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Tavener: Byzantine Influences on Tavener's So-  
Called Holy Minimalism Style of Composition

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# The *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* of Sir John Tavener: Byzantine Influences on Tavener's So-Called Holy Minimalism Style of Composition

Ralph Lorenz

**Abstract:** When British composer Sir John Tavener (1944-2013) converted to the Orthodox faith in 1977, he began to incorporate elements of Byzantine music into his own style. By his own admission, his early attempts were not fully successful, but by the time of his *Orthodox Vigil Service* (1984) he had a much better handle on Orthodox tones and liturgical practice. While Tavener was familiar with the research on Byzantine chant by Egon Wellesz, he felt that Byzantine chant could only be learned through experience.

Some scholars have cited Tavener as an example of the Holy Minimalism style of composition, and in this article I analyze Tavener's choral pieces *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* (1986) to show a specific example of how Byzantine influences on a Western composer helped to create a unique style (although I argue that the Holy Minimalism label is not quite appropriate for Tavener's music). In these works, Tavener took ideas from a traditional Greek folk song and used Byzantine devices such as the *ison* and chant melodic patterns, along with incorporating a Byzantine verse in the *Magnificat*. The *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* are proved to be fruitful examples of the importance of Byzantine influences in Tavener's music.

**Keywords:** Sir John Tavener, Holy Minimalism, New Simplicity, Byzantine Influences in Western Music, Magnificat

When the British composer Sir John Tavener (1944-2013) converted to the Christian Orthodox faith in 1977, he began to incorporate elements of Byzantine music into his own style. By his own admission, his early attempts were not fully successful, and he even called his *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* (1977) a fiasco. Tavener felt that by the time he composed *Orthodox Vigil Service* (1984), he had progressed to a much better

feel and sense for the Orthodox tones and liturgical practice.<sup>1</sup> Still, his music always maintained an English quality in not sounding quite Russian or Greek.

While Tavener was familiar with the research on Byzantine chant published by the scholar Egon Wellesz, he felt that Byzantine chant could only be learned through experience and not through academic study, stating that “Byzantine chant outside the context of the liturgy and outside the context of the meaning of The Word is meaningless. It only becomes meaningful when you see how faithful it is to The Word and how it proclaims The Word”.<sup>2</sup>

Some scholars have cited Tavener as an example of the Holy Minimalism style of music composition, and in this article I will analyze Tavener’s choral pieces *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* (1986) to show a specific example of how Byzantine influences on a Western composer helped to create a unique style (although I will argue that the Holy Minimalism label is not quite appropriate for Tavener’s music). While in the Anglican rite the *Nunc dimittis* is often paired with the *Magnificat*, here the analysis will primarily focus on the *Magnificat*.

### **Tavener’s Faith Journey**

It is helpful to start by tracing Tavener’s faith journey, as he did not grow up in the Orthodox faith. His father, Kenneth Tavener, served as the organist at St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Frognal, Hampstead, and John in turn also became organist and choirmaster at a Presbyterian Church, namely St John’s Presbyterian Church in Kensington, during the years 1961-1975.<sup>3</sup>

Tavener encountered Roman Catholic influences through his studies with Lennox Berkeley, his primary composition teacher at the Royal Academy of Music, and through the instruction in Roman Catholicism he received at Westminster Cathedral as a youth.

In another paper I have argued that the Roman Catholic priest, Father Malachy Lynch, was a significant influence upon Tavener in laying out the possibility that the Orthodox faith was more akin to Tavener’s spiritual leaning.<sup>4</sup> Tavener stated,

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<sup>1</sup> John Tavener, *The Music of Silence: A Composer’s Testament*, ed. by Brian Keeble (London: Faber, 1999), 44.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 53.

<sup>3</sup> John’s mother Muriel was raised as a Christian Scientist.

<sup>4</sup> Ralph Lorenz, “John Tavener and Father Malachy Lynch: How a Roman Catholic Priest Planted Seeds for the Development of Tavener’s Mystical Orthodox Holy Minimalism Style of Composition,”

*This growing preoccupation with finding a way to express metaphysical concepts through musical means had really begun at the time when I first met Father Malachy, when I was twelve. He was one of the most interesting Roman Catholics I have ever met. He was in contact with Sufis and he used to invite Sufis and Methodists down to the ancient castle in Kent where he lived his last years. It was there that I first met Metropolitan Anthony from the Orthodox Church. Father Malachy was an extraordinary man, very Irish, with all the vagueness of the Irish. But the whole idea of tradition was very important to him. All round the castle he had little notices encouraging us to keep alive the medieval spirit in art, and he spoke to me a lot about that kind of thing.<sup>5</sup>*

Tavener originally entered the Orthodox faith in 1977 through the Russian church. In 1999 he said,

*Despite my current love of all things Greek, I entered by the Russian door of Orthodoxy because to begin with its chant is more familiar to the Westerner. Also, I entered the Russian Orthodox Church in England because at that time it had this charismatic figurehead: that was the Church to which the converts went. The Greek Church in 1977 was isolated; it was very much its own church and there were hardly any English converts. Also, in the Russian Church they sang half the service in English and half the service in Church Slavonic. Metropolitan Anthony always used to preach in English. That was the reason I entered through the Russian Church.<sup>6</sup>*

One other Orthodox connection that should be mentioned concerns the musical influence from Stravinsky's *Canticum Sacrum*, which Tavener first heard at the age of twelve. Tavener commented, "I think parts of *Canticum Sacrum* sound Byzantine. It is

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American Musicological Society Midwest Chapter Annual Conference LI (Chicago: Roosevelt University, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Tavener, *The Music of Silence*, 27-28.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

Of the Byzantine Church and musical language, Tavener stated that "I found from my whole experience of the Byzantine Church this great love, which makes me feel sad for those who don't experience it": Piers Dudgeon, *Lifting the Veil: The Biography of John Tavener* (North Yorkshire: Pilot Productions, 2013), 31.

surrounded by carpets of very complex music, but I think I heard in the late works of Stravinsky the quality of Byzantine... after all, Stravinsky was Russian Orthodox".<sup>7</sup>

Now that we have some context about Tavener's church affiliations, let us take a look at where his choral compositions *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* fit within his overall stylistic development and particularly with regards to any Byzantine influences. We will go beyond surface-level characteristics such as the *a cappella* setting into aspects of text, structure, and harmonic language.

## Text

The text to the *Magnificat*, shown in Example 1, is in English, as this *Magnificat* was commissioned by Stephen Cleobury and the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, intended for use in the Anglican rite. In the composer's note of the score, Tavener comments that "In the Orthodox service of Matins, the Magnificat contains the refrain 'Greater in honour than the cherubim' in between each verse. The Dean of King's College encouraged me to use this, feeling that it would add richness to the Anglican rite".<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere, we learn that Tavener had first asked Cleobury whether it would be acceptable to include the Orthodox refrain; Cleobury thought so but wanted to check with the Dean to be sure.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Dudgeon, *Lifting the Veil*, 31.

<sup>8</sup> John Tavener, *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis (Collegium Regale)* (London: Chester Music, 1988), Composer's Note.

<sup>9</sup> Geoffrey Haydon, *John Tavener: Glimpses of Paradise* (London: Indigo, 1995), 200.

## Example 1

### *Magnificat text*

#### **Magnificat (Song of the Mother of God)**

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

[Refrain]

**Greater in honour than the cherubim, and glorious incomparably more than the seraphim; thou who inviolate didst bring forth God the Word, and art indeed the Mother of God: thee do we magnify.**

For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden.  
For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

**Greater in honour...magnify.**

For he that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy is his Name.  
And his mercy is on them that fear him, throughout all generations.

**Greater in honour...magnify.**

He hath showed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

**Greater in honour...magnify.**

He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek.  
He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away.

**Greater in honour...magnify.**

He rememb'ring his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel, as he promised to our forefathers,  
Abraham and his seed for ever.

**Greater in honour...magnify.**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning. I[i]s now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

The text in the verses comes from the Gospel of Luke (1:46-55),<sup>10</sup> in which Mary is the singer of the song of praise. The refrain reframes the perspective, as honor is now given back to Mary: "Greater in honour than the cherubim, and glorious incomparably more than the seraphim; thou who inviolate didst bring forth God the Word, and art indeed the Mother of God: thee do we magnify."

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<sup>10</sup> It is not found in the other three Gospels.

Tavener commented in an interview that the addition of the refrain gives “a sense of the universality of the Mother of God,” and that Mary’s all-embracing nature as seen through Byzantine art makes her into a female goddess. “From a universalist point of view, that is the only way She can be viewed. That brings her in line with Hinduism,... Islam,... the American Indians even.... And I feel more and more because we live in the society we do perhaps we’ve never really truly understood how deep Christianity is and how much revelation for all people it actually is... and in that sense every single religion is a Christian manifestation.” Tavener made reference to the child-like simplicity in the Byzantine icons. Furthermore, “In the music, also the Mother of God is shown again as a kind of goddess, not as a sentimental figure.” For Tavener, this approach was a defining difference from Western art.<sup>11</sup>

## Ison

Both *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* make use of drone (*ison*). For Tavener, the *ison* represents the eternity note.<sup>12</sup> He employs an *ison* right from the start of *Magnificat*. As Example 2 shows, at the opening of the piece the altos sustain an octave A (A3 and A4) on the neutral syllable “Ah.”<sup>13</sup> In the next verse, the *ison* is sustained in three octaves. In the final verse, the *ison* is presented as an octave by the bass voices, as a complement to the opening alto presentation. Looking at Example 2 again, we see that the opening section of *Magnificat* is very traditional in the Byzantine sense of containing two parts: the single melody plus the *ison*. While later verses get more complex musically, an *ison* is always present in the verse sections.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> <http://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/1760550> (accessed September 4, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> John Tavener, “The Sacred in Art,” *Contemporary Music Review* 12, no. 2 (1995), 49-54: 50.

<sup>13</sup> The pitch-class A serves as the tonal center of the work.

<sup>14</sup> Tavener employs the *ison* in the *Nunc dimittis* in less typical fashion, in that it migrates to a new center (from D to B).

## Example 2

John Tavener, *Magnificat*, Opening *ison*

**Flexible — always guided by the words (♩ = c.104)**

Sopranos  
mp  
My soul doth mag - - - ni - fy the Lord,

Altos  
1  
2  
mp  
Ah

## Microtonal Inflections

One of the most direct ways in which Tavener imports a Byzantine influence can be seen in his use of microtonal inflections. Example 3 shows the symbols used by Tavener along with his explanation.

## Example 3

Tavener's explanation of microtonal inflections

$\flat$  and  $\sharp$  denote microtones, the characteristic 'breaks' in the voice of Byzantine chant. Performers unfamiliar with the Byzantine idiom are advised to study recordings of this music, normally available from good record shops.

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Thus, it is up to the performers to research the sound of Byzantine chant, with very little actual "how to" instruction from Tavener.

## Rhythmic Character

Another way in which *Magnificat* shows Byzantine chant influence is through the ametric setting; there is no meter signature, and no sense of regularized metric pattern, even though there is a sense of pulse. The whole setting of text is in a chant-like manner. There are no measure numbers in the score.

## Melody

The principal melody in *Magnificat* is not taken from Byzantine chant. Rather, Tavener adapted it from a Greek folk song he had once heard. Tavener commented, “We were in a taxi, being driven to a restaurant in Perdika, right at the end of the island. The taxi driver was tuned to a station which plays the folk music of northern Greece. I heard this young girl singing a traditional song, over a drone. Not exactly Byzantine, but certainly Middle Eastern in flavor. I jotted it down on a paper handkerchief”.<sup>15</sup> Upon receiving the commission for *Magnificat*, he “thought I’d see if I could make something of the young Greek girl’s song that the boys at King’s would be able to sing”.<sup>16</sup> And of course the treble-voice melody and treble-voice opening is representative of Mary.

## Harmonic Language

Some of *Magnificat* remains within the format of single melody plus *ison*, but Tavener does expand the harmonic structure in places. For example, Tavener employs the use of planing in the refrain. The first refrain can be seen in Example 4—here an oscillating pattern of A major and G major triads in root position lead to a cadence on an F# minor triad, and then the progression is sequenced a step lower: G major and F# minor triads oscillate before the cadence on A major. The technique of planing is significant, because the parallel motion takes away from the independence of voices; the effect is akin to hearing a single voice that has an extra richness of sound, similar to the way in which an organ registration can “color” the sound of a single pitch. (Tavener makes extensive use of planing in the *Nunc dimittis* as well.)

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<sup>15</sup> Haydon, *John Tavener*, 199.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

Example 4

John Tavener, *Magnificat*. Planing in the refrain

The image shows a musical score for two vocal parts, Tenor (T) and Bass (B). The Tenor part is on a soprano clef and the Bass part is on a bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: "Great - er in ho - nour than the che - ru - bim, and glo - rious in com - pa - ra - bly more than the se - ra - phim;". The score features a series of chords that move in parallel motion, creating a 'planing' effect. There are markings for *p marc.* and *sim.* (sostenuto).

At the end of the refrain, Tavener highlights the magnifying of Mary through an expanding presentation of a D major triad—in the first refrain starting the phrase “thee do we magnify” in three voices and expanding to eight voices.<sup>17</sup> This expansion can be seen in Example 5. While the full harmony is in contrast to the simple single-melody-plus-*ison* structure, because the D major harmony is static, it is more of a coloration effect rather than true harmonic motion.

Example 5

John Tavener, *Magnificat*. Expansion of D major harmony

The image shows a musical score for two vocal parts, Tenor (T) and Bass (B). The Tenor part is on a soprano clef and the Bass part is on a bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: "- deed the Mo - - ther of God: thee do we mag - ni - fy.". A red circle highlights the final part of the phrase, where the D major triad is expanded from three voices to eight voices. The score features a series of chords that move in parallel motion, creating a 'planing' effect.

<sup>17</sup> The next refrain, with full choir, expands this phrase from six voices to thirteen parts (with ten actual pitches).

The opening melody features eleven of the twelve pitch classes, and certain motives are reminiscent of the ancient modes. For instance, the motive A—B $\flat$ —C $\sharp$ --B $\flat$ —A brings to mind the hard chromatic scale (as in D—E $\flat$ —F $\sharp$ --G—A—B $\flat$ —C $\sharp$ --D). An excerpt with the motive can be seen in Example 6, and these materials all fit within an A Phrygian context with the characteristic augmented second from B $\flat$  to C $\sharp$ .

### Example 6

John Tavener, *Magnificat*. Phrygian inflection in melody

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and a basso continuo line. The vocal line is in G major and contains the lyrics "now, and e - ver shall be, world with-out end. A - - men." A red circle highlights a specific melodic phrase: "e - ver shall". The basso continuo line is in G major and contains the lyrics "(Ah)". The score is written on two staves, with the vocal line on top and the basso continuo line on the bottom.

### Other Considerations

Other considerations of Byzantine influence include Tavener's frequent use of symmetry; one of the most striking passages in *Magnificat* displays Tavener's interest in this type of construction. In the third verse, as can be seen in Example 7, the eight voices are arranged space-wise in a symmetrical fashion. Alto 1 and Alto 2 form the interior voices, and they present a two-voice canon with a four-note head motive based on the main melody. Expanding in both directions from there, Soprano 3 and Alto 3 provide the *ison*. Soprano 2 and Tenor present the main melody, and the outer voices, Soprano 1 and Bass, present another version of the two-voice canon in augmentation (with the values doubled). This section with the added mensuration canon is the most complex part of *Magnificat*, and yet the level of complexity is still nowhere near that of contemporaneous composers such as Elliott Carter and Pierre Boulez. Even when Tavener makes use of an advanced technique such as mensuration canon, he does it in a relatively simple and transparent way. He adds to the sense of tradition with the mensuration canon. (On the other hand, one could argue that this level of counterpoint runs counter to the claim of Byzantine influence.)

## Example 7

John Tavener, *Magnificat*. Symmetrical spacing of voices

The image shows a musical score for John Tavener's *Magnificat*, Example 7. The score is for Soprano (S), Alto (A), and Bass (B) voices. The lyrics are "For he that is mighty hath magnified me, and". The score is marked with "mp" (mezzo-piano) and "poco f sopra" (poco fortissimo sopra). Red circles highlight the melodic material in the Soprano, Alto, and Bass staves, showing a symmetrical spacing of voices. A red line connects the Soprano and Bass staves, indicating a two-voice canon.

Another example of symmetry is the melodic material of the two-voice canon added in the second verse. The melody of the 49-note canon is palindromic.<sup>18</sup>

To a lesser extent, symmetry is also present in the overall form of the piece, as can be seen in Example 8. While not perfectly symmetrical, the ending *Gloria Patri* in bass voices complements the opening verse in treble voices, and there is a bit of an arch form in the arrangement of other sections with the alternating verses and refrains. The form in *Nunc dimittis* is symmetrical on a smaller scale, as the ternary form is a simple ABA.

<sup>18</sup> Sally Imrie, "Analysis of Selected Choral Works by John Tavener with Particular Reference to the Post-1977 Works," MM thesis (Rhodes University, 1998), 66. According to Imrie, *ibid.*, 40, Tavener learned about Webern's use of palindromes (including the magic square) through the work of musicologist Hans Moldenhauer and his book *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle of His Life and Work*. E.A. Johnson analyzes this melody and finds it to be an almost perfect example of a complete magic square: Eric Alan Johnson, "John Tavener's Choral Anthems 1985-1990: Analysis of Style, Form and Performance Practice," DMA diss. (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2003), 53-54.

## Example 8

Overall form of the *Magnificat* by John Tavener

V1	A	Melody plus octave <i>ison</i>
R1	B	TB triadic <i>planing</i>
V2	A <sup>1</sup>	Addition of two-voice canon (palindromic melody) plus additional octave of <i>ison</i>
R2	B <sup>1</sup>	Triads doubled by treble voices
V3	A <sup>2</sup>	Expansion to eight voices with addition of two-voice canon in augmentation
R3	B <sup>1</sup>	Same as previous refrain
V4	A <sup>2</sup>	Essentially the same music as previous verse with slightly modified melody
R4	B <sup>1</sup>	Same as previous two refrains but with louder dynamics
V5	A	Opening material with melody slightly reworked to fit different text and with some extra repetitions
R5	B	Complement of opening refrain in that voicing is now with treble voices
V6	A <sup>2</sup>	Slightly different melody
R6	B <sup>1</sup>	
V7	A	<i>Gloria Patri</i> complements opening by setting with bass voices

Medieval Byzantine architecture tended to place a greater value on symmetry than did medieval Western architecture,<sup>19</sup> and it would be interesting to trace in another study whether this focus was an influencing factor upon Tavener's great interest in symmetry.

### On the Term "Holy Minimalism"

The term "Holy Minimalism" has frequently been associated with a group of sacred composers including Arvo Pärt, Henryk Górecki, and Tavener. Tavener reacted against the great complexity of many of his contemporaneous colleagues, and one can see that there are elements of simplification and a certain transparency in Tavener's music. Similar terms that have been applied to this group of composers

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<sup>19</sup> André Grabar, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire: Byzantine Art in the Middle Ages*, transl. by Betty Forster, rev. ed. (New York: Greystone Press, 1967), 59.

include mystic minimalism and spiritual minimalism. Josiah Fisk, Andreas Andreopoulos,<sup>20</sup> and others have applied the term “New Simplicity” to the group of three in a not necessarily complimentary way. Fisk states that “The absence of inherent musical substance in their compositions is intentional. In the New Simplicity, the development of ideas in the manner of Western classical music is carefully avoided, the stated goal being the attainment of a simplicity and ‘purity’ of musical material and character”.<sup>21</sup> Fisk does elevate Tavener above the others, though, adding that “Tavener has the most proficient ear and appears to have absorbed the most musical training; his works have a degree of sophistication that the other two, Górecki in particular, have tried to make a virtue of lacking”.<sup>22</sup> Ivan Moody compares the use of ecstatic repetition within this group to Minimalism, but he distinguishes the categories because Minimalism does not qualify as mystical music.<sup>23</sup>

It is revealing to see what Tavener said about the difference between representing Hell and Paradise in modern compositions, of which he was more interested in Paradise. He commented, “Paradise is far more difficult than Hell... it’s much more difficult to try to represent the childlike state of Paradise that one hears in Mozart or the music of the Sufis, or any of the great religious musics. One is aware of an enormous childlike simplicity”.<sup>24</sup> This viewpoint gets at the simplicity found in Tavener’s music, and it is this simplicity that is sometimes enmeshed with the concept of minimalism. Perhaps “New Simplicity” is a better term than “Holy Minimalism,” but whether it should be a pejorative term is certainly open to debate.

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<sup>20</sup> Andreas Andreopoulos, “The Return of Religion in Contemporary Music,” *Literature & Theology* 14, no. 1 (2000), 81-95: 84.

<sup>21</sup> Josiah Fisk, “The New Simplicity: The Music of Górecki, Tavener and Pärt,” *The Hudson Review* 47, no. 3 (Autumn, 1994), 394-412: 402.

<sup>22</sup> Fisk, “The New Simplicity”, 403.

<sup>23</sup> Ivan Moody, “The Mind and the Heart: Mysticism and Music in the Experience of Contemporary Easter Orthodox Composers.”, *Contemporary Music Review* 14, nos. 3-4 (1996), 65-79: 78.

<sup>24</sup> June Boyce-Tillman, *Experiencing Music—Restoring the Spiritual: Music as Well-being* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019), 194. This quote came from Boyce-Tillman’s interview with Tavener, “Interview on *The Mystery of Faith*,” Winchester Theatre Royal, March 11, 2005.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, in these works, Tavener took ideas from a traditional Greek folk song and used Byzantine devices such as the *ison* and chant melodic patterns, along with incorporating a Byzantine verse in the *Magnificat*, to express his religious beliefs about Mary, the Mother of God. Tavener commented that this allowed him to portray the universality and goddess quality of Mary,<sup>25</sup> as opposed to the sentimental figure often portrayed in Western art.

In his later years Tavener explored other religions and was thought by some to have strayed away from the Orthodox church. Yet, in an interview with Tom Service about four months before Tavener passed away, the composer was still referring to himself as Orthodox.<sup>26</sup>

While Tavener incorporated many elements from Byzantine music and the Orthodox church, he always retained his own unique characteristics. In *Magnificat*, we see how he added simple forms of counterpoint, for example. On maintaining an absolutely strict observance of tradition in music, Tavener commented, "However, to be able to do this now, *totally*, after all that has happened in music, I think is only possible in the hands of a saint. In a certain sense music has 'fallen' after the Fall of Man. But there must be the possibility that music, because of the Incarnation, can also become 'deified' here and now. That does not necessarily mean a return to chant, but it does mean something very like that, something transparent, something timeless, like chant".<sup>27</sup>

Tavener commented, "I have rejected much of the intellectualism of Western music with its formal, self imposed constrictions which inhibit and enchain me. Of course, Byzantine music has 'constrictions' but these liberate me by turning me inside out, as it were. It has made me tear myself to shreds and left me hanging on by a thread of simplicity and, I hope, serenity" (Tavener 1999, 101).

Performers of Tavener's music gain great insight through their experience. Soprano Patricia Rozario has been a prominent performer of Tavener's music, and her thoughts on interpretation of Tavener's music amplify the Byzantine influence: "In a

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<sup>25</sup> For the teaching about the Holy Virgin Mary the Theotokos, cf. Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, revised ed. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 35, 71, 76-78.

<sup>26</sup> Tom Service, "Suffering Is a Kind of Ecstasy," *The Guardian*, July 2, 2013.

<sup>27</sup> Tavener, *The Music of Silence*, 47-48.

sense you don't need to interpret his music. I think you just need to dwell on the text, learn the lines so you are fluent. Then in an almost meditative approach, but keeping in mind the Byzantine approach mentioned before of totally unemotional, it is *sacred music*, but it is not romantic. He wanted, in some respect that you just cut yourself off from what it is and deliver it. I think to some extent it's like the Ikon. The painter of the Ikon doesn't put his stamp on the Ikon".<sup>28</sup>

The *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* choral works prove to be fruitful examples of the importance of Byzantine influences in Tavener's music, and a significant example of Byzantine music impacting Western music in recent times. The legacy of Tavener's output will keep this connection alive for many years to come.

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<sup>28</sup> Johnson, "John Tavener's Choral Anthems," 16-17.

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**Biography:** **Ralph Lorenz** is the Senior Associate Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts at Syracuse University and Professor of Music (Theory) in the Setnor School of Music. He holds a PhD in Music Theory from Indiana University, along with BMus and MA degrees in music composition from California State University Long Beach. His research interests include music theory pedagogy, music and health, music and World War II, and religion and spirituality in music. His publications appear in the *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*, *Theoria*, *Indiana Theory Review*, *The Phenomenon of Singing*, and *20<sup>th</sup> Century Music*.