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Portfolio of Compositions: Commentary

Sara Garrard

A commentary accompanying the portfolio of compositions submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Musical Composition in the Faculty of Arts.

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Abstract

This commentary accompanies a portfolio of compositions written for a variety of forces ranging from solo piano to full orchestra, with a central core of vocal music written for female choir. Through commentaries and analyses of these pieces, I show how I explore ways in which to incorporate medieval influence in contemporary composition, ways to approach setting or otherwise using text, and how music can facilitate a meditative or devotional mood in listeners and/or performers. The chapters examine my compositions in terms of these main concepts, and trace how my music developed alongside my evolving understanding of the concepts. I note an aesthetic marked by simplicity, clarity and restraint in my compositions, and situate my music and this aesthetic in the context of some of my influences and contemporaries.

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Author's declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: DATE:.....

SARA GARRARD

25 May 2020

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Compositions in the portfolio

for female choir

Ash Wednesday (2014)

Text by T.S. Eliot

for orchestra

Christmas Music and Coda (2015-2016, revised 2018)

for piano (2014-2018)

Piano book 1

Three Piano Pieces

Piano book 2

for female choir

Aphorisms: a heart under a stone (2016)

Text by Victor Hugo, translated by Isabel Hapgood and Charles E. Wilbour

for female choir

Between in God's eternity (2017)

Texts by Frances Ridley Havergal, Anna Rebecca Hunt, Julia Ward Howe, Ada Cambridge, Anne Steele, and from Psalm 5

for female choir

Missa Brevis (2016-2017)

for SATB choir and string orchestra

Revelations of Divine Love (2017-19)

Text by Julian of Norwich

Tracklist: CD 1

1. **Ash Wednesday *Part I*** 4.38
University of Bristol Schola Cantorum conducted by Emma Hornby,
Victoria Rooms, 10 January 2015
2. **Christmas Music and Coda** 8.09
University of Bristol Symphony Orchestra conducted by John Pickard,
Victoria Rooms, Bristol, 9 December 2018
3. **Aphorisms: a heart under a stone** 6.55
University of Bristol Schola Cantorum conducted by Sara Garrard,
St Paul's Church, Bristol, 23 November 2016. *Low quality recording*
4. **Between in God's eternity** 10.43
University of Bristol Schola Cantorum conducted by Emma Hornby,
St Paul's Church, Bristol 22 November 2017

Missa Brevis

University of Bristol Schola Cantorum conducted by Emma Hornby,
Victoria Methodist Church, Bristol, 28 March 2018

5. Kyrie 4.45
6. Gloria 3.46
7. Sanctus 1.50
8. Benedictus 3.10
9. Agnus Dei 3.41

CD 2

Revelations of Divine Love (Digital/MIDI recording)

1. Our good Lord said 1.58
2. For our soul is so loved 5.35
3. Full glad and merry is our Lord of our prayer 5.19
4. I was led down 5.40
5. Full preciously our Lord keepeth us 7.42
6. Accuse not thyself over much 7.07
7. Our good Lord said (2) 4.02

CD 3 (Piano music)

Piano Book 1

1. Green Peach Tea
2. Ice
3. Lullaby
4. January
5. Stepping Stones
6. Blossom
7. Poppies
8. Elliptical
9. Vanishing
10. Miracles?
11. Sleeping
12. Waking
13. Consolation

Three Piano Pieces

14. Chant for Mechanism
15. Lydia in Springtime
16. Clouds

Piano Book 2

17. Melody
18. Come Round
19. Crystal
20. Arabesque
21. Meditation
22. Frost Sky
23. Reverie

Piano pieces played by Sara Garrard

Introduction

This portfolio presents selected pieces written as part of my PhD study. Instrumentation ranges from solo piano to full orchestra, with a central core of vocal/choral music written for the University of Bristol Schola Cantorum, a female choir focusing on mostly medieval and some newly composed music. There is a prominent aesthetic marked by simplicity (limited materials, clarity, restraint) that can be traced back to a texture based on one or two musical lines. Medieval music and ideas were an abiding influence on my composition, and their echoes may be heard to varying degrees in the finished pieces. Text – its selection, arrangement and use or setting – plays a central role in the creation of most pieces. Finally, during this programme I worked on writing music that facilitates a meditative or devotional mood in its audience (which concept is often broadened or blurred to include performers).

Influence of the medieval

The 2014 Grove Music article defines *medievalism* as “The reception, reconstruction, or devotion to elements of both general cultural images and specific aspects of the Middle Ages.”¹ The writer emphasises that it cannot be seen as a musical tradition in itself, instead being an element of many traditions, with a wide range of outputs. As an example, the study of medieval music was adopted as part of a core curriculum by composers of the Second Viennese School, who saw themselves joining a canon reaching back to the Middle Ages. At the same time, medieval music was used as an alternative to or a reaction against the audience-unfriendly “new music” by those same composers.² Motivations for and results of engaging with medieval music are clearly many and varied.

My own encounters with the medieval during this programme took two main forms: 1) singing medieval music, particularly chant, with the Schola Cantorum at the University of Bristol, and 2) hearing updates on the Old Hispanic Office (OHO) project³ which was ongoing in the music department at the same time. The nature of my engagement was sustained, experiential, and highly specific, even fragmentary. My pieces have many links to

¹ Kreutziger-Herr, Annette. "Medievalism." Grove Music Online. July 01, 2014. Oxford University Press, 1. <<https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0002261008>> Accessed 22 July 2019.

² *ibid*, p. 3

³ See Appendix 1 for more information on the OHO project

medieval music and ideas, but they are neither reconstructions of, nor essays on, medieval music.

Medievalism invokes “general cultural images” as well as specifics.⁴ Peter M. Lefferts notes that of plainchant in particular, newcomers or non-musicians have a very generalised understanding: “melodically vague, undifferentiable, hypnotic and slightly ‘New Age’... governed by a universal, monolithic, standard medieval ‘theory of the modes’”.⁵ For Lefferts, introducing concepts in medieval music, this is a persistent misunderstanding that needs correcting, but for me as a composer it is an interesting consideration in writing music for audiences who are not medieval music specialists. In several places in my pieces, I make use of tropes, shorthand and even clichés of what may *sound* medieval.

The other major themes of this portfolio (approach to text and music that facilitates a meditative or devotional mood) are shown by contemporaneous writings to also be concerns of medieval chant. In my compositions, I often took the medieval approaches as inspiration or guide.

Approach to text

Mark Everist notes that the concept of composition and the role of a composer have been contested and in some ways narrowed since medieval times.⁶ In particular he reminds us of the word’s etymology, *componere* (Latin: arrange, compile, build, organise, order, as well as compose). This suggests an understanding of composition as the “placing together” of elements (individual pieces into repertoires, music with text, texts together with other texts.) I found taking this wider view helpful. The selection and preparation of a text is an important part of my composition process, not a less important preparatory stage.

The aims and priorities of medieval liturgical chant repertoires can be examined by looking at the writings of commentators from the time. With the Old Hispanic Office liturgy, relevant sources include Augustine of Hippo and Isidore of Seville, two writers with partly compatible

⁴ Kreutziger-Herr

⁵ Peter M. Lefferts, ‘Compositional trajectories’ in Mark Everist, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Music*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 241

⁶ Mark Everist, Introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Music*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 2

but sometimes divergent views on music, church and the divine. In brief, Augustine prioritises the importance of the clarity of text, wary of music that may be too distracting or seductive.⁷ The repertoire's chants can be seen to bear out his principles where there are large stretches of syllabic text setting, with variation, repeated cadence patterns, and pauses used at semantically significant moments: "melodic detail helps direct attentive listeners in their text-based devotion".⁸ Isidore, while also exhorting believers to remain focused on God during singing, writes with more unreserved praise of the power of music. He seems to allow for the possibility of melody itself to lift the spirits of "faithful and unfaithful alike" to a transcendent contemplation of or communion with God beyond words.⁹ The instances in the chant repertory of melismas of *over a hundred notes* may be better understood from this point of view. Debate about music in church continues through the centuries to this day, posing similar questions of appropriate style, clarity of words and accessibility. Although I am neither writing in a medieval liturgical chant context nor, on the whole, for a church setting, I am often working with sacred texts and themes, and more generally many of my aims and intentions are aligned with some of these stated priorities of chant. I am interested in making the text broadly comprehensible to listeners, and sometimes to give space to consider or reflect on it. I was directly inspired by the way OHO chant composers and compilers suggested new meanings and contexts by adapting and combining texts in a process of "textual adjustment"¹⁰ and used music (melody, pacing, use of silence, repetition, cross-reference) to give a particular "reading" of a text¹¹. Finally, I too am interested in the potential of music to transcend words and lift the singer or hearer to a meditative or devotional state. This will be explored further in the next section.

The role of text in the non-vocal pieces (which have no explicit text apart from the title) will also be considered. If "rather than *having* particular meanings... [music] has the potential for specific meanings to emerge under specific circumstances", the basic view of music's "emotionless nuance" summarised by Nicolas Cook,¹² then the title of an otherwise wordless

⁷ See Emma Hornby, 'Musical Values and Practice in Old Hispanic Chant' *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 69 No. 3 (Fall 2016), p. 595-650

⁸ *ibid.* p. 631

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ See Rebecca Maloy, 'Old Hispanic Chant and the Early History of Plainsong', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 67 No. 1 (Spring 2014), p. 9

¹¹ Hornby, *Values and Practice*, p. 613, 626-631

¹² Nicolas Cook, 'Theorising Musical Meaning' *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (2001), p. 180

piece is obviously one key way to set a context or frame¹³ of meaning. Indeed, it may assume huge proportional importance, as the *only* text, especially in a piano piece of less than one page. This same idea of framing or cueing meaning indirectly via words also applies at times to the pieces with an explicit text, most obviously to pieces with a non-vernacular text or with words distorted by long melismas.¹⁴ Furthermore, context and meanings can be suggested by non-verbal “texts” or cues, for example musical quotation, or reference or allusion to a musical style, era or genre.

In the original context of the OHO repertoire, a deeper appreciation of a given text would be gained from a thorough knowledge of 1) the Bible and current popular interpretations, and 2) other chants in the repertoire. Both could be assumed of members of religious institutions who sung the chants regularly. Singers would take note of where melodic elements were shared between different chants. The reason for this may have partly practical, for ease of memorisation, but the musical linking of words and elements between chants seems to also contribute to a certain “reading”.¹⁵ This is a property of Old Hispanic chant that is both interesting and challenging to engage with. How might these effects be replicated now? What common context may be assumed, of an unknown general concert audience? Alternatively: how far and in what ways is it possible to create context and familiarity that functions in a similar way within the small scale of a piece itself?

Opening a devotional space, facilitating a meditative mood

As I composed the pieces in this portfolio, I developed a clearer sense of ways in which I often intended the music to affect the listener. Eventually articulating a recurring aim as *opening a devotional space* or *facilitating a meditative mood*, I was able to pursue this effect more intentionally in later pieces.

The idea of a meditative or devotional experience naturally comes up in any study of sacred music or church history. Alongside the questions of whether and how the affective qualities music *should* be used in worship, there is the implicit understanding that music *has* these

¹³ Lawrence Kramer developed the idea of frames or “hermeneutic windows”, including: explicit text, “citational inclusions” (titles come under this category) and structural tropes, though which we interpret a meaning in music. See Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990, p. 9-10

¹⁴ Discussed more in the chapters on *Missa Brevis* and *Between in God's eternity*

¹⁵ Hornby, *Values and Practice*, p. 626.

qualities. Music has long been associated with “embodying and communicating the divine” in a special way: Albert Blackwell writes that while everything in the world is in principle capable of this, music would seem to have some particular “sacramental potential”.¹⁶ Concepts of meditative and devotional experience were also specifically suggested by some of the texts I set.

The concepts of *meditative* and *devotional* are not synonymous, but they overlap so much within the terms of the discussion of my portfolio that, within this discussion, they are almost interchangeable. In the current age, many people seek spirituality in music rather than in religion. But whether the experience of music is described in sacred or secular terms, the qualities observed are very similar. According to Jeremy Begbie, music has a feature not present in visual art of there being able to exist more than one thing in a single space and thus is the only art form capable of representing certain theological essentials.¹⁷ In evidence, he quotes Maurice Merleau-Ponty describing the experience of music’s “edgeless” space in an entirely secular context: “When, in the concert hall, I open my eyes, visible space seems to me cramped compared to that other space through which, a moment ago, the music was being unfolded.”¹⁸ Augustine, in the 4th century, wrote in terms of both theological contentions and observed experience when he characterised music as *transporting*, able to give mortals an experience beyond the earthly, to draw them “up to the celestial dwelling itself”.¹⁹

If, then, this potential to facilitate a meditative or devotional mood is latent in music, I have to find ways in which to realise it within my style and contexts. There are techniques and effects attested in existing music, or that I personally experienced whilst singing with Schola Cantorum, for example, and which I began to incorporate into my composition even before clearly articulating this goal. There are the general theoretical principles, for example of tension and release and emotional reaction as cued by expectations met, deferred or

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 12

¹⁷ Ideas such as: God as Trinity, Jesus as human and God, the potential of humanity and God existing together in relationship and in freedom. Jeremy Begbie, *Music, modernity, and God: Essays in listening*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 20

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Augustine quoted in Hornby, *Values and Practice*, p. 604

surprised.^{20,21} I will particularly make reference to ideas and techniques that seem to be worked through in medieval chant repertoires, as in my approach to text. Finally, since it is only ever a case of setting up *potential* circumstances for any emotional journey, meditative state or devotional mood for a listener, I will frame discussion in terms of facilitating rather than creating.

Conclusion

These three thematic strands I have picked out are interlinked in my composition, connecting and informing each other, even as one or another is more or less prominent in any individual piece. Medieval ideas inform my thinking about approach to text, as does a consideration of how to facilitate meditative focus or a devotional state of mind. At the same time, this very consideration of audience/performer experience was developed through the composition process, and is itself suggested by some of the texts I was drawn to.²² The pieces in this portfolio demonstrate ways in which medieval inspirations and ideas can be engaged with practically and, as a result, reveal new expressions of and answers to their own questions.

Notes on style and context

As discussed earlier, an interest in the medieval does not result in any one particular musical style. Over the last 150 years, composers citing medieval chant as relevant to their work have included Satie, Britten, Maxwell Davies, Tavener and Pärt, all of whom have produced different sounding results. Of those, I relate most closely to the sound and approaches of Satie and Pärt.

Pärt uses simplicity as part of his *tinntinabuli* style, famously in the triadic slow motion of *Spiegel im Spiegel* (1978), or the mostly single-note melody of each verse of *My Heart's In the Highlands* (2000). He constructs substantial and sustained pieces of music out of slow

²⁰ See Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956. This idea has been further studied since, for example by David Huron in *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006

²¹ Meditative/devotional states may also be emotionally affected ones. Musics for example of the “Holy Minimalists” are called both meditative and moving; many church contexts may encourage emotional engagement on a corporate and personal level, and the emotionally satisfying arcs of story and ritual are essential.

²² Discussed particularly in the chapter on *Aphorisms*: echoing the text’s own description of its effect within the story world of *Les Misérables*, I aimed to create the “effect of a half-open sanctuary”—something intriguing that invites, but does not demand, devotional contemplation.

lines of music and silences, for example *Psalom* (1985/1995) or *Trisagion* (1992/1994). I am interested in these techniques although in most of my pieces here I have not attempted to write on this scale and focused instead on brevity. Pärt is hugely influential, often cited as meditative or transporting and referenced as an inspiration by musicians across genres.²³ Less often appreciated is the intense focus and reflection on text Pärt often shows in vocal works. He states: “The words write my music”²⁴. With this approach he has set several prose passages from the New Testament and even a genealogy²⁵.

Erik Satie has been an icon to many composers since his time, and was particularly adopted by Experimental composers, with John Cage calling him “indispensable”.²⁶ His music, as well as his lifestyle and persona, was outstandingly original, anticipating many future musical developments, whilst at the same time he was “a gentle medieval musician lost in this century”, according to Debussy.²⁷ Interested in Gregorian chant from an early stage, he later enrolled as mature student studying rigorous counterpoint forms under Albert Roussel. His use of limited harmonies or stark textures is frequently commented on, defended or excused,²⁸ – I enjoy these elements of simplicity and brevity, particularly in the piano pieces. Elements of freedom and flexibility are presented even on a small scale: in the well-known *Gnossiennes*, for example, with the flowing musical lines written without barlines and the music’s floating tonal ambiguity. Satie also had an enduring strain of parody or irony, referentialness and/or intentional obscurity, particularly with regard to text, for example the texts that are written alongside the score of *Sports et divertissements*.

One example of a contemporary composer who has incorporated echoes of medieval music whilst also writing music of direct emotional warmth or rawness and often working in and around a tonal idiom is Pēteris Vasks. *Madrigals* (1976) shows explicit reference to medieval form and content, but textures built from chant-like lines and intervallic content that

²³ Siim Nestor, 'Arvo Pärt: "I suppose secretly we love one another."', 2010.

<<https://www.arvopart.ee/en/arvo-part/article/arvo-part-i-suppose-secretly-we-love-one-another-it-is-very-beautiful/>> accessed 15 October 2019

²⁴ Toomas Siitan, 'Introduction' in Hedi Rosma, Kristina Kõrver, Kai Kutman, ed. *In Principio: The Word in Arvo Pärt's Music*, Arvo Pärt Centre, 2014

²⁵ *Which Was the Son of...* (2000)

²⁶ Michael Nyman, *Experimental music: Cage and beyond*, London: Studio Vista, 1974, p. 35

²⁷ Robert Orledge, "Satie, Erik." Grove Music Online. 2001. Oxford University Press.

<<https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040105>> Accessed 20 October 2019.

²⁸ For example in Orledge’s article above, and Rollo H. Myers, *Erik Satie*, New York: Dover, 1968

recalls early music appear throughout many pieces.²⁹ Although *Revelations of Divine Love* is my only piece for SATB choir appearing in this portfolio, Vasks' choral writing had been an influence on my SATB a cappella writing in several pieces up to that point. *A Little Summer Music* (1985) for piano and violin speaks more directly to my piano pieces, and is an example of very short pieces making up a whole, a form that several of my pieces take.

Other contemporary composers who exemplify an aesthetic of limited materials, clarity and restraint include Judith Weir, Sally Beamish and Howard Skempton. Weir's *King Harald's Saga* is a 12-minute opera performed by one soprano. Her *Piano Concerto* (1997) defies what she saw as the "inflationary spiral"³⁰ of the genre and is an intimate work of 15 minutes for piano and string ensemble of, in the original score, only 9 players. Similarly, the four movements of Skempton's *Chamber Concerto* (1995) each last under two minutes. These experiments with historic forms take them in directions counter to the trends that come with larger, louder available forces and greater access to virtuosity. The result is music that is intimate and intense. Although they are not necessarily complex or virtuosic in the standard sense, perhaps more significant is the decision to turn away from the need to *sound* virtuosic. The music may be challenging to play – each player in Skempton's *Chamber Concerto* for example is very exposed and each part requires extreme precision. In my music I also experiment with references to existing forms or styles, use brevity, and often challenge players more with precision rather than great technical difficulty. Beamish and Skempton particularly also have written short piano pieces with a strong sense of line as well as a transparency that appeals to me.³¹

Skempton is sometimes classed as an Experimental composer (although Experimental music is notoriously difficult to define as a school or tradition.) One key idea from the Experimental music of the 1960s is the reconsideration of the rigid roles of performer, composer and audience. This was done through, for example, the late 1960s indeterminacy works of Rzewski e.g. *Free Soup*, *Sound Pool* and the endeavours of the Scratch Orchestra,

²⁹ For example, formal polyphonic textures in the short pieces *Summer* (1978), *A moment of celebration* (1988); stark intervals in the low basses *Our Mother's Names* (1977).

³⁰ Judith Weir, programme note for *Piano Concerto*,
<<http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/work/1689/8063>> Accessed 20 October 2019

³¹ Skempton particularly is known for this; Beamish's piano pieces I became particularly familiar with in this area include *Entre chien et loup* and *Lullaby for Owain*.

of which Skempton was a co-founder.³² Whilst finding a use for trained musicians' specialisms, and expecting thoughtful and serious engagement from everyone, the aim of such projects was to open up and democratise music-making: challenging, erasing or blurring defined boundaries and hierarchies.³³

In this portfolio I operate within fairly conventional music practices, but these experimental practices are relevant to me in at least two ways. First, the general concept of audience/performer overlap is one I play with in several pieces, having also encountered it from a very different direction, through music and “performance” in church and the concept of congregation being both audience and performer and neither. Second, whilst Schola Cantorum is basically a conventional ensemble, there are elements of the rehearsal and performance practice that diverge from the traditional ensemble/choir model and have more in common with experimental practices.³⁴ My rehearsing and performing as part of the group undoubtedly helped me mesh with its style, and has impacted my writing as much as more academic study of medieval music.

My style is not the only one through which themes of medieval music, approach to text and the facilitation of meditative mood can be explored, but I found it to be a good match, and through these areas of interest I was able to develop my style further.

³² Nyman, p. 60, 131

³³ *ibid.* p. 132-3

³⁴ For further information on Schola Cantorum and rehearsal/performance practise, see Appendix 2

1. *Ash Wednesday*

Ash Wednesday and medieval inspiration

Composed in 2014, this was the first piece I wrote with Schola Cantorum in mind. It represents a crucial step in my composition, and thus is the earliest piece included in this portfolio. It contains several aspects and approaches which are explored further in my future pieces, particularly those written for Schola Cantorum.

Ash Wednesday is a 1930 poem by T.S. Eliot. With allusions to Dante and the crossover of romantic/courtly and religious devotion, it depicts the struggle of turning to God. It is full of images both of beauty and of violence, sometimes starkly juxtaposed. The poem attracted me with its very elusiveness, possibly an intentional effect of Eliot's. "Do not worry at being unsure of the meaning, when the author cannot be sure of it either," he wrote in a letter to a friend: "The Vita Nuova might give you some help; but on the other hand it is much more obscure than I have the talent to be."¹

I had by this time heard Schola Cantorum perform twice, in a concert and as part of a lecture-recital by Emma Hornby in which she introduced ideas about text setting and compositional technique in Medieval chant. I was inspired both by ideas and techniques of the medieval chant composers, and by some specific effects of a choir of female voices singing mainly unison or two-part music. I perceived the extreme importance of every note in monophony, especially each *newly introduced* note, the contrast in timbre between high and low notes—especially when approached by leap, the vast difference between unison and two-part and the effectiveness of the moment of change between textures, and the extremely strong effect of octaves in unaccompanied vocal music.

Approach to text

Ash Wednesday, my piece, is in six sections, as is the poem. It is scored for two vocal lines, with sections of unison/monophony. I set the entire poem from start to finish, with no changes, reorderings, cuts or even repetition except for a few sections in which the voices sing the same lines in canon. Much of the text is set syllabically and at around speaking

¹ T. S. Eliot, in a letter to Philip Parker, 17 May 1930, quoted online at 'In Eliot's Own Words: *Ash Wednesday*' <<https://tseliot.com/editorials/in-eliot-s-own-words-ash-wednesday>> Accessed 18 September 2019

pace, with some melismas for effect or emphasis.

This approach was both facilitated and inspired by the way in which the poem is already very musically structured. Sections are differentiated by meter, line length and implied pace, and connected by repeated words or themes. Part VI begins with a clear recapitulation of Part I. On a more local level, I recognised compositional techniques used by the poet to develop material and motifs. The very first lines might have been put through the musical processes of diminution and augmentation:

Because I do not hope to turn again
 Because I do not hope
 Because I do not hope to turn

Many of the compositional choices I made were in order to follow an effect that had been set out in the words and the structure of the poem. A specific challenge was finding musical means to create a correspondingly dramatic effect to the things Eliot had made *visually* striking on the page: variation of line length and verses/section length, single lines dramatically alone, often aligned apart from the rest of the poem.

Examples of text setting

In the opening, I mirrored the addition/subtraction of words, venturing to new notes hesitantly, a step at a time. The Db is introduced at a different point in the phrase each time, in order to amplify the disorientating effect of the syntax of these first lines (the sentence opens with "because" and does not resolve for a long time). The close canon effect first heard in bar 3 creates a similarly disorientating effect, especially as it appears so briefly.

The musical score for the opening of Part I consists of two systems. The first system features a vocal line on a single staff. It begins with the instruction 'unis.' and 'mp'. The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by a sequence of quarter notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. A double bar line follows, and the melody continues with a quarter rest, then quarter notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The lyrics are: 'Be - cause I do not hope to turn a - gain' and 'Be - cause I do not hope,'. The second system features a piano accompaniment with two staves. The upper staff begins with a triplet of eighth notes (C4, D4, E4), followed by quarter notes: F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. A double bar line follows, and the melody continues with quarter notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The lyrics are: 'Be - cause I do not hope to turn' and 'De - si - ring this man's gift and that man's scope'. The lower staff begins with a quarter rest, followed by quarter notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. A double bar line follows, and the melody continues with quarter notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The lyrics are: 'Be - cause I do not hope to turn' and 'De - si - ring this man's gift and that man's scope'.

Figure 1.1: Opening of Part I

In general, just as the poem has no regular rhyme scheme or perfectly symmetrical structure,

I wrote very few exact repeats in the melody. There are however repeated melodic *shapes*. With such a bare texture, repeated shapes and even actual pitches sung are far more audible than they would be in a fuller piece, something I had also observed when first listening to Schola Cantorum.

The opening lines of Part VI *Although I do not hope to turn again...* initially follow the same shape as the opening of Part I. The link is made clear after such a long interim by the near-exact repeat. However, there is then a sense of progression. Part I returned frequently to the absolute pitch C—even without perfect pitch, singers internalise a sense of such a repeated note. In Part VI the phrase returns starting instead on the note D, the note Part I ended on. In bar 2 of Part VI, the upper line floats up higher, setting the distinct style and tone for this movement: more flowing and flexible and using a wider range of notes.

Recitation

Flexible

Figure 1.2: Opening of Part VI, the melody line of bar 2 prefiguring the more fluid notes/rhythm of the next *Flexible* section

The repeated phrase “O my people, what have I done unto thee” in Part V is another example of a non-exact repeat. I set the phrase to different notes each time, but it has a distinctive melodic shape and is sung by the full chorus in contrast to the solo/semi-chorus singing the rest of the movement, a musical effect corresponding to the effect in the poem of that line appearing alone. In the second appearance of the phrase, the overall pitch is raised and the melodic contour stretched over a bigger vocal range, as the words become ever more tense and anguished (**Fig. 1.3**). The anguish however is *controlled*—there is no exclamation point, or even a question mark, merely a full stop, and this is reflected in the music by a line which remains slow and regular, angular, matter-of-fact. The final, incomplete, iteration, “O my

people,” that ends the movement is set lower and more constrained in notes once more.

15 ALL *p*
O my peo - ple, what have I done un - to thee.

46 ALL *p* *f*
O my peo - ple, what have I done un - to thee.

62 Slow ALL *pp*
O my peo - ple.

Figure 1.3: Part V bars 15-16, 46-49, 61-62

As in the poem, each of the six parts has a clear identity, defined in the opening bars. This is an idea that recurs in other pieces (*Aphorisms*, *Between in God's eternity*, *Missa Brevis*, *Revelations*.) In most of those others, texture is one of the most important elements that defines each part's identity. Here, six parts are most defined and differentiated by melodic contour, rhythm and meter. Texture is very limited overall, but this means small changes are all the more perceptible.

The opening bars of several movements suggest something medieval or religious. These are generalised references: Part I as "chant" using stepwise lines and parallel 5ths, Part II in a compound time pastoral style ala *Summer is icumen in*, Part IV featuring drones. This intentional approximation of a medieval aesthetic is something I have used in other pieces since. Many of Eliot's poems, including *Ash Wednesday*, are full not only of specific classical, religious and literary allusion, but of lines that read *like* allusion but are not, such as the "three white leopards" in Part II. "Can't I sometimes invent nonsense, instead of always being supposed to borrow it?", he wrote.² His "nonsense" I take to mean apparently-familiar imagery from a cultural canon, a literary-academic-religious folklore. Similarly, I tried to use newly composed material to invoke a sense of familiarity.

² Letter to Charles Williams, 22 May 1930, quoted on 'In Eliot's Own Words: *Ash Wednesday*' <<https://tseliot.com/editorials/in-eliot-own-words-ash-wednesday>> Accessed 18 September 2019

As well treating particular repeated words or phrases in the text, I used musical means to link the different sections together more generally and to call attention to the more general recurring imagery. I reasoned that in order to have a similar strength of effect of familiarity as I had when reading the poem on the page, a listener would need additional cues or direction. This is because with the *addition* of music there are more calls on the attention: if *different* lines of music are added, links could be obscured.

Part VI, as well as containing clear links back to Part I, recapitulates and recalls elements from the entire piece. After the opening recalling the opening of Part I, the legato melismatic lines are most similar to Part IV while the texts of two parts share images of blue, white, rock, water, mother Mary. The triplets on “blessed sister, holy mother” (b. 42) echo the insistent compound time of the opening of Part II; the winding chromatic melismas on “sister, mother” (b 53) recall and develop further the shape of the word “sister” in Part V (b. 33, 42, 50). The setting of “*window*” in Part III:



Figure 1.4: Part III, bars 21-22

- in a near-exact repeat, becomes “*lost sea voices*” in Part VI:

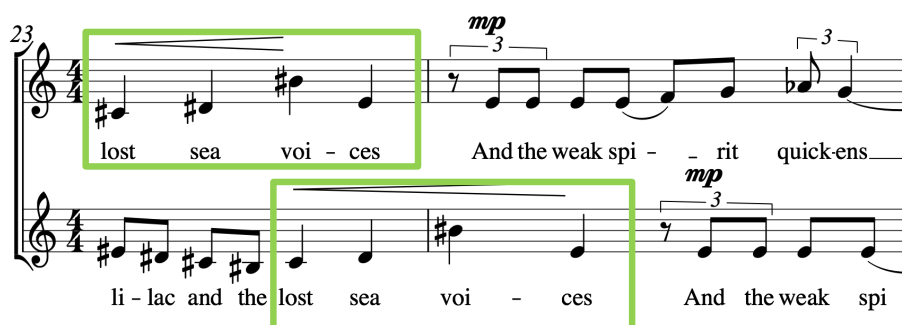


Figure 1.5: Part VI, bars 23-24

This is an example of where a connection that might be noticed on the page between III and VI could well be lost in translation to music unless reinforced. The phrase in Part VI follows immediately the only other “lilac” in the poem after Part III, and a corresponding reference to windows.

<p>At the first turning of the third stair Was a slotted window bellied like the figs's fruit And beyond the hawthorn blossom and a pasture scene The broadbacked figure drest in blue and green Enchanted the maytime with an antique flute. Blown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown, Lilac and brown hair; Distraction, music of the flute, stops and steps of the mind over the third stair, Fading, fading; strength beyond hope and despair Climbing the third stair.</p>	<p>From the wide window towards the granite shore The white sails still fly seaward, seaward flying Unbroken wings</p> <p>And the lost heart stiffens and rejoices In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices</p>
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Figure 1.6: Comparison of text of Part III and Part VI

Links are also drawn in order to show contrast or progression. For example, canons appear in both Parts 1 and VI. In contrast to the previously discussed close, syllabic, low in the voice canons in Part I, the long canon in Part VI is flowing, melismatic, taking in a wider vocal range with more leaps: it demonstrates how far the music has developed by this point.

This is undeniably a very wordy text, and I had taken the decision to set it complete from start to finish. Therefore, I sought clarity and to call attention to particular words. In some cases I employed word-painting in order to draw attention to a point or a word. “*Turning*” in Part III always set as part of a chromatic phrase, set at a higher pitch each time the narrative climbs a stair, and, separately, to a musical turn in bars 13-14.

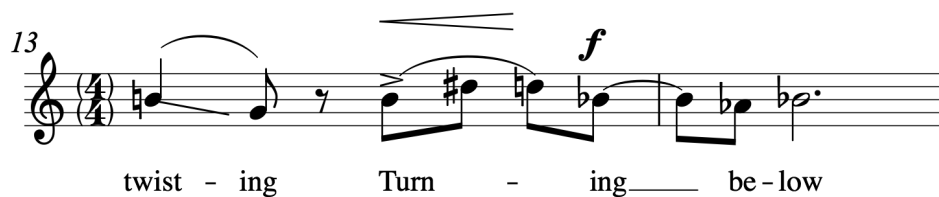
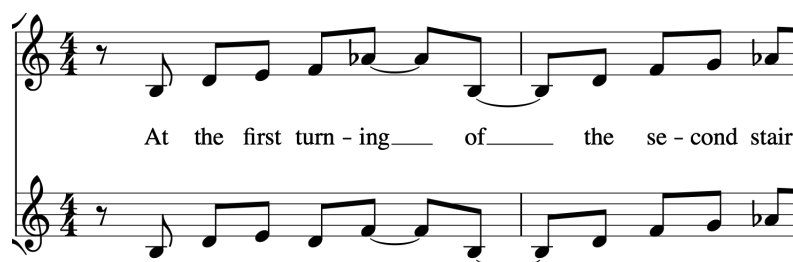


Figure 1.7: Part III bars 13-14, a turn on “turning”



11 *mf*
At the se-cond turn-ing of the se-cond stair

21 *f*
And the first turn-ing of the third stair

Figure 1.8: Part III bars 1, 11, 21

There are some small moments of antiphony, the change in texture drawing the attention, which double as word-painting. Part VI’s echoes on “*shaken*” suggest something being shaken free and falling.

39 *mp*
when the voi - ces shak-en from the yew_ tree drift_ a-way Let the o-ther voi-ces

40 *p*
sha - ken

41 *mf*
be sha-ken and re - ply_ Bles - sed sis - ter, ho - ly mo - ther_ Part 2 tacet

42 *mf*
shak ken

Figure 1.9: Part VI bars 39-42 “shaken”

In Part II, as the image is painted of a dismembered body, I cut up the line itself: “my legs my heart my liver” (see Fig 1.10). I wanted to set harsh juxtapositions at the start of Part II matter-of-factly: cold and clear, as in the text. At the same time, I wanted to alert the wandering ear to the change. Thus the change in the music between

Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper-tree
In the cool of the day, having fed to satiety

and

On my legs my heart my liver and that which had been contained
In the hollow round of my skull.

is actually quite limited but dramatic in context: a change from triplet to duplet rhythm on one note or a tone-clash, accented and detached, but without a break in the meter and only moving by step to notes which had already been used.

unis.
mp

La - dy, three white leo - pards sat un - der a ju - ni - per - tree In the

cool of the day, hav - ing fed to sa - ti - e - ty On my legs my li - ver and

cool of the day, hav - ing fed to sa - ti - e - ty my heart and

that which had been con - tained in the hol - low round of my skull.

Figure 1.10: Part II, bars 1-7

The crucial phrase is sung on duplets, insistently regular, on a single note. The lack of phrase *shape* or any rests/pauses as musical punctuation reflects the lack of punctuation written in the line of the poem.

Conclusion

In *Ash Wednesday*, I first developed what would become main themes in my portfolio. The very impetus of this piece was my experience of Schola Cantorum singing medieval music, and the inspiration from this early encounter in this piece is evident. Here too I start experimenting with *the idea of the idea* of the medieval. I also concentrated on approach to text, and I hope this commentary has demonstrated the amount of consideration needed even as the treatment of text appears to be very literal and straightforward. I set the text faithfully by, in this case, setting the words very clearly and unadorned. At the same time, by doing this, I hoped to reflect my own response to the words, the intrigue of something glimpsed not entirely grasped.

The ideas of facilitating meditative or devotional space had yet to clearly emerge in this piece. However, my concern to make the poem intelligible and approachable on an instinctive level³ corresponds to the ideas of Augustine and Isidore referenced in the introduction of how music can aid understanding of words (Augustine), or partially bypass intellectual understanding to reach a deeper level (Isidore). Furthermore, with the musical effects I employed to link together words and sections there was some blurring of the definition of audience. While these links may be appreciated by listeners, likely on a subconscious level, I also intended them to be for the *performers'* benefit.

This piece set out in a new direction in my composition at PhD level, defining several areas I continued to work with including:

- Centrality of text
- Small scale, 1-2 part writing
- Writing for and working with Schola Cantorum
- Medieval influence, allusion; and, like Eliot, *suggestions* of allusion
- Setting the text in light of its own themes
- The choice as well as treatment of text/themes (half-open, half-obscure)

At the same time, Ash Wednesday stands out from my other pieces, for two main reasons. The first is that the text is not adapted at all. The second difference is the denser chromaticism, the complex (implied) harmonic language. Later pieces are simpler in this regard partly due to practicalities of what could realistically be performed with reasonable rehearsal time and partly as I gained confidence to write in more tonal idioms, but also the differences in style can themselves be seen as a result of pursuing the same ideas of setting a text in light of its own themes and context. The style here is more modernist, angular, spare; in response to a 1920s, Modernist, elusive text.

³ Or, to *maintain*, in music, the approachability I felt the original poem, with all its intentionally obscurity, offered

2. *Christmas Music and Coda*

In contrast to most of the other pieces, *Christmas Music and Coda* is a piece for orchestra, without singers nor any audible text. I wanted to write a piece with a Christmas connection; other title ideas and concepts that stayed in back of my mind through composition were the phrases from carols “star-led” and “star-land”¹. The finished piece of course has no words apart from the more general title of “Christmas Music”.

Creation of a harmonic outline

I took as an initial musical stimulus Perotin’s *Alleluya Nativitas*, a piece of Notre Dame polyphony that Schola Cantorum had performed near to Christmas². I was struck by the sound of certain notes and chords created as we sang, in the key and at the octave we had sung them, as they had sounded in female voices, and realised only later that this pitching was specific to the edition prepared by Emma Hornby. I have since found no recordings of the piece at our transposition, and indeed few not performed by male voices. This is a specific example of my medieval inspiration being mediated or modulated through experience: I made a harmonic outline based on *Alleluya Nativitas* in “our” key.

As well as the material from which the harmonic framework was built (detailed below), and some rhythmic and melodic detailing, I took from *Alleluya Nativitas* a sense of bright modality. As in some other pieces, I did not aim to write consistently in one particular mode, but to use certain intervals and from modal music, and to use the suggestion of modality to signal the medieval inspiration.

I began by sketching out all the notes heard in the duplum and triplum over one note of the chant in the tenor together as chord clusters. My approach to finally selecting and ordering the chords I finally used was rather free: after all, beyond the possibility of hearing the reverberation of many notes as “chord clusters”, these notes were never intended to be put to

¹ From *O Come All Ye Faithful* and *Past Three O’ Clock* respectively, and both referring to the Magi/Epiphany; composition took place during Advent, as I participated in seasonal activities and rehearsals in church and choirs

² Edition prepared by Emma Hornby

this use. I aimed for chords of limited complexity, and voiced them across bass and treble clefs in order to work towards an orchestral canvas.

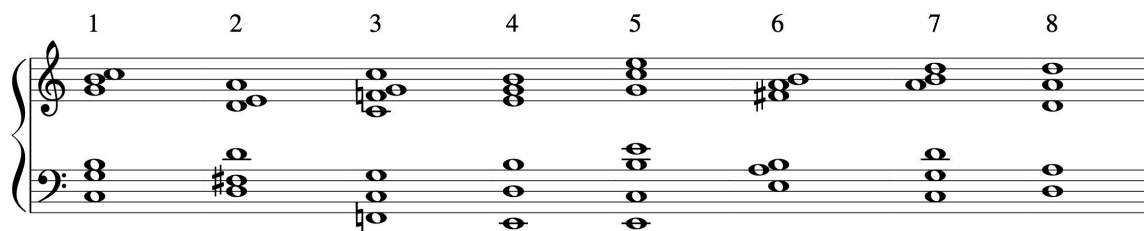


Figure 2.1: Chord sequence

Chord 1 is literally the “chord” created by the totality of notes of the first bar of *Alleluia Nativitas*, and the strings quote (in bar 8) that bar exactly. This G, B, C cluster becomes a key element of my piece.

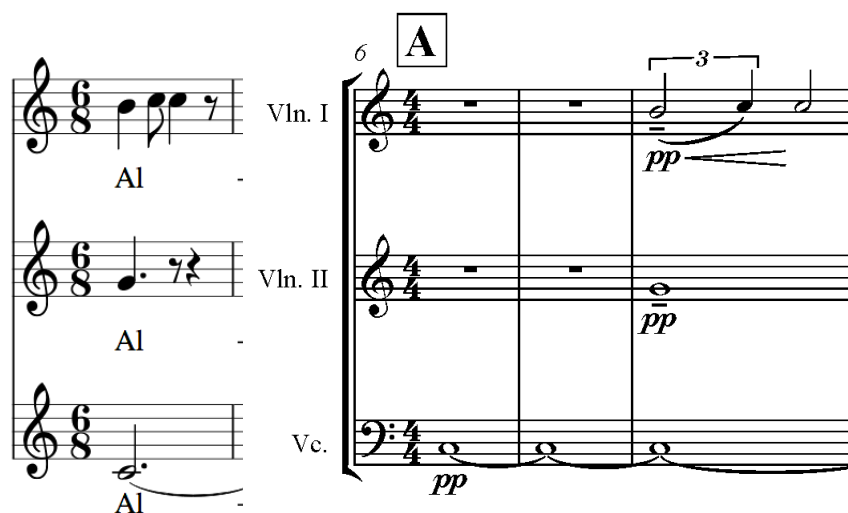


Figure 2.2: Opening of Perotin’s *Alleluia Nativitas* quoted in bars 6-8 *Christmas Music and Coda* in violins and cellos

The chord sequence (**Fig. 2.1**) is repeated throughout the piece. The harmonic rhythm varies, and the chords are not always moved between at the same rate in different voices, instruments or sections. Sometimes the chord sequence is clearly defined, sometimes obscured.

Motivic material is also derived from the chords: a melody will use notes in chord 1, then chord 2, then chord 3 and so forth. The melody need not use *all* notes in a chord, and may repeat notes in a chord, before moving on. For example, **Fig 2.3, 2.4, 2.5**.

* with A from chord 6 ** with G from chord 5

Figure 2.3: Piano, bar 36-38

Figure 2.4: Piccolo, bars 39-40

Figure 2.5: Oboe 1, bars 47-56, “Sailor Tune”

The other major component of the piece, and the one melodic element *not* created as described above, is the Chant line. This is the main theme of the piece, heard in part at the opening. This theme is not quoted from *Allehuya Nativitas* and not an attempt at accurate pastiche of chant. The line was constructed by using each voice of the chord sequence

horizontally: all notes of the bassline followed by all notes of the second line up, etc. (There are some changes and exceptions, especially in the third phrase, which I allowed myself for the sake of a more satisfying melodic shape.)

The diagram illustrates the relationship between a chord sequence and a chant line. At the top, a piano accompaniment shows eight chords numbered 1 through 8. The bass notes of these chords are circled in green. Below this, a single treble clef staff shows the resulting chant line. Brackets and arrows indicate the following relationships:

- Bass notes, some octave transposition:** A bracket under the first three notes of the chant line, with arrows pointing to the bass notes of chords 1, 2, and 3.
- second voice up from the bass (except chord 3 - use G):** A bracket under the next three notes of the chant line, with arrows pointing to the bass notes of chords 4, 5, and 6.
- third voice from the bass - not exact:** A bracket under the final two notes of the chant line, with arrows pointing to the bass notes of chords 7 and 8.

Below the chant line, another treble clef staff shows the voicing of the chords, with brackets indicating:

- bottom voice of treble clef:** The first three notes of the chord voicing.
- second voice up of treble clef:** The next three notes of the chord voicing.
- highest voice:** The final two notes of the chord voicing.

Figure 2.6: Chant line and relationship to chord sequence. Bass notes of the chord, forming the first phrase of the Chant line, highlighted as an example

Structure

As already stated, this piece is built around a series of rotations of the chord sequence. By the very nature of this cyclical repetition there is no possibility of a large-scale modulation or movement. Instead, over the course of the piece, I varied the rate of change and the voicing of the chords. This balances familiarity and change and defines the piece's structure into more distinct areas. The overall structure is in three large sections, as shown by the thicker lines in the table:

<i>Bars</i>	
1-5	Introduction: start of Chant line on clarinet and cor anglais
6-35	First rotation, very slow pace; triplet figures in violins, woodwind decorated texture.

36-46	Break. Piano and piccolo (using chords 1-6)
47-56	Rotation over 8 bars+1. Chord line outlined in horn. Sailor Tune in flute and oboe
57-66	Rotation with fuller chords in horns. Sailor Tune in woodwind slightly fragmented. Chant line introduced in cellos.
67-73	Incomplete rotation; Chant line continues in cellos and violas
74-87	Rotation with chords held about 2 bars each but irregular; horns out of sync with strings and woodwind. Chant line in canon. Loudest point.
88-100	Rotation with sparser chords. Fade out begins. Chant line in cellos and violas.
101-117	Rotation with upper parts of chord line clear in violins. Chant line passed in solos around the orchestra.
118-133	CODA start. Rotation with upper voices of chords in strings; rests between chords.
134-148	Rotation beginning with lower voices of chords in strings. Chord 5 onward sparsely scored. Woodwind decorated lines from first section reintroduced.
149-165	Rotation beginning in violas and cellos overlapping the sustained final chord of previous rotation. Lower voices of chords + timbral detail in harp/celeste/cymbal. Last chord held for a long time
166-185	Rotation begun soft woodwind (B/C clash in oboes). Tutti ending heralded by accented offbeat chord 5.

The chord spacing is particularly irregular at the start, where the second chord is not arrived at by the full chorus until bar 19, having been pre-empted by the flute solo. Throughout the first third of the piece, as the music broadly builds, the Chant line is more and more clearly realised until it is played *forte* in canon at bar 74. Then, as the Chant line fades and is fragmented through the instruments, the chord line comes more clearly to the fore, moving with greater regularity. In the Coda section, from bar 118, the chord sequence is presented in its clearest most literal form, starting in the upper strings.

The piece is entitled Christmas music *and Coda*, and the Coda section is substantial, the music heavily weighted towards this section even as the density of content and complexity drops and no new material is introduced. Chords are lengthened, and pauses and rests are

dramatic. The chord sequence and its every restart and repetition are now clearly audible. The Coda is a time to reflect on what has gone before, the familiarity of repetitions leaving mental space to reflect and think, but the irregularities and punctuations of silences gently bring awareness back to the moment.

In writing a piece with a mediated medieval influence for modern full orchestra, I have integrated the idea of planned harmonic progression with the horizontal melodic conception used in my two-part writing. The chord sequence itself is used *as a line*. At times, combined with the modality, the slow sometimes-obscured pulse, and the cyclical nature of the chord sequence rotations, this gives a sense of floating or static harmony. At times, the lines and particularly the lines *overlapping* (thus creating the more complex chords) drive the music forwards and create key structural points. For example, at letter F, bar 74, the Chant line is played in canon, and the chords in the horns move out of sync with the chords in the woodwind and strings; this creates the loudest part of the piece and the climax. In the Coda, at bar 149, violas and cellos come in with chord 1 over chord 8 held in violins and double basses. This creates one more moment of push-pull tension before the music releases towards its conclusion.

Meditative space and “Christmas music”

Why title the piece “Christmas music”? Partly, I wanted to acknowledge the *Alleluia Nativitas* connection (the text is about the nativity). Partly, in the most literal application of the theory of framing: having written a piece that in my mind related to Christmas, one of the clearest ways to communicate this to an audience was to tell them so. “Christmas music and coda” is paradoxically both prescriptive and vague or generic, intentionally so. I invite anyone to make their own Christmas associations with the music: having considered both Advent and Epiphany in the composition process I decided in the end to leave any specificity out of the title. Both within and outside religious tradition, the end of the year may be seen as a time to reflect. The cyclical elements of this piece recall the cycle of years or seasons, that allusion is strengthened by the title, and by the circumstances of the piece’s first performance, in early December, amid the usual end-of-term flurry of Christmas concerts.

Christmas Music and Coda facilitates a meditational mood with the cyclical repetition and the use of silences, the particular kind of intense and powerful silence of a large number of

people keeping silent.³ Both of these elements occur in the beginning and middle sections of the piece, and then are especially prominent in the Coda section. With the addition of the gentle cue given by the title, the music does not *demand* an emotional or other response from the audience, but allows and invites it.

³ The element of silence is explored further in my commentary on *Between in God's eternity*.

3. Piano Music

Style and genre

The piano music in this portfolio consists of fairly to very short pieces, in three sets. I have not given these pieces a genre such as prelude, study or miniature, though they have aspects of all three. In the liner notes to a CD of 20th Century British piano miniatures, Paul Conway lets his definition encompass both “character pieces” and “studies” that on a small scale present a “distillation of their composers’ musical language”.¹ Studies usually focus on a single musical idea or technique, as do several of my pieces here. They may also be character pieces, with evocative titles, such as the popular books of educational or children’s pieces by Burgmüller and Grechaninov. Concentration on a single musical idea is also a characteristic of the prelude as codified and popularised by Chopin: the non-“didactic” prelude, the prelude without function, that exists without needing to justify its existence in relation to another piece – a prelude, Richard Taruskin writes, to “everything, nothing... to the next prelude”.² The other essential quality of the Chopinesque prelude is that it is both fragmentary and complete; Taruskin describes Chopin’s Prelude No. 1 in C major as “a paradoxically single (“aphoristic”) statement of the sort of idea that usually demands contrast and repetition: complete yet incomplete, fully formed yet inchoate.”³ My pieces here, like the Preludes, are miniature but not *miniaturised* (versions of something else); they contain precise examples of a musical language but not via a process of distillation from something that should take up more space and time.

The medieval connections here are explicit in a few cases, but mostly to be found beneath the surface in aspects of texture and tonality. As with *Christmas Music and Coda*, in these purely instrumental pieces the only text is a piece’s title. I shall discuss both of these themes in the piano pieces, but focus most on theme of the player’s experience, and the potential to enter into a sort of meditative state through playing. These pieces may certainly be played before audiences, but it was the player/performer I imagined as the primary audience.

¹ Paul Conway, liner note to *A Hundred Years of British Piano Miniatures*, Grand Piano GP789, 2018

² Richard Taruskin, ‘Chapter 7: Self and Other’ in *Music in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, New York, USA. 2009. <<https://www.oxfordwesternmusic.com/view/Volume3/actrade-9780195384833-div1-007005.xml>> Accessed 18 December 2019

³ *ibid.*

Another common quality of miniatures defined by the compilers of *A Hundred Years of British Piano Miniatures* was that they “tended to be written quickly and therefore perhaps had a ‘postcard’ quality.”⁴ My piano pieces presented here are more “postcard” or diaristic, than the other pieces in this portfolio, and so may be the best examples of direct expression of my sustained, experiential, almost subconscious engagement with medieval ideas and the other ideas which influenced my work. I wrote these pieces over the course of a few years, while writing the other pieces. I also wrote many more such short piano pieces during this time. Then I undertook the selection and ordering of the pieces in sets or books; the final part of the composition-*componere* process.

The individual pieces are independent in a way that the parts/sections of the vocal pieces are not. The piano pieces can be played individually or out of order. They *are* ordered however, with the outline of an overall shape if played from start to finish, or several smaller arcs or outlines made from a few consecutive pieces. I also chose *which* sets to put them in (broadly: Three Pieces is a shorter set of longer pieces; Book 2 pushes brevity and simplicity further than Book 1 and includes more general or genre-based titles), and, centrally, I chose to put them in sets at all. Each set or book is an item, a collection into which a player can dip, not only to choose a piece or a programme, but to flick through several of the mostly accessible, sight-read-able pieces at a sitting for enjoyment.

Features

There are several recurring features in these pieces which I see as particularly contributing to the player experience, blurring the performer/audience divide, and facilitating a meditative mood whilst playing.

The pieces are short and generally simple, non-virtuosic. As well as the actual difficulty level, in many cases they also *sound* simple, transparent and non-virtuosic. This may make them sound less like “performance” pieces, turning the attention inwards—and if they are performed, these simpler sounds invite the listener into a private space. This is a general aesthetic point that applies to many of the pieces. For example: *January* and *Clouds* feature few rhythms more complex than crotchets; *Melody* and *Chant for Mechanism* begin with a single line of melody. Alongside the simplicity in construction and aesthetic however, there

⁴ David Power, liner note to *A Hundred Years of British Piano Miniatures*

are moments of drama and contrast, in fast leaps across the keyboard, in dynamics, in melodic flourishes (*Waking, Blossom*). These are all elements which are enjoyable to play; challenging up to a point and rewarding.

Repetition, as explored in *Christmas Music* and elsewhere, can be a meditative element, and even within these short pieces, repetition and repeated ostinati figures are used in several places. Repetition functions in subtly different ways, from the exactly identical last four bars of *Waking*, a release after a piece spanning the dynamics and the range of the keyboard; to the repeated LH figure that continues throughout *Reverie* under the freer improvisatory melody line.

A level of physical engagement, challenge, novel shapes under the fingers, contributes not only to player interest but potentially to a quality of “flow”⁵; meditative does not always mean being still. Examples in these pieces include: playing melodies in parallel 7ths (*Clouds*) or 2nds (*Frost Sky*), RH over LH in *Crystal*, rocking hand position and movements in *Green Peach Tea* and *Meditation*, and the challenge of non. ped. legato at the start of *Chant for Mechanism*. Mental meditative engagement is demanded particularly through the meters and rhythms. Frequent shifts in simple time from 2 to 3 to 4 crotchets in a bar happen frequently, the simplest examples being *January* and *Stepping Stones*. The meter switches between 2/4 and 5/8 or 3/4 and 5/8 in *Melody* and *Frost Sky*. The meter bends mainly to fit the line of the melody or the emotion in *Vanishing* and *Miracles*; encouraging expressive playing. The combination of often very regular, even blocky, rhythms and irregular meter may encourage the mind to wander a certain amount but retain some engagement, hypnotic like a chaotic pendulum.

⁵ See Bridget Grenville-Cleave, *Positive Psychology*, Icon Books, 2016, Chapter 4

Andantino moderato ♩ = 92

Figure 3.1 *Melody* bars 1-8, switching between 5/8 and 3/4

The pieces are structured to balance of familiarity and change, and in some cases a sense of line and narrative which goes through the whole piece. The structures most commonly employed in these pieces are either a loose ternary form, with a return to the opening material (e.g. *Poppies*, *Melody*), or a small-scale unfolding rhapsodic form (*Miracles?*, *Waking*). In several cases, a coda element is added to the end of a piece: most contrastingly in *Consolation*, which itself is placed as a coda to Book 1. As discussed earlier, the pieces appear in books or sets, and thus have potential structures on a larger scale. I leave it up to the performer to discover or invent sets-within-sets, sequences of pieces that due to the textual/title content or musical content or both seem to work well together.

In terms of tonality, harmony, and texture, there can be seen some links to the medieval. I also, as elsewhere, use and lean on the basic tonal background expectations of a modern piano player to give shape, leveraging expectation, familiarity and surprise. *Lydia in Springtime* is fairly consistently modal; other pieces make reference to modes and keys and move between them often without conventional modulation (*Green Peach Tea*, *January*, *Arabesque* (**Fig. 3.2**)), lightly acknowledging tonality, as also in pieces for Schola Cantorum (particularly *Aphorisms* and *Missa Brevis*).



Figure 3.2: *Arabesque* bars 1-6, shifting harmonies

The pieces towards the end of Book 1 that are the most directly emotional allude most specifically to major and particularly *minor* keys and chords (particularly *Miracles*.) The order of the pieces relates to their tonality, moving towards this clearer major-minor. In Book 2, the final piece, *Reverie*, can be read as a resolution to diatonicism/tonality itself, an effect I also use in *Aphorisms* and *Between in God's eternity*.

The influence of 2-part writing can be seen for example in the start of *Lullaby*, in *Melody*, *Come Round* and *January*. Even *Vanishing*, which later becomes most “filmic”, narrative in mood, and pianistic in texture, begins with 2 lines in counterpoint (Fig. 3.3).



Figure 3.3: Opening of *Vanishing*

Parallel intervals, particularly 5ths, 2nds and 7ths, appear frequently. Chords are used as a line, as in *Christmas Music*, in for example *Frost Sky*, *Clouds*.

Sedately ♩ = 40

Figure 3.4: *Clouds*, with chords moving as lines, intervals including stacked 7ths

As in *Christmas Music and Coda*, the title of each piece, along with any performance directions or tempo indication, are the only texts. These titles are frames through which to perceive and understand the pieces dramatically, but they are also *part of the piece* as written and their role may be to be enjoyed as a reference or a private joke. They range from fairly traditionally pictorial titles as might belong to a character or lyric piece (*Stepping Stones, Blossom, Clouds*) to more either obscurely specific (*Green Peach Tea, Come Round* (a bell-ringing term)) or intentionally generic (*Melody, Lullaby*.) *Lullaby* then upends expectations with dramatically contrasting dynamics up to *ff* and the opening lilting motif taken into irregular meters.

Case study: Chant for mechanism

Chant for Mechanism makes clear its medieval influence both with the title and style of notation. But it is written for piano, “mechanism”, a non-medieval instrument that cannot sing or breathe. This sets up a clash of expectations and a challenge for the player, a challenge which is made explicit with the direction to play the first lines *molto legato* without pedal. The notation is non-traditional for piano, but not wildly so. The look, especially on the first page, is of an approximation of chant notation, but only an approximation and there is no need for the player to be familiar with real chant notation. The notes are stemless and the direction “Freely flowing” is given, implying a freedom of rhythm.

Freely flowing (♩ = c.112)



Figure 3.5: Opening of *Chant for Mechanism*, suggestion of medieval chant notation together with modern piano performance directions

Very specific detail of dynamic and pedalling is given in places, another deviation from earlier music notation. The left-hand chords are mostly octaves or triadic: standard piano writing. Overall, there is a mix of specificity and free choice, and a reference to medieval music which is both overt and overtly only a reference.

Tonality or modality is ambiguous. The melody could appear at first by default to be in C major, or perhaps G. A minor is outlined by the start of the third line, and then F and C sharps are introduced. The left hand chords further confuse the issue: a Bb major chord against a B natural in the RH, G minor chord quickly followed by implied A major, an E major chord with a C sharp. Most chords are inversions, further undermining any stability. Each repeat ends with a harmonically unmoored whole-tone scale phrase.

A major element of *Chant for Mechanism* is that the second page is to be repeated “as many times as needed”. Potentially, this piece is not brief at all; potentially it is longer than the rest of this portfolio put together! As in several other pieces, there is a coda section: in this case an elective coda to be played at a time of the player’s choosing. The material of this coda is less in contrast to the rest of the piece than that of for example *Consolation*, *Elliptical* – however, after many repetitions of identical material, any change at all will be very noticeable.

I thought of *Vexations*⁶ while writing the direction to repeat. Satie’s posthumously published piece including the note “Pour se jouer 840 fois de suite ce motif, il sera bon de se préparer

⁶ Probably written in 1899, *Vexations* consists of a single line of music labelled “theme” notated beneath the same theme harmonised intensely chromatically, with the indication “très lent” and the note about playing 840 times.

au préalable, et dans le plus grand silence, par des immobilités sérieuses⁷” has had a profound effect, particularly on pianists and experimental musicians since Cage.⁸ Whether Satie ever expected or intended any player to take this as a challenge, it is the player/performer’s experience that is considered in that note. Those who have taken part in complete playthroughs of the piece have noted calming and/or unnerving mental states, particularly citing the harmony.⁹ The harmonic shifts in *Chant* are less intense and frequent, creating an effect that is less unsettling, but still never quite settled. The meditative mood that may be experienced through playing both these pieces depends upon them *not* being completely static.

The meditative aspect of *Chant* comes through engagement not stasis: the cycling but constantly shifting harmony, the concentration used to play the very limited amount of material precisely and as smoothly as if breathed and sung. If one really was chanting, it would slow the breathing to long, deep breaths. This could happen here too, with the barlines at the end of phrases inviting a pause and perhaps implying a breath before embarking on the next line.

Conclusion

While *Chant for Mechanism* is the most obvious example, echoes of medieval music and ideas can be heard throughout these piano pieces. Titles fulfil various potential roles, from straightforwardly illustrative to intriguing. This is a tradition I trace back to Couperin at least. My decision to place pieces in sets also was inspired by Couperin, by my own experience of exploring his wealth of harpsichord pieces collected together, and also by collections such as Chopin’s Preludes. Many such collections are presented as for education, and that is an area I would be happy for these pieces to be situated, though they were not written with that in mind nor ordered so as to progress in difficulty. Most of all, I composed and collated the pieces with the player’s inner experience in mind. György Kurtág, introducing *Játékok* (Games) for piano, stated that the series was neither exactly a “tutor” nor

⁷ “To play the theme 840 times in succession, it would be advisable to prepare oneself beforehand, and in the deepest silence, by serious immobilities.”

⁸ Michael Nyman, *Experimental music: Cage and beyond*, London: Studio Vista, 1974, p. 37

⁹ E.g. Christopher Hobbs while playing *Vexations* in relay with Gavin Bryars: “The music’s unnerving because it’s impossible to get used to it - the unexpected keeps happening.” Quoted in Gavin Bryars, ‘*Vexations* and its performers’, *JEMS*. <<http://www.users.waitrose.com/~chobbs/Bryars.html>> Accessed November 3 2019

simply “a collection of pieces” but “a possibility for experimenting” in playing the piano. Although my Piano Books and pieces are far more traditional in appearance, I consider that there are experiential possibilities here, and also elements of freedom and experimentation in flicking through such a collection, as well as in an open-ended piece like *Chant for Mechanism*, to be repeated as many times as needed. With Kurtág, I encourage all piano-players to pursue "pleasure in playing, the joy of movement... we should try to create valid proportions, unity and continuity out of the long and short values - just for our own pleasure!"¹⁰

¹⁰ Introductory note by Kurtág, <<https://www.boosey.com/shop/prod/Jatekok-vol-1-Z8377/601163>> Accessed 18 October 2019

4. *Aphorisms: a heart under a stone*

Text

Chapter 4 of Volume 4 Book 5 of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* "A heart under a stone" presents a striking and immediate visual contrast to the rest of the novel. The chapter is a series of individual thoughts, a sentence or two each, spaced out on their own lines, about the nature of love. There is no clear narrative through-line nor, within the chapter, reference to the characters and events of the rest of the story. In the novel, the text of this chapter is the contents of a paper the young man Marius has left for his beloved Cosette to find under a stone in her garden. I first encountered this chapter while flicking through the intimidatingly long novel; as I did, a reader can appreciate the chapter outside of its context, reading it entire or skimming and alighting on individual insights. At the same time, the chapter sums up one of the major arguments of *Les Misérables*, on the transcendental and redemptive nature of human love.

The elision of heavenly and earthly love is also found throughout Medieval thought, expressed for example in motets which overlap Marian devotional texts with secular love lyrics. At the time of composition of *Aphorisms*, I was singing with Schola Cantorum, and encountering such pieces in repertoire. As with *Ash Wednesday*, I wanted to highlight the aspect of religious allusion in the text through music. I do this most explicitly by setting the third section "True love is in despair..." as psalmody, as if a religious text.

In my overall approach to the text and its meaning, I aimed to present the thesis of the chapter as given, but in a paraphrased and transformed form—as the chapter presents the thesis of the overall novel. I also wanted to represent fragmentary aesthetic of the chapter. In the next chapter of *Les Misérables*, Hugo describes Cosette's reactions and feelings upon reading Marius' words. The lines of text appeared individually as "drops of soul" but together produced "the effect of a half-open sanctuary"¹. I aimed for the same in my approach to text setting and music. This meant, first, balancing fragmentation and coherence (each line or section as a "drop" but a cumulative argument with all of them taken together). Secondly, I wanted to evoke a "half-open" quality, and one that suggested the idea of "sanctuary"

¹ Victor Hugo, trans. Isabel Hapgood, *Les Misérables*, Volume IV, Book 5, Chapter 4. Available online at http://www.online-literature.com/victor_hugo/les_miserables/246/

(holiness, somewhere where God and sacred love are or are talked of), elusive but inviting. This relates to my interest in writing music that facilitates, not forces, meditative engagement or a devotional state of mind.

I selected only a few sayings out of a total of over thirty in the chapter, used them out of their original order and made small changes to the wording (which is itself a translation into English from French).² The individual sections of the piece are very short, generally just long enough to contain the arc of a thought, sentence or pair of sentences.

The challenge was to write short individual sections that start and end in themselves and also connect together, potentially echo each other, and hold together as one coherent piece. Each of the six sections is defined by the use of various musical elements outlined below, with textural identity being particularly important.

	Texture or other main characteristics	Tonality/harmony featured	Character
1) <i>I encountered in the street...</i>	Drone(s) and melody	Dorian mode	Flowing
2) <i>On the day...</i>	Mostly rhythmic unison, fast	2nds and 4ths opening out to 3rds	Active
3) <i>True love is in despair...</i> (+ Dialogue)	Homophony like Psalm singing; then natural speech	Around F major with flattened/minor 7th	Settling down...
4) <i>If you are a stone...</i>	In and out of rhythmic unison; imitative	3x intervallic tension and release	...to here
5) <i>What love commences...</i> (+ link section)	Species counterpoint/canon at different intervals (exact canon but fragmentary); drone and melody in link bars	Lines conceived horizontally; clashes then resolutions	Disrupted and active again; link section harking back to the start
6) <i>Love participates..</i>	Exact rhythmic unison, less regular meter	Around C major with off/on Bbs and Ebs	Summation, conclusion, yet slightly open ended

² The complete chapter with my selections highlighted can be found in Appendix 3

I used melodic material to draw links between the sections. This is a technique I had employed in *Ash Wednesday* and would go on to use in *Between in God's eternity*, *Missa Brevis* and *Revelations of Divine Love*.

The opening melody in 1) *I encountered in the street...* is repeated after the free “Oh joy of the birds” segment, establishing its importance, and then again towards the end of the piece before part 6), heralding that end with a reference to the start. Very small amounts of repetition are perceptible and feel significant in such a sparsely scored piece as this. Where the repetition is exact as to pitch, it can be particularly audible in the timbre of the voice.

4) *If you are a stone...* and 6) *Love participates...* have several similarities – starting note, tempo, with 4) serving almost as a false ending. The link between them is made most clear when in 6) “which nothing...” (bars 128-9, 131-2) is sung to the same leap to the F/E 7th as the final “if you, if you...” of 4) (bars 86-7).

86 *f* -- hold back *p* *mp*
 if you, if you are man, are man, be love.
 if you, if you are man, are man, be love.

128 *p* *pp* *ppp*
 — which nothing can con-fine, — which no-thing can ex-tin-guish.—
 — which nothing can con-fine, — which no-thing can ex-tin-guish.—

Figure 4.1: repeated interval in 4) bars 86-90 and 6) bars 128-134

The piece generally holds tonality rather loosely but never loses touch with it. The music leans on the expectations and associations set up by tonality in order to facilitate significant moments, particularly transitions. Reference to tonality is often used at the starts and ends of sections. For example, the change from 2) *On the day...* to 3) *True love is in despair...* the brightness of the former, which appears to end in G major if not further along the circle of

5ths, settles a tone down to a strongly implied F major which is not disrupted for a whole line and half. From 3) into 4) *If you are a stone...* the G leading down to C may be heard as a V-I movement, or resolution to a point of stability, satisfying, from which the music immediately moves on.

Effects and approaches through the piece

The opening melody of 1) *I encountered in the street* is not authentically chant-like in terms of rhythmic flow, but the shapes are reminiscent, the mode is Dorian and the simple drones were specifically inspired by the unwritten drone parts we have frequently added to chants in Schola Cantorum. This sets the tone of the piece as not literally Medieval but breathed through with echoes of that world. The melody is very simple on one level but requires irregularity of rhythms and meter in order to set the words naturally, with a final falling to each line, mirroring the “trickle” of water or starshine in the text.

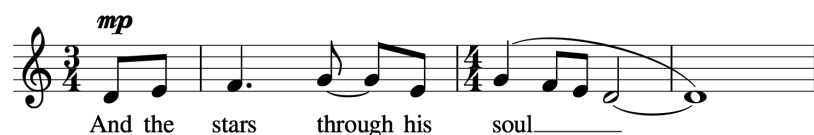


Figure 4.2: 1) *I encountered in the street* bar bars 21-24, voice part 2

In 2) *On the day...* by breaking up the sentence, I create more narrative shape and drama. I split the sentence into three parts: “on the day” “when a woman as she passes before you...” “...emits light as she walks, you are lost, you love!” The weighting of most words is towards the end, with the first, shortest clause repeated individually first, then the next, slightly longer, and finally the rest of the sentence comes tumbling at once (**Fig. 4.3**).

39 **Bright**
mf
 On the day, on the day when a woman as she pas-ses be - fore you___ on the day, on the
 On the day, on the day when a woman as she pas-ses be - fore you___ on the day, on the

45
 day when a woman as she pas-ses be - fore you_ e-mits light_____
 day when a woman as she pas-ses be - fore you_ e-mits light_____

Figure 4.3: opening to 2) *On the day...*

As well as the psalm-style singing already referred to, 3) *True love is in despair* contains the Dialogue section, in which two voices speak, rather than sing, over a very soft hum. The most literal and earthly words “Does she still come to the gardens?” are contained in the centre of the whole piece, and in the middle of this movement in particular. Speech in music can be powerfully effective—or jarring. Here I have prepared the way for the spoken dialogue through the previous singing, in natural rhythm, on single notes. The initial background hum cushions the spoken words at their entry, and removing it allows a musical effect: the shock of the quiet under the spoken “she did not say”.

In 4) *If you are a stone...* I once again set the sentence in three cumulative phrases. Each of the “if you...” exhortations builds on the previous, getting higher in pitch and dynamics. Each is set on a rising phrase: the first with clashing notes close together and a slow crescendo, and the final more confident, quicker, with both parts moving together. “Adamant” (**Fig. 4.4**) is set to an open 5th, the perfect interval made solid and grounded by the timbre of the voices at middle C and G (low, comfortable notes in the respective alto and soprano ranges). It is implied to either be a tonic, settling from the disruption of the F# or returning after a transitory modulation, or, if the key is heard to be G, a plagal chord IV.

76 **As slow as is comfortable, with rubato**

If you are a stone, be adamant.

If you are stone, be adamant;

Figure 4.4: opening of 4) *If you are a stone...* arch shape of first phrase and “adamant” 5th

“Be the tender plant” (bar 84) is set to the fastest moving notes, quavers. “Be love” resolves to a bright major third (bar 90). The words are set clearly and lightly painted by the notes, to draw and hold the listener’s attention until the end of the sentence.

5) *What Love commences...* is the shortest sentence of them all. “What love commences”, repeated multiple times, is a commencement in itself, opening a question, inviting an answer or continuation. It is not immediately clear even what grammatical part of a sentence it is, but it is asked or offered urgently: loud, with canons at different intervals, horizontally planned yet fragmented, not flowing together. The ending (**Fig. 4.5**) uses an archetypal shape of a final cadence, but does not sound finished, ending on an open 5th F and C. While the section could be analysed broadly in either C major or F Lydian, probably the chief reason why the ending does not feel like a resolution is that no single key was established, and harmony itself was hardly suggested by the bare outline of the canon.

103

fin - ished by God alone.

can be fin - ished by God alone.

Figure 4.5: bars 103-107, cadence of 5) *What love commences...*: “by God alone”

The same 5th is then held over the original Dorian opening melody. Resolution is still withheld. With the drone no longer on D and A as in the opening, the earlier static quality is lost, as the notes could be heard either as a D minor 7th, or the two keys of D minor and F major superimposed over each other (**Fig. 4.6**).

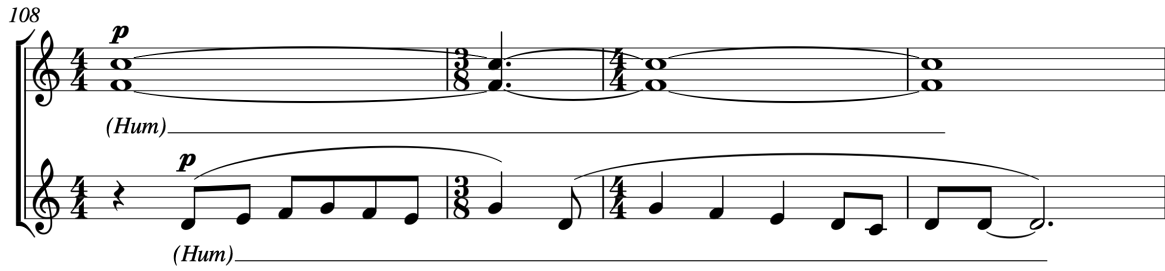


Figure 4.6: link from 5) to 6) with the opening melody returning under the F-C pedal

Finally, the first two bars of 6) *Love participates*, settle the question, outlining a C major triad with a 4-3 suspension. This section is the simplest in several aspects and gains effectiveness by being heard after the other sections, just as the opening C major outline feels most strongly like resolution after resolution has been withheld. The text is stated slowly, simply and in total rhythmic unison for the first time. The ending is very soft and gentle, the melodic shape of both lines the same as the start of the section, but now on the implied chord IV. The final chord without the root hangs in the air, not quite extinguished.

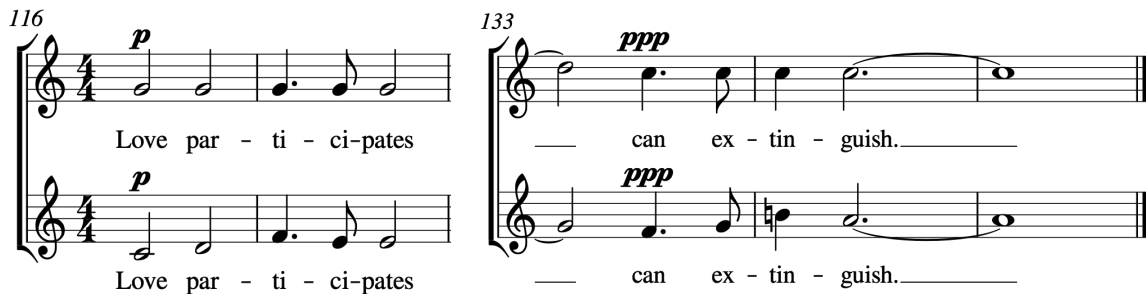


Figure 4.7: opening and closing bars of 6) *Love participates...*: same melodic outline

This could be described as a resolution and return to diatonicism/clear tonality itself: no single cadence but the whole final section is a “resolution” of the whole piece where resolution had remained elusive.

Conclusion

Overall, *Aphorisms* remains one of my favourite pieces. I think it works very successfully and shows many of my musical fingerprints: simplicity, brevity, religious/secular crossover; writing in 2-part texture and writing a piece in short sections. Several of these aspects were present in *Ash Wednesday* and the changes and developments in this piece came mainly with keeping closer to tonality (or modality). Rhythms and particularly meters are also less

complex. I continue to build on these ideas in *Between in God's eternity* (where a “tonal resolution” in the final movement is even clearer) and in *Missa Brevis*, where I move again towards greater complexity, difficulty and scale.

5. *Between in God's eternity*

Between in God's eternity was commissioned as part of a project run by Beth Williamson of the University of Bristol Centre for Medieval Studies, and Bristol Cathedral. My brief was to write a piece, for Schola Cantorum, that would “approach the concept of silence, and the relationship between sound and silence,” possibly responding to ongoing research into sound and silence in Bristol Cathedral.

Beth Williamson, in her introduction on the project blog, set out as a basic tenet that “Silence is not a negative, and not the absence of sound”¹. Several positive qualities of silence, or active types of silence, have been identified, in music, in religion, and in general. Writers in *Silence, Music, Silent Music* explore silences that convey meaning, silences that “speak”—Jenny Doctor in the introduction argues that far from being empty, “musical silences are cognitive in the deepest sense.”² Silences can be participatory and active: Beth Williamson continues: “Anyone who has ever been moved by the sound of people keeping silent together on Remembrance Sunday knows that silence has a powerful presence.”³ *Keeping* silence suggests an action, not an absence of action: Thomas Clifton points out that one can only keep silence if one has the potential to make noise.⁴ The silence of Remembrance Sunday is also an example of a corporate silence. Silence as well as sound can build community: writing of the *media distincto*, the pause for breath in the middle of a psalm verse, in medieval monastic culture, Emma Hornby argues that as well as promoting meditation, the pause embodied the *unity* of breathing and singing together.⁵

At the same time, in narrative and experiential terms, silence *can* represent or be felt as emptiness, nothingness. Context of a silence is key in how it is interpreted. Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim, describing the effect of *Psalom* by Arvo Pärt says that whether its “long-drawn-out pauses ... feel sheltering or terrifying depends on each listener’s state of mind.”⁶

¹ Beth Williamson, ‘Sounds Silence: About the project’ <<https://bristol-cathedral.co.uk/soundssilence/about-the-project/>> Accessed December 2 2019

² Jenny Doctor, ‘Introduction to Nicky Losoff & Jenny Doctor, ed., *Silence, music, silent music*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, p. 1

³ Williamson

⁴ Thomas Clifton, ‘The Poetics of Musical Silence’, *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 62 No. 2 (1976), p. 164

⁵ Emma Hornby, ‘Preliminary Thoughts about Silence in Early Western Chant’ in *Silence, music, silent music*, 2007, p. 145

⁶ Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim, ‘How Silence Makes the Music’, *The New York Times*, 2 October 2019

It seems difficult *not* to ascribe meaning to silences: in the same article, the writer casually characterises musical silences even whilst analysing them: Webern’s silences are “a sea of white” containing “islands of sound”, whilst the silences of Pärt’s *Psalom* are “gaping black” voids, into which the composer “lobs” musical questions.⁷

We perceive different types of silence, differentiated by factors other than volume: physical factors of location and surroundings; the presence of other people; what sounds have come before; the state of mind of the listener. Beth Williamson explores these in the locus of Bristol Cathedral and its different rooms and spaces, noting: “different spaces offer up different varieties of silence. To achieve the... quietest silence in the cathedral, a visitor could seek out a number of smaller, less immediately accessible spaces. But many people seem to seek the silence found in the largest, most public space in the cathedral, that of the nave.”⁸

Silence in the Bible is an ambiguous concept. Many references to silence conceptualise it as a lack and a negative, a failure to speak⁹, relate it to death¹⁰, or implore God to *no longer be* silent¹¹. There are also references to finding and communing with God in the silence or the quiet: God speaks as a “still small voice”¹², hears silent prayer¹³, and Jesus tells his followers to pray quietly rather than ostentatiously¹⁴. Silences are reflective times, particularly in mourning, or to reflect on and repent of one’s sin¹⁵. In the famous passage in Ecclesiastes, silence is located in balance with other elements of life: a time to speak and a time to keep silence.¹⁶ Silence is a ritual element in church services: the phrase “Silence may be kept” appears in Church of England liturgy.

The project emphasised Bristol Cathedral as a space *in the city*, (potentially) accessible to all, not only as a religious building. Beth Williamson writes, “A cathedral is one of very few

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ Williamson

⁹ 2 Kings 18:36, Psalm 32:3, Psalm 50:21, for example

¹⁰ 1 Samuel 2:9, Job 23:17, Psalm 31:17

¹¹ Psalm 83:1, Psalm 109:1

¹² 1 Kings 19:12

¹³ 1 Samuel 1:13

¹⁴ Matthew 6:6

¹⁵ Lamentations 2:10

¹⁶ Ecclesiastes 3:7

places within a city where a person can find silence”. Going into a church or cathedral building, not to take part in an organised act of worship, but to find silence and contemplate alone is as attested in literature down the centuries, including two of the poems I used for this composition.

One further theme that arose in discussion with researcher Nerissa Taysom was the place of women and girls in the story of Bristol, the cathedral and the church in general. On the one hand, Bristol Cathedral ordained the first 32 female priests in the country in 1994¹⁷ and pioneered the use of girl as well as boy choristers¹⁸, while the University of Bristol is known for being the first higher education institution to admit women on the same basis as men, in subjects other than medicine.¹⁹ On the other, clearly, women were and are not always made to feel welcome in the church, excluded or marginalised by its rules, its language and even its architecture. Cathedral staff and musicians reported that the beautiful Norman vaulted Chapter House is a particularly unfriendly acoustic for women’s voices in general. Schola Cantorum is a female group, and I decided to also centre women writers in my choice of texts.

Text selection

The use of existing words, words not written about Bristol Cathedral, lends universality and connected human experience across the centuries. At the same time, the directness and the consistent use of the first person in the texts make them as highly personal, an effect increased by having them sung by a small group of singers. The combination of the private and the shared experience is a cathedral space phenomenon, so I wanted to express it through the text and mechanics of the piece. It felt right to incorporate a Psalm as these too share this private-public, specific-universal combination: highly personal first-person prayers long used in corporate worship.

The structure of a piece as a series of shorter sections, distinct but with textual and musical links, was something I had already used in *Ash Wednesday* and *Aphorisms*. While in *Ash*

¹⁷ Angela Berners-Wilson interviewed by Huma Qureshi ‘I was the first female priest in England’, *The Guardian*, 7 November 2012 <<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2012/nov/07/angela-berners-wilson-first-female-priest-england>> Accessed 4 October 2019

¹⁸ Beth Williamson, ‘Singing the Songs of Mary’, <<https://ecologyofthecathedral.wordpress.com/2017/06/26/thoughts-on-evensong/>> Accessed 12 January 2020

¹⁹ See <<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/university/history/>>

Wednesday I followed the poem's original structure, in *Aphorisms* I had used very short excerpts collaged together out of their original order. In this piece I would develop that idea further, collaging *different* texts and quoting selectively in order to create and highlight the kinds of cross-reference between sections that I had found written into *Ash Wednesday*. By doing this, I moved closer to the "textual adjustment" used in medieval chant repertoires, particularly those of the Old Hispanic Office where routinely "dispersed scriptural passages [were] put together to form a new text, with additions, omissions, rewordings, and paraphrases".²⁰

Text adaptation

My selection and placing together of texts was the first stage in the composition-*componere* process, outlining the piece's structure, pace and shape as well as themes. I took excerpts from a shortlist of poems that had themes of entering a cathedral, hearing from God, sound and speech and silence, then pruned the texts around a list of more specific concepts and words that emerged as recurring, reinforcing their centrality as I did so.²¹

If in *Ash Wednesday* I aimed to set the text faithfully by (among other things) presenting all the words clearly, and in *Aphorisms* I used excerpts to represent one of the main themes of the larger text, here it can be argued that as I more intensively rearranged and recontextualised the original texts, I also reinterpreted them or shifted their original meanings or emphases. I also wished to present a variety of voices, or something like a stream of consciousness, rather than a single didactic argument.

While they are recontextualised, I have not set any of the texts against their original grain. For example, *A Sermon*, which forms the centre of the piece and most directly addresses the idea of silence as communication not absence, is explicitly *not* about an experience in a cathedral—a religious experience takes place *outside* of a traditional place of worship. My recontextualising of this poem within a larger piece about a different location is akin to the sometimes extreme recontextualisation of texts in the Old Hispanic repertory.²² While I

²⁰ Rebecca Maloy, 'Old Hispanic Chant and the Early History of Plainsong', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 67 No. 1 (Spring 2014), p. 9

²¹ See Appendix 4 for the text of the original full poems

²² In a case studied by Rebecca Maloy, for example, a text in praise of the high priest Simon is used as part of a chant in praise of boy martyrs Justus and Pastor. See Maloy, 'Old Hispanic Chant', p. 20

severely abridge and resituate the poem within a larger “cathedral” context, I do not excise references to the outdoors. Within the narrative of the whole piece, this could be understood as a memory, recalled in the cathedral, of another special time, another silence. Additionally, the speaker in the poem finds spiritual connection somewhere they were not expecting it: this nowadays could apply to many visitors entering a cathedral. The “wanderers” in the earlier poem, unsure of stepping inside, are probably more numerous today. The poems had been reinterpreted by the passage of time before I adapted them.

I made most radical changes to the text of *Psalm 5*, re ordering as well as selecting lines. There are no direct quotes longer than one line, but I aimed to reconstruct from the familiar-sounding words a familiar-sounding prayer that flowed plausibly as a short “psalm”. Two ideas in the original psalm are present: coming into the Lord’s house and God blessing and protecting the righteous. The section condemning the speaker’s enemies is omitted, allowing the piece to resolve rather than introducing difficult new questions. Finally, I changed the pronouns: “With favour wilt thou compass him” in the King James version becomes “With favour wilt thou compass her”. This acknowledges the women singing, clarifying our position in the narrative not as disembodied voices or advising angels but as humans to whom this prayer is equally applied. The male listener is by no means excluded; he simply must situate himself in the “her” presented as default and neutral, as women have for centuries had to situate themselves in the default “him”.

Musical content and text setting

Between in God’s eternity is, like *Ash Wednesday* and *Aphorisms*, a piece made of several shorter sections. As well as shared narrative themes, there are shared musical elements between the sections linking them together.

The first line of the final part, *Psalm*, is quoted three times in the first movement (**Fig. 5.1**).



Figure 5.1: First bars of *Bells* and *Psalm 5*; shared melody (different enharmonic spelling) “I will come into thy house”

Research on Old Hispanic Office chants revealed links between chants that would be noticed by singers and could be used for effect or to link concepts²³; here I try to suggest familiarity and set a context within the very small scale of one piece. As the one repeated line overlaps the rest of the words in *Bells*, it also recalls the effect of overlapping sounds from different places in the cathedral, as if the choir were rehearsing a psalm as a visitor entered

Lines of music and text are overlapped in other places throughout the piece. It is a technique of collaging that very literally creates *layers* of meaning. In the second section, *O Wanderer/I felt the glories*, two texts from different poems on similar themes are overlapped in two solo voices, accompanied by a drone in the rest of the choir. This too could be understood as hearing sounds from different areas of a cathedral, or as thoughts coming and going. The two solos proceed in the same meter and tempo, but in divergent apparent keys and sometimes sing words over each other. The theme of sound and silence in the cathedral space blurring the boundary between the past and present is first introduced in this text; the overlapping lines might suggest echoes of prayers of centuries of “musing souls”.

²³ See Emma Hornby, ‘Musical Values and Practice in Old Hispanic Chant’ *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 69 No. 3 (Fall 2016), p. 626

Text setting is largely syllabic, around speaking speed. One example of a melisma is used for word-painting on the word “wandered” in *A Sermon*:



Figure 5.2: *A Sermon* bar 18-19

The most showcased melismas however are in *Psalm 5*, nine notes long and reaching up to an F. This is nowhere near as long as examples of over a hundred notes in the chant repertoire, but in relation to the rest of this piece, and the rest of my vocal settings, it stands out. The melismas highlight the words “Harken” and “Thou” (i.e. God). The shape, the high range comfortable on an open vowel sound in the soprano voice, and the written-in flexibility are in the first context imploring and in the second joyful, a jubilation.²⁴

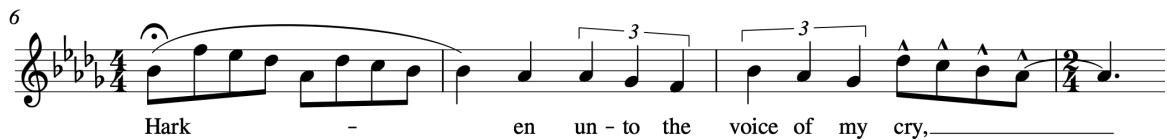


Figure 5.3: *Psalm 5* bar 6-9, melismas on “harken” and “cry”

Wordless singing is also used in *Psalm 5*. As in *Aphorisms* and *Revelations*, the wordless melody is a repeat of an earlier section with words. The wordless verse comes after all the text of this section has been heard; it provides a space to consider the text. Wordless singing may function in a similar way to a long melisma: it is not silence, but it is a lack of words, a relaxation in the delivery of new information. The sound changes from “ooh” to “ah” in bar 35; this practically makes the higher notes more comfortable, but also brings a sense of opening up and out to a more ecstatic jubilation on the melody that previously held the words “Thou wilt bless the righteous”. These words may be, consciously or subconsciously,

²⁴ Maloy, p. 7: *Iubilare*/to “jubilate” from the Psalms came to mean an untexted expression of joy in worship, and the long melismas in the Old Hispanic repertoire have been associated with this idea.

recalled to listeners. Thus the wordless singing is invitational—giving a space listeners to consider what has already been heard, cueing a meaning. Combined with the release of tension as the whole final section resolves to clear tonality, the wordless singing may also open a space for a heightened emotional experience. The words that are retained, and repeated, at the end are the words of comfort: “With favour wilt thou compass her as with a shield”.

As well as setting texts about the effects of silence, I use silence as an element in the piece itself. As Beth Williamson noted different kinds of silence and quiet in the cathedral, I experimented with different kinds here, within the limited context of two to three voice parts. In *O Wanderer/I felt the glories...* the choir sings a quiet open fifth drone throughout. There is never literal silence, but stillness as a constant background. Shorter silences, pauses within music, are most used in *A Sermon, Where, and Psalm 5*.

In the opening bars of *A Sermon*, the silences are doubly anticipatory²⁵ as both the text and the melodic line are fragmented, incomplete. The melody of bar 3, moving from Bb to E natural, suggesting a Lydian scale, frames the following pauses as unstable and full of anticipation.



Figure 5.4: *A Sermon*, bars 1-3

The final bars exemplify this silence-as-tension-element, even in a piece with minimal harmony (Fig .5.5). The final note D is, despite the key signature, not heard as a tonic and feels unresolved (after an Eb in bar 41). This unbalanced effect is increased by the longer rest before the final repetition—itsself a *fourth* “it will be heard” where conventionally a line might be expected to sound three times.

²⁵ see Clifton, p. 164-171, for more on anticipatory and other “temporal” silences.

42

2 *p*
it will be heard; it will be heard; it will be heard.____

3 *p*
It will be heard; it will be heard; it will be heard; it will be heard.____

Figure 5.5: *A Sermon*, bars 42-46

In *Where*, silences are used for an even stronger dramatic, tense effect. The first line contains pauses of unspecified length over nothing, not even rests. I chose to do this partly to leave the metrical length of the pause completely unspecified. I was also playing with the idea of whether silence is “nothing”. Here on the page, the bar contains a held absence of anything; but that will never be true acoustically, with reverberation from the *forte* singing and any background sounds. This space will be coloured by the dissonant, suspended chord, by the word “Alas!” and so may feel like the “black” “empty” “terrifying” silences referred to by da Fonseca-Wollheim, potent even if not absolutely quiet.

It is after this high point of emotional tension that I have written *Silence may be kept*. This phrase appears in the choir’s printed music and also in the text printed in any programme²⁶, in reference to and imitation of an order of service. Audience and singers are invited to participate together in the performance and in a collective experience. The boundaries are blurred between audience and performer, or, since both the rubric and the experience of keeping collective silence may recall a church experience, everyone’s role may be rather that of congregation. Narratively, the piece moves on after this to resolution: soft at first, then more certain. What began as one of those Biblical silences of absence, anticipation, reflection and sadness seems to have settled and passed; perhaps some comfort was recalled in, or spoken out of, that silence.

In *Psalms 5*, silences take the form of rests between phrases of various lengths, and evoke the effect of the *media distincto*, the ceremonial pause, connecting the singers as they sing and rest together. Having just been invited to participate by keeping silence, the audience may

²⁶ Or if printed programmes are not available this point could be announced by the conductor at the beginning of the performance; in the performances so far even though there were printed programmes the conductor has drawn attention to the fact that there will be a period of silence before the final section and that the audience are invited to keep silence with us.

also feel included in this “unity of... breathing together”²⁷. The tune of the psalm is simple and repeated; whilst not strictly metrical, it has a predictable four-line structure. By the end, the audience may be able to “sing along” mentally, and to anticipate the next phrase together with the singers through the periods of silence.

Conclusion

It was through this piece that my interest in how my music might facilitate a meditative mood or open a devotional space came to the fore. This was the third piece I wrote for Schola Cantorum, having been part of the group for two years. I incorporated references to medieval chant such as the use of a cantor and some modal writing, as well as reinterpreting ideas from the medieval approaches into my own idiom, such as the use of melisma or wordless singing, and the ceremonial, communal pause. In this piece I also combined texts and layered meanings, taking the process of textual adjustment further than I yet had. A theme of my chosen texts is silence as text, and throughout the piece I also used silences as part of the piece’s text.

²⁷ Hornby, ‘Preliminary Thoughts’ p. 143

6. *Missa Brevis*

Missa Brevis was composed in 2016-2017 and first performed by Bristol University Schola Cantorum in March 2018. The work is intended for either church or concert performance—the first performance took place in a church building but as part of a concert, not a service. Of all the pieces in this portfolio, this is arguably the one that owes the most to my engagement with medieval music through Schola Cantorum. This is the only non-English text I have used, and also the text which has been set to music many more times than any of the others¹.

Kyrie eleison

The Kyrie eleison is built from two main elements: a flowing, scalic melody with the words sung by a small group, and a series of wordless chords in rhythm, sung beneath it by the rest of the choir. The larger choir group begins on a drone or series of pedal notes, changing at bar 45-46 to the chord sequence. The choir gets louder while the small group melody fades: after the words are sung six times, the wordless chord sequence is repeated once more.

Ky-ri - e e - lei - (i) son, Ky-ri - e e - lei - son,

push on --

Ky - ri - e e lei - - - (i) son,

-- hold back

e - lei - son, e - lei - son.

Figure 6.1: Kyrie eleison melody (bars 1-11)

¹ There is no fixed definition of the sections included a short mass/missa brevis: often the Credo and/or the Gloria is omitted from the full mass text. I included the Gloria but not the Credo.



Figure 6.2: Kyrie eleison chord sequence (bars 65-74)

This movement uses a fairly minimal amount of musical material and processes of repetition and layering found in *Minimalism*. Both the small group melody and chord sequence are used at their original pitch and at a 5th transposition. It was natural for me to think of Arvo Pärt and Holy Minimalism when writing a meditative work with a religious text. His influence is most present in this opening Kyrie and the later Benedictus, with their slow tempo and insistent repetition with slow rate of change.²

By the time I composed *Missa Brevis*, I had been singing regularly with Schola Cantorum for two years. The melodic writing in this Kyrie, while not a soundlike, has naturally moved closer to an authentic medieval chant line in its rhythmic flow and use of melisma than lines in *Ash Wednesday* or *Christmas Music*. Even more profound an influence than the increased familiarity with chant melodies was the experience of singing long sections of chant with the group. Specifically, in the concert in which *Aphorisms* was first performed, we performed chant by Hildegard of Bingen, including *Ave generosa* performed by a small group accompanied by a drone. A drone necessitates staggered breathing, and the un-conducted chant needs to be breathed in time with the other singers. Breathing is controlled and slowed, as in various meditation practices. In the Kyrie, the same slow-breathed time and meditative space is created by the sevenfold repetition and the degree of mental and physical engagement required.

² The Benedictus in particular is completely tonal/triadic, like pieces like *Spiegel im Spiegel*. I also had in mind *My Heart's in the Highlands* for both movements, in which the voice intones each verse of the text on a *single note* as the organ plays through a cyclical chord pattern underneath.

There is a line of development from *Aphorisms* to this piece and this movement in particular. The use of 2-part parallel lines and 5ths in *Aphorisms* prompted John Pickard to suggest I investigate Icelandic twinsong (*tvisöngur*). Distant echoes may be heard: I was inspired once again to write in a Lydian mode and encouraged by this 2-part style that affirms parallel 5ths.

Gloria

The Gloria contrasts and balances the Kyrie. Its text is longer than the Kyrie, the longest text of the whole piece, but the music is of similar length, even slightly shorter, so the rate at which the text moves is much faster. These two first movements represent two ends of the spectrum in medieval-influenced (or medieval-sounding) music: slow vs fast, meditative vs brisk. A different mode is most prominently suggested in each: Lydian in the Kyrie, Mixolydian in the Gloria.

The writing is mainly in 2 vocal parts, with *divisi* decoration at the end of “in excelsis Deo” stacking 5ths and bringing out overtones. I make a change from the structure of the original text by using “Gloria in excelsis Deo” as a refrain, sung by the whole choir, between sections of text sung as verses by semi chorus. The tempo is fast except for one *senza misura* section, like a section of chant in a piece of Notre Dame polyphony. The rhythms/meter of the verse sections are technically irregular, but flowing, with time signatures a best-fit.

In the familiar-but-not-entirely-understood language (to me, and probably to many listeners) I allow melismas and scanning that would be unnatural in English: “et in terra pax hominibus_____” (**Fig. 5.3**) for example, and using the last syllable of “Deo” as an exclamatory, repeated “O! O! O!” in the refrain. This is an idea used in the whole mass: words may be used on a small scale primarily for sonic/rhythmic quality *whilst* having a frame of overall meaning set by familiarity with the meaning of at least a few words in each text. Some more readily-understood individual words are also emphasised or painted: for example the rise and fall on “eleison” (“have mercy”) in the Kyrie could be heard as pleading.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line, starting at bar 11. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The music begins with a *mp* (mezzo-piano) dynamic marking. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. A long melisma is indicated by a horizontal line under the final syllable 'bus' of the text 'Et in ter-ra pax ho - mi - ni - bus_____'. Above the melisma, there are several slurs and a final accent mark (>) pointing to the end of the melisma.

Figure 6.3: Gloria bar 11-13; extended melisma on final syllable

Brisk and flowing ♩ = c. 108

The image shows a musical score for the Gloria opening, 'Deo - o! o! o!'. It consists of three staves. The top staff is labeled 'ALTOS' and has a dynamic marking of *f*. The middle and bottom staves are for piano accompaniment, also marked *f*. The music is in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and starts with a 4/4 time signature, which changes to 2/4 and then back to 4/4. The lyrics are: 'Glo-ri - a, glo-ri - a in ex-cel-sis De-o! o! o! o!'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 6.4: Gloria opening: “Deo – o! o! o!”

The frequent use of open 5ths and modalities, together with the Latin text, are commonly understood signifiers of a medieval “sound”. “Jesu Christe” (Fig. 6.5) is set to almost a cliché of a medieval music soundbite, the parallel 5ths delighted in at a fortissimo dynamic. At the same time, the brighter B natural/E natural also draws attention to this moment. It is a climactic point, on words that the listener is most likely to understand.

The image shows a musical score for the Gloria, bars 79-81, 'Je - su Chris-te.'. It consists of two staves. The top staff is for the vocal line and the bottom staff is for the piano accompaniment. Both are marked with a fortissimo dynamic (*ff*). The music is in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and features parallel 5ths. The lyrics are: 'Je - su Chris-te.'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 6.5: Gloria, bars 79-81

Sanctus

Both the Gloria (especially the refrain) and the Sanctus also drew some inspiration from traditional folk/working songs of Estonia³. I was interested by the musical language of some of these songs, and the fact that they are usually sung by groups of women. Other specific elements borrowed are the use of a leader (Alto 1 here) and chorus in call and response, and the small shift of a single phrase up and down in pitch, first heard at bar 6.⁴ On a conceptual level, setting these two texts of

³ See Folk Songs and Instruments of Estonia, 2013. <<http://eestikultuurist.ut.ee/rahvapillid/index.php/en/>> Accessed 3 November 2019

⁴ This idea, at greater length, appears in *Loomine* and *Mu süda ärka üles* as performed by Ensemble Heinavanker for example. Heinavanker conducted by Margo Kolar, *Songs of Olden Times*, Harmonia Mundi. HMU907488DI, 2013

elevated seriousness and holiness to music suggesting work and the every-day was a making a choice in interpretation: emphasising heaven *and earth* as full of God’s glory, an immanent, every-day holiness.

While both movements have this same broad inspiration and theme, there are also significant differences between my setting of Gloria and Sanctus. The Gloria is the most heavily marked-up movement in terms of dynamics, articulation and accents, whereas the Sanctus is simpler, more repetitive and unmarked. We commonly begin rehearsing a piece in Schola Cantorum with a musical edition that is only lightly marked or unmarked and develop an interpretation during rehearsal. The Sanctus is a more literal or naturalistic representation of a work-song; intended to be sung by a small group and developed through singing together. As the simplest and most repetitive part, it offers a break in intensity after the Kyrie and Gloria.

The opening “Sanctus sanctus sanctus” is prefigured in bar 72 of the Gloria: this pre-echo effect is for the enjoyment of the singers and may not be noticed by the audience.

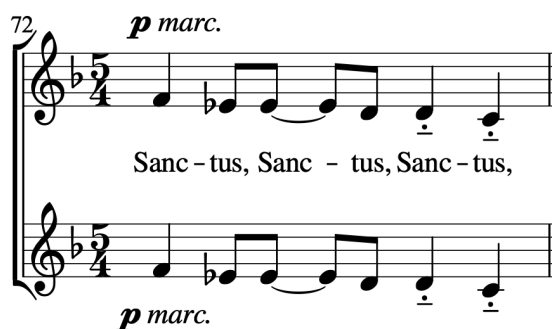


Figure 6.6: Gloria, bar 72

The line and half-rhyme of *Pleni sunt coeli* has delighted me ever since I first came across it in David Fanshawe’s *African Sanctus* (and afterwards in *Missae breves* by Britten and Fauré) and I have set it joyfully, grammatically incomplete as it is, repeated on a rising arc (Fig. 6.7).

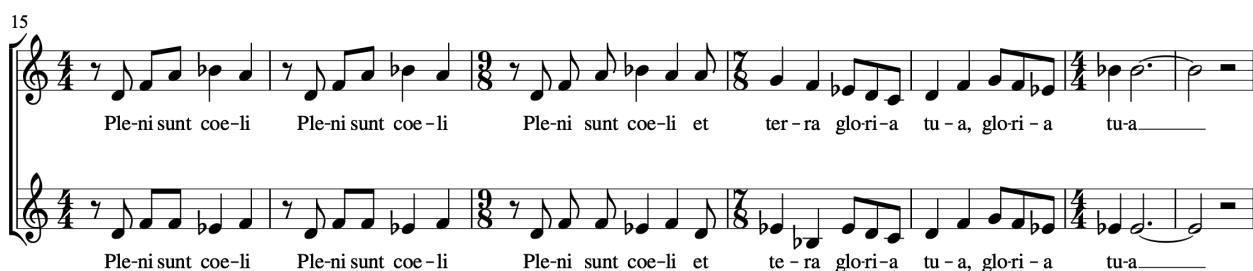


Figure 6.7: “Pleni sunt coeli”, Sanctus bars 15-21

Benedictus

My overall aim in setting the Benedictus text was to convey blessed-ness as warm and peaceful. The half-rhyme “in nomine Domini” appealed to me and, as in the Sanctus, I allowed my natural enjoyment of these syllables to lead the setting.

The image shows a musical score for two staves, likely soprano and alto, in a key signature of three flats (B-flat major) and a 12/8 time signature. The score is numbered 18 at the beginning. The lyrics are: "i - in no - mi - ne — Do - mi - ni" on the top staff and "in — no - mi - ne, no - mi - ne" on the bottom staff. The music features a repeating pattern of 5- and 4-time alternating, with rests and silences used as structuring devices. Dynamics include a forte (f) marking. The melody is purely diatonic and major.

Figure 6.8: Benedictus, bars 18-19, repeated “nomine”, extra internal rhyme

For the first time, the music is purely diatonic and major, although even here there is slight uncertainty at the beginning with Db (chord IV) insisted on until bar 7 and the G natural that clarifies Ab major not appearing until bar 9. Similarly, the meter is very gently irregular – even *regularly* irregular, with a repeating pattern of 5- and 4-time alternating. Rests and silences are used as structuring devices, as are bare octaves.

I was concerned in this movement with building with minimal material and controlling the structure. Lines are repeated exactly with layers added or taken away. Soprano 1s stay on an Eb for almost the whole of the last page. Dynamics, especially gradual crescendos and decrescendos, are used to shape phrases. More contrary motion and fuller harmonies feature. 4ths, 5ths and 8ves still occur frequently between parts, but are filled in and re-characterised with 3rds (which had begun to feature heavily in the Sanctus), and stacked to make 7ths, 9ths and 2nds. A 2-part aesthetic is still apparent however, both here and in the Agnus Dei. Each new idea (bar 6, bar 26) is initially stated in a 2-part form over which other layers are added. Parallel intervals (of 3rds, 2nds or 7ths) move together as one line. The end result is a section which is further from an obviously medieval sound than the earlier movements, but which, due to its static qualities and still parallel movements, does not especially reference any other intervening era. This movement in particular demonstrates the confidence I had gained to write something so diatonic for this group, confidence gained through the

composition and performance of Psalm 5 from *Between in God's eternity* and the final part 6) *Love Participates from Aphorisms*.

Agnus Dei

The Agnus Dei is the darkest and most dramatic of the movements. The interpretation I made of text was straightforward: sadness, seriousness, a focus on the weight of sin and the cost to the Lamb of God. Dynamics are bolder and more extreme than in the Benedictus. The chord clusters that are built up are no longer soft, with frequent minor second clashes. These two consecutive movements are in harmonic areas that are distant from each other (Ab or Db major in Benedictus; D minor or B minor in Agnus Dei), creating a further contrast between them.

As in the Gloria, perfect 5ths feature heavily, the interval heavily associated with medieval music. However, in this movement a different complexion is put upon the interval due to the thicker texture, minor second clashes and insistent regular rhythms. The mood is sad and dark. Also as in the Gloria, I used the idea of varied repeats of melody (rather than true development of material) inspired by singing music by Hildegard of Bingen for example.⁵ “Agnus dei” in bar 54 is an upside-down version of the opening material; “dona nobis pacem” in bar 70 echoes “miserere nobis” in bar 29. This technique is removed from its original context, however: the squareness of the meter takes the music far from flowing chant.

The words “dona nobis pacem”, again some of the most likely to be familiar to listeners, held the greatest weight of expectation in setting for me. I chose to set them extremely clearly but simply and coldly. After the maximum volume and all the dissonance, the movement ends softly and on an unadorned octave. The effect of voices singing octaves was something I noted before writing *Ash Wednesday* as very powerful, an effect to be reserved for occasional use.

Conclusion

Missa Brevis takes inspiration from or makes reference to medieval ideas in three ways. First there is the audible reference to an idea of medieval music: the preponderance of 5ths, the chant-like melodies, monophony and 2-part writing. Second, sometimes overlapping, are the influences from actual medieval music on specific elements which may be less audible: the chant section in the

⁵ *Ave generosa* – each verse starts with an upwards 5th but varies after that

middle of the Gloria inspired by moments in Notre Dame polyphony, varied repeats inspired by Hildegard chants. Finally, there the specific inspirations from the experience of singing medieval music in context of Schola Cantorum: for example, the use of a drone and its effect on singers' breathing, experiments in changing notes of a drone/pedal, use of small group and chorus. Setting a non-English text distantly familiar to many (but not all) listeners brought an interesting set of opportunities. I enjoyed being able to both highlight specific words to draw attention to their meaning and to use words for their sound or internal rhyme, within a larger context established by the texts themselves and the tone I set for each movement.

I started work on this piece before *Between in God's eternity* and continued it after I finished that piece. *Missa Brevis* is therefore the last piece for Schola Cantorum to be completed in this portfolio and, I think, the most accomplished and successful.

7. *Revelations of Divine Love*

The famous lines “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well” come a text sometimes known as *Revelations of Divine Love*, recording the visions or “shewings” experienced by the writer after a bout of serious illness aged 30.¹ The writer was an English Christian mystic and theologian, an anchorite known as Julian after the saint of the church she was attached to. *Revelations of Divine Love* is the first surviving book known to be written by a woman in the English language. The overall message is one of comfort, the text is replete with beautiful phrases and imagery, though also dark and startling moments. It also includes thoroughly argued theology, with each vision followed by an explanation. “All shall be well” is declared, then passionately contested (“Ah good Lord, *how* might all thing be well?”) and ultimately reaffirmed in a blend of rational argument and numinous outpourings. Apart from Biblical texts and the Latin words of the mass, this text is the oldest I have used in a piece in this portfolio, a medieval text.

Text selection

My selection of six abridged passages² by no means summarise the whole work but focus on the one central idea, God’s love to humanity, together with encouragements to hold to this love in times of trial. The broad approach to the text is most similar to the approach I took in *Aphorisms*: limited selections from a work that convey the sense of at least one main theme of the whole text. The text is cut and reordered, but not recontextualised as in *Between in God’s eternity*. I used modernised English but retained some archaic vocabulary and elements of syntax. My intention was to strike a balance between evoking the strangeness of mystic visions with the familiarly unfamiliar language of the age of Chaucer, and acknowledging that Julian was writing in the vernacular of her time as opposed to the higher register of scholarly Latin.³

¹ The full text in original Middle English is available at <<https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/crampton-shewings-of-julian-norwich>> the text in full in original Middle English. There is the Short Text, written immediately after her illness, and the Long Text written later, including more reflection and argued theology.

² There are seven movements in my piece, but the text of the first is the just the first lines of the seventh.

³ Julian describes herself as a simple creature that “cowde no letter” – it is thought perhaps this means of Latin, see Nicholas Lezard, ‘Julian of Norwich’s Heavenly Visions’, *The Guardian*, 5 May 2015

<<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/may/05/revelations-of-divine-love-julian-of-norwich-review-religious-visions>> Accessed 17 Oct 2019

A contemplative journey

In contrast to many of my other pieces, this piece is not at all characterised by brevity, but it is concerned with using minimal materials and intentionally minimal development. Ideas are often simply placed and repeated within a movement. Development does occur over the course of the whole piece, with a general shift from very stark, 2-part influenced textures, to fuller textures and richer harmonies, and with particularly a repetition and expansion of the opening material in the last movement. There is more chromaticism and harmonic complexity than in any piece since *Ash Wednesday*. Much of the complexity is created by overlapping melodic lines. I continue the idea of a piece in the form of several shorter interlinked sections or movements. The overall shape they form is crucial to both the argument of the piece and to how the piece may facilitate reflection and meditative mood.

Medieval references appear in terms of chant-like melody, modes, and intervallic content. There are also in this piece references to other eras and styles particularly of vernacular sacred music: chorales and choruses in particular.

The opening movement uses the shortest piece of text, and is also the shortest in length. The first half of the text “Our good Lord said full blissfully” is repeated over and over before the sentence concludes, “lo! How that I loved thee.” This text is repeated in full at the start of movement 7 which then continues to read from the passage. This approach recalls the first and last parts of *Ash Wednesday*. In that case I had been given the structure by the poet; here, I arranged the text myself.

The opening strings are bright, with a stark texture of open octaves and fifths. The tempo is stately (crotchet = 56) and the beat regular, although the meter shifts between 3 and 4. Accented string chords play offbeat as the voices steadily repeat their phrase and establish the clear beat. The voices and strings proceed as separate choruses playing in parallel: although the piece is harmonically static it is also harmonically ambiguous, partly because of this. The voices hold to their repeated line without regard to the increasingly densely chromatic chords in the strings. The vocal lines frequently return to the note F, which is also the bass note in the strings chords, which shift but do not modulate, so the movement never moves away from this one note. Build-up to the conclusion of the sentence happens only through adding more layers and more volume. This movement is an introduction: it is short, repetitive and fairly static harmonically, like a fanfare.

Movement 2 employs some of the same techniques and text treatment, whilst extending and complicating the material. The first sentence “For our soul is so loved of Him that is highest that it passeth the knowing of all creatures” is also divided into two parts, with the first half repeated many times from bar 20 to 57. Similarly “There is no creature that is made may know” is repeated, and spread around the choir in imitative counterpoint, and, as in movement 1, the last line “how much, how tenderly our Maker loveth us” is the only line sung only once. Cutting up a sentence in this way and repeating a single phrase has two possible effects here, both of which could contribute to a meditative or devotional mood in singers or listeners. It may make the voiced words closer to a purely musical element, with no new words or new meanings presented. This, combined with the repetitive melody, allows the mind to relax⁴ and enter a meditative state. At the same time, the very repetition of the same words without adding any more could give a chance for the mind to deeply focus *on those words*. I was thinking of the practice of *lectio divina*, a monastic practice of reading the Bible slowly and prayerfully, dwelling on the words.⁵ Here the singers remain with one phrase before moving on. The music thus facilitates consideration, even prayerful contemplation. I see my use of repetition as analogous to the use of melisma in chant—both can be seen as either disrupting the meaning of the words or encouraging a deeper engagement with them.⁶ Incompleteness draws the attention gently forwards: as melismas extend syllables in a single word, I repeat incomplete sentences.

The texture in the second movement is less bare than the first; slightly contrapuntal/imitative textures are used in the strings (bars 37-44, 70-78) and the homophonic chorale-like subject of the choir (first heard bar 20) has fuller, warmer harmony than previously. Parallel 5ths are confirmed as an important element of the musical language of the piece from their use melodically in the violins from bar 7. They also function as an audible signifier of “medieval” in music.

⁴ As in the psychology of expectation in music outlined by Leonard Meyer in the 1950s (*Emotion and Meaning in Music*, University of Chicago Press, 1956, p 23-32), and studied in greater scientific detail for example by David Huron (*Sweet anticipation: Music and the psychology of expectation*, The MIT Press, 2006), the use of repetition sets up *and satisfies* expectation, partially or completely releasing the mind from tension.

⁵ Phil Collins, ‘Lectio divina’, 2014, <<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/scripture-engagement/lectio-divina/home>> Accessed 15 January 2020

⁶ For analysis of the function of long melismas in Old Hispanic chant, see Emma Hornby, ‘Musical Values and Practice in Old Hispanic Chant’ *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 69 No. 3 (Fall 2016), p. 595-650

In movement 3, there is continuity but more change, recurring elements taken in new directions. Once again, there are strings-led sections. Here, the strings have a separate, but related, subject (bars 43-54), with the melody of “pray inwardly” outlined at the opening in the *cantabile* violin part.

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is labeled 'A.' and contains a single measure of music in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The notes are G4, A4, B4, C5, and D5, with lyrics 'Pray in-ward-ly' underneath. The bottom staff is labeled 'T.' and contains two measures of music in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The notes are G4, A4, B4, C5, and D5, with lyrics 'Pray in - ward - ly' underneath. Both staves have dynamic markings *mf* and *f* above the notes.

Figure 7.1: melodic shape of “pray inwardly” as it appears in alto bar 14, alto and tenor bars 30-33

The image shows a string section score starting at bar 43. The tempo is marked 'C a tempo' and the performance instruction is 'rubato espress.'. The score includes staves for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The Violin I part is marked 'cantabile' and 'mf'. The Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass parts are marked 'mp'. The Double Bass part has the instruction 'half desks pizz.'. A green box highlights the first measure of the Violin I part, which contains the notes G4, A4, B4, C5, and D5.

Figure 7.2: The strings section from bar 43 uses melody derived from the vocal melody “pray inwardly”, highlighted

In this movement, the strings and the choir are not treated as two discrete blocks, but combined and subdivided in other ways. In the opening section, the voices make a layered texture of their own. The words “full, full, full, full glad” are used as a texture element. Although the syllables are out of context, once the rest of that phrase “Full glad and merry is the Lord of our prayer” has been sounded, repetitions of “full, full glad” may recall the meaning of this whole sentence, which is the essence of the whole text of the movement.

The text is longer, and this movement is most narrative so far, with a wide range of musical subjects and textures. The melody line is often treated as a solo rather than a chorale as in movement 2. Much of the text is delivered at a quiet dynamic, but is always clear to hear through or on top of the texture. The melody line, though still restrained in terms of range and rhythmic flexibility and kept within a mode, is far more varied than previously, with more attention paid by it to the words themselves. There was no word-painting in the first movements, only text delivery and occasional use of melisma to draw attention to a word. Here, the setting of “in dryness and in barrenness” for instance, softly sung over an insistent line limited in range and repeatedly returning to the note D, is more painterly, in sympathy with the sense of the words (Fig. 7.3).

58

A. *p*

For in dry ness and in bar ren ness, in sick-ness and in fee ble ness,

Vln. I *pp*

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Figure 7.3: movement 3, bars 58-62, minimal texture, small range of notes

This movement is more functionally and stably modal, and while still evoking the medieval (with parallel 5ths and chant-like vocal lines), it also suggests a folk or pastoral style. The consistent use of mode is an element of familiarity and certainty that balances the changes made in other areas: the decreased amount of direct repetition, the more varied textures, the

longer text. As in the first two movements, the final line of text, (“...though thee thinketh it savour thee naught but little”) is heard only once, and set clearly in unaccompanied unison sopranos and altos. Finally, this movement introduces an extended coda, a time to reflect on what has gone before.

The fuller textures introduced in sections of movement 3 continue in 4, as the mood changes. After the stable modality of 3, movement 4 contains the most chromaticism so far. Although the sound is very different, 3 and 4 are similarly highly narrative. For most of movement 4, the main vocal line develops and extends with the words, rather than using repeated phrases as in the opening movements. There is some word-painting here too: *wrack* set to a shaking, anguished faster-moving line, the “m” of *moss* elongated to suggest stickiness (bar 30). The only repeated line, “then I understood” (bars 56-63) is set to a descending whole tone scale, leading to complex harmony in rhythmic unison as the voices conclude the text. Instrumental interludes, like the coda to movement 3, illustrate the text and giving time for reflection on the meaning.

The opening material of 4 was in fact only a preview of the opening to 5, which continues the theme and adds a layer of high violin harmonics. This movement is the longest of all, and the most clearly built on regular repetition. The singers sing what is clearly a hymn-tune or a chorus, four regular lines, with the last two repeated. As with the Psalm in *Between in God’s eternity*, I aimed to present something that sounds immediately familiar.

The familiar tune is held on to over shifting harmonies. The settled-unsettled nature of this movement comes from the established material (the strings opening, the SATB “chorus” (first heard bars 18-32), and the intoned “verses” (beginning at bar 47 and bar 97)) being layered and repeated unbendingly, with parts being switched between voices and shifted into different keys. This regularity of meter and constant return to an unchanging theme is perhaps the most traditionally and obviously meditative part of the piece: we have arrived at this moment of stillness through the journey and struggle of the more narrative movements 3 and 4, and will set off into activity again in 6.

Movement 6 uses the longest text, and multiple styles and melodies within one movement, like a smaller version of the entire piece. At the same time as the largest amount of new text appears, musical elements link this movement back to all the previous ones, as they did in the

final part of *Ash Wednesday*. There are echoes of the opening movements particularly in the fragmenting of the text “Ah good Lord, how?” followed by the conclusion of that sentence heard sung only once: “for the great hurt that is come by sin to the creature”. “Amends-making...” (bar 51) is a chorale that recalls movements 2 and 5; the sostenuto “God willeth...” (bar 74), in octaves, slightly suggests “I was led down” in 4; and the following intoned section “For it is God’s will...” (bar 103) also recalls moments in 4 and 5. Shorter strings interludes appear throughout.

We finally arrive at the most famous words, “all shall be well”. By holding them back until now, I set them in context and give them a background. At the same time, they may bring a sense of arrival, familiarity, even if listeners do not know why the words are familiar. I aimed to echo in music the effect of the text, particularly in this movement, in which doubts are aired, ultimately overwhelmed with a numinous revelation of love, but taken seriously, so I repeated “Ah Lord, How might all things be well” throughout. Finally, I intentionally avoided assigning particular “roles” to the voice parts of the choir (basses as the voice of God, sopranos as angels or children, tenors as an everyman figure etc), to emphasise that the text is an argument for all humanity.⁷

“Flee we to our Lord” is sung in canon by the voices only. It is markedly unadorned and unstudied in manner, particularly as the SATB parts are encouraged to mix, creating a sound more like congregational singing. There is the element of indeterminacy in how many times the refrain will be sung. This too is a moment for reflection—the orchestra listening with the audience. The singers too, singing a simple repeated melody may also find this a meditative moment, as in the repeated refrains of the Taizé tradition.⁸

The final movement is the second-shortest movement after the opening, with which it is linked. This movement shows continuity and also – unusually – development, development

⁷ Julian declares in another part of the text: “As God is our Father so God is our Mother”

⁸ “Singing is one of the most essential elements of worship. Short songs, repeated again and again, give it a meditative character. Using just a few words they express a basic reality of faith, quickly grasped by the mind. As the words are sung over many times, this reality gradually penetrates the whole being. Meditative singing thus becomes a way of listening to God. It allows everyone to take part in a time of prayer together and to remain together in attentive waiting on God, without having to fix the length of time too exactly. To open the gates of trust in God, nothing can replace the beauty of human voices united in song.” ‘Meditative Singing’, n.d. <https://www.taize.fr/en_article338.html> accessed December 20 2019

of the material from 1. Both movements open with accented chords: in 7 they are lower, fuller, with dynamics gradated rather than abrupt as in movement 1 (**Fig.7.4, 7.5**). The vocal line, with the same melody as in the opening but transposed, begins this time already in harmony, quietly more certain and confident.

Maestoso ♩ = 56

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass

ff *p* *f* *mf* *mp*

Figure 7.4: Accented opening chords of movement 1, stark and open

♩ = c.60

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass

mf *f* *p* *mf*

mf *f* *p* *mf*

mf *f* *p* *mf*

mf *f* *p* *mf*

mf *f* *p* *mf*

Figure 7.5: Opening chords of movement 7, becoming warmer and fuller

The repetition of the phrase “our good Lord said full blissfully” puts us back firmly in the territory of the opening movement, but the rest of that first phrase: “lo! How that I loved thee” is reached not as a conclusion as in 1. Instead the music moves on, becoming more

narrative, the words sung together in rhythmic unison (Fig. 7.6). The voices lead the movement, with only brief string interludes.

The musical score consists of two systems of staves. The first system covers bars 25-27, and the second system covers bars 28-30. The vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) are in 4/4 time and sing the lyrics in rhythmic unison. The string parts (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, Double Bass) provide accompaniment, with some parts marked 'div.' (divisi) and 'mf' (mezzo-forte). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor), and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *f*, *mf*, and *ff*.

Figure 7.6: “Lo! How I that I loved thee” in movement 7, bars 25-30

The bare intervals and heedless clashes of parallel tonalities of movement 1 have changed in 7 into warm tonality. *Revelations* uses an adapted form of the “resolution to tonality” idea in the final movements of *Aphorisms* and *Between in God’s eternity*. Here, as part of a longer piece, the structure is slightly more complex, with an earlier rest-point in movement 5, followed by the drama and activity of part 6 containing references to other movements, and finally, the resolution which takes the music back to the beginning and then concludes.

Conclusion

This final piece in my portfolio addresses all the main themes of this body of work that had by this time been articulated: medieval influence, approach to text, the facilitation of a meditative or devotional space or mood. It also builds on previous pieces in technique, particularly in order to work on a much larger scale with regard to forces and to piece length.

The shaping of the overall piece as a journey was an overriding concern. I made text selections that got longer through movements 1 to 6, which was setting myself a challenge but was also an intentional choice as to shaping, with the longer and more complex texts leading deeper into contemplation. As in *Between in God’s eternity*, I tried to create a context for the piece within the piece itself, being unable to rely on such a shared context as that of medieval monasticism. This is a cycle of music in which every movement is self-contained but builds on each other to take the listener, and perhaps the musician, further into meditation and the heart of meaning.

In conclusion

After I had begun composing *Revelations of Divine Love*, I recollected that the first time I encountered the lines "all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well" was quoted in T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. I first read that poem around the same time I first read *Ash Wednesday*. This Eliot link is one of several connections between these two pieces written years apart that I can see now as I reflect on the entirety of the music presented in this portfolio.

Text choice has been very important throughout, and I found in *Ash Wednesday*, *Revelations of Divine Love* and the other texts I selected an intriguing and elusive quality, and the potential to draw a reader or listener into contemplation or meditation. Medieval influences and allusions have also been present from the beginning. *Ash Wednesday* and *Revelations* both take long, medieval or medievalistic texts; both are pieces made up of shorter sections or movements; both feature more chromaticism or complex harmonic language, as well as evoking medieval chant in some of their melodies. *Revelations* is a larger scale piece (longer, using larger forces), and the text was significantly adapted and abridged, unlike *Ash Wednesday*. *Ash Wednesday* is the first piece written as part of my PhD programme that I choose to include in this portfolio. It was composed instinctively rather than to a harmonic plan, centring the words and the connections between the words. *Revelations* was also composed in this way, but the years between had been spent not only developing my composition but experiencing medieval chant and processing fragments of research. The differences and similarities between these two pieces illustrate the development and the continuity throughout the whole portfolio. Development may take the form of more specific or "accurate" evocations of the medieval, more advanced writing in terms of forces and complexity¹, but at the same time I gained confidence to write knowingly general or "inaccurate"/transformed allusions, and to use simplicity, brevity and clear tonality.

My experiences with Schola Cantorum over the years — being involved as audience member, singer, occasional conductor, and composer — had a defining influence on my

¹ Compare *Aphorisms* and *Missa Brevis* for example, both of which I consider to be successful pieces for Schola Cantorum: written later, *Missa Brevis* sees some of the techniques and ideas of *Aphorisms* deployed on a larger scale.

practice, and the impact of this group on the trajectory and content of my work cannot be overstated. I had written choral music prior to this programme but did not know it would come to be such a central core of this portfolio, and of my future plans. I intend to write for other choirs and configurations, but also to continue writing for women's voices in particular, a choir configuration that is sometimes seen as limiting. Having an "in residence" role with Schola Cantorum and being intimately involved with the performance of my own compositions was very valuable and I hope to have this kind of practical musical engagement in some future projects.

In these commentaries, I have examined the ways in which the overarching concerns of medieval influence, approach to text, and music facilitating a meditative or devotional mood are addressed in my pieces and informed their construction. I worked out techniques and strategies to respond musically to these ideas, and through my musical response developed and focused my understanding of them. As I said in the introduction, the concerns are inextricably linked. I looked to medieval theory and practice of meditative or devotional engagement, used structures and cross-references within texts to aid musical structuring, and developed my experiential understanding of medieval chant and polyphony through singing it. In the commentaries, I also discussed aspects of my musical style or aesthetic and set my music in the context of my influences and contemporaries.

There is no single way of responding to medieval ideas in music, no single sound that will result. This portfolio presents the ways in which I personally have responded to medieval ideas over the past several years. Together the accompanying commentaries, it may be an especially relevant reference to others seeking to engage with the medieval in their own work, in their own different ways, or to those engaging with another era or genre as stimulus. Similarly, in my consideration of meditative and devotional aspects of music, I bring a practical experience-based and historical viewpoint, which may be useful complementary study to those researching related areas in music. Finally, I have argued for a restoration of the wider understanding of *componere*-composition, in which the choice and adaptation of the text is considered an essential part of the composition process, and from there as part of musical analysis and discussion.

Appendix 1: The Old Hispanic Office Project

The Old Hispanic Office Project was an ERC-funded research project, running from 2013-18 at The University of Bristol. Research into Iberia's early-medieval Christian liturgy has been ongoing in other projects since. The OHO project undertook research into the Old Hispanic (sometimes called "Mozarabic") liturgy, a Latin Christian liturgy celebrated in medieval Iberia from the 7th century to the 11th century. Subsequently, the Old Hispanic liturgy was overtaken by the better known Roman rite (Gregorian chant) and suppressed.

This rite had been little studied previously. One of the major challenges in studying and conducting any kind of musical analysis on this repertoire is that the notation cannot be transcribed or performed from. It contains no specific intervallic or pitch content, beyond indications of whether notes rise or fall. (Just twenty chants from the time also exist in later sources, with pitched notations.) Researchers therefore made careful analysis of musical *patterns*, especially recurring cadences and opening phrases, and of the combination and pacing of text with the melody. Through this and through examination of the choice, combination and adaptation of texts, they explored the melodic language and the distinctive theology of medieval Iberia that was conveyed through all this in the liturgy.

As part of the music department, I had many opportunities to hear updates from the researchers through university and public seminars and events, as well as directly from Emma Hornby and others through a staff and postgraduate writing group and Schola Cantorum.

This specific project ran from 2013-18, but research in the area is ongoing. For more see the project website: <<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/research/old-hispanic-liturgy/>>

Appendix 2: The Schola Cantorum

Background

The University of Bristol Schola Cantorum was established in 2007 by Professor Emma Hornby, a medieval music specialist who also was a lead researcher on the Old Hispanic Office Project (Appendix 1). It is an auditioned group open to female music students, generally comprising 16-20 singers. The Schola Cantorum focuses mainly on medieval music and also sings new music specially composed for it, often commissioned with a brief to encourage composers to engage with the choir's usual medieval repertoire. As well as performing concerts and singing evensong in local churches, the choir can regularly be heard in outreach events, singing as part of lectures, and leading workshops. Emma Hornby reflects:

I set up the choir in 2007 as there was a bit of a gap in the department. There is a wide variety of choirs, open to all, but too few spaces in the high level choirs for the keen singers among the female music undergraduates. The result was that the Schola Cantorum was born. I didn't originally intend to link the choir to my work; however, it soon became clear that the choir could illustrate my research to a wide range of audiences through public workshops and concerts. The volume of these has grown over time and the choir is now well-known for its outreach role... The choir provides an accessible and enjoyable way of demonstrating research to lay audiences.¹

My own involvement

Having heard Schola Cantorum perform in a lecture-recital and a concert, I composed *Ash Wednesday* with them in mind, before joining the group myself the next year.

Whilst is a specialized ensemble made up of music student performers including first study singers, it differs in its essence from a "normal choir" in key ways including our usual repertoire, strengths and rehearsal/performance practises. Chant, read from neumes on a 4-line stave, generally makes up a large part of our repertoire, which also includes Notre Dame polyphony and secular songs and carols of England, France and Spain. Pure tone rather than rich vibrato is encouraged in the medieval repertoire, as are "flat" vowel sounds in many cases (e.g. "A-men" with an A sound as in "hat"). Some special characteristics of the group may be experienced by composers as difficulties or technical limitations, but that is not how I tended to experience them from within, as both performer and composer. Schola Cantorum

¹ Emma Hornby, quoted on "The Schola Cantorum", <<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/research/impact/schola-cantorum/>>, accessed January 20 2020

tends to be a close knit group of female students, with a serious ethos in terms of focus on the music, but also somewhat collaborative or experimental (in the general sense of the word) rehearsal process. Concert programming and choice of pieces, arrangement of some of the medieval pieces (deciding on structure, taking voice parts in and out, adding drone notes, occasionally involving instruments) can be tried out and decided on through rehearsal. At the end of some rehearsals we have “sound circles” in which all singers sit on the floor in a circle with eyes closed and improvise lines and textures for a set amount of time, a performance for no other audience but the singers.

Appendix 3: Full text of the chapter adapted in *Aphorisms: a heart under a stone*, with selections highlighted

Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. Isabel F. Hapgood

(available online at <http://www.online-literature.com/victor_hugo/les_miserables/246/>

Volume IV—SAINT DENIS
Book Fifth—THE END OF WHICH DOES NOT RESEMBLE THE BEGINNING
Chapter IV—*A Heart Beneath a Stone*

THE REDUCTION of the universe to a single being, the expansion of a single being even to God, that is love.

*

Love is the salutation of the angels to the stars.

*

How sad is the soul, when it is sad through love!

*

What a void in the absence of the being who, by herself alone fills the world! Oh! how true it is that the beloved being becomes God. One could comprehend that God might be jealous of this had not God the Father of all evidently made creation for the soul, and the soul for love.

*

The glimpse of a smile beneath a white crape bonnet with a lilac curtain is sufficient to cause the soul to enter into the palace of dreams.

*

God is behind everything, but everything hides God. Things are black, creatures are opaque. To love a being is to render that being transparent.

*

Certain thoughts are prayers. There are moments when, whatever the attitude of the body may be, the soul is on its knees.

*

Parted lovers beguile absence by a thousand chimerical devices, which possess, however, a reality of their own. They are prevented from seeing each other, they cannot write to each other; they discover a multitude of mysterious means to correspond. They send each other the song of the birds, the perfume of the flowers, the smiles of children, the light of the sun, the sighings of the breeze, the rays of stars, all creation. And why not? All the works of God are made to serve love. Love is sufficiently potent to charge all nature with its messages.

*

Oh Spring! Thou art a letter that I write to her.

*

The future belongs to hearts even more than it does to minds. Love, that is the only thing that can occupy and fill eternity. In the infinite, the inexhaustible is requisite.

*

Love participates of the soul itself. It is of the same nature. Like it, it is the divine spark; like it, it is incorruptible, indivisible, imperishable. **It is a point of fire that exists within us, which is immortal and infinite, which nothing can confine, and which nothing can extinguish.** We feel it burning even to the very marrow of our bones, and we see it beaming in the very depths of heaven

*

Oh Love! Adorations! voluptuousness of two minds which understand each other, of two hearts which exchange with each other, of two glances which penetrate each other! You will come to me, will you not, bliss! strolls by twos in the solitudes! Blessed and radiant days! I have sometimes dreamed that from time to time hours detached themselves from the lives of the angels and came here below to traverse the destinies of men.

*

God can add nothing to the happiness of those who love, except to give them endless duration. After a life of love, an eternity of love is, in fact, an augmentation; but to increase in intensity even the ineffable felicity which love bestows on the soul even in this world, is impossible, even to God. God is the plenitude of heaven; love is the plenitude of man.

*

You look at a star for two reasons, because it is luminous, and because it is impenetrable. You have beside you a sweeter radiance and a greater mystery, woman.

*

All of us, whoever we may be, have our respirable beings. We lack air and we stifle. Then we die. To die for lack of love is horrible. Suffocation of the soul.

*

When love has fused and mingled two beings in a sacred and angelic unity, the secret of life has been discovered so far as they are concerned; they are no longer anything more than the two boundaries of the same destiny; they are no longer anything but the two wings of the same spirit. Love, soar.

*

On the day when a woman as she passes before you emits light as she walks, you are lost, you love. But one thing remains for you to do: to think of her so intently that she is constrained to think of you.

*

What love commences can be finished by God alone.

*

True love is in despair and is enchanted over a glove lost or a handkerchief found, and eternity is required for its devotion and its hopes. It is composed both of the infinitely great and the infinitely little.

*

If you are a stone, be adamant; if you are a plant, be the sensitive plant; if you are a man, be love.

*

Nothing suffices for love. We have happiness, we desire paradise; we possess paradise, we desire heaven.

*

Oh ye who love each other, all this is contained in love. Understand how to find it there. Love has contemplation as well as heaven, and more than heaven, it has voluptuousness.

*

"Does she still come to the Luxembourg?" "No, sir." "This is the church where she attends mass, is it not?" "She no longer comes here." "Does she still live in this house?" "She has moved away." "Where has she gone to dwell?" "She did not say."

What a melancholy thing not to know the address of one's soul!

*

Love has its childishness, other passions have their pettinesses. Shame on the passions which belittle man! Honor to the one which makes a child of him!

*

There is one strange thing, do you know it? I dwell in the night. There is a being who carried off my sky when she went away.

*

Oh! would that we were lying side by side in the same grave, hand in hand, and from time to time, in the darkness, gently caressing a finger,—that would suffice for my eternity!

*

Ye who suffer because ye love, love yet more. To die of love, is to live in it.

*

Love. A sombre and starry transfiguration is mingled with this torture. There is ecstasy in agony.

*

Oh joy of the birds! It is because they have nests that they sing.

*

Love is a celestial respiration of the air of paradise.

*

Deep hearts, sage minds, take life as God has made it; it is a long trial, an incomprehensible preparation for an unknown destiny. This destiny, the true one, begins for a man with the first step inside the tomb. Then something appears to him, and he begins to distinguish the definitive. The definitive, meditate upon that word. The living perceive the infinite; the definitive permits itself to be seen only by the dead. In the meanwhile, love and suffer, hope and contemplate. Woe, alas! to him who shall have loved only bodies, forms, appearances! Death will deprive him of all. Try to love souls, you will find them again.

*

I encountered in the street, a very poor young man who was in love. His hat was old, his coat was worn, his elbows were in holes; water trickled through his shoes, and the stars through his soul.

*

What a grand thing it is to be loved! What a far grander thing it is to love! The heart becomes heroic, by dint of passion. It is no longer composed of anything but what is pure; it no longer rests on anything that is not elevated and great. An unworthy thought can no more germinate in it, than a nettle on a glacier. The serene and lofty soul, inaccessible to vulgar passions and emotions, dominating the clouds and the shades of this world, its follies, its lies, its hatreds, its vanities, its miseries, inhabits the blue of heaven, and no longer feels anything but profound and subterranean shocks of destiny, as the crests of mountains feel the shocks of earthquake.

*

If there did not exist some one who loved, the sun would become extinct.

*

Selections highlighted, some wording adjusted. Some phrasing, including the title “a heart under a stone”, came from an edition trans. Charles E. Wilbour, *Les Misérables*, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1994, vol. 2, p. 631)

Appendix 4: Full text of poems used in *Between in God's eternity*, with selections highlighted

Central themes:

- Wandering, entering
- Silence, music
- Speaking, hearing, voice
- Crying / mercy
- God, glory (gold, light)
- (prayer, time/the past, being wrapped about/all around/atmosphere)

EASTER DAWN

Frances Ridley Havergal

In Havergal, Frances Ridley, *The Poetical Works Of Frances Ridley Havergal*, London: James Nisbet & Co., n.d.

It is too calm to be a dream,
Too gravely sweet, too full of power,
Prayer changed to praise this very hour!
Yes, heard and answered! though it seem
Beyond the hope of yesterday,
Beyond the faith that dared to pray,
Yet not beyond the love that heard,
And not beyond the faithful word
On which each trembling prayer may rest,
And win the answer truly best.

Yes, heard and answered! sought and found!
I breathe a golden atmosphere
Of solemn joy, and seem to hear
Within, above, and all around,
The chime of deep cathedral bells,
An early herald peal that tells
A glorious Easter tide begun;
While yet are sparkling in the sun
Large raindrops of the night storm passed,
And days of Lent are gone at last.

IN MILAN CATHEDRAL.

Anna Rebecca Hunt

In Hunt, Anna Rebecca ('Claude Berwick'), *Studies For Poems*, Boston: T.R. Marvin, n.d.

(April, 11.)

O WANDERER, pausing at the door,---
Doubting of things divine,---

The wearier thou of life,---the more
All this domain is thine.

For thee, upon that altar high,---
The symbol-splendours blaze;
Upwards, with clouds of incense, fly
Yearnings that fill thy days;

For thee maintains each column proud
The worship of the years;
For thee the lofty arch is bowed,---
As even with mortal fears;

For thee, O stricken, cowering heir
Of bliss and love untold,---
Visions thy weakness scarce can bear,---
Immortal deeps unfold!

Enter.---The depths of music fill
These echoing spaces fair;
Thy heart can only beat to thrill;---
Thy silence turns to prayer.

The air of death that girds around
Thy spirit and thy life,---
Sinks from thee on this blessed ground,---
With holy victories rife;

Thy heart, beyond its longings weak,---
Has, for the moment, flown;
Earth's bitter voices cannot speak
Where Heaven's is heard alone.

Thou think'st that God has left thee; know'st
No world but thy despair;---
If, to its very deeps thou throw'st
Thy look, then,---He is there!

O worlds that from the soul can sweep
The sickening of its pain!---
O worlds that hold such cordials deep
For heart and blood and brain!

Worlds that in giving death to pride,---
Uplift us to the sky;
Worlds that beneath this roof abide,---
Within these cloisters lie,---

Worlds whose spells waft us to His
throne,---
The Lord of Heavenly powers,---
Who for our sakes made death His own,---
That so might life be ours;

Most merciful! where'er they roam,---

These souls which Thou hast made,---
Here must they breathe the air of home,
Here Earth's proud waves be stayed.

IN COLOGNE CATHEDRAL

Julia Ward Howe

In Howe, Julia Ward, *From Sunset Ridge*, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1898

I felt the glories of the ancient shrine
Wrap me about with harmonies divine.
The childlike faith, the earnest sacrifice,
The inspiration of the truly wise.

Here musing souls for centuries have prayed,
Here hath man's bleeding heart atonement made.
What throngs devout, what aspirations vast
People the dreamy regions of the Past!

But now the splendors of the later thought
Break on my dream, deliverance dearly bought
By martyr spirits that could waste and burn
With pangs enforced, our liberties to earn.

Above the mass-bell the clear sentence rings,
Above the incense soar the angels' wings;
And for the mystic sentence, hid in light,
I see uprise the prophet's brow of might,
Chiding us human children from our toys,
Meting our tasks out with unflinching voice.
O holy Past! O Future, dear to me!
I stand between in God's eternity.

A SERMON

Ada Cambridge

In Cambridge, Ada, *The Manor House and Other Poems*, London: Daldy, Isbister, & Co., 1875

Midsummer, 16.

We have heard many sermons, you and I,
And many more may hear,
When sitting quiet in cathedral nave,
With folded palms and faces meek and grave;---
But few like this one, dear.

We oft-times watch together 'fore the veil,
With reverent, gleaming eyes,
While priestly hands are busy with the folds,---
And pant to see the holy place, which holds
Life's dreadest mysteries.

We watch weak, foolish fingers straying o'er
The brodered boss, to grasp
Vaguely at some small end of thread, and twist

And shake the glorious pattern into mist,
And leave us nought to clasp.

We watch, with eyes dilated, some strong hand
Of nerve and muscle, trace
The grand, faint outlines, erewhile undefined
To our slow earth-enfolded sense, and find
The great design---the shadow from behind---
Dawning before our face.

But seldom do we see, dear, you and I,
The pattern melt in light,
And all the shine flow out on us, uncheck'd---
With eyes of soul and not of intellect---
As we did see that night.

It was a summer-night---the sun was low,
But overlaid the sea,
And made gold-crystals of the wet sea-sand,
And drew our shadows short upon the strand
That stretched out shallowly.

It was a Sunday night---far off we heard
The solemn vesper-chime
From some grey wind-swept steeple by the shore,
Chanting "For ev-er-more! for ev-er-more!"
While the deep sea beat time.

We wandered far that night, dear, you and I,
We wandered out of reach,---
Until the golden distances grew grey,
And narrowed in the glory, as it lay
'Mid horizon and beach.

We wandered far along the lonely waste,
Where seldom foot had trod;
The world behind us dared not to intrude---
The summer silence and the solitude
Were only filled with God.

We sat down on the sand there, you and I,
We sat down awed and dumb,
And watched the fiery circle fall and fall
Through solemn folds of purple, and the small
Soft ripples go and come.

There was not wind enough to stir the reeds
Around us, nor to curl
The sheeny, dimpled surface of the deep;
The waters murmured low, as half in sleep,
With measured swish and swirl.

Two sea-birds came and dabbled in the pools,
And cried their plaintive cry,
As their strong wings swept o'er us as we sat

(No profanation of the stillness that,
But added sanctity).

They flecked the crimson shallows with black streaks,
Low-wheeling to and fro,
Crying their bold, sweet cry, as knowing well
It was a place where God, not man, did dwell---
A father, not a foe.

Ah, we hear many sermons, you and I---
The poor words fall and drown;
But this, whose speech was silence, this has stirred
The stream of years,---and aye it will be heard
As when that sun went down!

DESIRING THE GRACIOUS PRESENCE OF GOD

Anne Steele

In Steele, Anne ('Theodosia'), *Miscellaneous Pieces, In Verse and Prose*, Bristol: W. Pine, 1780

Alas! my heart where is thy absent God,
Arise and search, nor languish hopeless here,
See o'er creation's frame diffus'd abroad,
His power, his wisdom and his love appear!

But chiefly of his sacred word enquire,
There faith and hope diviner glories trace,
Seek with the ardor of sincere desire,
For nature's father is the God of grace.

His sacred word invites me to his feet,
Reveals forgiveness rich and full and free,
The voice of mercy, how divinely sweet!
O be the heavenly accents spoke to me!

God of my life, thy radiant face reveal!
For thou art near though clouds obstruct my sight
Thy voice divine can every cloud dispel,
O speak and give me comfort, give me light!

Thy word permits, commands to seek thy face,
Nor shall the humble mourner seek in vain:
Thou wilt reward the search, thy word of grace
Inviolable for ever must remain.

Thy word of grace---rich treasure of delight!
(O let my soul recall her comforts past)
Not morn's fair dawn is dearer to the sight!
Nor honey sweeter to the longing taste.

And shall those heavenly sweets no more be mine?
Return ye, blissful moments to my heart!
Dispel the cloud, O God of mercy, shine,
And life and peace and happiness impart!

PSALM 5

(King James Version)

¹ Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation.

² **Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God:** for unto thee will I pray.

³ **My voice shalt thou hear in the morning,** O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.

⁴ **For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness:** neither shall evil dwell with thee.

⁵ The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

⁶ Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

⁷ But as for me, **I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy:** and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.

⁸ **Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness** because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.

⁹ For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.

¹⁰ Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee.

¹¹ But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

¹² For **thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass [him] as with a shield.**

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