategies “has something to do with our awareness of hierarchies in the music,” and in fact, Leydon notes that the interaction of these layers itself leads to subjective identification, in that the “creation of internal contrasts between musematic and discursive structures is one way that repetitive music can forge particular subjective identities.”⁴²

This leads Leydon to the identification of six repetition tropes: maternal (identifying the listener with a holding environment), mantric (signifying some mystical transcendence), kinetic (identifying the listener with dancing bodies and forms), totalitarian (an absence of freedom), motoric (identifying the listener with indifference in a mechanized process), and aphasic (signifying cognitive impairment, or disorientation). Leydon notes that these tropes each “configures the musical subject in a distinct way, by constructing different relationships between surface and syntax, between ‘discourse’ and ‘musematicity.’ If we are to understand something of the affective range exhibited by repetitive music, then our analyses must find ways to highlight the subtle interplay of these repetition strategies within works.”⁴³ The creation of a musical subject—a character which has agency within the extensive repetition—is critical to teaching a group of individual singers to sing repetitive music.

Horlacher: Superimposition of Strata

Repetition also forms the basis of Gretchen Horlacher’s analysis of the superimposition of rhythmic and melodic strata, in this case in the music of Stravinsky.⁴⁴ While Horlacher’s analysis does not directly address minimalism or postminimalism, it

⁴² Leydon, “Towards a Typology of Minimalist Tropes,” 14.

⁴³ Leydon, “Towards a Typology of Minimalist Tropes,” 25.

⁴⁴ Gretchen Horlacher, “The Rhythms of Reiteration: Formal Development in Stravinsky’s Ostinati,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 14, no. 2 (Autumn 1992): 171-87.

does analyze pairing strata as a “means of motivic and formal development,”⁴⁵ both in discussing rhythmic interrelationship and repetition and in analysis of the “counterpoint” generated between two superimposed rhythmic strata to emphasize certain pitches. Horlacher notably identifies Pieter van der Toorn’s classification of two types of repetition in the *Rite of Spring*:⁴⁶

1. “Two or more blocks of contrasting material alternate in rapid succession; each block is characterized by shifting time signatures, and its constituent strata remain in a fixed relationship. Development is a product of the extensions and contractions of the blocks, and the changing order in which they occur.”
2. “Features a steady time signature where the strata are *not* in a fixed alignment: the opposition of strata occurs through their superimposition, rather than through their successive alternation. Thus, development is a product of the changing vertical coincidences created by the strata.”⁴⁷

In opposition to comments of Pierre Boulez, Horlacher notes that rather than the “physical mixing” Boulez notes, a developmental process occurs out of the interaction of discrete blocks. Given the varied repetition and overlaying strata of background and foreground repetition in postminimalist music, this analytical strategy is particularly suited toward this style.

⁴⁵ Horlacher, “The Rhythms of Reiteration,” 178.

⁴⁶ The “Chariot” section of Stravinsky’s *Symphony of Psalms*, third movement would be a choral analogue to the *Rite of Spring* examples given by Horlacher.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 172. Similar to Leydon’s article above, Horlacher’s summary is quoted here rather than van der Toorn’s original.

Hanninen: Recontextualization and Repetition

The interplay between repetition at different textural levels of composition is also analyzed by Dora Hanninen, specifically, the “recontextualization” of repetition.⁴⁸ The “estranged repetition, in which repetition doesn’t sound (primarily) like repetition” transforms the musical context around ostinato and other motivic repetition to generate a formal device more similar to van der Toorn’s analysis of Stravinsky than the minimalist composers. Also similar to Horlacher’s analysis, Hanninen analyzes the relations between musical ideas,

relations to aspects of the context the thing is abstracted from that are somehow also part (and partly constitutive) of it. This suggests a mechanism (or explanation) for the phenomenal transformation of repetition: when a change-in-context changes the set of relations active between the thing and its context in an important way, the sound of the thing is transformed.⁴⁹

Hanninen also notes that musical quotation is a type of recontextualization; this relationship of quotation to repetition and its effect on the musical subjectivity of ostinato strongly implies the relationship of eclecticism and repetition within the accessible contexts of postminimalist music, as well as a tightly controlled rate of change within a shifting context and a flexibility of choral practice within the juxtaposition of eclectic resources.

Other Analytical Resources: Timbre and Counterpoint

The third characteristic of postminimalist choral music described in the section above also relies on the function of timbre in creating a musical subject juxtaposed with the action of minimal elements. In other words, composers use the timbral possibilities

⁴⁸ Dora A. Hanninen, “A Theory of Recontextualization in Music: Analyzing Phenomenal Transformations of Repetition,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 25, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 59-97.

⁴⁹ Hanninen, “A Theory of Recontextualization in Music,” 61.

of choral ensembles—and the relative freedom that implies—to contrast the strict or pseudo-strict processes of minimalist elements. Leydon, whose work on repetition is cited above, also analyzed the creation of volition and its interaction with the musical subject as it relates to timbre.⁵⁰ Leydon’s study draws from an analysis of the perception of music, particularly from ethnomusicology, and the universal human response to timbre: “Arguably, it is our innate sensitivity to features of the human voice that is at the core of the paradox of timbre: the unique way in which we are attuned to human speech has implications for our reception of timbre more generally, because it shapes the perceptualizing impulses to which we are most susceptible.”⁵¹ Further, Leydon considers that timbre has “power precisely because it is a thing that exists partly within and partly outside of our own bodies, a thing both monolithic and obstinately composite, a reliable signature of material nature and at the same time a bundle of phantom sine waves.”⁵²

Leydon’s work alludes to the analysis of spectralist works, the qualities of the intersection between noise and sonic “purity,” and particularly the tendency of composers interested in “spirituality and religiosity” to exploit timbre’s “capacity to represent states of embodiment and disembodiment.”⁵³ Using Leydon’s model, postminimalist choral music juxtaposes the parameter of timbral freedom/restriction with other musical textures (for example, varying repetition or even more traditional formal structures), sometimes in the presence of quasi-historical resources like plainchant or mechanical ostinato. This timbral experimentation creates a musical subject in not only the listener, but also the singer. Combining Leydon’s two models of the identification of a musical subject (via

⁵⁰ Rebecca Leydon, “Clean as a Whistle.”

⁵¹ Leydon, “Clean as a Whistle,” 3.2.

⁵² Leydon, “Clean as a Whistle,” 8.2.

⁵³ Leydon, “Clean as a Whistle,” 5.3.

repetition and timbre), a singer or a section both participates in the interaction of musical strata and perceives a musical subject in their own line.

This interaction of musical strata is also clearly related in an experiential way to counterpoint and voice leading, although not in terms of traditional analysis. David Huron's 2001 article on constructing voice leading principles from perceptual principles is related to developing parameters of postminimalist music that relate to the intersection musical strata and their perception in a musical subject.⁵⁴ In particular, Huron's analysis of musical parameters on the perceived independence of a musical line is based on his requirements for coherence in perceived auditory streams, three of which are applicable here: temporal continuity, minimum masking (or register spacing), and tonal fusion.

The Pedagogy of Postminimalist Choral Music

Hanninen's 2003 paper on recontextualization cited above notes that "much of what we do as music analysts is predicated, in some way, on the recognition and modeling of repetition. Equivalence and similarity relations, transformational networks... all rest on the concept of repetition that is at some level literal."⁵⁵ On a pedagogical level, repetition both is and is not naturally performed. The challenge of creating a stylistic unity of approach is a fundamental choral technique, but the level of control of certain parameters to best perform minimalist and postminimalist music, especially in the context of melody based more on motivic generation than melodic shape and repetition of small sets of pitches, presents a unique challenge in training choirs. Additionally, in practice, various techniques of teaching singers (*bel canto* technique, common warm-up patterns,

⁵⁴ David Huron, "Tone and Voice: A Derivation of the Rules of Voice-Leading from Perceptual Principles," *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 19, no. 1 (2001).

⁵⁵ Hanninen, "A Theory of Recontextualization in Music," 59.

popular repertoire from many historical periods) implies styles which involve little strict motivic repetition, and even formal repetition is often secondary to the unified realization of choral technique.⁵⁶

Re-stating Hanninen's quote above, repetition creates musical coherence of form and stylistic practice. Adding Leydon's analytical principal of the generation of a musical subject through the variance of repetition, combined with Horlacher's analysis of this variance itself, creates a model for contextualizing repetition in postminimalist compositions. The semiotic lens of Masnikosa's philosophical model, in its dynamic intertextuality of postminimalist compositions, suggests that the analysis (and therefore pedagogy) of postminimalist composition is rooted in the compositional "coding" of the interaction of eclectic musical resources. Similarly, the identification of the musical subject in Leydon's article on minimalist tropes would suggest that music of repetition can be seen to objectively *do* something, and the type of repetition guides not only the individual's aural experience but also the performer's agency in creating that experience.

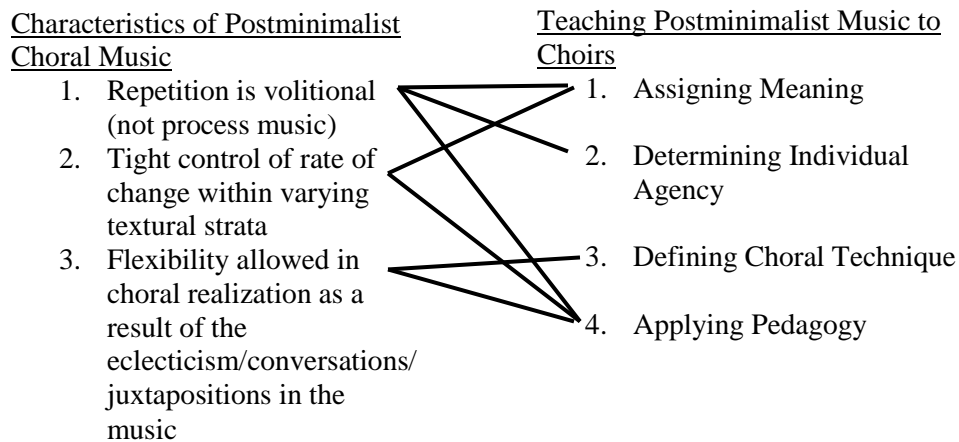
Therefore, I suggest the following four steps in preparing a choir to sing postminimalist choral music:

1. **Assigning Meaning: what does the music mean?** Based on the perception of the musical parameters present in the score, the conductor should analyze the strata present, the characteristics of repetition, and their primary interactions in the (listener's) musical subject.

⁵⁶ For example, performing a Bach motet clearly *does* require formal awareness of the discursive repetition present in imitative counterpoint. In particular, each repetition of a fugal subject must have identical articulation and foreground dynamic placement.

2. **Determining Individual Agency: what does the individual singer do?** How does the individual experience of a single block of strata create meaning within the larger whole? What vocal techniques are required to identify with this block?
3. **Defining Choral Technique: what does the choir do together?** What stylistic or timbral characteristics must be emphasized to portray the independence versus homogeneity of strata?
4. **Applying Pedagogy: how do we teach it?** Based on the first three stages, scaffolding the process of musical meaning and technique and bringing awareness of the subjective repetition present in the music will generate a process of how to teach it.

Example 2.2: From analysis to pedagogy



CHAPTER 3: ARVO PÄRT'S *THE BEATITUDES*

Introduction

Arvo Pärt's (b. 1935) compositional style and output is the most-analyzed of the four composers in this monograph. Named the "world's most performed living composer,"⁵⁷ the popularity of his work seems to derive from its austere beauty and simplicity, with an underlying complexity of a highly unified compositional language in harmony and counterpoint. His original musical construction of "tintinnabuli" is, in his choral composition, a blend of medieval plainchant aesthetic and practice, pan-tonal triadic harmonic language, and a deep sensitivity and almost monastic devotion to the text. This seemingly incongruous musical collection, rather than a continuation of the experiments of the mid-twentieth century, is cited as a distinct rejection of the eclecticism and fragmentation of the modern era, in musical and spiritual terms. Benjamin Skipp explains that a modern listening of Pärt is "an alien process to those experiences encountered on a daily basis in the current period of technological saturation, since it demands a particular contemplative mode of appreciation which does not sit well with a soundbite culture."⁵⁸ Skipp goes on to define Pärt's musical disenchantment with the modern world in his rejection of a "fetishism of the means" through an absence of contemporary subject matter, a rejection of the necessity of modern technology (for

⁵⁷ Pärt has held this ranking for the last seven years in Bachtrack, an online catalogue of live art music performances; an infographic from the 2017 data says "Arvo Pärt still #1". <https://bachtrack.com/files/73896-Classical%20music%20statistics%202017-EN.pdf>.

⁵⁸ Benjamin Skipp, "Out of Place in the 20th Century: Thoughts on Arvo Pärt's Tintinnabuli Style," *Tempo* 63, no. 249 (July 2009): 3.

example, tape loops or electronic music), and what Skipp describes as “orthodoxy within his material.”⁵⁹

Because of Pärt’s outright rejection of so much of the narrative that comprises minimalist discourse—even during a time in which composers are still writing music in this style—an investigation of Pärt from a postminimalist perspective is appropriate. His eclectic but unified musical language particularly applies to Masnikosa’s disciplinary axes, and especially their combination with a postmodern lens cited in Chapter 2 of this monograph.⁶⁰ The three characteristics of postminimalist music named in the same chapter apply here:

1. Volitional repetition is generated by a deep personal and spiritual connection to the text, akin to the “musematic” repetition of Leydon’s work cited previously;
2. A strict control of parameters through pantonal but well-described transformational models creates progression;
3. A conversation between the materials from many historical periods (in this composition: modal reciting tones, parsimonious transformation of triads, the use of the organ and silence) generates a flexibility in choral realization.

An identification of the strata associated with these characteristics, and the dialogue between them, is generated by the four-step process given in chapter 2 (assigning meaning, determining individual agency, defining choral technique, and applying pedagogy). There are four important strata in *The Beatitudes*: the tintinnabuli structure

⁵⁹ Skipp, “Out of Place in the 20th Century,” 3.

⁶⁰ An additional summary of several sources relating to the postmodern connection of Pärt’s music is found in Grace Kingsbury Muzzo, “Systems, Symbols, & Silence: The Tintinnabuli Technique of Arvo Pärt into the Twenty-First Century,” *Choral Journal* 49, no. 6 (December 2008): 27.

of T-voice and M-voice, the (usually) parsimonious triadic transformations generating a progressive harmony, the structure and subtext of the biblical text from the Gospel of Matthew, and the chiasmic structure of the composition.

Assigning Meaning: T-voice, M-voice, and Triadic Transformation

An identification of each of the four strata listed above is necessary to investigate the rhetorical meaning (and volitional characteristics) of *The Beatitudes*. Paul Hillier's generalization of the contrapuntal structure of Pärt's tintinnabuli-style compositions is now standard.⁶¹ It is based in a two-voice counterpoint which combines both vertical and horizontal dimensions, where a primary melody is given the designation M-voice, and a tintinnabuli voice is called a T-voice. The M-voice contains a generally stepwise melody which Hillier notes "may be constructed in accordance with a textual pattern or a purely abstract musical procedure," but is always "moving mostly by step from or towards a central pitch (often, but not always, the tonic)."⁶² In *The Beatitudes*, the M-voice is composed similar to a medieval reciting tone, with its last note "final" always occupying tonal significance (though not always tonic). It is presented harmonized in the alto and bass parts.

The position of the M-voice within the harmonic context established by the T-voice creates some degree of stability and tendency within the harmonic motion. The alto and bass, always the carriers of the M-voice in this composition, are always in unison to establish the final of the reciting tone at the end of a measure. In m. 1, the M-voice

⁶¹ Paul Hillier, *Arvo Pärt (Oxford Studies of Composers)*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 87-97.

⁶² Hillier, *Arvo Pärt*, 92.

final is the root of the last chord, F minor. In the next phrase, the reciting tone ends on F again, which is in this case the third of the triad—emphasizing the modal change. The next phrase in m. 5 ends on the fifth of the B-flat minor triad, and resolves in its paired phrase in m. 7 on tonic. This constant cycling of the scalar position of the reciting tone final is used to create an additional sense of punctuation and form. Notably, the reciting tone is always on the chord root when following an RLP shift.⁶³

Example 3.1: Parallel reciting tone M-voices

(*The Beatitudes*, mm. 5-7, alto and bass only).

The image shows a musical score for two voices: Alto and Bass. The Alto part is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The Bass part is in bass clef with the same key signature. The lyrics are: "Bless - ed are they that mourn : for they shall be com - fort - ed." Above the Alto staff, a bracket labeled "reciting tone (^5)" spans the first five notes. Above the Bass staff, a bracket labeled "reciting tone (^1)" spans the first five notes. Below the Bass staff, the chord "(Bb minor)" is indicated under the first five notes, and "(F major)" is indicated under the last three notes.

The T-voice outlines a major or minor triad, and alternates lower and higher registral position than the M-voice. Hillier classifies the T-voice based in its relative position (superior or anterior) to the M-voice and its relative proximity (1st position and 2nd position). In *The Beatitudes*, this construction is not philosophically accidental, and is critical to the meaning of this composition. Hillier states, from his discussions with Pärt, that the M-voice signifies a subjective world, “the daily egoistic life of sin and suffering,” whereas the T-voice signifies the “realm of forgiveness.”⁶⁴ Hillier then compares this to other dualities, “body and spirit, earth and heaven; but the two voices are in reality one

⁶³ “RLP shift” refers to the successive applications of the Neo-Riemannian R, L, and P transformations, explained in the text below.

⁶⁴ Hillier, *Arvo Pärt*, 96.

voice.”⁶⁵ It is clear, then, the M-voice and T-voice do not occupy traditional primary “melody” and secondary “harmony”—Hillier describes the “intensity” with which Pärt emphasized the unity of these voices as the most important characteristic of this style.

Example 3.2: T-voice and M-voice duality

(*The Beatitudes*, mm. 5-7, soprano and alto only).

The image shows a musical score for two voices: Soprano (T-voice) and Alto (M-voice). The Soprano part is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The Alto part is also on a treble clef staff with the same key signature. The lyrics are: "Bless - ed are they that mourn : for they shall be com - fort - ed." The Soprano line starts with a half note B-flat, followed by quarter notes G, A, B-flat, and a half note C. There is a three-beat rest, then quarter notes D, E, F, and a half note G. The Alto line starts with a half note B-flat, followed by quarter notes C, D, E, and a half note F. There is a three-beat rest, then quarter notes G, A, B-flat, and a half note C.

The T-voice and M-voice duality is the primary compositional layer and one which has clear echoes in the text of *The Beatitudes*: it signifies the temporal qualities of the imminent (e.g., “poor in spirit,” “they that mourn,” “meek,” etc.) with the transcendent qualities of the eternal (“theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” “they shall be comforted,” “they shall inherit the earth”). To punctuate and further reflect this duality, Pärt changes from minor to major mode with each transition from the temporal to the transcendent, accompanied by a three-beat pause. Rather than simply changing the mode and retaining the perfect fifth and thus the tonic note, in every case except four Pärt mostly retains the minor third of the chord and moves the fifth up a step. In those four cases, Pärt retains the fifth of the triad, and moves both root and third down by a half step to create a major triad.

⁶⁵ Hillier, *Arvo Pärt*, 96.

Example 3.3: Parsimonious triadic transformation in the first two phrase groups.

measure: 1 3 5 7

L R RLP (N)

"... the poor in spirit" "theirs is the kingdom..." "... they that mourn..." "... shall be comforted..."

The above harmonic method moving from temporal to the transcendent (in all but the four exceptions) is easily modeled by the Neo-Riemannian “leading-tone exchange” transformation, L.⁶⁶ This approach, based on parsimonious voice leading, fits particularly well with the minimal pitch difference between each phrase and sub-phrase in *The Beatitudes*.⁶⁷ The above L transformation between phrase-halves is similar to the transition between each phrase after each period in the text, but here the root and major third are preserved, and the fifth moves up a whole step to form a minor chord. This is the relative transformation, R. The further distance, and its accompanying 6-quarter note silence, signifies a further separation in rhetoric. P is never used on its own in this composition; perhaps because a change in only the quality of a triad (preserving the perfect fifth) would not give the desired sense of continuous progression.

The double half-step transformation in the four exceptions above can be given by the successive transformations RLP, which can be compared to the tonal transposition of

⁶⁶ A historical survey and summary of the approach of triadic transformation is beyond the scope of this study, but can be found in Richard Cohn, "Introduction to Neo-Riemannian Theory: A Survey and a Historical Perspective," *Journal of Music Theory* 42, no. 2 (1998): 167-80. Cohn uses David Lewin's notation of these transformations, given as PAR, REL, and LT instead of P, R, and L.

⁶⁷ An article by John Roeder, "Transformational Aspects of Arvo Pärt's *Tintinnabuli* Music," *Journal of Music Theory* 55, no. 1 (2011) establishes a transformational network of *The Beatitudes* based on these Neo-Riemannian transformations.

a minor subdominant to major tonic (iv-I).⁶⁸ This has a similar effect to the R transformation above, and the L transformation for minor triads – it preserves common tone(s) and related tonality but also progresses the harmony by changing the mode. Aurally, however, it has a distinctively minor plagal sound with two tendency tones, which matches the spirit of the text in those instances. A complete diagram of the PLR transformations in *The Beatitudes* is given below.

Table 3.1: T-voice triad, Neo-Riemannian transformation, and pedal tone in the first half of *The Beatitudes*.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|----|-----------|-----|-----|----------|-----|----|-----------|----|-----|----------|----|----|----------|
| <u>Measure:</u> | 1 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 11 | 13 | 15 | 17 | 19 | 21 | 23 | 25 | 27 |
| <u>Triad:</u> | Fm | DbM | Bbm | FM | Dm | BbM | Gm | EbM | Cm | GM | Em | CM | Am | FM |
| <u>Trans.:</u> | | L | R | RLP | R | L | R | L | L | RLP | R | L | R | L |
| <u>Pedal:</u> | | Db | | | D | | | Eb | | | E | | | F |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|-----|-----------|----|----|----------|----|-----|-----------|----|-----|
| 29 | 31 | 33 | 35 | 37 | 39 | 41 | 43 | 45 | 47 | 49 |
| Dm | AM | F#m | DM | Bm | GM | Em | BM | G#m | E | C#m |
| R | RLP | R | L | R | L | L | RLP | R | L | R |
| | | F# | | | G | | | G# | | |

... continues
in retrograde
(organ alone)

As stated above, the L and R transformations are usually presented in alternation, with the RLP transformation occasionally replacing L. Each transformation is paired with silence: three quarter-notes for the colon of the internal text division, and six for periods at the end of the sentence. Two lines are given a slightly different structure both

⁶⁸ This transformation is sometimes notated as the *Nebenverwandt* (N) transformation, related to the work of Carl Friedrich Weitzmann and applied to Neo-Riemannian transformation in Richard Cohn, "Weitzmann's Regions, My Cycles, and Douthett's Dancing Cubes," *Music Theory Spectrum* 22, no. 1 (2000): 92.

in their original punctuation and in their musical treatment: the final two lines of the text summarize and personalize the text of the Beatitudes. This section begins “Blessed are ye,” the first direct address of the Beatitudes, and continues with the exhortation to rejoice through persecution, in the hope of eternal glory.

The second-to-last sentence (beginning with “Blessed are ye”) is split into 5 parts, reflecting the comma divisions. To this point, every measure in *The Beatitudes* ends with a major or minor triad on a dotted whole-note. In m. 39, the text is “and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely,” and under “falsely,” Pärt ends this phrase with a vertically non-triadic chord. The only other long-note chord to feature this treatment occurs immediately after, on the word “rejoice.” Importantly, the transformation between mm. 39 and 41 is an L transformation, breaking the pattern of alternating L and R, and the transformation between mm. 41 and 43 is an RLP exception, noted in Example 3.4. This incomplete triadic tonality signifies the incompleteness of “falsely” and “rejoice” – particularly important as the reciting tone M-voice of the alto and bass voices are *not* their modal final until their resolution in the following measure, a device Pärt has not used in the composition until this point.

Example 3.4: “False” final and resolution in mm. 39-41 of *The Beatitudes*.

Harmony: implied G major (non-triadic) Em

The image shows a musical score for four voices: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The lyrics are: "and shall say all man - ner of e - vil a - gainst you false - ly, for my sake." The score is divided into three measures. The first measure contains the main text, the second measure is a rest, and the third measure contains the phrase "for my sake." Above the Soprano staff, the harmony is labeled as "implied G major" for the first measure, "(non-triadic)" for the second, and "Em" for the third. Above the Alto staff, the first measure is labeled "false final" and the second measure is labeled "final". Above the Bass staff, the first measure is labeled "false final" and the second measure is labeled "final". The Soprano and Tenor parts are in treble clef, while the Alto and Bass parts are in bass clef. The Soprano part has an octave sign (8) below the first measure.

Soprano
and shall say all man - ner of e - vil a - gainst you false - ly, for my sake.

Alto
and shall say all man - ner of e - vil a - gainst you false - ly, for my sake.

Tenor
and shall say all man - ner of e - vil a - gainst you false - ly, for my sake.

Bass
and shall say all man - ner of e - vil a - gainst you false - ly, for my sake.

The M-voice/T-voice duality reflects one semiotic stratum, symbolizing spiritual duality. The transformational and harmonic stratum, as discussed above, symbolizes the progression from persecution to rejoicing—but taken as a formal device, reveals a different structure than either the tintinnabuli taxonomy or the analysis of the transformations. The text of the Gospel of Matthew reveals a third layer of structures, based on the inherent parallelism of the text. This strata is even more important in conversation with the composition’s other musical structures.

Example 3.5: Parallelism and chiasmic structure in the text of Matthew 5:3-12 (KJV).

- 3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for **theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they **shall be** comforted.
5 Blessed are the meek: for they **shall** inherit the earth.
6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they **shall be** filled.
7 Blessed are the merciful: for they **shall** obtain mercy.
8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they **shall** see God.
9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they **shall be** called the children of God.
10 Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake:
for **theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
- 11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and **persecute** you, and shall say all manner
of evil against you falsely,
for my sake.
12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great **is** your reward in heaven:
for so **persecuted** they the prophets which were before you.

The 10 verses of the Beatitudes are structured on multiple syntactical levels. Each of the first 8 verses is separated into two halves: a temporal condition, and an eternal promise, linked in the music by the triadic transformations. Further, the Beatitudes are divided into categories, according to the temporal characteristics they espouse. John Roeder, in his article about transformational networks in the music of Pärt, divides *The Beatitudes* into three parts, each with three verses: passive virtues, active virtues, and virtues during conflict.⁶⁹ The table in Roeder's article lists the change pitch collections of the tintinnabuli triad, which he separates into threes; this mirrors his analysis of the transformational networks, although this does not directly reflect the text. The change in each reciting tone is also given, and is more salient to the textual divisions. The intersection of these strata also points to a larger structure within the text itself.

⁶⁹ John Roeder, "Transformational Aspects of Arvo Pärt's Tintinnabuli Music", 31.

Considering the final two verses as a single condition/promise pair, the first and last two pairs of the text are parallel. Every internal verse is in future tense: “shall be.” Verse 3 and verse 10 state “theirs **is** the kingdom of heaven,” and the last states “for great **is** your reward in heaven.” This section begins and ends in immediate combination of the present and eternal—to those who are being persecuted now, theirs is currently the kingdom of heaven right now. A chiasmic structure in verses 3-10 emphasizes the internal shift from passive to active, happening directly over the central verses. A similar chiasmic structure is present in the final two verses (11 and 12), which have “for my sake” in the center.

This structure of the Gospel text is mirrored in the harmonic structure of Pärt’s composition in total. The organ epilogue retains many of the musical parameters of the choral exposition: the toccata-style figuration is tightly knit around triads which change only by small distances (and usually one chord tone). In fact, the organ epilogue reverses the transformations present up to the “Amen” in m. 50, beginning from the C-sharp minor chord in m. 49 and progressing backwards through the harmony until the final F-minor chord, on which the piece began. Even after the declamation of the text, Pärt unifies the temporal and eternal, mirroring the promise in the text. Critically, in a chiasmic structure that includes the organ interlude, the central statement of the piece (and the highest in terms of register and density) is about persecution—a subject familiar to Pärt.

Table 3.2 shows these overlapping strata.

Table 3.2: Overlapping strata in *The Beatitudes*.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|---------|-----|---------|-----|---------|-----|------|----|----|----|
| <u>Measure:</u> | 1 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 11 | 13 | 15 | 17 | 19 | 21 | 23 | 25 | 27 |
| <u>Verse:</u> | 3 | | 4 | | 5 | | 6 | | 7 | | 8 | | 9 | |
| <u>M-Voice Final:</u> | î 3̂ | | 5̂ | | î 3̂ 5̂ | | î 3̂ 5̂ | | î 3̂ 5̂ | | î 3̂ | | | |
| <u>Triad:</u> | Fm | DbM | Bbm | FM | Dm | BbM | Gm | EbM | Cm | GM | Em | CM | Am | FM |
| <u>Trans.:</u> | | L | R | RLP | R | L | R | L | L | RLP | R | L | R | L |
| <u>Pedal:</u> | | Db | | D | | | Eb | | | E | | | F | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---------|-----|--------------|----|----|-----------------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 29 | 31 | 33 | 35 | 37 | 39 | 41 | 43 | 45 | 47 | 49 |
| 10 | | 11 | | | | | 12 | | | |
| 5̂ | î 3̂ 5̂ | | î (false) 5̂ | | | (rejoice) 3̂ 5̂ | | î | | |
| Dm | AM | F#m | DM | Bm | GM | Em | BM | G#m | E | C#m |
| R | RLP | R | L | R | L | L | RLP | R | L | R |
| | F# | | | G | | | G# | | | |

Organ retrograde

Determining Individual Agency: What does the singer do?

The experience of the individual singer within *The Beatitudes* is highly linear. Ross Bernhardt's dissertation on the performance of Pärt's choral music emphasizes chord verticalities for exactly this reason—the M-voice/T-voice counterpoint is not always harmonically functional, does not fit the individual singer's experience, and therefore is difficult for a choir to tune.⁷⁰ Reference points of vertical sonority are critical to perceiving their part within the whole, especially given what Bernhardt identifies as challenging for the voice: a “constant presence of dissonance” and “awkward writing for the voice” caused by a rigid adherence to the tintinnabuli compositional structure.

In addition, the horizontal nature of the individual experience within this work would benefit from an experience in medieval music. Hillier, in an essay entitled “Some Observations on the Performance of Arvo Pärt's Chamber Music,” notes that

Pärt's music presents certain problems in performance which belie the simplicity of the notes. Many of these problems can be more satisfactorily addressed by singers who have some experience of singing early music.⁷¹

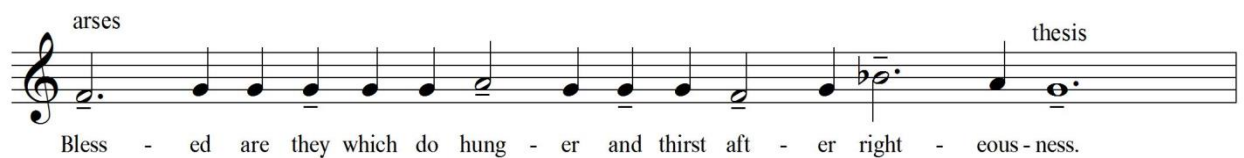
Singing the M-voice in *The Beatitudes* is very similar to preparing singers for chant and cantillation, especially Gregorian plainchant. Specifically, the analysis of a given phrase for ictic accents in terms of arsis and thesis is helpful when the pitch content of each phrase is highly limited and often repeats pitches extensively. The phrase shape of the M-voice lends itself to this model, and the rhythm is clearly designed to mimic

⁷⁰ Ross Bernhardt, “The Interrelationships of Text, Musical Form, and Tintinnabuli Technique in Arvo Pärt's *Berliner Messe* and *Litany*, and Their Implications for Choral Rehearsal and Performance,” DMA diss., Michigan State University, 1997: 93-95.

⁷¹ Paul Hillier, “Some Observations on the Performance of Arvo Pärt's Choral Music” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Minimalist and Postminimalist Music* (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Routledge, 2013): 390.

arsis impulse in the phrase, giving it forward momentum by identifying accents no more than 4 quarter notes apart.

Example 3.6: Possible arsis and thesis accents in an M-voice in m. 13.



The image shows a musical staff in treble clef with a 2/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter notes and half notes. The lyrics are: "Bless - ed are they which do hung - er and thirst aft - er right - eous - ness." Above the staff, the word "arses" is written above the first four notes (Bless - ed are they), and the word "thesis" is written above the last four notes (er right - eous - ness). Underneath the staff, there are small horizontal lines under the syllables "ed", "are", "they", "er", "and", "thirst", "aft", "er", "right", "eous", and "ness" to indicate accents.

The T-voice is closer to what Philip Tagg called “musematic” repetition.⁷² The repeated pitches of the implied triad must be sung without accent to allow the M-voice to remain primary. In *The Beatitudes*, Pärt does not change triads in the T-voice within a phrase.⁷³ In most phrases, the T-voice alternates between two pitches of this triad. The two pitches should be sung with syllabic accent but avoiding the accent of register—in fact, because of the vocal ranges, soprano and tenor voices will have to sing higher notes softer when the text accent does not match the register change. Hillier’s notes that the

T voices moving up and down the triad sometimes have to negotiate awkward leaps—which the singers will need to practice. In these lines, it is quite common to find unstressed syllables popping out (literally!) on high pitches... the singers of the T parts should aim to phrase their lines as naturally as the singers of the M parts....⁷⁴

The T-voice breaks its two-voice alternation in two ways. First, it provides phrase direction (especially to long phrases) by changing the note in the triad to one of a closer interval to the M-voice. In Hillier’s classification, the T-voice may switch from

⁷² I quote it here and throughout in the same sense Leydon utilizes the terms “musematic” and “discursive.”

⁷³ An exception is the “falsely” phrase analyzed above, which has a false phrase ending on G in m. 39 and a cadence on E minor in m. 41.

⁷⁴ Hillier, “Some Observations on the Performance of Arvo Pärt’s Choral Music,” 391.

second to first position, either superior or anterior; otherwise, the change of notes of the triad reflects a change in position of the M-voice. This is done multiple times in longer phrases to provide an accent similar to the arses of the M-voice, and this sudden intersection of these strata is a strong formal divider. Below, in m. 13, the T-voice soprano switches notes to a G instead of continuing its alternation to D, which continues its first position anterior species given the change in M-voice range. This creates contrapuntal contrast in the voice pairs.

Example 3.7: T-voice displacement with M-voice movement, m. 13.

The second way the T-voice breaks two-voice alternation is for the word “persecuted.” The octave leap in m. 29 on “persecuted,” also mirrored by a rare skip in the M-voice, is also the highest note sung by the soprano in the piece thus far by a minor third. The other exception is also on the word “persecuted,” this time in m. 49: the soprano sings an F-sharp, which is not a chord member of the C-sharp minor triad. Both of these exceptions are almost aurally indistinguishable for the listener given their brevity, but make a major difference for the individual singer.

Juxtaposing these two minimalist strategies of repetition yields a postminimalist approach. The voices are unified by textual stress, rhythm, and mode—but their pitch collections are intersecting but not the same. The voices borrow both from Gregorian

plainchant and from a highly modern sense of dissonance, and the intersection of these parameters within the single voice creates the meaning of the work as a whole.

Defining Choral Technique: What does the choir do?

Questions of tuning and unified text stress are pedagogical issues identified by Bernhardt and Hillier. In addition, the choral parts lack any dynamic or expressive markings, and the organ parts includes only a few dynamic markings (none at the beginning) and no suggestions for registration; there is also no tempo marking. This flexibility in performance is balanced by a tight control of rhythmic duration and vocal range. Stressed syllables are given two beats, final half-phrase syllables are given six beats, penultimate stress is given three beats, as is the first syllable of “blessed.” All other notes receive a single beat. In addition, the vocal range is very tightly controlled, ascending or descending slowly with a general upward motion (similar to the chromatically ascending organ pedal); the only exception is the “persecuted” line mentioned above, where the range is suddenly increased by a third.

Paul Hillier, admits that the question of vibrato is “ultimately...a question of degree and taste.”⁷⁵ He clearly prefers minimal vibrato in similarity to how a singer would approach early music, as is evident both in this article and in his extensive discography incorporating Pärt’s works. This could be philosophically linked in what Muzzo states in reference to Pärt’s use of the ethos of chant, in which “Pärt subjugates the western penchant for personal, individual expression in order to serve the text in an objective and universal way.”⁷⁶ Of course, this preference for minimal vibrato in

⁷⁵ Hillier, “Some Observations on the Performance of Arvo Pärt’s Choral Music,” 391.

⁷⁶ Muzzo, “Systems, Symbols, & Silence,” 26.

plainchant is in some senses a modern aesthetic addition, but at the same time, the tuning of the challenging T-voice and the maintenance of pitch center in the repeated pitches of the M-voice would be assisted by minimal vibrato. Because the voices never “compete” with the organ, a lighter, quieter, flexible approach with little individual vocal timbre seems appropriate. Rebecca Leydon’s timbral analysis (quoted in chapter 2) proposes that a composer’s preference for sonic “purity” functions in timbre’s role in expressing “embodiment and disembodiment”.⁷⁷ These concepts are clearly present in the text of *The Beatitudes*.

This said, a degree of timbral freedom, realized in flexibility with vibrato, may allow for a more nuanced approach to choral realization. The longer note durations will be perceived louder than the shorter ones, assuming the conductor maintains a chant-like speech-related rhythm. Allowing the M-voice to “bloom” on these notes—every arsis—would in some senses allow for a limited use of vibrato in widening the timbral sensation of accent. Also, while tuning in such exposed music is certainly vital, the linear motion of the individual lines must be just as important to highlight the various types of repetition in play.

Emphasizing and balancing common tones between the triadic transformations referenced in the Assigning Meaning section of this chapter could be counter-intuitive, since the common tones are not always the root or bass notes. The common practice of tuning triads by root, then fifth, then third may be less useful in this case than a perfect unison between the M-voice reciting tone and the associated chord factors of the T-voices, giving primacy to a T-voice which has a common tone in the following chord.

⁷⁷ Rebecca Leydon, “Clean as a Whistle: Timbral Trajectories and the Modern Musical Sublime,” *Music Theory Online* 18, no. 2 (June 2012): 5.2.

Finally, developing “tendency tones” that mimic the action of scale degree 4 to 3 or 7 to 8 within these parsimonious triadic transformations will ease choral realization.

Applying Pedagogy: How do we teach it?

Score Preparation

In each M-voice (alto and bass), the melodic impulse is directed toward the final pitch that changes with every musical phrase. This impulse will manifest as a dynamic stasis on the notes of the final, and an increase in melodic tension away from the final. Because the first note of the alto and bass part are not the final, these parts begin with tension, not stasis progressing to tension. Therefore, the conductor should mark the reciting tones for each phrase, as it is not always clear from the initial pitch of the phrase. The conductor should instruct the chorus to mark this as well. This is particularly critical in the silence between the phrases, as the M-voice should audiate the subsequent reciting tone and generate the next note from that, not the reverse. Furthermore, noting the scale degree of each M-voice final in its accompanying tonic chord may be helpful.⁷⁸ These markings would be useful in the singers’ score, as well.

The variants of the T-voice—specifically, where the T-voice breaks its two-voice alternation—should be marked, as those signify closer vertical intervals than the rest of the phrase. Similarly, T-voice positions of less than a third, especially in sections where the arpeggiation may involve more than two notes, should be marked with a bracket for tuning purposes.

⁷⁸ See the previous chart of the Assigning Meaning section for M-voice finals and triadic implications.

Finally, arsis accents in each phrase should be marked. The longer note durations are easily marked; a nuanced approach to other accents which do not receive an increase in duration (for example, the word “poor” in the first phrase) may be desired. This is particularly important as *The Beatitudes* does not include time signatures or any rhythmic subdivision in the score, as opposed to, for example, the *Berliner Messe* or many of Pärt’s shorter motets. Conducting the phrases as plainchant will aid in the interpretation of the parallelism in both the text and the music.

Choral Preparation

First, singers must be comfortable accomplishing relatively large leaps with no perceptible increase or decrease in volume and a shifting metrical accent. These leaps in *The Beatitudes* always outline a triad, but the more challenging are usually those which omit a chord factor between the notes, or those involving triads not in root position.

Therefore, the following example scaffold of exercises is suggested:

1. The choir sings a second inversion G minor chord, sol-do-me-sol, on a neutral syllable, sung three times and ending on tonic do, as below.

Example 3.8: Suggested exercise for developing T-voice pedagogy.



2. The above exercise is repeated, but with dynamic shapes. Begin with shapes only in the four-note groupings (continuous crescendi as the phrase ascends, or descrescendi), expanding to dynamic shapes continuing for the whole exercise.
3. A new linear phrase is taught, utilizing a three-note repetition of te-do-re, also ending on tonic do. The same dynamic shapes are taught.

Example 3.9: Suggested M-voice addition to the T-voice.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled '(T-voice)' and the bottom staff is labeled '(M-voice)'. Both staves are in treble clef. The T-voice part consists of a sequence of notes: C4, D4, E4, F4 (with a flat), G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6. The M-voice part consists of a sequence of notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6. The notes are spaced evenly across the staves, with the final note being a whole note.

4. Split the choir S/T and A/B. Again without dynamics, the soprano and tenor voices will sing the first phrase, and the alto and bass voices will sing the second. Because the phrases cells are of different length, the combination of the two will yield different intervallic combinations. Conducting each note, the director could emphasize certain arrangements that are challenging to tune.
5. Experiment with dynamics, conducting the M-voice only in shaping the dynamics, but instructing the T-voice to de-emphasize pitches of close intervallic distance.

In this way, the choir will prepare to process the multi-layered counterpoint while maintaining an ear for the choral effect and regulating their internal vocal timbre. To modulate, the director should change only one chord factor in the original chord, moving the M-voice to compensate (and changing te into ti if utilizing a major mode). The modulation can be sung by the choir without pause, alternating back and forth between modes. Example 3.10 demonstrates this technique.

Example 3.10: M-voice and T-voice exercise with modulation.

Advanced choir could alternate this exercise and its modulation with a short pause between. Choir members could be encouraged to write short exercises utilizing these parameters, with M-voice and T-voice of different lengths, and a modulation which switches mode. To emphasize the change in timbre as the voices get closer, a subgroup could individually improvise an M-voice to an accompanying directed T-voice, again using the above parameters. This would allow a personal experimentation with the sonorities generated by this strict repetition in a distinctly postminimalist way.

Teaching The Music

Finally, preparing the choir to sing *The Beatitudes* could benefit by incrementally introducing the strata, allowing for time to experiment with the interplay of its various component types. The whole choir should sing either the alto or bass M-voice, perhaps in the context of the organ pitches, teaching the piece as unison plainchant, then two-voice plainchant similar to a contrary-motion organum. In this step, a kinesthetic device

for the accented syllables may provide additional phrase shape reinforcement, especially a fluid ictus-based circular gesture.

Then, introducing the T-voice concepts from the exercises in the step above, the whole choir can sing the T-voices while the M-voices are played, continuing to reinforce the arses by gesture while reinforcing an aversion to registral emphasis. As the choir explores the “exceptions” to the tintinnabuli structure (especially on “persecuted” and “falsely”), a discussion of Pärt’s Estonian upbringing in the middle of the twentieth century, his Orthodox aesthetic, and his beginnings in serialism may help the singers clarify the individual/communal dichotomy underlying *The Beatitudes*.

Summary

The four steps of the process of postminimalist choral pedagogy of this chapter were:

1. **Assigning Meaning:** Identifying the overlapping tintinnabuli and harmonic structure with the text.
2. **Determining Individual Agency:** Assigning arsic and thetic accent to the M voice, and determining the role of the T-voice in harmony and distance.
3. **Defining Choral Technique:** Timbral considerations, and tuning in non-root-position triads.
4. **Applying Pedagogy:** Creating a pedagogy of tintinnabuli music and music of triadic transformations by utilizing warmups to demonstrate them.

CHAPTER 4: NICO MUHLY'S *BRIGHT MASS WITH CANONS*

Introduction

Where Arvo Pärt's *The Beatitudes* combines minimalist technique with musical resources from the medieval period, Nico Muhly's *Bright Mass with Canons* (2005) derives his historical materials from the Renaissance; both composers have a similar affinity for music's aesthetic and personal connection. In a 2007 interview, in a question about whether music communicates similarly to languages, Muhly notes:

I was thinking about these issues a lot at school, because the two musics that I like the best—that communicate the best to me—are underrepresented, I think, in school, which is to say, early music—early English choral music—and American minimalism from the '60s and '70s, both of which have fundamental communication problems.⁷⁹

Muhly's love of "early English choral music" stems from his youth as a chorister in an Episcopalian church in Providence, Rhode Island, and he viscerally wrote about how he immediately fell in love with Byrd and Weelkes as a "fanboy."⁸⁰ In the same article several paragraphs later, Muhly stated that structure in modern music, especially minimalist structure, is "politically loaded, thanks in part to everybody's bad attitude in the 60s and 70s." He lists off a catalog of questions about well-known minimalist (and modernist) works, and then concludes by noting that this is why he takes comfort in choral works: because he can "look for moments when my music can connect with people in the same subtle and urgent ways" but without having to "stake a claim" in the well-rehearsed conflicts of art music in the last few decades.

⁷⁹ Molly Sheridan, transcribed by Dave Allen. "Defining Nico Muhly," Interview January 23, 2007, <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/defining-nico-muhly/>.

⁸⁰ Nico Muhly, "Choral sex," *The Guardian*, April 27, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2007/apr/27/classicalmusicandopera1>.

This combination of minimalism and music of the English Renaissance can be seen in much of Muhly's interviews and writings, and paired with a rejection of the common practice eighteenth- and nineteenth-century models. From his upbringing, Muhly noted his distaste of the "world of the beginner pianist... essentially a Disneyfied German romantic landscape"⁸¹ and its balanced forms, and noted that when he started attending Julliard he had a "huge hole" in a traditional music education, mostly comprising "19th-century European music," but he did know a great deal about Howells and Messiaen, and "the American minimalist stuff which I had just fallen into randomly."⁸² His affinity for minimalism had nothing to do with its process or its structure, but in its ability to communicate, having discovered along with early minimalist composers that audiences "could become emotionally engaged by listening to a gently repeating pattern, as if they were looking at the ocean or the sky for an extended period of time."⁸³ In fact, Muhly rejects the aesthetic and philosophy of the early minimalists:

The composers are saying "it's just a process, all it is is a process. There's no Wagner here, there's no secret agenda." And then of course, you listen to them, and you realize, well, okay, you can say what you like, but the fact of the matter is those pieces are incredibly communicative—at least to me.⁸⁴

The combination of the English Renaissance aesthetic and minimalism is realized in his characteristically irreverent take on the intersection of popular music and "classical music." In a section entitled "Only Your Grandmother Calls It Crossover" of the previously quoted *New Music Box* article, Muhly discusses his works and his affinity for

⁸¹ Muhly, "Choral sex."

⁸² Sheridan, "Defining Nico Muhly."

⁸³ Nico Muhly, "Bright Mass With Canons," <http://nicomuhly.com/projects/2007/bright-mass-with-canons/> (accessed 19 May 2018).

⁸⁴ Sheridan, "Defining Nico Muhly."

both popular and classical styles. Muhly compares his classical training to being “from” a geographical location, which doesn’t mean “that you can’t have a productive life somewhere else.”⁸⁵

Second, Muhly says that among the younger generation of musicians, both classical and popular artists are more interested in hospitality than self-distinction: “But again, most people are saying, people who I like and respect are saying in their music, ‘Make yourself at home.’ They’re not saying, ‘Oh, I’m sorry. You’re not from here. You really shouldn’t do that. Don’t put that there. Take off your shoes.’” This intentional eclecticism is mirrored in his collaborations with Björk, Phillip Glass, major opera companies and the Icelandic record label and music collective Bedroom Community.

Bright Mass with Canons lies at the intersection of these two. It fits the three categories of postminimalism given in chapter 2:

1. The use of canonic repetition has three purposes: for historical reference, for experiential (spatial) effect, and to generate a dichotomy between the corporate and individual senses of the Mass texts.
2. The writing is highly “efficient,” in that the different textural strata of the music is based on a very small amount of motivic material, similar to a Renaissance point of imitation; this forces a very slow change of harmonic material as well as limits dynamic and textural change.
3. This Mass contains aleatoric sections, and other sections that are labeled “senza misura” or “not synchronized,” which allow for a direct flexibility in realization. Much of this flexibility is in Muhly’s conception of the “space” of

⁸⁵ Sheridan, “Defining Nico Muhly.”

the music, both for its commission and for its continued performance. The organ is also given substantial timbral and rhythmic freedom.

This analysis of Muhly's *Bright Mass with Canons* and its following pedagogy focus on the Mass's multiple types of imitative repetition, varying types of counterpoint, and its use of recontextualization in harmony and texture.

Assigning Meaning: Close Canons and Spatial "Canons"

Muhly's own program notes for the *Bright Mass with Canons* states that there are "canons ('imitative repetitions') in almost every bar of the Mass,"⁸⁶ and describes two types of canons. The first type of canon, found primarily in the Kyrie and Gloria, is a direct reference to "the imitative writing of early English composers Byrd and Weelkes," which notably are the same composers named in the *Guardian* interview cited above. While Muhly's presentation of this type of canon is less strict than Byrd and Weelkes, there are clear parallels. The second type of canon, found primarily in the Sanctus and Agnus Dei, is "more abstract and spatial," and he notes the Sanctus is designed for singers to repeat "in his own time, creating a flurry of sound to fill the space in St. Thomas's sanctuary."

Canon Type 1: Kyrie and Gloria

The first type of canon generates a progressing tension between textural layers, by highlighting the interaction of the individual musical lines to their context. In the Kyrie, paired voices are used in a rhythmic canon and in a strict unison canon to generate a multi-layered canonic structure which references, but does not imitate exactly, English

⁸⁶ Muhly, "Bright Mass With Canons," <http://nicomuhly.com/projects/2007/bright-mass-with-canons/> (accessed 19 May 2018).

polyphony. The Gloria utilizes many strict unison canons as well as antiphonal polyphony, imitative counterpoint at the third and fourth, and other types of repetition which both refer to Renaissance polyphony and provide material for minimalist-style repetition.

Kyrie

The Kyrie contains three related musical ideas, labeled in Examples 4.1 and 4.2 as A, B, and C. Idea B and C are each comprised of two voices in note-against-note counterpoint, similar to first-species albeit without the same contrapuntal rules. They are together a sort of generalized canon: idea B begins first, and idea C begins exactly one half-note pulse after. They are not exactly imitatively related, but there are reference intervals in both ideas which cause the simultaneous use of idea B and C to aurally reference a canon without strict counterpoint. Because they are not melodically identical, and because they always appear in this configuration, I classify them as two separate ideas imitating a canon rather than one idea utilizing a rhythmic canon.

Example 4.1: *Bright Mass with Canons*, Kyrie, mm. 5-12, chorus only.

The image shows a musical score for four voices: A (Alto), T1 (Tenor 1), T2 (Tenor 2), and B (Bass). The lyrics are "Kyrie eleison". The score is in 4/4 time. Two musical ideas are highlighted with boxes and labels:

- Idea B:** A box highlights the notes for "ri" in the T1 and A staves. In T1, it covers a half-note G4 and a half-note F4. In A, it covers a half-note G4 and a half-note F4.
- Idea C:** A box highlights the notes for "ri" in the T2 and B staves. In T2, it covers a half-note G3 and a half-note F3. In B, it covers a half-note G2 and a half-note F2.

The lyrics are: A: Ky - ri - e e - lei - son; T1: Ky - ri - e e - lei - son; T2: Ky - ri - e e - lei - son; B: Ky - ri - e e - lei - son.

Ideas B and C are repeated immediately but shifted a single half-note pulse later. The two different juxtapositions of B and C generate two different perceptions of musical tension and accent. Generalizing from Horlacher’s method of analysis cited in chapter 2, the type of development here could be seen to utilize “the subtle differences between contiguous presentations of superimposed strata, [producing] a formal framework through the joint completion among strata.”⁸⁷ In the Kyrie, the shifted metrical position of idea B and C is reinforced with a more rhythmic idea A in the soprano voices, shown in Example 4.2.

Example 4.2: Metrically shifted repetition in the second phrase of the Kyrie mm. 12-19, chorus only.

The image shows a musical score for five voices. The first staff is labeled 'Idea A' in a box. The lyrics are 'Ky - ri - e e - lei - son'. The score consists of five staves, each with a different vocal line. The lyrics are repeated across all staves. The music is in a key with one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The first staff has a box labeled 'Idea A' pointing to the first measure. The lyrics are 'Ky - ri - e e - lei - son'. The second staff has lyrics 'Ky - ri - e e - lei - son'. The third staff has lyrics 'Ky - ri - e e - lei - son'. The fourth staff has lyrics 'Ky - ri - e e - lei - son'. The fifth staff has lyrics 'Ky - ri - e e - lei - son'.

⁸⁷ Gretchen Horlacher, “The Rhythms of Reiteration: Formal Development in Stravinsky’s Ostinati,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 14, no. 2 (Autumn 1992): 172.

Idea A is presented in unison first (above), after the introduction of B and C, and then in strict unison canon except the last note. It also forms the motivic basis for a contrasting section on the text “Christe eleison,” which is written primarily as a melody over a simple homophonic accompaniment. Against the harmonic context of G Dorian implied by the organ and lower voices, it strongly implies suspensions in its canon.

Example 4.3: Idea A canon with alterations, Kyrie mm. 20-27.

The Kyrie progresses mostly through textural alteration, by changing the metrical positions of ideas B and C and presenting A in strict canon. Only minor variations of this structure exist: for example, in the climax of the piece at mm. 52-69, the choir sings a restatement of mm. 20-27, but the upper voices are presented first, and the second voice is altered higher for the first note. Additionally, idea C in mm. 46-50 is presented in short quarter notes surrounded by rests in a somewhat irregular pattern. A chart of this movement is below in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Three motivic ideas in the Kyrie of *Bright Mass with Canons*.

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|--------|--|------------------------------|---------|-----------------|
| Measure | 1 | 5 | 12 | 20 | | 35 | 44 | 52 | | |
| Section | organ fanfare | A | | A' | | B | A'' | A' | fanfare | coda |
| Idea A | | unison | | canon | altered lower | melody | | 2 nd voice higher | | |
| Idea B | | whole notes | half notes | whole notes | half notes | | whole notes transposed (also in short quarter notes) | whole notes | | alto is similar |
| Idea C | | half notes | whole notes | half notes | whole notes | | half notes, in soprano | half notes | | |

Utilizing two distinct overlapping canons is similar to Byrd's writing in his motet *Miserere mihi Domine* (1575), specifically in the double canon between the plainchant voices and the more florid descending lines, notated below. Whereas Byrd uses strict imitation between voices, Muhly uses two lines in similar motion. This, paired with Muhly's repetition of each idea without transposition or most alterations, is a distinctively postminimalist take on the aesthetic of Byrd.

Example 4.4: William Byrd, *Miserere mihi Domine*, canonic imitation only, mm. 20-25.

The musical score consists of six staves. The first two staves are soprano and alto voices, both with lyrics: "Mi - se - re - re mi - hi". The third staff is empty. The fourth staff is tenor voice with lyrics: "Mi - se - re - re mi - hi Do - mi - ne,". The fifth staff is bass voice with lyrics: "Mi - se - re - re Do - mi". The sixth staff is another bass voice with lyrics: "Mi - se - re - re mi - hi Do - mi - ne,". The music features a canonic imitation of a melodic phrase across the voices.

The influence of Weelkes is apparent primarily in the alterations of texture. Idea A is similar to the “O my son, Absalom” section from Weelkes’s motet *When David Heard*, with an implied half-step “sigh” motive. In Example 4.5 below, Weelkes reinforces one alto entrance with a parallel voice, but all other voices are in strict canon, which is similar to Muhly’s treatment of the overlapping idea B/C canon with idea A. Several measures later, the soprano 1 voice’s entrance is split, stopping after the first note, and the soprano 2 voice leaps higher to increase motion into the cadence, similar to Muhly’s treatment of the final Kyrie entrance.

Example 4.5: Canonic variation in Weelkes *When David Heard*, mm. 50-56.

Ab - sa - lom,
O Ab - sa - lom, O Ab - sa - lom, Ab - sa - lom,
O Ab - sa-lom, O Ab - sa-lom Ab sa - lom, O Ab-sa - lom,
O Ab - sa-lom O Ab - sa - lom, O Ab-sa - lom,
O Ab - sa - lom Ab - sa - lom Ab-sa - lom,
O Ab - sa-lom Ab-sa - lom,

Gloria

The Gloria, perhaps because of its more extensive and varied text, includes a diversity of canonic techniques; a classification of each canon is helpful in understanding the form and meaning of the Gloria. Unison canons (canons beginning on the same pitch), with entrances one beat apart in two voice, are the most-used type. These canons are frequently altered to add dissonance at the end of a phrase. The opening “Gloria in excelsis Deo” canon at the quarter note, written in divided alto voices, is altered to avoid the simple unison consonance of the last note. It is immediately repeated, but combined with a rhythmically strict soprano voice singing mostly a single pitch, only changing on the phrase climax, and in even note values which do not match the meter.

Example 4.6: Two canon voices and upper voice in the Gloria, mm. 75-78 (soprano and alto only).

Glo - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o

Glo - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o

Glo - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o

“Et in terra pax” is similarly a simple canon at the quarter note, and also includes an alteration of the last note to avoid unison. Later, the phrase “quoniam tu solus sanctus/Dominus” utilizes this altered ending approach so the voices can sing different words on “sanctus” and “Dominus,” pairing two different phrases of text—the only time in this Mass that Muhly has different voices singing different text on the same motives.

The canon on “Tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe cum Sancto Spiritu in Gloria Dei Patris” is the climax of the movement and the Mass, in density, dynamic, and structure. The chorus splits into 8 parts in a distinctly Anglican way. The cathedral for which this piece was written features a divided choir loft; all the “firsts” would be on one side, and the “seconds” on another, and is one of few polychoral-style textures in the Gloria.

Example 4.7: Double-choir canon on “Tu solus Altissimus” in the Gloria, mm. 157-163.⁸⁸

The image shows a musical score for a double-choir canon. It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The lyrics are: "Tu so - lus Al - tis - si - mus Je - su Chri - ste". The score is in G major and 4/4 time. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand.

All other canons involve a transposition. The canon on “Domine fili unigenite” is a strict canon at the fourth, as is “Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris”. The canon of “Qui tollis peccata mundi” is two voice against two voice at the tenth.

Several short canons do not fall into the canonic types above. The canon in m. 106 on “Deus Pater omnipotens” is imitative counterpoint in four (divided) voices, which forms a single Renaissance-like (but short) point of imitation; this texture is never reused. Two other parts of the text use even less strict canon types. Beginning with “Glorificamus te,” Muhly uses antiphonal six-part writing divided into two halves on material established beginning at “Laudamus te.” “Domine Deus, Rex caelestis” is essentially homophonic, but the soprano voice sings a quasi-canon with the first alto.

⁸⁸ The original score is notated for 8-part chorus (S1, S2, A1, A2...), but is reduced here for double chorus to highlight the canon.

Example 4.8: Polychoral six-part canon in the Gloria, mm. 90-95, choral parts only.

te a - do - ra - mus te Glo - ri - fi - ca - mus te

te a - do - ra - mus te Glo - ri - fi - ca - mus te

te a - do - ra - mus te Glo - ri - fi - ca - mus te

Glo - ri - fi - ca - mus te Gra - ti - as a - gi - mus

Glo - ri - fi - ca - mus te Gra - ti - as a - gi - mus

Glo - ri - fi - ca - mus te Gra - ti - as a - gi - mus

The texture of the Gloria, like the Kyrie, refers repeatedly to the English Renaissance, especially in the antiphonal section and the sections in strict imitative (but not unison) counterpoint. The use of a diversity of canons and textures for dramatic effect are also very similar to the English composers: Muhly’s use of antiphonal texture in the “Laudamus te” catalog of verbs (laudamus, adoramus, benedicimus) may symbolize the Church in the “we praise You,” especially in conversation with Byrd’s use of sudden homophony after single-voice entrances in the same section of his *Mass for five voices* (1594).

Canon Type 2: Sanctus and Agnus Dei

The “more abstract and spatial” techniques of the Sanctus and Agnus Dei utilize more continuous sound at wider pitch ranges, which is often more harmonically dense and contains a drone or drone-like element. Where the Kyrie makes extensive use of

brief silence between statements, and the Gloria shifts textures and harmony regularly, the Sanctus and Agnus Dei are both nearly continuous sound and rarely change harmonic areas, creating an expansive stasis in the Sanctus and a quiet peace in the Agnus Dei.

Sanctus

The Sanctus, beginning in m. 195, utilizes the soprano and alto voices aleatorically, with dense motives sung with the instruction not to “synchronize with other singers within or between sections.” Each progressive entrance in the chorus adds exactly one pitch while reinforcing the A, B-flat, and C with longer rhythmic values on those notes. In some ways, this is the opposite technique of the parallel reinforcement of canon in the Kyrie, removing any perception of individual strata. The organ, notably, contains all pitches of the entire aleatoric section in its given motives, and is noted as “busy, intense.”

Example 4.9: Aleatoric section of the Sanctus, mm. 195-196.

195

senza misura

mp cresc.

S San - ctus

mp cresc.

A San - ctus

mp cresc.

T San - ctus

mf to the fore

B Do-mi-nus De-us Sa-ba-oth

mf to the fore

senza misura

p busy, intense

mp

N.B.: Soprano and Alto; do not synchronize with other singers within or between sections.
Each singer sings the pattern, rests slightly, and continues repeating through bar 201.
Tenor and Bass is conducted through this section.

The tenor and bass in this section are in canon, though they vary linear intervals freely while keeping the rhythm strict. In this way, they fall between the strict canons of the Gloria and the much less strict Kyrie ideas B and C. The parts at which they differ seem to be for differing reasons. The “Domine Deus” section alters the opening leap, so the tenor and bass enter on the A and C reinforced in the women’s part, but then leap up a sixth and a seventh, respectively. This generates a very close canon at the major second, adding to the density of this section. The wide leaps on “sunt coeli” are also of different size, yielding parallel sixths until the phrase is altered in m. 199 to create parallel fifths on quarter note beats. Oddly, the bass does not sing the word “pleni” (“full”) at all; the tenors sing it alone under a change in the soprano 1 motive.

Example 4.10: Tenor/bass “Domine Deus” canon underneath aleatoric section, Sanctus mm. 196-202.

T
Do - mi - nus De - us Sa - ba - oth

B
Do - mi - nus De - us Sa - ba - oth

Ple - ni sunt coe - li et ter - ra

sunt coe - li et ter - ra

The Benedictus is set in a new texture for the Mass: the internal voices of the choir sing a minimalist-like ostinato against a simple melody, all reinforcing A major. This ostinato underlays a melody in the soprano, repeated in imitation (but not canon) in the bass. The organ continues this ostinato without the choir under the surprisingly quiet “Hosanna” in m. 234, which sets up a final canon between the outer voices of the chorus.

Agnus Dei

The opening of the Agnus Dei makes extensive use of a drone to reinforce a static G minor seventh chord “tonic.” The Agnus Dei uses a combination of the previous canonic techniques in the Mass. The idea is presented first solo then in canon, in a harmonized two-voice texture combining techniques of the Kyrie, Gloria, and Sanctus. The text repetition of “Agnus Dei,” a rarely-used device in the Mass, reinforces the strength of the G minor seventh-chord tonality by creating an internal cadence.

Example 4.11: Agnus Dei statement and canon.

$\text{♩} = 54$
 247 *mp*
 S Ag-nus De-i Ag-nus De-i qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun-di,
 A Ag-nus De-i Ag-nus De-i qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun-di,
 $\text{♩} = 54$
mp
 256 *sempre mp*
 S Ag-nus De - i Ag-nus De - i qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun-di,
 A Ag-nus De - i Ag-nus De - i qui tol - lis pec-ca - ta mun-di,
p

The next section on the text “miserere nobis” begins similarly, with an introduction of a harmonized melody, then the same melody in canon. It is punctuated by an 8-part final “miserere nobis” in m. 273. This expansion of texture and dynamic,

incorporating a pause before the next statement of Agnus Dei, creates a middle climax of this movement. The final Agnus Dei statement is presented in all four voices in the same canon as the opening, but a final homophonic “Dona nobis pacem” is punctuated by a sparse ascending soprano 1 solo, similar to the effect of the organ in the Kyrie. The three-part structure of this movement is similar to the Kyrie, generating change in form by changing canonic textures utilizing simple melodies.

Determining Individual Agency: What does the singer do?

The intersection of Renaissance-style vocal writing and minimalist technique creates vocal lines that are often challenging to sing. The melodic shape of Kyrie ideas B and C are similar to Byrd’s Kyrie motives; Byrd’s Kyrie from his *Mass for five voices* and Muhly’s upper voice of idea B from the Kyrie are presented below.

Example 4.12: Kyrie motives of Byrd and Muhly.

The image displays two musical staves in treble clef. The top staff, labeled 'Muhly', shows a sequence of notes: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. Brackets above the staff group the notes into three pairs: (G, A), (Bb, C), and (D, E). A bracket below the staff groups the final two notes, (F, G). The bottom staff, labeled 'Byrd', shows a sequence of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6. Brackets above the staff group the notes into three pairs: (G, A), (B, C), and (D, E). A bracket below the staff groups the final two notes, (F, G).

However, the counterpoint differs in notable ways from the standard rules of species counterpoint.⁸⁹ Leaps are rarely resolved with steps in the opposite direction. The close canons in the Mass intentionally generate interval sequences disallowed in Renaissance counterpoint. For example, the Kyrie counterpoint emphasizes parallel

⁸⁹ As codified by Fux in *Gradus ad Parnassum* (1725).

fifths rather than eliminating them. The “Gloria in excelsis Deo” canon contains repeated harmonic seconds internally punctuated by unisons, making it difficult to sing. While the individual melodic lines of the Mass contain very few chromatic alterations from the mode or key implied, they often cadence on higher-tertian elements (e.g. a ninth or eleventh above the root), and the harmony implied is often not in root position in the chorus or the organ.

At the same time, the Mass shares some aesthetic similarities to Renaissance writing which translates to individual vocal technique. The acoustic for which this piece was written was a reverberant cathedral, not a modern concert hall, so sound is clearly meant to continue past its notation cessation. Dynamics change gradually, especially after loud dynamic markings. The cathedral for which it was written utilizes a standard Anglican divided choir loft and was written for a choir of men and boys. Therefore, the vocal approach should match the English Renaissance aesthetic Muhly clearly loves: minimal vibrato, a relatively tight control of dynamic contrast, and a significant lightening of the voice in internal (especially higher) sections where counterpoint is denser. Not coincidentally, this also aids in the realization of the minimalist drones and ostinati.

The melodic lines of the Mass vary in construction. The Kyrie ideas B and C contain notes that are all one rhythmic value. Idea A has implied rhythmic accents which do not “line up” with the strict meter of the other two ideas. Another important super-metrical grouping is in the “et in terra pax” line of the Gloria, notated in Example 4.6. Individual singers must be aware of these groupings similar to hemiola, as they drive the rhythmic intensity of certain lines without the presence of motor ostinati.

Finally, several strata of the Mass fit a similar function to Pärt's T-voice described in the previous chapter: they provide harmonic reference but no motivic material. These are exceptions to the otherwise terse composition of the Mass, where nearly every note belongs to a primary musical idea. Both "sparse quarter note" passages fit this model (Kyrie mm. 46-50, tenor 2 and bass; Sanctus mm. 234-238, alto), as does the soprano single-note rhythmic motor above the first Gloria canon in mm. 75-79. Given the minimalist style of this approach, singers should remove any unwritten accent or dynamics from these lines, and practice singing them without inflection.

Defining Choral Technique: Form and Recontextualization

The separate textural strata in *Bright Mass with Canons* are comprised of: a single voice, two voices in homorhythmic counterpoint, two voices in canonic counterpoint, or multiple voices in homorhythmic similar motion. The combination of these textural strata, specifically textural canons which combine strata of different sizes (like the Kyrie), is used to generate larger form in the external two movements: the Kyrie and the Agnus Dei. This form emphasizes the simultaneous individual and corporate expressions of the text, also symbolized in the Mass's canonic technique.

This creation of form by altering the superimposition of strata is created by recontextualization. Recontextualization "shifts" the identity of the sung line, changing the ordering of aural perception—what is perceived as most important, what the perceived function and context of individual elements are—but retaining coherence by utilizing repetition of existing musical phrases. In the Mass, this predominant compositional device shapes the meaning of the text.

Several examples of recontextualization have been discussed above in the Assigning Meaning section of this chapter. For example, the canon-like intersection of Idea B and C of the Kyrie are shifted in metrical position (from primary to secondary and vice versa), and when the position is shifted, the organ and idea A provide a new context. Though Idea B and C have not changed at all, their interaction with the other strata changes their function, and the choir should be aware of, and perhaps emphasize, this metrical shift. In doing this, the choir creates development out of static lines, especially in the Kyrie and Agnus Dei.

The organ accompaniment often establishes the harmonic center of phrases, giving a context to chords that are otherwise tonally ambiguous. It also serves the opposite purpose: to blur the harmonic function of otherwise stable implied pitch centers. In the beginning of the choral entrances of the Kyrie, the opening fifth (G and D) implies the g minor chord of the organ right hand held in mm. 3 and 4. The following fifth in the lower tenor and bass voices changes the harmony to imply an E-flat major seventh tonality. The entrance of the organ in m. 6 strongly implies a G-minor chord with an added B-flat, especially when taken with the pedal D as a sort of dominant in mm. 3 and 4. This same strategy is used at the end of the Kyrie to imply an F Aeolian context for two chords: F-minor and E-flat major.

Example 4.13: Kyrie organ harmonic recontextualization, mm. 1-8.

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system is for the Organ, with two staves. The upper staff is marked "solo, brassy" and "f". The lower staff is also marked "solo, brassy" and "f". Above the organ part, the instruction "each part should be independent, not synchronized" is written. The second system shows the organ part continuing, with a dynamic marking of "p" at the end. The third system is for the vocal parts, labeled A (Alto), T (Tenor), and B (Bass). It begins with the instruction "In time" and a tempo marking of "♩ = 68". The vocal parts are marked "mp" and sing the words "Ky - ri - e e -". Below the vocal parts is the organ part, also marked "mp", which provides harmonic support. The organ part features a sustained chord in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand.

Similar harmonic recontextualization occurs at the end of every movement. The Gloria ends with an A-minor ninth chord in the chorus, reinforced by an A in the pedal, but obscured by a retardation of the E-major tonality beginning from the organ fanfare in

m. 176. The Sanctus ends with a similar figuration to the Kyrie, but strongly implies F Lydian until the organ pedal ceases, leaving the choral entrances to imply only a third and fifth, and the organ notes forming a second-inversion C major ninth chord. The final chord of the *Mass* is an E-flat major triad in second inversion, with only the soprano solo adding a higher-tertian element (the seventh, a D).

Higher-tertian chords (especially 9th, 11th, and 13th chords) generally do not function as strongly as their triadic counterparts, and even less so when the polychordal relationships within the chord are highlighted, and the bass note is not the root. In fact, although the *Mass* utilizes a pantonal approach that shifts freely from mode to mode but still strongly implies pitch centricity, Muhly's use of the organ prevents any weight given to functionality, and instead forces the listener to aurally rely on linear motion to imply cadences instead of vertical sonority. Even when the organ occupies a prominent harmonic role—for example, in the “Tu solus altissimus” eight-part canon of the Gloria—the vertical harmony always contains higher-tertian elements and ambiguous polychord-like structures.

Example 4.14: Organ ostinato from Gloria, mm. 156-167.

The musical score for Example 4.14 is presented in two systems. The first system, marked "Suddenly faster" with a tempo of quarter note = 132, features a right-hand part with a complex, rhythmic pattern of chords and a left-hand part with a simple, repetitive eighth-note pattern. The second system, marked "Broader" with a tempo of quarter note = 120, features a right-hand part with a slower, more spacious pattern of chords and a left-hand part with a simple, repetitive eighth-note pattern. Dynamics include *mf* and *sim.* (sustained).

This aural prominence of linear motion away from vertical sonority matches the Renaissance aesthetic which Muhly borrows with very different harmonic materials. A choral approach similar to highly chromatic Italian Renaissance madrigals may be effective, or pre-tonal late-Renaissance motets in general. Similar to singing a Renaissance motet by working within hexachordal modulation, singing this *Mass* requires more linear perspective (and often less than full scales) than vertical awareness within a single strata.

Applying Pedagogy

Score Preparation: Canons

Two-part canons, especially unison canons which are “close,” occupy one of the main pedagogical challenges of the *Mass*. A conductor should mark the entrance of every canon, its classification (interval and rhythmic distance), and any notes varying

from the canonic rule. Phrase shape should be marked with musical elements that must retain context in both canon voices: phrase climax, any applicable dynamics, and articulation. In addition, vertical alignment of the voices in the canon should be marked when they strongly imply relationship to the harmonic context, through metrical placement or long rhythmic values. Finally, very close intervals (especially half steps) should be marked to make the conductor aware of potentials for inadvertent unisons.

Example 4.15: Gloria canon with suggested markings, mm. 75-78.

(four eighths, not three)

Glo - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o

unison canon
at the quarter note

Glo - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o (late, and altered)

Glo - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o

With very few exceptions, choral parts do not “trade” canonic material. A canon, if repeated, stays in those voices and the material does not appear in other voices. Therefore, teaching the canons with the full ensemble present will be inefficient. Choirs who are unable to sight-read the linear, modal canons should be encouraged towards sectional rehearsal prior to any attempt to put the sections together.

Finally, the canons which combine multiple strata (notably the Kyrie and Agnus Dei) must be rehearsed to tune vertical sonorities. For the Mass, tuning the polychords

which inevitably occur as a result of this combination is best done by component triads, because to tune the vertical higher-tertian chord to a single root note does not follow the ambiguous tonal implications analyzed in the section above. Therefore, the conductor should mark in individual triads as well as analyze the vertical harmony as a whole. In the score below, the general harmony is marked below the staff; implied harmonies in the upper three parts which generate a polychord-like structure are marked above the staff.

Example 4.16: Vertical harmonic strata in the Kyrie, mm. 5-12.

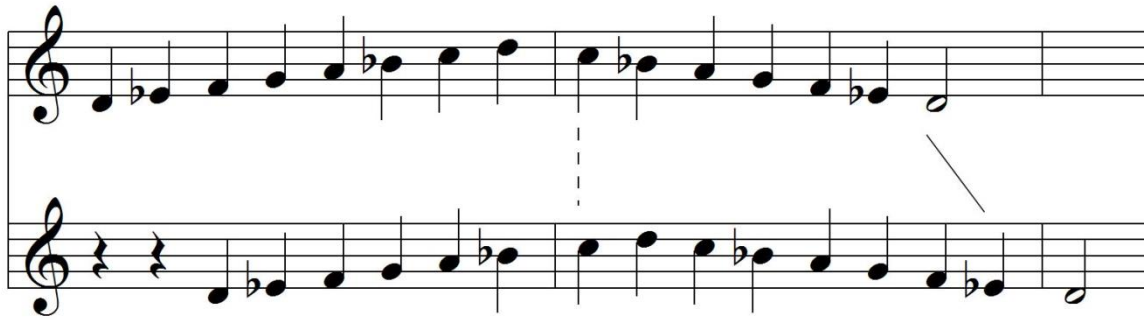
The musical score consists of four staves labeled A, T1, T2, and B. Above the staves, the following chords are marked: gm, dm7, EbM7, Bb, and G2. The lyrics are: Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. The bass staff (B) has additional harmonic markings below it: (g) EbM7, gm11, -- Bb, Eb9 (11), and Fadd4. The score is in 4/4 time and features a polychord-like structure in the upper parts.

Choral Preparation

To match the freely pantonal but triadic harmonic approach, a choir should be taught to sing modal motives (other than Ionian) and to comfortably tune the vertical sonorities present in each combination. For example, a choir could be taught to sing a Phrygian scale in two-part canon at the third. To create awareness of the sonorities, sing the canon slowly and instruct the choir to raise their left hand every time they sing a

unison pitch, and their right when they sing a half step. Repeat this process for other rhythmic intervals.

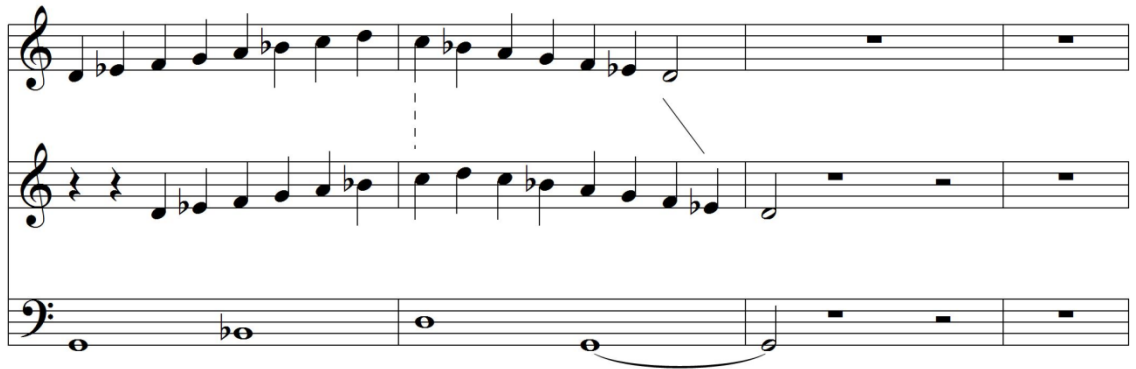
Example 4.17: D Phrygian canon with important intervals marked.



Several melodic lines in the Kyrie and Agnus Dei imply this mode. To recontextualize it into the background harmony of G Dorian, a conductor could play a pedal tone of G through the whole exercise, or, as notated below, change root notes to mimic the contextualization of the organ against the canon. The conductor could select any of scale degrees 1, 3, 5, and 7, changing the “center” of the mode without changing the intervallic content.

Advanced choirs could be taught to sing using scale degrees or solfege, shifting their tonic as the bass note changes.

Example 4.18: Canon with changing root notes.



As stated above, many canons in the slower movements are harmonized. A choir could sing a slow canon harmonized in parallel fifths. A rhythmic entrance for the canon on the third note will generate mostly planing seventh chords (as below); closer intervals will generate more ambiguous chords similar to parts of the Sanctus.

Example 4.19: Slow, harmonized canon.



Finally, teaching close canons outside of the Mass is recommended. “Close” canons can be close by rhythmic proximity of voices or by a relatively small (third or

smaller) interval. These canons can be taught with a mix of conjunct and disjunct motion with complex rhythmic patterns, which would aid the choir in being able to listen both within their section for linear cohesion and outside their section for vertical tuning. Because most close canons happen within close voice parts (soprano 1 and 2, for example, or tenor and bass), teaching the canon in a division between “firsts” and “seconds” would be helpful. An example is below utilizing the harmony of the first Gloria canon.

Example 4.20: Close canon in double chorus.

Teaching the Music

Because of the organ’s role in recontextualizing the choral part, rehearsal should be done with organ as early as possible in the process. The challenging rhythmic quality of the organ part also requires a very strict adherence to rhythm and tempo, but often without providing an aural reference point on which the choir can stabilize. In sections where more freedom is indicated, including the aleatoric Sanctus imitation, rehearsing in

the acoustic for the performance is necessary, as the speed of notes and time given to rests will depend on the reverberation time of the space itself to match Muhly's "spatial" effect.

Finally, Muhly's conception of an Episcopal church choir would include the two halves (*decani* and *cantoris*) separated. As noted above, the "Tu solus Altissimus" 8-part canon implies this physical separation. In addition, the tuning of individual chords may benefit from this sort of "double choir" arrangement. For example, in the final chord of the Kyrie, the alto 2, tenor 2, and bass 2 parts form a simple F-minor triad. The soprano 1, alto 1, tenor 1, and bass 1 voices would sing an open fifth A-flat and E-flat. Tuning within the "sides" of the choir (generally at the fifth) would be easier than the relatively close triads and fourths spacing.

Example 4.21: Tuning within choir "halves" on the finale Kyrie chord, m. 66.

The musical score shows four staves: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. Above the staves, the sections are labeled: "all", "seconds", and "firsts".

- Soprano:** Treble clef, key signature of two flats. In the "all" section, it plays a whole note chord of A-flat and E-flat. In the "seconds" section, it plays a whole note chord of A-flat and E-flat. In the "firsts" section, it plays a whole note chord of A-flat and E-flat.
- Alto:** Treble clef, key signature of two flats. In the "all" section, it plays a whole note chord of F and C. In the "seconds" section, it plays a whole note chord of F and C. In the "firsts" section, it plays a whole note chord of F and C.
- Tenor:** Treble clef, key signature of two flats. In the "all" section, it plays a whole note chord of F and C. In the "seconds" section, it plays a whole note chord of F and C. In the "firsts" section, it plays a whole note chord of F and C.
- Bass:** Bass clef, key signature of two flats. In the "all" section, it plays a whole note chord of F and C. In the "seconds" section, it plays a whole note chord of F and C. In the "firsts" section, it plays a whole note chord of F and C.

Summary

The four steps of the process of postminimalist choral pedagogy of this chapter were:

1. **Assigning Meaning:** Differentiating the canon types and meanings.
2. **Determining Individual Agency:** Creating an intentional mix of English Renaissance style singing with minimalist technique
3. **Defining Choral Technique:** Focusing on recontextualization and form by varying harmony and rhythm.
4. **Applying Pedagogy:** Applying warm-ups and other exercises for the unique kind of harmony and close canons in this piece.

CHAPTER 5: TARIK O'REGAN'S *THE ECSTASIES ABOVE* (2006)

Introduction

Tarik O'Regan (b. 1978) shows similar philosophical and musical intersections in his compositional style as the previous composers in this monograph: a deep familiarity with pre-Baroque choral music, a love of the aural effect of extended repetition, and a simplified harmonic language based on linear transformation rather than vertical sonorities. Pärt utilizes a plainchant aesthetic somewhere between orthodox and Gregorian combined with his unique tintinnabuli structure; Muhly's style combines a deep sensitivity to the Anglican choral tradition combined with indie-rock experimentalism. Tarik O'Regan's influences range from rock music of the 1960s and 1970s to a wide range of non-Western musical styles (north African music, Al-Andalusian music, Balinese gamelan), and including American minimalism, all through a distinctly rhythmic and textural lens.

Recent Scholarship

A summary of O'Regan's influences and style is made easier due to a recent surge of interest in his music, both in academic writings and in choral performance. At the beginning of this recent scholarship, Cameron LaBarr's 2011 article in *The Choral Journal* notes that at the time "no major research or dissertations have been written about Tarik O'Regan, but his work is beginning to appear in academic recording reviews, journal articles, and choral performances of national and international importance."⁹⁰ He also notes the appearance of O'Regan's music in Dennis Shrock's seminal choral

⁹⁰ Cameron F. LaBarr, "Tarik O'Regan's 'Scattered Rhymes' and its Compositional Relationship to Machaut's 'Messe de Nostre Dame' and the Music of 'The Who'," *The Choral Journal* 52, no. 7 (February 2012): 10.

repertoire text. LaBarr's article was based on his own 2011 dissertation; another 2011 dissertation (at the same institution) by Sangyun Choi also includes an appendix of an e-mail interview with the composer.⁹¹ Dominic Gregorio's 2012 dissertation interview with O'Regan is more extensive and wide-ranging, encompassing his general influences (Gregorio asks O'Regan scores he would take when stranded on a desert island).⁹² Another extensive interview was conducted by James E. Brown for his 2013 dissertation,⁹³ and includes a thorough summary of O'Regan's background and musical influences as well as his perspective on several of his own pieces, including *The Ecstasies Above*. The similarity in O'Regan's answers over these three years shows a deep commitment to his compositional philosophy and process.

The "journal articles" cited by LaBarr (which is quoted in several of the other dissertations) are recording reviews only, including an important 2006 review⁹⁴ by Jill Barlow in *Tempo* of a recording by the Choir of Clare College in Cambridge (Timothy Brown, conducting).⁹⁵ For the American choral world, the first seminal recording of O'Regan's music is Conspirare's recording *Threshold of Night*, conducted by Craig Hella Johnson.⁹⁶ This recording includes *The Ecstasies Above* as well as two of the other pieces analyzed in the dissertations above, *Tryptich* and *Threshold of Night*. It is likely

⁹¹ Sangyun Choi, "Minimalism, Exoticism, and Alternatim in Tarik O'Regan's *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis* and *The Ecstasies Above*," DMA diss, University of North Texas, 2011: 36-37.

⁹² Dominic Gregorio, "An Analysis of Two Choral Compositions With Strings by Tarik O'Regan," DMA Diss., University of Southern California, 2012: 21.

⁹³ James E. Brown, "Portrayal of Life and Death: An Analytical Study of Tarik O'Regan's the Night's Untruth, the Ecstasies Above, and Tryptich," Ph.D. diss, Florida State University, 2013.

⁹⁴ Jill Barlow, "Tarik O'Regan's Voices," *Tempo: Quarterly Review in Modern Music* 60, no. 237 (June 2006), 69-70.

⁹⁵ Tarik O'Regan, *Voices*, Collegium COLCD 130, 2006, CD.

⁹⁶ Conspirare, *Threshold of Night*, Harmonia Mundi HMU 807490, 2008, CD.

that this recording, as well as Paul Hillier's 2008 recording of *Scattered Rhymes*, generated the academic interest in the four dissertations cited above. In general, the recordings of choral ensembles specializing in the performance of both modern and ancient choral music, such as Conspirare and The Sixteen, points to its combination of styles, genres, and worldview.

An investigation of *The Ecstasies Above* requires an identification of O'Regan's personal and compositional philosophy, and a brief examination of his diverse musical influences. By comparing interviews over a roughly 5-year period from 2008-2013, a consistent picture of his musical style emerges.

Universality, Ecumenism, and Craftsmanship

O'Regan's musical and aesthetic eclecticism is driven by a commitment to universality, shown in his comments on and composition of *The Ecstasies Above*. The poem on which the work is based, written by American poet Edgar Allan Poe in 1831 and reworked and republished in 1836, is itself an eclectic mixing of cultures, spirituality, literature, and poetic technique, all in the service of a poem which proclaims a universality of art. Poe's poem references and is titled after Israfil, an angel in the Muslim tradition (though not named in the Koran), and freely reimagines a character from the religious tradition. This character creates primal music to which all other created objects listen, and who inspires the song of creation, like a muse. The poem utilizes references to Islam primarily as exoticism: the name of the angel Israfil, as well as "Houris," the heavenly companions of paradise in Islam. Poe's poem begins with an epigraph cited from the Koran:

And the angel Israfael, whose heart-strings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures—KORAN.⁹⁷

Oddly, this passage does not seem to be in the Koran, and Poe seems to include it only to add mystical weight to the character. O'Regan omits this epigraph in his notation of the text in the full score. This poem in general fits into a Romantic poetry tradition examining the inadequacy of human spirit and language to pursue idealized Art, similar to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, which not coincidentally is also an ecstatic vision for an artist, utilizing non-Western mysticism as a foundation.

O'Regan's understanding of Poe's re-construction of Israfael was an "homage ecumenicity to an all-encompassing angel of music."⁹⁸ O'Regan's own background uses music to tie together several spiritual and cultural influences. His mother was brought up a Muslim, and his father a Christian, and so he "learned to embrace diversity rather than division."⁹⁹ He notes this ecumenical stance is similar to the appreciation of sacred architecture: "Consider a great cathedral or temple of any faith—it's relevant to those both inside and outside of the structure. There is awe and wonder, no matter what one's background might be."¹⁰⁰ Utilizing the same metaphor, in O'Regan's interview for Gregorio's dissertation cited above, he adds "secular temples... like Grand Central Station," and adds that the universal awe at these buildings "goes back to an earlier time... to the world of composers and musicians being craftspeople."¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Edgar Allen Poe, "Israfael," reprinted by The Poetry Foundation, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48628/israfael>.

⁹⁸ Tarik O'Regan, "Interview with Composer Tarik O'Regan," September 2007, Conspirare newsletter transcript: 1.

⁹⁹ Tarik O'Regan, "Interview with Composer Tarik O'Regan," 2.

¹⁰⁰ Tarik O'Regan, "Interview with Composer Tarik O'Regan," 2.

¹⁰¹ Gregorio, "An Analysis of Two Choral Compositions With Strings by Tarik O'Regan," 23.

To O'Regan art is a combination of diverse influences not for diversity's sake, but because the constructions of other cultures are equally beautiful and equally deserving of awe, and therefore can be combined without tokenism. This is apparent in his combination of musical style. For example, about a different work of his, "Nunc dimittis", O'Regan writes that he didn't attempt to create a minimalistic texture out of a Balinese scale superimposed over medieval plainchant, but that arose out of "the conversation between two 'ancient' cultural ideas."¹⁰² Texture and construction drive his principles, but his resources often come from rock and the music of non-Western cultures.

Diverse Musical Influences

Four areas of musical influence are present in O'Regan's musical style, all of which are supported by both musical analysis and O'Regan's autobiographical statements: al-Andalusian and Moroccan music, British rock music of the 1960s and 1970s, the choral music of the Renaissance, and the minimalism of Steve Reich.

O'Regan cites "the music [of] North Africa, specifically Moroccan al-Andalusian music" as influences in *The Ecstasies Above*.¹⁰³ He spent summers in north Africa with his mother's side of the family, and notes of the regional music that "Spanish Music, Andalusian, North African music is so highly intertwined, and very much what I like about that is there's not so much a divide in North Africa between what I would call

¹⁰² Tarik O'Regan, "Interview with Composer Tarik O'Regan," 2

¹⁰³ Choi, "Minimalism, Exoticism, and Alternatim in Tarik O'Regan's Magnificat and Nunc dimittis and The Ecstasies Above," 37.

concert music, pop music and folk music. It's much more closely put together, much in the same way that I think jazz is today.”¹⁰⁴

The influence of al-Andalusian music in *The Ecstasies Above*, as well as O'Regan's other compositions, is difficult to precisely identify. O'Regan does not seem to use harmonic resources or compositional techniques from al-Andalusian music without modification, but he borrows an aesthetic of driving rhythmic pulse with an overlaid cyclic melody, or at least one based on short motivic cells, which are continuously varied, in opposition to, for example, balanced phrases.¹⁰⁵ O'Regan, in Choi's dissertation interview, cites mm. 82-89 of *The Ecstasies Above* as an example, noting that “these tend to be linear melodic ideas which go across fairly accented ‘straight’ rhythms.”¹⁰⁶ In the same answer, he also notes that the heavily ornamented string writing in m. 141 is an “example of a gestural connection” with this music.¹⁰⁷ The “gesture” used here utilizes the open strings of the violin to produce a quasi-drone and folk-like quality against rapid ornamentation of the following vocal line.

¹⁰⁴ Gregorio, “An Analysis of Two Choral Compositions With Strings by Tarik O'Regan,” 20.

¹⁰⁵ Brown's dissertation notes O'Regan's observation that some of Leon Janáček's music is similarly structured; while highly motivic and cyclic melodies are certainly a construct of many eastern European and Russian composers, this is also a musical characteristic shared by much of O'Regan's influences (jazz, for example, and American minimalism).

¹⁰⁶ Choi, “Minimalism, Exoticism, and Alternatim in Tarik O'Regan's Magnificat and Nunc dimittis and *The Ecstasies Above*,” 37.

¹⁰⁷ Choi, “Minimalism, Exoticism, and Alternatim in Tarik O'Regan's Magnificat and Nunc dimittis and *The Ecstasies Above*,” 37.

Example 5.1: al-Andalusian “gestural connection” in *The Ecstasies Above*.

mm. 82-89

Musical score for mm. 82-89, featuring Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The score is in 4/4 time and features a strong al-Andalusian rhythmic pattern. The first system (mm. 82-89) shows a dynamic shift from *ff subito* to *mf*. The second system (mm. 90-96) continues the *mf* dynamic. The Cello part provides a steady accompaniment with a consistent rhythmic pulse.

mm. 141:

Musical score for mm. 141, featuring Violin I. The score is in 4/4 time and features a dynamic shift from *mp* to *mf*. The Violin I part includes a triplet of eighth notes and a long, sustained melodic line.

O'Regan's reference to American jazz above is not incidental, not only in jazz's own connection to African musical traditions and the challenges in the genre of

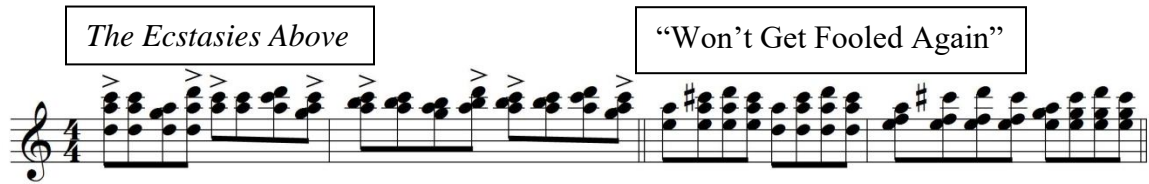
separating popular and art music, but also because his parents' musical interests directly affected his musical taste. Brown's dissertation, based on an interview, notes that "O'Regan's father was fascinated by jazz music from the era of Glenn Miller... while his mother was interested in British rock bands *Led Zeppelin* and *The Who*, groups which O'Regan says were a profound part of his musical heritage."¹⁰⁸ Other than elements with a somewhat more ambiguous connection (e.g., repeated rhythmic syncopation, modal harmony and higher-tertian non-resolving melodic tension), jazz influence does not seem to play a role in *The Ecstasies Above*.

The British rock influence, however, is apparent. LaBarr's article references the repeated synthesizer chords in The Who's "Won't Get Fooled Again."¹⁰⁹ LaBarr demonstrates this connection with O'Regan's *Scattered Rhymes*; the connection with the string parts in *The Ecstasies Above* mm. 104ff is readily apparent in Example 5.2 below. In the same way, some of Led Zeppelin's polyrhythms across different fixed strata to drive rhythmic intensity could be compared to the climaxes of *The Ecstasies Above*.

¹⁰⁸ Brown, "Portrayal of Life and Death," 22-23.

¹⁰⁹ LaBarr, "Tarik O'Regan's 'Scattered Rhymes' and its Compositional Relationship to Machaut's 'Messe de Nostre Dame' and the Music of 'The Who'," 18.

Example 5.2: A comparison of mm. 104-105 of *The Ecstasies Above* with 0:20-0:26 of “Won’t Get Fooled Again” by The Who.¹¹⁰



O’Regan’s early experiences as a percussionist reinforced his previous familial introduction to music. His interview with Conspirare notes that he played in rock bands in high school.¹¹¹ Brown’s dissertation lists early experiences with a big band and playing percussion in a school’s production of Leonard Bernstein’s *West Side Story*, citing this experience as what motivated O’Regan to pursue percussion seriously.¹¹² O’Regan’s interview with Conspirare confirmed this pivotal moment, but indicated it was originally “an attempt to meet girls.”¹¹³ When asked which composers most influenced him, O’Regan generally includes at least Leonard Bernstein, Samuel Barber, and Benjamin Britten. The Conspirare interview notes that “on the classical side, I’ve always had an interest in the movement that started in the 30s and continued on into the 70s,” and mentions Aaron Copland and Roy Harris as major influences, connecting them eventually to Bernstein, then Glass and Reich.¹¹⁴ This multi-faceted connection to American nationalism, experimentalism, and eventually minimalism is a major influence in his music.

¹¹⁰ The Who excerpt transcribed by the author; some pitches are octave-displaced to show similarity of chord structure.

¹¹¹ Tarik O’Regan, interview with Conspirare, 1

¹¹² Brown, “Portrayal of Life and Death,” 13.

¹¹³ Tarik O’Regan, interview with Conspirare, 1.

¹¹⁴ Tarik O’Regan, interview with Conspirare, 2

Finally, like both Pärt and Muhly, O'Regan is deeply interested in pre-Baroque music and modern musical syntax, with little focus on the Classical and Romantic periods, especially. Gregorio's dissertation lists several Renaissance composers as influences, particularly noting the influence of dissonance in the music of Nicolas Gombert.¹¹⁵ The opening section of *The Ecstasies Above* contains some Renaissance-like counterpoint, although built from echo repetition rather than imitation, and chromatic dissonance is extremely rare in the chorus throughout the work. Although O'Regan is quoted as saying he sings poorly, and that he grew up playing percussion instead of the choirboy tradition, his experience in hearing choral works in Anglican services clearly shaped his aesthetic of composing for chorus.

Postminimalism

O'Regan's *The Ecstasies Above* is an example of postminimalism because of the three characteristics stated in chapter 2.

1. The use of repetition of varying types, specifically utilizing textural and rhythmic change, creates a spatial effect which models the immensity of Israfel's song.
2. O'Regan's harmonic rhythm is generally slow, with few notes if any varying outside a modal pandiatonic structure, and occasionally limiting pitch resources to a single tetrachord; texture and rhythm create progression and development.
3. Far from being process-oriented music, this piece is full of examples of modification for aural effect, as well as some examples of modification for

¹¹⁵ Gregorio, "An Analysis of Two Choral Compositions With Strings by Tarik O'Regan," 20.

easier performance. Choral realization is enhanced by varying timbre and balance throughout as the sections change, yielding a more complete picture of O'Regan's diverse influences.

Assigning Meaning: Recontextualization and Expansion/Contraction

The Ecstasies Above uses two primary devices to generate meaning and progression: recontextualization, and the altering of the length of repeating cells, especially in the presence of fixed rhythmic strata, which can be thought of as a type of formal contraction and expansion. Recontextualization functions as a method of variation upon repetition, similarly to the Muhly mass in chapter 4. In *The Ecstasies Above*, O'Regan recontextualizes the text itself, repeated pitches, and rhythmic motives.

Recurring musical motives are strongly related to the text ideas under which they first appear. For ease of nomenclature, the motives are catalogued below, and will be referenced by name in the following sections.

Example 5.3: Recurring motives in *The Ecstasies Above*.

The image displays four musical motives on a single staff in treble clef. The first two motives are vocal lines with lyrics. The last two are instrumental lines.

- "Heaven"**: A vocal line starting with a half note G4, followed by a whole note A4, and another whole note G4. Lyrics: "In Hea - ven".
- "Israfel"**: A vocal line starting with a half note B4, followed by a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, and a half note E4. Lyrics: "Is - ra - fel,".
- "Strings"**: An instrumental line consisting of a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Lyrics: "Strings".
- "Ecstasies"**: An instrumental line consisting of a sequence of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Lyrics: "Ecstasies".

Recontextualization: Text, pitch repetition, and melodic motives

Pärt's *The Beatitudes* uses no text repetition at all; Muhly's *Bright Mass with Canons* repeats only the first two words of the *Agnus Dei*. In contrast, *The Ecstasies Above* repeats several whole stanzas of text, some individual phrases, and sometimes changes the text in the repetition; the texture is always varied. This is best observed through an investigation of the middle section of this piece, mm. 141-254. Through this section, O'Regan utilizes a repetition of text but a variation of texture to create formal delineation and progression.

The middle section beginning at m. 141 ("The ecstasies above/With thy burning measures suit") repeats text extensively, with a complete repetition of that stanza three times. The texture varies each repetition. The first time, mm. 141-153, the "ecstasies" melody is presented with only "ah" in the accompanying solo parts, forming a small semi-chorus. The second time, mm. 154-168, builds to a stronger climax and utilizes close canon between the first and second soprano soloists. The third section begins with a modulation utilizing only the phrase "Well may the stars be mute," and utilizes both unison and canonic statements of the melody, with the text split eventually between tenor and soprano. The string quartet intensifies the second and third repetition, which eventually splits into a rhapsodic canon between the sopranos on "Yea, Heaven is thine."

Before returning to "The ecstasies above" stanza, a short section from mm. 212-215 utilizes the same choral gesture as that which underlies the melody in the first "The ecstasies above" section (mm. 141-153), but without the melody present, and is in fact based on the "Israfil" motive. Notably, the repeated text here is "The shadows of thy bliss," which is a sort of false echo ("shadow" is singular in the text).

The following section returns to the “The ecstasies above” text, with two repetitions very similar to the first two repetitions of the text as above. Finally, the stanza “Yea, Heaven is thine” is repeated in an extremely sparse a cappella section (only four solo voices), before modulating and returning to an exact restatement of the primary A section material, on the text “Israfel”/”And the giddy stars.” A complete reproduction of the poem as it appears before the first page of music in the full score is below, as well as a macro-level chart of *The Ecstasies Above*. These text repetitions, with accompanying textural variation, generate form in most of the work.

Table 5.1: Chart comparing the poetic and musical forms in *The Ecstasies Above*.

| Poem (“Israfel”) | <i>The Ecstasies Above</i> | Section (motives) |
|--|---|--|
| In heaven a spirit doth dwell “Whose heart-strings are a lute;” None sing so wildly well As the angel Israfel, And the giddy stars (so legends tell) Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell Of his voice, all mute. | In heaven a spirit doth dwell “Whose heart-strings are a lute;” None sing so wildly well As the angel Israfel, And the giddy stars (so legends tell) Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell Of his voice, all mute. | A (heaven, Israfel) mm. 1-62 B (heaven, strings) mm. 63-103 |
| Tottering above In her highest noon, The enamoured moon Blushes with love, While, to listen, the red levin (With the rapid Pleiads, even, Which were seven,) Pauses in Heaven | Tottering above In her highest noon, The enamoured moon Blushes with love, While, to listen, the red levin (With the rapid Pleiads, even, Which were seven,) Pauses in Heaven And they say (the starry choir And the other listening things) That Israfel’s fire Is owing to that lyre | |
| And they say (the starry choir And the other listening things) That Israfel’s fire Is owing to that lyre By which he sits and sings – The trembling living wire Of those unusual strings. | By which he sits and sings – The trembling living wire Of those unusual strings. | B coda (strings, Israfel) mm. 103-117 |
| But the skies that angel trod, Where deep thoughts are a duty- Where Love’s a grown-up God- Where the Houri glances are Imbued with all the beauty Which we worship in a star. | But the skies that angel trod, Where deep thoughts are a duty- Where Love’s a grown-up God- Where the Houri glances are Imbued with all the beauty Which we worship in a star. | C (heaven) mm. 118-140 |
| [Therefore thou art not wrong, Israfeli, who despisest An unimpassioned song; To thee the laurels belong, Best bard, because the wisest! Merrily live, and long!]* | | |

Table 5.1 (continued).

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>The ecstasies above With thy burning measures suit- Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love, With the fervour of thy lute- Well may the stars be mute!</p> | <p>The ecstasies above With thy burning measures suit- Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love, With the fervour of thy lute- Well may the stars be mute!</p> <p>The ecstasies above With thy burning measures suit- Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love, With the fervour of thy lute- Well may the stars be mute!</p> <p>The ecstasies above With thy burning measures suit- Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love, With the fervour of thy lute- Well may the stars be mute!</p> | <p>D (ecstasies) mm. 141-153</p> <p>D' (ecstasies) mm. 154-167</p> <p>D'' (ecstasies) mm. 168-181</p> |
| <p>Yes, Heaven is thine; but this Is a world of sweets and sour; Our flowers are merely – flowers, And the shadow of thy perfect bliss Is the sunshine of ours.</p> | <p>Yes, Heaven is thine; but this Is a world of sweets and sour; Our flowers are merely – flowers, And the shadow of thy perfect bliss Is the sunshine of ours.</p> <p>The shadows of thy bliss.</p> <p>The ecstasies above With thy burning measures suit- Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love, With the fervour of thy lute- Well may the stars be mute!</p> <p>The ecstasies above With thy burning measures suit- Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love, With the fervour of thy lute- Well may the stars be mute!</p> <p>Yes, Heaven is thine; but this Is a world of sweets and sour; Our flowers are merely – flowers, And the shadow of thy perfect bliss Is the sunshine of ours.</p> | <p>E mm. 181-215</p> <p>D (ecstasies) mm. 212-215</p> <p>D (ecstasies) mm. 216-228</p> <p>D' (ecstasies) mm. 229-241</p> <p>D''' (ecstasies) mm. 242-253</p> |

Table 5.1 (continued).

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| | <p>And the giddy stars (so legends tell) Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell Of his voice, all mute. Tottering above In her highest noon, The enamoured moon Blushes with love, While, to listen, the red levin (With the rapid Pleiads, even, Which were seven,) Pauses in Heaven And they say (the starry choir And the other listening things) That Israfel's fire Is owing to that lyre</p> <p>By which he sits and sings – The trembling living wire Of those unusual strings.</p> | <p>B (heaven, strings) mm. 254-297</p> <p>B coda (strings, Israfel) mm. 298-311</p> |
| <p>If I could dwell Where Israfel Hath dwelt, and he where I, He might not sing so wildly well A mortal melody, While a bolder note than this might swell From my lyre within the sky.</p> <p>*Stanza omitted</p> | <p>If I could dwell Where Israfel Hath dwelt, and he where I, He might not sing so wildly well A mortal melody,</p> <p>If I could dwell Where Israfel Hath dwelt, and he where I, He might not sing so wildly well A mortal melody, While a bolder note than this might swell From my lyre within the sky.</p> | <p>C' (heaven) mm. 312-337</p> <p>(new material) mm. 338-380</p> |

Another example of recontextualization, but utilizing a repeated melodic pattern rather than text, is the pseudo-canon which begins at “his voice” in m. 77 in the chorus.

The canon uses the “heaven” motive’s fifth, but repeated at different pitch levels. The

melody is presented in unison soprano and alto at m. 71, unison SATB at m. 74, two-part pseudo-canon at m. 80, and four-part counterpoint where the two-part pseudo-canon is divided into four voices split at the quarter note.

The gradual variation of texture creates gradual aural chaos. This creates a perception of madness, supernatural wonder, or divine “ecstasy.” The piece spins wildly into and out of regular metrical pulse underneath these text recontextualizations. In the section beginning at m. 83, where the pseudo-canon utilizes four independent parts, the melody (and therefore the text) is given a new function as accompaniment to the unison string melody. Similarly, the strict close canons in the soprano part at mm. 104-113 and at the end “blur” the presentation of the text in preference of an aesthetic or a feeling rather than clear text declamation; this section finishes with an almost nonsensical repetition of the text “of those unusual strings” three times.

The ostinato first heard in mm. 104ff was noted above in comparison with The Who’s “Won’t Get Fooled Again,” and is based on the “Israfel” motive, with the “strings” motive placed above it. It is both melodic and textural—the pitch set used by the chords changes very little, and the strings constantly swap chord factors.

Example 5.4: Pitch displacement in the string quartet.

The image shows a musical score for a string quartet, consisting of four staves: Violin I (Vln I), Violin II (Vln II), Viola (Vla), and Cello (Vc). The score is in 4/4 time and features a melodic line with a prominent A5 pitch. The A5 pitch is highlighted with boxes in each staff, showing it being traded between instruments. The dynamics are marked as *mf* (mezzo-forte). The score is divided into measures, with some measures containing multiple notes, indicating a complex rhythmic structure. The overall texture is dense and repetitive, characteristic of postminimalist music.

The A5 pitch is constantly present and changes function both by being traded around the instruments as well as changing its function in the harmony. The relatively limited repetition and lack of any direct phasing or canonic technique in the strings, underlying the long (though motivic) soprano canon creates a distinctively postminimalist take on repetition.¹¹⁶ As the melodic motives and pitch centers travel around the ensemble, the ensemble gradually loses any aural individuality even while their part maintains its identity. A similar effect occurs in the drive to the cadence in the middle sections, for example, at mm. 161-165. In this section, the D4 is traded around the string textures, and the B-flat in the cello changes the harmonic center on its entrance.

Finally, O'Regan re-uses melodic motives in novel ways. The "Israfel" motive is first heard in m. 50 and then used as a rhythmic ostinato against the steady eighth notes in the first violin beginning in m. 63. It continues until the two-part pseudo-canon reaches

¹¹⁶ This is an example of Kyle Gann's perspective, cited in chapter 2, which notes that the combination of diverse elements utilizing repetition "is not entirely accessible to left-brain analysis or turns out to be a deliberate illusion."

its stage utilizing four independent parts (on the text “The enamoured moon”), where the choir takes over the rhythmic accompaniment.

In this section on “the enamoured moon,” two melodies are given new contexts. The “Israfel” motive is the accented notes in the violin 1 part of the rhythmic ostinato. It utilizes only repeated eighth notes, beginning in m. 104; this section is the section related to “The Who” chords referenced above. The “strings” melody underneath the four-part canon is given two new contexts: the soprano melody at m. 95, and the soprano duet at m. 104. Both times the melody is recontextualized, it contains less notes and less pitch variation, until it fades into the close soprano canon, and the “Israfel” motive in the strings becomes the most aurally dominant figure. The same process occurs with the “ecstasies” motive, first with ornamentation in the strings and then simplified in the soprano part in mm. 141-143.

Contraction and Expansion

This process simplifies a melody by removing its ornamentation, and eventually by reducing the melody to a repetition of only its most important motive. This occurs primarily in the “strings” and “ecstasies” motives. The “heaven” and “Israfel” motives, on the other hand, are generally expanded and extended. Both practices generate textural variation which, against the above-mentioned text repetition, allow for aural and compositional cohesion.

The “strings” and “ecstasies” motivic contraction occurs in the sections O’Regan identifies as those borrowing from al-Andalusian music. The generation of long melodies on the repetition of short motives and the ornamentation in the strings on these melodies are both identified by O’Regan as influenced by the north African and al-

Andalusian music in his background. While these sections do not relate directly (the motives are not based on any discernable trope or convention from north African or al-Andalusian music), the aesthetic drives O'Regan's melodic technique. Below are examples of contraction utilizing the "strings" motive.

Example 5.5: Motivic contraction in the "strings" motive.

By which he sits and sings

The "Israfil" motive is expanded several times, particularly in the strings as a rhythmic ostinato. Another example of its expansion is in the long notes of the middle section. The solo altos sing a greatly rhythmically augmented version of this to form the "ah" chords underneath the "ecstasies" section.

Example 5.6: Expansion of the "Israfil" motive.

soprano I solo, mm. 63-64 violin I, mm. 79-80

Is - ra - fel,

The “heaven” motive of an ascending fifth is greatly expanded in the rhythmic B section. Beginning at the text “And the giddy stars (so legends tell),” the choir sings a melody based on this fifth (and its following thirds), which can be seen in Example 5.7 below. This fifth-generated melodic construction is also echoed in the slow sections at m. 118ff and 317ff, particularly in “a mortal melody” in mm. 333-336.

Example 5.7: Expansion of the “heaven” motive.

soprano, mm. 1-7
In Hea - ven a spi - rit

soprano, mm. 71-73
And the _____ gid - dy _____ stars (so _____ le - gends tell)

Determining Individual Agency

The individual singer in *The Ecstasies Above* constantly trades philosophical “identities.” This is particularly true of the eight singers in the two SATB solo quartets. As noted above, their text is sometimes clearly declaimed, sometimes not; their melodic motives are sometimes foregrounded and sometimes not, often in the same range with the same dynamic marking. The ranges vary greatly (especially in the solo sopranos), and often utilize a very wide spacing, making tuning and balance difficult. Simon Carrington, the commissioning and premiering conductor of this piece, noted “Tarik’s wide spread voicing demands superlative balancing from the choir. We worked a great deal on vocal

color as the piece is repetitive in a positive sense and needs a variety of colors to mark out each section.”¹¹⁷

Individuality is created and reinforced in the clever ways O’Regan alters choral canons and imitations. The opening utilizes an “echo effect,” with the chorus sopranos and altos singing the first statement, then the soprano 1 and alto 1 soloists, then echoed by the soprano 2 and alto 2 soloists. The echo is irregularly spaced; the motive is not always presented in its original metrical position, and eventually, the echoes no longer carry the same pitch content as the original chorus parts, but maintain the echo texture. This is also true of the pseudo-canon in mm. 71ff: while they all begin in what appears to be strict canon, the chorus parts all have different intervallic content near the end of their phrases (though never the beginning).

¹¹⁷ Gregorio, “An Analysis of Two Choral Compositions With Strings by Tarik O’Regan,” 99.

Example 5.8: Opening echo canon (condensed), mm. 1-24

The musical score consists of three systems of staves. The first system has three staves: S/A Chorus, Solo S/A 1, and Solo S/A 2. The second system has three staves. The third system has three staves. The lyrics are: "In Hea - ven a spir - it doth dwell, in Hea - ven, whose heart strings are a lute;\"

The “Israfel” motive close canon, beginning at m. 63, alters the canon to make it more easily sung. The soprano 2 and alto 2 soloists have an “o” on the downbeat, which is not in the text, but allows the singers to maintain metrical awareness without compromising the canon technique. Similarly, in the “By which he sits and sings” soprano soloist duet, the sopranos first divide the melody so both have a chance to sing it independently before repeating it in close quarter-note canon.

Example 5.9: Canon alteration for singability, mm. 65-68, soprano solos 1 and 2 only.

The image shows a musical score for two soprano parts. The top staff is for Soprano 1 and the bottom staff is for Soprano 2. The lyrics are: Soprano 1: "Is - ra - fel, Is - ra - fel,"; Soprano 2: "o, Is - - ra - fel, o, Is - - ra - fel,". The music is in a 4/4 time signature. The top staff has a melody with a dotted quarter note, an eighth note, and a quarter note, followed by a half note. The bottom staff has a melody with a quarter note, a dotted quarter note, and an eighth note, followed by a quarter note. There are accents over the 'Is' in both parts. The bottom staff has a longer note value for 'Is' in the second measure.

Finally, the individual singer’s awareness of the accent patterns in their own and the accompanying strata is critical to performing the piece, especially in the chorus, where the four-part pseudo-canon yields a precise repeated eighth note motive that cannot phase at all against the “strings” motive. The consonants in this phrase are similar to vocal percussion. Similarly, the text accents in the lower parts of m. 96 have nothing to do with text stress, but are critical to the harmonic progression and create a textural accent against the three-eighth polyrhythm in the lower strings.

Example 5.10: Text accents against the metrical stress in mm. 95-97.

The image shows a musical score for Example 5.10, spanning measures 95-97. It features four vocal staves (SOLO S. II, SOLO A. II, SOLO T. II, SOLO B. II) and four instrumental staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello). The vocal parts have lyrics: "And they say (the star - ry choir and the o - ther lis - ten - ing". The instrumental parts include dynamics like *f* and *fff*. A 'D' is marked above the first measure of the instrumental parts.

Defining Choral Technique

The Ecstasies Above shows something O’Regan considers to be central to his style: he is interested in “taking the developments in orchestration that one finds in instrumental music over the last century and applying them to choral music.”¹¹⁸

Specifically, he considers orchestration a color choice: “the choice of instruments... I don’t see how the choral world managed to ignore that.”¹¹⁹ This idea is central to the choral realization of *The Ecstasies Above*.

¹¹⁸ Tarik O’Regan, interview with *Conspirare*, 1.

¹¹⁹ Gregorio, “An Analysis of Two Choral Compositions With Strings by Tarik O’Regan,” 22.

The score is divided into four “choirs”: SATB chorus, two quartets of SATB solos, and string quartet. The solo quartets function similar to woodwinds in an orchestra: the individual parts function both solo and in duets and trios with the other solos, occasionally all (or most) of the solos function as a single ensemble, mostly in the internal “ecstasies” section. They provide primary melodic material, as well as harmonic and rhythmic support. The solos quartets rarely function above the full chorus, but it does occur, notably in the final soprano duet. In one section (“Yes, Heaven is thine”, m. 189ff) the solos function as a semi-chorus, singing entirely in octaves, initially with all soloists of the first quartet, then adding the second.

Textural doubling is very rare in this work. The notable exception is in the dynamic climax to the work at “(the starry choirs and the other listening things)” in m. 95ff and its repeat at m. 289ff. Here, the sopranos of the choir are doubled by both alto soloists; the soprano soloists both double an octave above. The tenor and bass soloists double the pitches of the choral parts, though with more varied rhythms rather than held long notes.

Choral realization of *The Ecstasies Above* is built on this texturally varied construction. Controlling the timbral effect of the piece relies on managing the vocal tone in each section in relation to the texture, as well as the text, dynamic, and rhythmic possibilities. A further extension of this attention to timbral characteristics is evident in the treatment of the close soprano canons.

O'Regan's conception of text setting is less about the perception of individual words, and more about the *idea* of these words being formed in the compositional process.¹²⁰ Further, from his background observing Anglican choirs, O'Regan states:

It goes back to hearing music in that sort of whispering sounds of the evensong in England. It wasn't so much the exact words they were saying. There's nothing like hearing a whole group of people not quite say an S sound together, so that you get that 'ssss'... that really opened my eyes, because as soon as you're not restrained by comprehensibility of the words, then you're open.¹²¹

The six-part (SAT solo 1 and 2) canonic imitation in the final section of *The Ecstasies Above* (mm. 342-378) is evidence of this idea. In order to create this effect, however, each voice should present the same level of consonant articulation, and preferably the same phrase shape. In other words, while the composer is "not restrained by comprehensibility of the words," the individual vocalists most certainly are. The voice parts should focus on unification of approach to the text, but because of the compositional structure this will create a type of incomprehensibility. The independent consonant articulation and dynamics create the sacred "congregational" effect O'Regan describes.

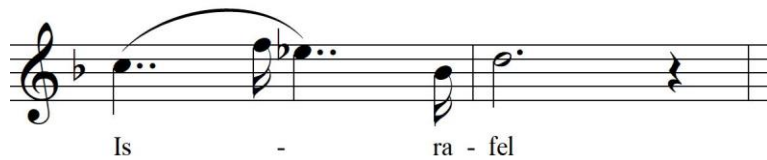
Linking timbral concepts and articulation across macro sections is important, and unifies the work within these varying concepts. The above six-part canon is clearly related to the two-part canon in the section "By which he sits and sings" at mm. 104-112, and this link should be apparent in the soprano soloists. In addition, the sixteenth note on-beat "snap" in the Israfel motive in Example 5.11 should be accented on the beat, rather than allowing the stress to fall in its resolution. This will create a link between the

¹²⁰ Gregorio, "An Analysis of Two Choral Compositions With Strings by Tarik O'Regan," 30

¹²¹ Gregorio, "An Analysis of Two Choral Compositions With Strings by Tarik O'Regan," 31

related string parts at m. 118, which are marked with a tenuto accent on these snaps (and placed on the downbeat).

Example 5.11: Related sixteenth note “snap” rhythms.



E
Slow
♩ = 54

Violin I (Vln I), Violin II (Vln II), Viola (Vla), and Violoncello (Vc.) parts. The score is in a key signature of two flats and 7/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Slow' with a quarter note equal to 54 beats per minute. The dynamic marking is *mf*. The score shows four staves of music with various rhythmic patterns and articulations, including tenuto marks and accents.

Applying Pedagogy

O’Regan’s diverse musical influences are unified in an approach that blends eclecticism with a tightly controlled rate of change. This approach requires attention to formal structure within the context of individual and choral technique. Three pedagogical tools are suggested by the analysis in the previous sections: first, reinforcing and modifying both an individual and a corporate sense of vocal timbre; second, creating a sense of formal structure by introducing the sections by “type” and controlling for all

variables of choral realization; and third, breaking the ensemble into smaller parts to reinforce their musical identity.

Teaching *The Ecstasies Above* requires flexibility in vocal timbre and color. Shifting between choral approaches requires a coordination of both individual vocal technique and an acute sense of the individual singer's placement within the section. To complicate this process, while most sections of this composition utilize a single vocal color with an obvious break before a transition, some require a continuous transition.

Consider, for example, the section beginning at m. 71, "And the giddy stars." To aid in the introduction of a new melodic idea against the repetitive textures of the continued "Israfil" motive in the solos and the ostinati in the strings, the sopranos and altos could sing their line with full vocal color: with vibrato, with appropriate and marked phrasing, and with standard text stress. As this section progresses and the canon is introduced in the chorus, to create the spatial "echo" effect, the chorus will need to remove these elements from their singing. As the four-part pseudo-canon emerges in m. 82, O'Regan has reduced the choir to a mezzo-piano dynamic to allow the string melody to become prominent; the chorus, even though they have the same melodic figure as previously and following, should remove vocal elements which aurally "prioritize" their sound. Even as the dynamic gets louder and the string melody ends, the audience's inability to perceive individual text and melodic line will be instantly changed in m. 95 as the choir suddenly sings in homophony.

A simple canonic exercise can be expanded to create a unified sense of shifting from aurally significant to textural support. The choir begins together on a single short melodic passage. This passage was chosen because the canon at the half-note implies a

tonal structure, where the canon at the quarter note does not. This mimics the effect of the above pseudo-canon, where the chorus begins with a melody that strongly implies modal structure, but eventually “disperses” into pandiatonicism.

The choir should sing the phrase twice in unison. Then, one voice part should enter on the next phrase, and the choir should wait one beat before entering. Each part divides from the choral texture in this way. To mimic the structure of the four-part pseudo-canon in mm. 83ff, the exercise below is organized so the entrance of the voices in canon will be alto, bass, soprano, tenor. As the choir moves through the exercise, they should be instructed to expand parameters of individual singing (vibrato, phrasing, dynamics) when combined with other sections, and to decrease these parameters once the canon expands. In doing so, they can become more aware of the spatial echo and sacred “congregational” effects of *The Ecstasies Above*.

Example 5.12: Suggested canon exercise for *The Ecstasies Above*.

The musical score consists of two systems, each with four staves. The top three staves are vocal parts, and the bottom staff is a bass line. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is a simple eighth-note sequence: Tee (quarter), teh_ (quarter), tah_ (quarter), toh (quarter), too. (half). The first system shows the vocal parts starting on the first measure, while the bass line starts on the second measure. The second system shows the vocal parts starting on the first measure, while the bass line starts on the second measure. The lyrics are 'Tee teh_ tah_ toh too.' repeated twice.

This is a strict canon and intended to play with the choral realization of the echo technique. A chamber choir could model the pseudo-canon by giving each voice part a few minutes to decide on an alteration to the end of their canon. This alteration can be accomplished by asking singers to change two notes in the canon to different diatonic notes, but never change the first four. (To really test their listening skills, sections can be asked how another section altered the melody!)

Next, a choir can learn to differentiate the sections by introducing those with the same tonal concept first. Not unlike Baroque *Affekt*, most sections in *The Ecstasies Above* fit a single timbral and dynamic concept tied to a single desired emotional effect. Two consecutive sections may share melodic ideas and even tactus, but completely change *Affekt*. For example, the first two major sections of this work (“In heaven” pseudo-canon and “And the giddy stars” pseudo-canon, m. 1 and m. 71, respectively) have the exact same tempo marking (half note = 63 and quarter note = 126) and share the ascending-fifth motive, and even share a common compositional approach (altered echo pseudo-canon), but have completely different *Affekts*.

Similar to the previous suggested exercise, the chorus begins in canon, but this time a canon that can be easily shifted between two meters, and one that strongly implies the same modal structure throughout. To mimic the first third of *The Ecstasies Above*, the exercise below utilizes a simple scalar canon in Dorian.

Example 5.13: Sample canon in Dorian.

The musical score for Example 5.13 is a simple scalar canon in Dorian mode, presented in 4/4 time. It consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a quarter rest, followed by the notes C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, and C5. The second staff begins with a quarter rest, followed by the notes D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, and C5. The third staff begins with a quarter rest, followed by the notes E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, and C5. The fourth staff begins with a quarter rest, followed by the notes F4, G4, A4, B4, and C5. The score concludes with a double bar line.

Each iteration of the canon should maintain the same tactus, but at different metrical subdivisions. The exercise can be presented with one note per beat, then two notes, then four. Each new iteration should have its own tonal concept, and the conductor should spend time unifying the approach. To mimic the composition, the choir could separate as follows.

- One note per beat: piano dynamic, limited vibrato, soft and fluid consonants, no dynamic change.
- Two notes per beat: mezzo forte dynamic, full vocal color, rhythmic accent every two notes, gradual transition from piano to forte.
- Four notes per beat: forte dynamic, limited vibrato, rhythmic accent every four notes, gradual transition from piano to forte.

For ease of realization, it may help to list these characteristics visually for the chorus and refer to them by number.

This idea of a single tonal concept within the same formal unit should be reinforced by how *The Ecstasies Above* is introduced to the choir. Several sections utilize a similar approach, and should be introduced together. The director could again write the desired vocal characteristics on the board grouped into numbers (or even better, affective names like “spacy”), and the singers could mark those sections by their tonal concept. This will aid in unifying the long composition by linking the aural effect of similar sections.

Of course, although the chorus should be aware of formal sections unified by timbral approach (especially in the first and last thirds of *The Ecstasies Above*), several of the timbral ideas of the middle third are closely related but utilize only soloists. Because

the separate musical identity of the chorus, soloists, and strings are so vital to the realization of this composition, rehearsing individual groups before putting the composition together is critical. Five rehearsal groups (other than tutti) are necessary: soprano soloists, all soloists, choir alone, choir and soloists, and strings.

The soloists nearly always function as a semi-chorus, in groups of four or more. The notable exception is the soprano soloists, who have several extended sections where their canon forms the primary melody. These canons are often challenging and vary widely in range, and careful consideration must be given to choosing the soloists. Both individual technical execution and the ability to sing in perfect intonation and blend with each other is critical, especially in the final section of the piece beginning at m. 343, where the soprano soloists must sing a high, exposed canon with very little accompaniment, finally ending on a triple-piano F and A major third above the treble staff, completely a cappella. In contrast, the soprano canon beginning in m. 154 is quite low in the range, rhythmically very challenging with prevalent quasi-al-Andalusian ornaments, and against a fairly thick accompaniment, although the strings are mostly harmonics.

The soloists as a whole must function as an 8-voice chorus in unison (mm. 202ff), in antiphonal groups (mm. 47ff), as a quartet a cappella (mm. 242ff), and in only one instance as a solo (tenor 1 solo, mm. 325-330). Similarly, the strings function homorhythmically, in pairs, in canon, and very rarely as solo instruments. Strings often function rhythmically, and instructing the string quartet where the rhythm can be flexible (for example, in the al-Andalusian ornaments) and where it must remain strict is important. For example, the violins and viola in m. 83 play a fortissimo melodic line and

may be tempted to allow it to subtly phase rhythmically for dramatic effect. However, because all three strings play this line in unison and its outline eventually becomes the choral parts, these notes must be played exactly in time.

The relation of the chorus to the soloists is challenging because both often utilize the same melodic ideas, but often with different rhythms. For example, the sopranos of the chorus sing a slow descending E flat major scale in mm. 316-322; the solo sopranos begin at the same time, but other than the first note, every note is a quarter note earlier in the chorus than the soloists. Combined with the slow tempo, the 3/4 to 4/4 time signature change at the beginning of this section, and the relatively complex rhythm and text stress in the alto, tenor, and bass soloists, this simple phrase requires intentional rehearsal and an awareness of the score in the chorus and the soloist sopranos.

To facilitate this, a suggested division of rehearsal is below.

Table 5.2: Suggested rehearsal elements for varying forces in *The Ecstasies Above*.

| Group | Element | Measures |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Soprano soloists | Close canon | mm. 104-113 “By which he sits and sings” mm. 298-307 (similar) mm. 343-end “If I could dwell” |
| | Ornamentation | mm. 182-188 “Yes, heaven is thine” mm. 154-166 “The ecstasies above” mm. 229-241 (similar) mm. 172-180 “The ecstasies above” |
| Soloists | Israfil | mm. 47-83 mm. 258-278 |
| | Harmonic support | mm. 141-168 mm. 216-243 |
| | Pairings/quartets and solo | mm. 168-182 mm. 242-246 mm. 316-322 mm. 325-330 (solo) |
| | Homorhythmic | mm. 92-103 mm. 286-297 mm. 189-210 |
| Choir alone | Opening without soloists | mm. 1-47 |
| | Canon and climax | mm. 71-103 mm. 264-297 |
| | Quiet homophony | mm. 123-136 mm. 333-339 mm. 342-end |
| Choir and soloists | Opening | mm. 1-47 |
| | Canon and climax | mm. 71-103 mm. 264-297 |
| | Ending | mm. 312-end |

Table 5.2 (continued).

| | | |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Strings | Ostinato | mm. 62-82 |
| | String melody | mm. 82-89 (vln1, vln2, vla) |
| | Both | mm. 62-117 mm. 252-311 |
| | Slow with sixteenth note “snap” | mm. 118-140 mm. 312-333 mm. 23-57 |
| | Quick sixteenths | mm. 178-209 |
| | Al-Andalusian influence | mm. 141-172 mm. 216-241 |

Summary

The four steps of the process of postminimalist choral pedagogy of this chapter were:

1. **Assigning Meaning:** Identifying the expansion, contraction, and recontextualization of musical material.
2. **Determining Individual Agency:** Creating “identity” in singers and soloists, determining issues of range and spacing, and handling the “individual versus corporate” identity in singing.
3. **Defining Choral Technique:** Allowing a more “orchestral” model of texture to dominate, and allowing for unique timbre in the voices in the presence of the intersection of textural strata
4. **Applying Pedagogy:** Allowing a shifting timbral and rhythmic approach to define the difference between the sections, and identifying a rehearsal plan and strategies to facilitate this.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Postminimalism and Choral Music

The goal of this study is to suggest paradigms, strategies, and resources for choral conductors teaching postminimalist music. Because this music is repetitive, and because development in this music occurs primarily through the intersection of various rhythmic strata, melodic ideas, textural blocks, or other parameters, this monograph began with several philosophical and analytical models of postminimalist music, and through them generalized postminimalist characteristics in modern choral music. Applying these models, this study categorized the intersection of these strata within the music, which provided meaning and context for the repetition. Finally, specific choral preparation and rehearsal strategies were provided to impart this meaning and context to a choir.

Research in postminimalist (and minimalist) musical analysis is ongoing, and new directions will suggest new pedagogical approaches. However, a large amount of choral music, especially in collegiate and professional choruses, seems to increasingly show characteristics of postminimalist influence and its related tropes. This study, rather than being exhaustive, is intended to be suggestive of the need to identify further pedagogical resources. A granular, context-focused approach to postminimalist music benefits choirs who might be intimidated by its musical structures, many of which fall outside standard-practice analytical tools.

Summary

Chapter 2 of this monograph identified three characteristics of choral postminimalism: first, the use of repetition if volitional; second, this music features a tight control of the rate at which parameters change but allows the tight control to vary substantially at textural levels; and third, flexibility in realization is allowed, in contrast with earlier strict minimalism. Building on Rebecca Leydon's generalization of minimalist tropes, Gretchen Horlacher's model for the superimposition of strata, and Dora Hanninen's paradigm of recontextualization, a pedagogy of four steps was presented: Assigning Meaning, Determining Individual Agency, Defining Choral Technique, Applying Pedagogy.

These four steps were then applied to three choral pieces: Arvo Pärt's *The Beatitudes*, Nico Muhly's *Bright Mass With Canons*, and Tarik O'Regan's *The Ecstasies Above*. Identifying their primary musical characteristics utilizing the postminimalist generalizations from chapter 2, ideas for choral rehearsal, choral realization and performance, and score analysis were presented for each piece. Warm-ups were presented for each piece to give the individual singer context for their individual strata, and a model for interpreting each piece based on the intersection of its strata was presented.

Further Directions

Based on this study, three additional areas of inquiry would seem to be probable. First, music from pre-twentieth century composers which is built from repetition and the intersection of similar parameters would benefit from this kind of analysis. Second, this study briefly referenced many examples of musical and textual quotation as a technique

of recontextualization; categorizing this quotation as a compositional device could be useful in choral music. Third, the further application of transformational theory, briefly introduced through uniform triadic transformation in Chapter 3, seems particularly applicable to choral music.

The sparse, pantonal style in postminimalism mirrors an aesthetic in other parts of music history. For example, the late style of Franz Liszt (1869) is similarly austere, including simple melodic and textural ideas utilizing repetition and the juxtaposition of strata. *Cantantibus organis*, an 1879 setting of the story of Saint Cecilia, is almost minimalist in its accompaniment patterns, and its free, unaccompanied recitative-style plainchant interruptions. His *Via crucis* is virtually modern in its pastiche aesthetic and unresolving, unrelenting dissonance. Liszt's constant quotation of plainchant and other traditional religious music was in part due to the influence of the Cecilian Society, and in part due to his own asceticism; this, combined with often disjunct stylistic shifts underneath a pantonal but often static harmony, is similar to some of the works in this monograph.

Popular modern choral composers such as Morten Lauridsen and Eric Whitacre have written in an often pantonal idiom with very slow harmonic change, often utilizing textural or contrapuntal variation to create forward momentum. While these works do not usually exemplify the characteristics of postminimalist music identified in this monograph, they may benefit from some of the pedagogical tools, especially identifying recontextualization in repetitive music.

The utilization of historical quotation as a stylistic device is widespread in choral music, with a recent interest in the materials of pre-Baroque music. This can be clearly

seen in the works by Nico Muhly and Arvo Pärt in this monograph, but is not limited to compositions utilizing postminimalist techniques. Much as the theoretic analysis of minimalism has tried to generalize tropes of repetition to generate a formal system of meaning in the music, an identification of historical quotation would serve a similar goal. Borrowing Renaissance texture, plainchant-style modal melodies, or Italian madrigal-esque chromaticism could be generalized into a system which allows choral directors to better understand modern compositions built on these quotations.

Finally, the triadic transformations in Chapter 3 of this monograph (about Arvo Pärt's *The Beatitudes*) is part of an approach to harmony is called transformational music theory.¹²² The paradigm of examining music as the transformation of musical objects which interact via defined operations (often using the terminology of abstract algebra) could be applied to choral pedagogy. The granular approach to identifying individual elements within music and analyzing their progression seems to be applicable to choral music.

¹²² See David Lewin, *Generalized Musical Intervals and Transformations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

PART II: PROGRAM NOTES

the university of kentucky chorale & the lafayette high school madrigals
at the Episcopal Church of St. Michael the Archangel • Lexington, KY
sunday, february 16, 2014 • 3:30pm

- I.
- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| So I'll Sing With My Voice Mary Catherine Wright, soprano Nick Johnson, tenor | Dominick Argento (1927-) |
| Lobet Den Herrn, BWV 230 | Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) |
| Beati quorum via <i>with the Lafayette HS Madrigals</i> | Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) |

University of Kentucky Chorale

- II.
- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Sechs Sprüche, op. 79 1. Weinachten 2. Im Advent | Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) |
| Jesu, dulcis memoria | Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611) |
| Jing-ga-lye-ya | Bruce Sled (1975-) |
| A Boy and a Girl | Eric Whitacre (1970-) |
| Anoj Pusej Dunojélio Caroline Keegan and Sarita Hernandez, soloists | Vaclovas Augustinas (1959-) |
| Sirini | Daniel R. Afonso |

Lafayette High School Madrigals

- III.
- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Aeterna lux, Divinitas <i>from Carmina mei Cordis</i> Maggie Blair, alto | Abbie Betinis (1980-) |
| Funeral Sentences <i>from Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary</i> | Henry Purcell (1659-1695) |
| My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord | Moses Hogan (1957-2003) |

University of Kentucky Chorale

**PROGRAM NOTES: UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY CHORALE,
FEBRUARY 16, 2014**

The concert on February 16, 2014 was shared between the University of Kentucky Chorale conducted by the author and the Lafayette High School Madrigals conducted by Ryan Marsh. The program notes below refer to the works on the program sung by the Chorale. Texts and translations are given in the concert program, and therefore not included here.

The program in general is a study of contrasts and dichotomies: in some cases, thematic contrasts of light and dark or life and death; in others, musical contrasts of antiphonal singing, or dramatic articulation change, or mode. The resonant, somewhat formal space of the Episcopal Church of St. Michael the Archangel made the general choice of sacred (often liturgical) works appropriate, and the English works on the program (Purcell and Stanford) were chosen specifically for the space. The mentorship of maestro James Burton, who began his 2014 residency with the University of Kentucky in his assistance with this project, guided the early selection of the Purcell and Bach, and his insistence on excellence and clarity shaped the final performance.

“So I’ll Sing With My Voice” (Dominick Argento)

American composer Dominick Argento (b. 1927) is primarily known for works involving the voice, especially song cycles and opera, although his contribution to the choral genre is significant. Even works not intended for the stage contain dramatic elements, often inwardly-focused; Argento says “My interest is people... I am committed

to working with characters, feelings, and emotions.”¹²³ This interest, and his collaborations with the Guthrie theater, the arts scene of Minneapolis, and especially conductors Phillip Brunelle and Dale Warland, perhaps kept his work from being too “academic” in nature. The well-known university affiliated composers of the mid-twentieth century (Schoenberg, Babbitt, Stravinsky) must have been in his mind as he took a position at the University of Minnesota in 1958. He would later write:

In spite of the university position I happily filled for forty years, I managed to avoid its major occupational hazard: becoming an academic composer, with all the unattractive connotations that title holds. The affective content of my music seems to depend less on intrinsic form than on some narrative element, the latter usually manifesting itself as storytelling.¹²⁴

“So I’ll Sing With My Voice” was completed in 1994 as part of a cycle called *Spirituals and Swedish Chorales*, and was a surprise gift to conductor Phillip Brunelle. The juxtaposition of more “severe and solemn” Swedish chorales with the “freewheeling and exuberant” African American spirituals, but linked in religious expression, specifically in the “sharp difference in their modes of expressing profound religious fervor and the striking contrast of the musical manner in these two types of devotional music”.¹²⁵ Somewhat less formally, he states that this cycle contrasts “the musical expression of the stern, frigid North versus the relaxed, warm South.”¹²⁶ The works are themselves a study in contrast: the chorales are presented exactly as he found them in a

¹²³ Mary Ann Feldman, “Dominick Argento: Minnesota Romantic,” accessed January 10, 2018, http://music.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/0210_argento/index.shtml.

¹²⁴ Dominick Argento, *Catalogue Raisonné As Memoir*, University of Minnesota Press (Minneapolis, MN, 2004): xviii.

¹²⁵ Argento, *Catalogue*, 162.

¹²⁶ Argento, *Catalogue*, 162.

Swedish hymnal but harmonized “in a mildly dissonant fashion,”¹²⁷ but the spirituals are entirely his own composition. He wrote the words and music to these spirituals in the style of an African-American spiritual for an opera set in the post-Civil War South, titled *Colonel Jonathan the Saint*.

The main melodic idea of “So I’ll Sing With My Voice” is a perfect study of this dichotomy. It starts relatively simply, utilizing a common pentatonic scale, but its second phrase spans an octave and a half and strongly implies D mixolydian. Its motivic content echoes both African-American spiritual tropes and modernist, disjunct melodic writing at the same time, and is quite virtuosic, occupying a high tessitura. The slower middle section retains the surprising harmonic gestures throughout, and the return to the triumphant A section material includes an exuberant coda on “O, Hallelujah!”

***Lobet den Herrn, alle Welt*, BWV 230 (Johann Sebastian Bach)**

The motets of Johann Sebastian Bach provide both musicological quandaries and performance challenges; these two are often interlinked. The Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis (BWV) catalog lists six motets (BWV 225-230), one motet later determined to be part of a cantata (BWV 231), and several motets that were attributed to Bach and later determined to be of spurious authorship (BWV Anh. 159-165). However, within these, some doubt exists: for example, some scholars attribute BWV Anh. 159 *Ich lasse dich nicht* to Johann Sebastian Bach instead of his father’s cousin, as was previously supposed

¹²⁷ Argento, *Catalogue*, 163.

in the first collected works of Bach,¹²⁸ and the authorship of several motets cannot be distinguished from definitive primary source material.

BWV 230 is one such motet. The first extant edition is published by Breitkopf in 1821. On the title page of this edition, it notes “nach J.S. Bach’s Original-Handschrift” (“after J.S. Bach’s original handwriting [manuscript]”),¹²⁹ but no manuscript in Bach’s hand has been found, nor any independent confirmation of the source. Lacking a definitive primary source, scholars have used idiosyncrasies of the motet to challenge or confirm authorship. For example, the independent continuo part, the instrumental-like vocal lines and long phrases, and the relatively strict and continuous counterpoint are easily compared to some late works of J.S. Bach (for example, the “Confiteor” or “Credo in unum Deum” movements from the *Mass in B Minor*).

The motet begins with a major-chord arpeggio on “Lobet” (“praise”), can be compared to a trumpet fanfare of Bach’s time: the natural trumpet (without valves) would be limited to notes of the harmonic series lower in the range, and so this figuration appears nearly identically in other Bach works, like the *corno di caccia* parts in the opening of the first Brandenburg Concerto, BWV 1046. This arpeggio is the beginning of a long fugue subject, which utilizes tonal answers throughout the exposition to avoid any modulation. The tonal answers in the bass and alto voices include chromatic alterations, however, to briefly tonicize F major for exactly one beat.

¹²⁸ For example, Daniel R. Melamed, “The Authorship of the Motet *Ich lasse dich nicht* (BWV Anh. 159),” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 41, no. 3 (Autumn 1998), 491-526.

¹²⁹ Johann Sebastian Bach, “Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden,” accessed January 10, 2019, [https://imslp.org/wiki/Lobet_den_Herrn,_alle_Heiden,_BWV_230_\(Bach,_Johann_Sebastian\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Lobet_den_Herrn,_alle_Heiden,_BWV_230_(Bach,_Johann_Sebastian)).

The following section, beginning in m. 10 utilizes only the opening fanfare of the subject as episodic material passed between voices, with increasing homophony and voice pairings between non-subject voices and including modulation to several keys. A final return of the subject in tonic at m. 18 in the soprano voice (and an accompanying answer in the bass voice in m. 19 in stretto) drives this first section to a somewhat abrupt cadence in dominant, on a weak beat.

The following section on “und preiset ihn” (“and praise him”) is similarly a fugal exposition, and the subject also opens with a long melisma. In contrast to the first subject, however, the melisma on “preiset” is entirely stepwise, and the answer modulates to the dominant. Similar to the first section, further development in this section is driven by increasing homophony and modulation. The episodic material is largely derived from the “preiset” melisma, although an extended (and difficult) melisma on “alle” begins in the sopranos at m. 28, and appears imitated in the alto immediately after.

Measure 42 ends this section, again with a cadence on dominant on a weak beat, but presents the second subject in the soprano and bass, and the first fugue subject (beginning on “Lobet”) in the tenor and alto. Each subject appears in all voices until a final tonic entrance of the subject in the soprano voice in m. 54, which is presented exactly once with no coda material. This, again somewhat abruptly, ends the double fugue.

The following section is an extended meditation on “Denn seine Gnade und Wahrheit waltet über uns” (“For his grace and truth rules over us”). In a break from the fugal counterpoint of the previous sections, this section begins in homophony, utilizing more chromaticism and minor chords. Very long melismas on “waltet” (“rules”)

characterize this first section, almost entirely in paired voices throughout, usually in parallel thirds and sixths, and occasionally in cascading suspensions.

A new section begins in m. 77 but utilizes the same text as the previous section, but adding the words “in Ewigkeit” (“in eternity”) in very long held notes. This new section utilizes a new theme with an octave jump in the middle, maintaining a long melisma on “waltet” and introducing a paired quarter-note melody on “in Ewigkeit” which eventually slows the harmonic and rhythmic motion into a final cadence at m. 98.

An exuberant “Halleluja” closes this motet as a strict fugue in triple meter. This creates a three-part structure for this motet: a double fugue on “Lobet”/”und preiset”, a more texturally varied section on “Denn seine Gnade und Wahrheit”, and a closing “Hallelujah” fugue. As noted above, every section in this motet ends with none of Bach’s usual closing material—long codas, extensive use of stretto, or long pedal points on dominant. There are also no fermatas or obvious breaks of rhythm, and so this is one of the most continuous of the Bach motets, especially because it does not include a chorale of any sort. The three-part imitative structure with fugal sections is very similar to Bach’s motet *Komm, Jesu, komm*, BWV 229, albeit BWV 229 begins with antiphonal homophony and is a double-chorus motet, but that motet closes with a final chorale. It is possible a final chorale was lost.

“Beati quorum via” (Charles Villiers Stanford)

British composer Charles Villiers Stanford is best known for his role in the re-birth of British music around the turn of the twentieth century, especially through his well-known students (including Gustav Holst, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Herbert

Howells) as well as his own choral and liturgical music.¹³⁰ He was opposed to the musical modernism of his time, typified in the heavily chromatic and occasionally dissonant music of Wagner and Strauss. His sense of nationalism (Irish conservative as well as generally British) was similar to nationalist composers of the time like Grieg and Sibelius, in a deep sense of tradition and connection to the melodic and poetic sensibilities of his roots. His musical style falls in the tradition of Brahms and Bruckner as a conservative, structural traditionalist most concerned with objective beauty.

“Beati quorum via” was written at the end of the 19th century, though not published until 1905 as part of a collection of three motets, op. 38. These motets are for different voicings of choir a cappella: “Justorum animae” is for four voices, “Coelos ascendit hodie” is for eight-part double choir, and “Beati quorum via” is for six, SSATBB. “Beati quorum via” is actually almost in double-chorus itself, as the upper SSA and lower TBB voices are often used as antiphonal semi-choruses.

Quarter note motion remains nearly constant in this motet, symbolizing the word “ambulant” (“walks”). Motion is almost entirely stepwise and diatonic, with well-prepared and well-resolved dissonance. Occasional hemiola rhythms are gentle and only punctuate cadences. A slower harmonic rhythm establishes a macro-level pulse at the dotted half note, which is emphasized several times throughout this motet. For example, at the beginning, the uppermost voice (soprano 1) sings only dotted half notes while the lower voices present the quarter-note motion; this is identical in the first entrance of the tenor. Later in the motet, in the transition back to the opening material, the two halves of

¹³⁰ Jeremy Dibble, “Stanford, Sir Charles Villiers” *Grove Music Online*, accessed January 10, 2019, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.uky.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000026549>.

the choir sing homophonic dotted-half note three-part chords on “beati”, first in F major, then F minor, re-introducing the A-flat tonic pitch.

The short text is repeated liberally throughout for emphasis. The piece is essentially ternary, with the first section on the text “Beati quorum via integra est”, the middle, more modulatory section on the text “qui ambulant in lege Domini,” which then returns to the opening “beati” material and text. The internal modulatory section introduces each key center carefully by chromatic alteration of a single pitch and a well-prepared dominant-tonic gesture. A very harmonically static coda closes the motet on the repeated text “qui ambulant in lege Domini,” utilizing primarily material from the A section and a constant A-flat pedal.

“Aeterna lux, Divinitas” (Abbie Betinis)

Abbie Betinis is an American composer living in Minnesota whose compositions show a fascination with musical resources of all kinds, listing projects ranging from “early American shape-note singing, Chinese compassion mantras, ancient Greek binding spells, Gaelic keening, Japanese origami and... the mysticism of 14th c. Sufism” on her website.¹³¹ Her choral and vocal work maintains a careful sensitivity to melody and text; each year, Betinis writes a Christmas carol (and includes them on cards to friends and family) in the tradition of her great-uncle, Alfred Burt. A three-time cancer survivor, her compositions show a personal affinity for texts of beauty and strength. *Carmina mei cordis*, a set of two pieces from which “Aeterna lux, Divinitas” comes, is a song of

¹³¹ Abbie Betinis, “Biography,” accessed January 10, 2019, <http://www.abbiebetinis.com/biography.html>.

intense hope in both of its movements, and the set's title ("Songs of my heart") does not come from the text, but from the composer.

The composer's own program notes for "Aeterna lux, Divinitas" describe its harmonic plan:

Because the text hails the unity of the Trinity, the piece modulates between two primary tonalities, which combine to form a third. In the end, all modalities combine into a canon which spirals on, encircling and unifying all voice parts in its course.

This "encircling" is heard first in the primary melody, which is sung first in the alto voice. This melody is highly motivic, and seems to circle around the tonic pitch B, first varying one whole step up and down, then a third, then further. The second melody on "alleluia" has a similar structure, always returning to the center.

The rhythm of the vocal lines is often counter to the meter, which itself is constantly shifting. It provides a constant motion forward, as the cyclic nature of the melody combined with these polyrhythms creates an insistent pulse that adds rhythmic impetus to a very regular and formulaic text. The Latin text is divided into four lines of eight syllable equal length and a simple aabb rhythm scheme. While the melody retains the four-line text structure of two antecedent-consequent phrases, the internal rhythm is considerably more playful.

Betinis's note above indicates the modal combinations that occur in the middle section. An alto solo over choral accompaniment includes a rare text repetition on "amare fac et consequi" ("Thyself we love, to Thee we cleave"), and spills over into the next stanza, which is the resolution of the hope of the hymn text. This section makes liberal use of higher-tertian chord elements and wide chord spacings, which abruptly returns to unison for "et praemium sperantibus" ("and, unto them that hope, the Prize").

Each stanza is punctuated by a refrain that increases in complexity on the word “alleluia,” which is added by the composer to the text and not present in the original hymn. This refrain begins in two voices, then adds voice parts in each iteration; the final iteration is a close canon with ever expanding ranges and drives to a final, exciting unison “alleluia.”

Funeral Sentences (Henry Purcell)

Similar to the Bach motet on this program, the musicological details of Purcell’s *Funeral Sentences* is important to its performance, but for the opposite reason: whereas the Bach motet does not survive in an autograph copy, several autograph revisions exist for the *Funeral Sentences*, particularly the parts sung today, which are more properly referred to as a Burial Service, and pre-date the *Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary* by 20 years. The two sentences sung in this program are “Man that is born of a woman” and “In the midst of life.” Both pieces show a fascination with text setting, dissonance, and harmonic tension and resolution.

Purcell is near the end of the original English choral tradition which Stanford (above) sought to re-invigorate two centuries later. In these funeral sentences, Purcell combines the intense chromaticism and intricate counterpoint of the English Renaissance composers (for example, Weelkes and Byrd) with the melodic sensibility and textural simplicity of the emerging late-Baroque style. The revision of these sentences show Purcell’s sensitivity to texture and the influence of both the full anthem and verse

anthem; this sensitivity shows the creativity of the young Purcell tempered by the influence of other modern composers.¹³²

The individual vocal lines maintain an independence that makes liberal use of part crossing, particularly in the soprano and alto voices. This is first evident as the chorus sings “hath but a short time to live and is full of misery,” where the alto voice gradually travels up by step beginning on the word “time,” only to sing a downward leap of a diminished seventh on the word “misery”. A similar gesture occurs in the following sentence in the primary melody on “In the midst of life we are in death.” Given an underlying tonality of C minor, the soprano voice leaps from a high E-flat down a diminished fourth to B-natural, resolving to C, then a major third leap down to an A-flat, then finally a tritone leap down on the word “death.”

“Man that is born of a woman” switches between imitative polyphony and a homorhythmic texture, generally to increase forward movement. For example, the first phrase begins in imitative polyphony, but all voices sing together on “hath but a short time to live.” Similarly, the second major section of this funeral sentence begins on the text “he fleeth as it were a shadow,” which quickly passes, and then the chorus sings “and ne’er continueth in one stay” in imitative polyphony as a sort of extended meditation.

This textural contrast is presented only in the climax of the second sentence, “In the midst of life.” It is freely imitative with much more time between entrances, and a much less dense contrapuntal format, until the climax on “Yet, O Lord most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour.” The final section “deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death” is harmonically and contrapuntally more similar to the first funeral

¹³² Robert Shay, “Purcell’s Revisions to the Funeral Sentences revisited,” *Early Music* 26, no. 3 (August 1998): 457-467.

sentence, with substantial use of chromaticism and dissonance and freely imitative polyphony throughout.

“My Soul’s Been Anchored in the Lord” (Moses Hogan)

American choral composer Moses Hogan is one of the most-performed arrangers of the African-American spiritual, and particularly well known for unaccompanied arrangements. His upbringing in the African American Baptist church and his early work with the Moses Hogan Chorale created a style of arranging that was both accessible and engaging. Many of his early arrangements weren’t written down, in part because his choir could not afford to buy music, and his parts were often written for specific voices in the choir.¹³³ His first published arrangement, “Elijah Rock,” was at the urging of collegiate choral director Andre Thomas.

At the same time, Hogan’s trained as a classical pianist at Oberlin, and much of the percussive, homophonic style of his faster arrangements and the thick, often 8-part or more voicing of his music reflect a combination of the traditional African-American spiritual and a piano idiom. He notes that he was an accompanist for singers auditioning for Oberlin, and that he attended voice lessons because of that, and was always interested in choral music, but had no plans to make that his career.¹³⁴

“My Soul’s Been Anchored” begins with a slow, dramatic statement of the “hook” of the repeated refrain. After a bass soli which “anchors” the chord very low in the range, the ensemble begins with the refrain. It is syncopated, driving the spiritual

¹³³ Kathy Romey, “Music Down In My Soul: an interview with Moses Hogan,” *Choral Journal* 44, no. 1 (August 2003), 20.

¹³⁴ Romey, “Music Down In My Soul,” 19-20.

forward with continuous offbeat accents, especially on beat three, towards the following downbeat. Verses (“Before I stay in hell one day” and “Gonna shout and pray and never stop”) are sung as solis by sections and punctuated by the full choir; this call-and-response texture is continuous in the last half of this piece between the tenors and the full choir, ascending to a high A on “hallelujah!”

The driving ostinato rhythm, blue notes (often the flat fifth scale degree), and the call-and-response texture are strongly part of the African-American spiritual tradition; the wide ranges, challenging rhythmic variation, and very intentional and dense voicing and textures are more part of the classical choral (and musical) tradition. Moses Hogan’s combination of the two reinvigorated the American spiritual in the 1990s and 2000s in a way that is still taking shape today.

feet on the ground... head in the clouds

a spring concert presented by
The University of Kentucky Chorale and Choristers
Tuesday, March 25, 2014 • 7:30pm • Recital Hall

- I. Concord trad. American shape note
Combined Choirs
- II. Prši, prši trad. Slovak folksong, arr. Hroněk
Out of the Deep (from *Requiem*) John Rutter (b. 1945)
Rebecca Price, *cello*
Joshua Chai, *organ*
Julian Bryson, *piano*
- Famine Song VIDA, arr. Matthew Culloton
Sloan Gilbert, Haley Goode, *soloists*
Julian Bryson, *conductor*
- Light of a Clear Blue Morning Dolly Parton, arr. Craig Hella Johnson
Kaley Mayrose, Haley Goode, *soloists*
Jessica Miskelly, *violin*
- The University of Kentucky Choristers*
- III. Fama malum Josquin des Prez (c. 1450-1521)
Missa Rorate coeli desuper, Hob: XXII:3 Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)
Kyrie
Gloria
Credo
Sanctus
Benedictus
Agnus Dei
Andrew Miller, Dee Walker, *soloists*
- O Heiland, reiß die Himmel auf Johannes Brahms (1833-97)
The Ecstasies Above Tarik O'Regan (b. 1978)
Gabby Barker, Emily Furnish, Maggie Blair, Maggie Smith,
Nick Johnson, Andrew Miller, Patrick Callaghan, Darnaby Kerns, *solo octet*
- The University of Kentucky Chorale*
with Chi Young Song, *violin* • Amanda Markley, *violin*
Rafaela Copetti, *viola* • Rebecca Price, *cello*
- IV. The Battle of Jericho Moses Hogan (1957-2003)
Combined Choirs

The portable organ used today was generously loaned to the University of Kentucky by the Kentucky Bach Choir and the Lexington Chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

**PROGRAM NOTES: UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY CHORALE,
MARCH 25, 2014**

The University of Kentucky Chorale and Choristers presented a concert entitled “Feet on the Ground... Head in the Clouds” on Tuesday, March 25, 2014. The concert explored the duality of humanity’s experiences that are both temporal and eternal, through the natural world (the cycle of rain, for example), through human words and rumors, in music, and in sacred experiences. Fellow students Maggie Blair, Julian Bryson, and Patrick Callaghan conducted several pieces on this program; these program notes refer to the pieces I conducted with the Chorale.

The Chorale performed Tarik O’Regan’s *The Ecstasies Above*, which is the subject of Chapter 5 of this monograph.

“Fama malum” (Josquin des Prez)

“Fama malum” is difficult to identify by genre; the text is in Latin, and its four-voice free counterpoint seems to be similar to Josquin’s sacred motets. However, the text is secular, and personifies rumor’s speed and strength. Though the title of this concert (“Feet on the ground... head in the clouds”) often refers to someone who is grounded both in the present and the transcendent, this piece has a much different take on nearly the same words: “Ingrediturque solo et caput inter nubila condit.” (“She walks the ground with head hidden in the clouds.”) The text is intentionally ominous, referring to Rumor as a great evil, and is from the beginning of Book IV of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, foreshadowing Dido’s eventual fate.

Josquin's secular pieces are mostly French chansons, although several Italian frottola and other small secular works exist. Josquin's handling of the French chanson is diverse in his output, and identifying a compositional style, or the progression of his compositional style, is complicated by the difficulty in establishing the historical authenticity of Josquin's secular works. Oxford Music Online notes of the secular works that "the sources are fewer, more scattered and less reliable" than the already challenging source material for the sacred works.¹³⁵

"Fama malum" contains textural elements that are very similar to much of Josquin's other writing. In particular, his love of canon is evident throughout. The first motive on "Fama malum" is not a standard point of imitation, but rather a double canon, which is repeated exactly in the voices before breaking into free four-voice counterpoint for "qua non aliud." The texture continues to differ between canon and imitative counterpoint, although a very Josquin-typical voice pairing duet at "parva metu primo" ("small at first"), leading to a point of imitation on the next phrase, and cadences entirely after "mox sese attollit in auras" (but soon, she mounts up to heaven.) The last section begins with all voices singing together in homophony on "inrediturque," which establishes a formal break and emphasis for this last phrase, about Rumor's head in the clouds.

¹³⁵ Patrick Macey, Jeremy Noble, Jeffrey Dean, and Gustave Reese, "Josquin (Lebliotte dit) des Prez," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 10 January 2019, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.uky.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000014497>.

“O Heiland, reiß die Himmel auf” (Johannes Brahms)

This motet is arranged as a theme (chorale) and variations, and, similar to the Josquin of this program, makes extensive use of canon in addition to other contrapuntal devices. The chorale is a 17th century German chorale, and its text is attributed to Friedrich Spee, a Jesuit priest who lived (and died) during the Thirty Years’ War. The violence and ultimate triumph of the pleading chorale text could be a reflection of the violence in Germany at the time.

This motet is the second in opus 74, which was published a decade after the composition of this motet. The motet itself is likely from Brahms’s first year directing the Vienna Singakademie, and his concert programs of that time are historically rich; this historical richness infuses his motets from this period onward. The first motet in opus 74 is the well-known “Warum ist das Licht gegeben,” and is on a set of texts Brahms himself chose, all about despair and eternal hope. “O Heiland” is a much more strict chorale motet than “Warum,” but extremely varied in compositional technique.

The first verse texture and counterpoint strongly refer to the Renaissance polyphonic Lied, where one voice sings the cantus firmus and the other voices sing in imitative counterpoint, and the entire structure is separated by phrase. The tenor often carried the chorale tune in these compositions, and Brahms begins with the tenor voice, although the second half of the tenor melody is a variation of the cantus firmus. The soprano carries the whole chorale, but each phrase is motivically begun by the tenor voice, which varies in canon, counterpoint, and imitation with the soprano (and other voices). The text painting is conservative in this verse, but present; for example, the word “reiß” (tear) has an octave jump down in the bass voice in the first phrase.

The second verse begins with a faster canon between bass and alto before the soprano again enters with the cantus firmus. The stepwise, running quarter notes could be a setting of the “fließ” (flowing) of the “Tau” (dew). This is in contrast to the third verse, “O Erd schlag aus” (“O earth, burst forth”) which maintains the rhythmic values but changes to almost entirely disjunct motion in the voices. A stepwise triplet figure, introduced halfway through the verse, represents the green spreading on the mountains and valleys, and ultimately the Savior “springing” forth out of the earth.

The bass voice carries the cantus firmus in the fourth verse in c minor, and the harmony begins in A flat major briefly before descending to C minor; the harmony shifts much more substantially in this verse, which leads to descending chromaticism on the phrase “from exile to our Fatherland.” This phrase ends in a dramatic cadence, marked Lento, on the dominant of f minor.

Finally, the fifth verse continues canon-like motion, but every entrance of major themes also has a voice in contrary motion. The long-note cantus firmus is not present at all, for the first time in the motet. Instead, the cantus firmus forms new points of imitation. In the first phrase, “Da wollen wir all danken dir,” the altos begin with a phrase that ascends to “wir” and descends to “dir”; the tenors have the exact opposite motion. This foreshadows the final (and lengthy) “amen,” which is a canon in all four voices, but with two in “mirror,” or inverted. Brahms’s friend Franz Wüllner wrote of this section, “No one else can write the double canon in contrary motion at the end as you

do. Writing a double canon isn't so hard; what is hard is to write one that sounds as if it weren't."¹³⁶

The Ecstasies Above (Tarik O'Regan)

This piece is the subject of Chapter 5.

¹³⁶ Leon Botstein, *The Compleat Brahms: A Guide to the Musical Works of Johannes Brahms*, W.W. Norton and Company (New York, NY), 1999: 354.

LECTURE-RECITAL: POSTMINIMALISM IN THE MUSIC OF ARVO PÄRT

A lecture-recital presented in partial fulfillment of the
Doctoral of Musical Arts
degree in Choral Conducting
through the University of Kentucky

members of the University Choir and Concordia Singers
Concordia University Texas

Joshua Chai, presenter and conductor

| | |
|---|---|
| Bogoroditse Devo | Arvo Pärt (b. 1935) |
| Cruxificus from <i>Mass in B Minor</i> | Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) |
| Vexilla regis produnt from <i>Via crucis</i> | Franz Liszt (1811-1886) |
| from <i>Berliner Messe</i> Kyrie Gloria | Arvo Pärt |
| <i>The Beatitudes</i> | Arvo Pärt |
| Excerpts from <i>Bright Mass With Canons</i> <i>The Ecstasies Above</i> | Nico Muhly (b. 1981) Tarik O'Regan (b. 1978) |
| Even When He Is Silent | Kim Andre Arneson (b. 1980) |

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