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Spring 2012

Analytical Studies for Conductors: Project Portfolio

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MUMH 501: Analytical Studies for Conductors

Project Portfolio

Spring 2012

ID: 01024931

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Contents (in order)

Interpretation Paper

Harmonic Analysis (in-score)

Formal Construction Outline (hand-written)

Melodic Analysis (notes)

Melodic Analysis (written examples)

Formal Analysis (chart)

Orchestration and Texture (chart)

Rhythm and Analysis (paper)

Rhythm and Analysis (written examples)

Jason Snyder

Interpretation Paper

MUMH 501: Analytical Studies for Conductors

ID: 01024931

As one of the most significant and demanding choruses in Mendelssohn's Elijah, "Baal We Cry to Thee" contains many elements conductors need to focus upon in order to successfully perform this piece (both as an individual anthem and as an entire major work). Melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, and orchestration are all facets that need to be taken account, all of which play an important part in how the conductor interprets the piece with his/her own ensemble.

The chorus opens with a regal entrance by the men and brass. The conductor should make sure that his/her gesture (both preparatory and subsequent patterns) represents this sound. The initial chord on the text "Baal" is marked with a *sf* dynamic with a decrescendo over the following beat, therefore it is necessary to provide extra emphasis at this moment. This technique is used by the composer throughout this section and this gesture should remain steadfast throughout.

The conductor should be aware that the rhythmic motive of the dotted eighth note followed by the sixteenth note as it is used throughout the A melodic material. The conductor should be vigilant to not subdivide or create a "hook" to the pattern at this moment as the singers and players are able to execute this motive without extra interference.

The women's material is repetitious of the men's entrance with the brass and should be treated in the same manner. However, when the men enter at the end of the women's imitated phrase, the thought process changes both melodically and rhythmically.

The conductor should take extra care to observe a more legato conducting gesture at the A2 melodic material beginning at the end of measure 9. While the end of this material is reminiscent of the rhythmic material in A1 (dotted eighth followed by sixteenth), the idea in this section has more of a flow than the slightly detached material in the opening. Again, the women repeat the idea and the same conducting considerations should be observed.

At measure eighteen the melodic and rhythmic material from melodic section A1 is repeated, however the texture is altered. The voices are canonized beginning with the men and followed by the women. The conductor should make sure that proper cueing occurs at this time as the shift in material is sudden and unexpected.

At measure 22 the women require a cue into the recapitulation of the A2 material. In addition, this gesture needs to contain two other important elements: (1) the legato gesture that is contained in this rhythmic material and (2) the change in dynamics to the *mf* marking. The men will require a cue on the third beat of measure 24. The conductor should also note that the dynamic marking has changed on the text "Baal" from a *sf* with a decrescendo to a *forte* dynamic with a decrescendo and this may need to result in an alteration in the conductor's gesture. Finally, it needs to be noted that all the men carry a harmony at measure 24 rather than the melody they carry previously.

The conductor needs to observe the implied crescendo by the composer between measures 31 and 34. The composer has marked *forte* at measure 31 with a *ff* marked at the second half of measure 33. The conductor needs to

observe the movement of this phrase in the growth of this dynamic and maintain the continuity of the melodic material (which is again recapitulated).

The conductor should immediately reflect the change in character, texture, meter and ideology at measure 34. The piece moves into a $\frac{3}{4}$ meter with the marking *allegro non troppo*. Therefore, the conductor should conduct this section in a “one” pattern. The strings are marked on every pitch while the brass have a longer, sustained line underneath. The conductor should make sure the downbeat of each measure is conducted with significant accentuation. The downbeats are marked with *sf* and *f* frequently for the brass and this quality needs to be reflected in the gesture.

The voices enter at measure 38 and need special attention of their own. The voices will require a cue in the correct *f* dynamic and they will also need a legato gesture (perhaps with the left hand) to acknowledge the fact that the character of their melodic material significantly differs from the instrumental accompaniment. Also, the conductor needs to note the change in dynamics from the “question-answer” material that occurs as the unison voices pair off in call and response.

The conductor should note that all four voices (SATB) have a homophonic entrance and continued material at measure 70 at a *forte* dynamic and a significant cue and gesture should reflect this activity.

Another moment of importance occurs at measure 109 when the sopranos and tenors have a sustained pitch that carries over into the bass/alto entrance one measure later. The conductor needs to indicate the sustaining of this phrase

to the sopranos and tenors while cueing the altos and basses at a *forte* dynamic for their entrance.

A diminuendo occurs significantly for the first time at measure 118 and the conductor should therefore take great care to make sure this takes place over the course of the twenty-odd measures the composer has suggested. The conductor should also take care to note the *forte* dynamic change in the bass line at measure 129 and *sf* entrances for the male/female entrances at measures 134 and 136.

Finally, the conductor should take care to continue the diminuendo in the strings at measure 138. In addition, the strings need to be pulled back to a piano dynamic by measure 140 and appropriately cut off while the voices must be cued at the same time at a *forte* dynamic and pulled back to a *piano* dynamic on the final chord.

“Baal we cry to thee” contains elements that require specific attention from the conductor. From changes in texture, to changes in meter, dynamics and rhythmic themes, the conductor must take care to observe all these facets in order to produce an appropriate interpretation of the piece. This chorus contains several rhythmic and melodic motives that are recapitulated and varying dynamics and textural alterations. Preparing the gestures required to control all these elements takes significant time, consideration and study for proper execution.

"Bad We Cng to Thee"
 Formal Construction

142

37

109

18 + 19

30 + 24 + 20 49

8 + 10 5 + 9 + 5

20 + 14 9 + 10 12 + 8 + 29

A₁ A₂

A₁ A₂ A₁

B₁ B₂

B₁ B₂

B₁ B₂ B₃

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Melodic Analysis

Notes

Measures 1-18 contain the first two phrases (or the first period). A1 occurs first in the male voices. The melody is then repeated with the female voices. This occurs with both A1 and A2 melodic material.

After the first statement of A1 and A2 there is a brief (and reduced) restatement of A1 contained in four measures. There is an alteration of the pitch material in the third measure, where the pitch is placed up a third from the previous melodic statement in measure 4.

After the restatement of A1 there is a full restatement of A2 (mm. 22-30), and another brief restatement of A1 (mm. 30-34); this restatement begins in the tenor voice and is then passed to the soprano line as the voices overlap.

The B section begins with a statement of B1 material (mm. 34-53). This melodic material is passed between the alto/bass and tenor/soprano. Both groups sing a unison line. The B2 material (mm. 54-69) is a call and response between the tenor/soprano and alto/bass, set up similarly to the B1 material but with slightly altered material.

Measures 70-93 and 94-113 are restatements of B1 and B2 twice.

B3 serves as a coda for measures 114-142, where some previous material is familiar in the ascending melodic pattern, but it is altered, and extended in length to pull to the end.

mm. 1-18 = A₁ + A₂

Brief restatement of A₁ (mm. 18-22)

* Alteration of pitch (up a 3rd)

Full restatement of A₂ (mm. 22-30)

Brief restatement of A₁ (mm. 30-34) - begins in tenor - taken over by Sopranos

B₁ (mm. 34-53) Passed between Alto/Bass and Tenor/Soprano

B₂ (mm. 54-69) Call and response in melody between Tenor/Soprano and alto/bass

Answer in alto/bass line ↓

Restatement of B₁ and B₂ twice (mm. 70-93, mm. 94-113)

B₃ (mm. 114-142) - coda material

Formal Analysis
 "Baal We Cry to Thee" from Elijah

Form	18	16	36	24	50
Meter	8 + 10 4/4	4 + 8 + 4	20 + 16	8 + 16	12 + 8 + 30
Melody	A1 A2	A1 A2 A1	B1 B2	B1 B2	B1 B2 B3
Harmony	FM CM/Am V/vi → vi V7→I (Am)	FM CM/Am FM V/vi→vi V7→I (Am) V7→I	FM Gm V-I V-i	FM Gm V-I V-i	FM Gm FM V-I V-i V-I
Orchestration/ Texture	Voices and Brass + Reeds	Canonized voices, thicker texture	Strings (arpeggios) + Brass Voices	Tutti (Voices, Brass, Strings)	no brass
Style	Very marcato		Voices legato and stretched Strings marcato (arpeggios) Brass - marcato		
Dynamics	Voices <i>sf</i> < (repeatedly throughout) <i>sf</i> > <i>f</i> Orchestra: Dynamics match vocal dynamics throughout		<i>f</i> (prominently w/ <i>mf</i> passages)	<i>p</i> (final chord only)	

Orchestration and Texture
 “Baal We Cry to Thee” from Elijah

18

16

Tessitura	Medium to low brass, medium-to-high voices Medium clarinet and oboe
Texture	Bright/Regal
Timbres	Mixed brass w/added oboe and clarinet Male voices by themselves followed by women’s voices by themselves (imitative)
Orchestration	Melody - Tenor I, Oboe, Soprano I, Cello/Bass Accomp - Trumpets, Trombones, Bassoons, Alto I, II Ten II, Sop II

(similar)

Voices: Canonized – creates a thicker, layered texture

Mixed bass, oboe, clarinet, cello/bass

Melody - Tenor 1, Soprano I, Corni in B, Oboe
 Accomp - Corni in F, Bassoon, Trombone

Orchestration and Texture
 “Baal We Cry to Thee” from Elijah

36

24

50

Tessitura	Medium strings that climb to middle range Voices – middle/comfortable range	Strings – Medium-high range Voices – middle/comfortable range	Strings – middle → medium high Voices – middle → medium high
Texture	Lighter but forceful Voices Homophonic, unison	Homophonic – full unison voices, strings light but forceful	(similar)
Timbres	Strings and paired voices (BA) (ST), Stated in unison (voices)	Strings (violin, viola, cello, bass) Voices (SATB – unison)	Strings Voices (BA) (ST) stated in unison
Orchestration	Melody – voices, traded between bass/alto, and soprano/tenor Accomp – Strings (violin, viola, cello, bass)	Melody – all unison voices Accomp – Strings	Melody – all unison voices (SATB) Accomp - strings

Rhythmic and Stylistic Analysis of “Baal We Cry to Thee” from Elijah

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Rhythm and tempo have a great deal to do with the form of “Baal We Cry to Thee,” a chorus from the oratorio Elijah. While the tempo remains primarily steady throughout the piece, it is the rhythmic motives that help to drive the piece forward to its climax, and it is the change in rhythm, particularly the orchestration that helps define the form of the piece and move it toward its conclusion.

The basic tempo is described in Italian as *andante grave e maestoso*, or “at a walking pace, slowly and solemnly and stately and dignified.” While there is no metronome marking, one can assume that at an *andante* tempo the piece could be marked approximately 76 to 108bpm. In reading the “slowly, solemnly and stately,” the conductor could interpret this at the slower end of the spectrum for the piece, with the realization that he/she would need to leave room for the passages in the piece where the rhythm announces the “stately and dignified” moments.

The tempo remains steadily the same for the A section of the piece. There is a significant change in the tempo at the B section (mm. 34) when the piece moves into three quarter time. The tempo marking at this point in the piece moves to *allegro non troppo* or “fast, but not too fast.”

“Baal We Cry to Thee” is defined through several rhythmic motives. In the A section, “Baal” is dominated by the dotted rhythm, particularly the dotted eighth followed by the sixteenth. The smaller phrases amongst these rhythmic motives begin with two quarter notes followed by the aforementioned dotted rhythms. The piece is propelled toward the climax of the A section in a unique way.

Mendelssohn puts the rhythmic motives into canon. Beginning with the men in

measure 18 the motive begins and is then begun again by the women two beats later. This increases the harmonic tension of the piece. The dotted rhythm of the first group (men) line up with the straight quarter-note rhythms of the second group (women). The rhythm of the first group is then slowed with half note and quarter-note movement, allowing both groups to realign for the imperfect authentic cadence at the end of the phrase.

Next, the A2 material is repeated and again the A1 material is split into canon at measure 30 helping to propel the piece to the end of the A section. The canon material helps to move the piece with a feeling of urgency and need for rhythmic (and melodic/harmonic) resolution.

The constant eighth note arpeggios in the strings that begin in measure 34 control the rhythm of the B section. The marking *sempre staccato* is given to the strings in measure 38 (always staccato). The voices however have much slower rhythmic material consisting of half and quarter notes. The rhythmic motive then becomes even slower at measure 54 with the dotted half notes. In these passages the phrases begin with more sustained rhythms and conclude with faster quarter, dotted eighth and eighth note rhythms. The B section rhythm reaches its climax around measure 109 when the highest pitch in the melodic material is held for the longest duration of time in the rhythmic material (dotted half tied to another half note). After measure 109 the rhythmic material is quickened again in quarter and half note alterations.

The piece comes to a conclusion with the rhythm in the soprano line sustaining tied dotted half notes while the lower three parts move in half/quarter

alternations underneath. Finally the strings end at measure 140 while the voices sustain on the tied dotted half note.

“Baal We Cry to Thee” also has a great deal of dynamic markings, although the piece stays primarily in “forte” dynamic in one form or the other (*f*, *sf*, or *mf*) throughout the entirety of the chorus. The phrases in the A material all begin with a *sf* on the text “Baal.” The other word that is also given dynamic consideration is the word “hear” in measure 12 and throughout.

The first major climax given significant dynamic consideration occurs in measure 22. A crescendo is marked for the voices as the canon of the A material synchs together and builds to a *ff* dynamic to end the phrase. The softest overall dynamic in the piece, *mf*, begins the next phrase in measure 22-23. This time, when the “Baal” material enters the dynamic is a forte with a decrescendo (note it is not marked *sf*). Another climax appears at the end of the A section when the material is once again used in canon and crescendos into a *ff* dynamic.

The strings are given a *f* marking at the onset of the B material at measure 34 with a *sf* marking in measure 36. The lower voices are given a *f* dynamic (altos and bases) while the upper voices are given a *mf* marking as they take over the material at measure 42. The various voices alternate between the *f* and *mf* markings throughout the B sections. When the sopranos float on the sustained dotted half note beginning in measure 122, the lower voices are given a *f* marking while the sopranos are instructed to get softer after they begin their sustained pitch. The piece ends with the voices moving from a sustained two-measure *f* to a three beat *p* in the last chord.

... we cry to thee from Elijah
Rhythm and Style Analysis
Examples

Rhythmic Motives

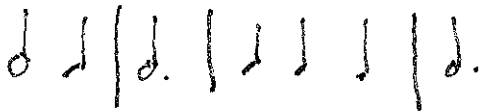
A Section



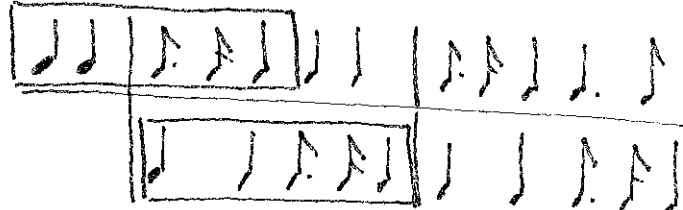
B Section - strings



B Section - voices



A Section - Canon



* Rhythm extended for line-up for cadence

