FROM PASSION TO COMPASSION: A STUDY OF NON-CHRISTOCENTRIC PASSION COMPOSITIONS FOCUSING ON THE SETTINGS OF DAVID LANG AND CRAIG HELLA JOHNSON

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May 2022

Submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of D.Mus. Performance Studies

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Abstract

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Andrew Chun Fung Hon

(Under the direction of Dr. Jean-Sébastien Vallée)

REB File #: 21-03-006

The Passion, in the context of the Christian Church, is the story of the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus as recorded in the four canonical Gospels of the Bible: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Musical settings of the Passion narratives have existed since the Middle Ages, used within the Roman Catholic liturgy. Throughout history, Passion compositions have taken many forms, some even detached entirely from liturgical practices, but the concept of using Gospel texts as the basis of the narrative remained unchanged until the second half of the twentieth century. The past few decades saw a trend in secularization of the Passion genre with increasing diversity in subject matter, style, and expression, but no previous study has given a full examination on this new phenomenon.

This paper examines twenty-first-century Passion compositions that set the story of a protagonist other than Jesus, what I call non-Christocentric Passions. I focus on two works that serve to illustrate many important aspects of the new trend of Passion writing: David Lang's *the little match girl passion* (2007) and Craig Hella Johnson's *Considering Matthew Shepard* (2016). I study how these two works allude to and diverge from past traditions and what uncomfortable elements these allusions and divergences create, particularly when manifested in the narrative and music. I also examine how the two works elicit the listener's emotional response from the perspectives of the composers and my own experience as a conductor and chorister. Lastly, I examine how the two works respond to social issues of our time, particularly the suffering of minority and underrepresented groups in society, and how contemporary composers interpret Jesus's passion in modern contexts.

Résumé

DE LA PASSION À LA COMPASSION : UNE ÉTUDE DES COMPOSITIONS DE PASSIONS NON CHRISTO-CENTRÉES AU TRAVERS DES CAS DE DAVID LANG ET CRAIG HELLA JOHNSON

Andrew Chun Fung Hon

(Sous la direction de Dr. Jean-Sébastien Vallée)

Numéro de dossier du REB : 21-03-006

La passion, dans le contexte de l'Église chrétienne, est le récit de la souffrance et de la crucifixion de Jésus telle qu'elle est rapportée dans les quatre évangiles canoniques de la Bible : Matthieu, Marc, Luc et Jean. La mise en musique de la passion dans le cadre de la liturgie catholique existe depuis le Moyen Âge. À travers l'histoire, les mises en musique de récits de la passion ont pris de nombreuses formes, dans certains cas totalement détachées des pratiques liturgiques. Cependant, l'utilisation des textes évangéliques comme base du récit est restée inchangée jusqu'à la seconde moitié du 20e siècle. Les dernières décennies ont amené une sécularisation de la passion par le biais d'une diversité croissante de sujets, de styles et d'expressions. Malgré ce développement, aucune étude n'a encore fourni un examen complet de ce phénomène.

Cette dissertation examine les compositions inspirées des récits de la passion composées au 21e siècle et mettant en scène un protagoniste autre que Jésus, ce que j'appelle ici des passions non christo-centrées. Je me concentre sur deux œuvres illustrant de nombreux aspects importants de cette nouvelle tendance: *the little match girl passion* (2007) de David Lang et *Considering Matthew Shepard* (2016) de Craig Hella Johnson. Dans ce document, je discute de la manière dont ces deux œuvres sont à la fois similaires et divergentes des traditions passées. De plus, je discute de l'inclusion et du traitement d'éléments inconfortables créés par le texte et la musique. Considérant l'intention du compositeur ainsi que mon expérience comme chef et choriste, j'examine également comment ces deux œuvres suscitent une réponse émotionnelle unique chez l'auditeur. Finalement, j'examine comment ces deux œuvres utilisent le narratif de la passion de Jésus pour répondre et commenter sur les problèmes sociaux de notre époque, en particulier la souffrance des groupes minoritaires et sous-représentés, et comment les compositeurs contemporains situent la passion de Jésus dans un contexte moderne.

獻給我的父母，他們一直支持我對音樂和人生意義的追求，讓我去了很多國家和地方，留在家裡的時間卻很少。

To my parents for their constant support for my pursuits of music and the meaning of life, which have brought me to many countries and places but left me with little time at home.

Acknowledgement

They always say that it takes a village to finish a doctoral degree. It is impossible to name all the people whom I had the privilege to work with over the past seven years of graduate studies, but please know that your support and friendships are most appreciated. Particularly, my gratitude goes to the many teachers and mentors whom I encountered in Hong Kong, the San Francisco Bay Area, Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky, New Haven, and Montreal—you have prepared me for a bigger stage.

Special thanks to Dr. Jean-Sébastien Vallée for always believing in my ability and providing excellent guidance and opportunities; and along with the rest of my doctoral committee, Dr. Lloyd Whitesell and Prof. Guillaume Bourgogne—thank you for contributing to my research from multiple fields of expertise and challenging me to find my own voice.

One of the great opportunities of studying modern Passions is meeting the composers. The enthusiasm and generosity I received from David Lang and Craig Hella Johnson/Conspirare (Ann McNair, Managing Director) truly exceeded my expectation, for which I am forever indebted.

Thank you to the Choir of the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul (A&P Choir) and their Director of Music, Dr. Jonathan Oldengarm, for inviting me to conduct the Quebec premiere of *Considering Matthew Shepard* (initially planned for January 22, 2022, but postponed to May as a video recording project due to Covid-19 restrictions). You are some of the best musicians I have ever had the privilege to work with, and I am so blessed to have been a part of you, both as a chorister and conductor, in the past three years. The performance is financially supported by the Church, an FRQSC Doctoral Research Fellowship, and crowdsourcing efforts. The scores used in the performance are funded by the Program to Support Graduate Conducting Students in the Study and Performance of Music by Composers from Underrepresented Groups, a collaborative initiative between the Schulich School of Music and the Marvin Duchow Music Library at McGill University.

Last but not least, thank you to God for the strength and wisdom to complete this doctoral journey and for inspiring so many Passion compositions. (Philippians 3:13-14)

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Introduction

By coining the term non-Christocentric Passion, I have no intention to trivialize the Christian influence on the Passion genre throughout history nor to subvert Christianity itself. In fact, the association between the Passion genre and Christianity, whether historically or culturally, is indisputable. Therefore, the core considerations for me in the current study lie in the contrary direction: *Can there be a Passion that is not about Jesus at all? If so, what is it trying to convey and how should we approach it?* I hope this paper will even elucidate the fundamentals of Jesus's Passion that inspired so many musical settings throughout history.

Some observations from etymology might illuminate the issue at stake: the word "passion" derives from the past-participial stem of Latin *pati*, and hence Late Latin *passionem* (nominative: *passio*), meaning "suffering" or "enduring."[1] Furthermore, it has the same word root as another English word "passive," which connotes "a capacity in matter for being acted upon."[2] These definitions certainly correspond to the traditional Passion narrative, in which Jesus's suffering can be interpreted as both a result of the persecution of his enemies and a fulfillment of a divine mission to redemption given by the Father.[3] Yet, many fundamental elements so poignantly expressed in the Passion, such as scapegoating, betrayal, scorn, guilt, and catharsis, just to name a few, are also part of the human experience as much as they are of Jesus's. In other words, perhaps the Passion is essentially about the people—*us*—and how we

[1] *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. "Passion (n.)," accessed September 18, 2020, https://www.etymonline.com/word/passion.

[2] *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. "Passive (adj.)," accessed September 18, 2020, https://www.etymonline.com/word/passive?ref=etymonline_crossreference.

[3] See John 18:11: "Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" [King James Version, hereinafter KJV].

react to someone else's suffering. This humanistic reading of the Passion, which can already be found in the Passions of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), is a central part of my research.

To be sure, no musical genre comes into existence overnight. The non-Christocentric Passion, as an outgrowth of the traditional Passion, is no exception. Therefore, the first chapter of this paper is a brief survey of the Passion from the Middle Ages to our time, highlighting a resurgence of the genre at the turn of the twenty-first century. The second chapter builds on the background established in the previous chapter but focuses on the secularization of the Passion (which, to a large extent, refers to a separation from liturgical practices) that eventually led to its dechristianization. Given the seemingly inextricable connection between the Passion and Christian culture (that is, including all cultural practices around Christianity), I acknowledge the controversies that such dechristianization entails but argue for its relevance in the twenty-first century, supported by historical observations. Therefore, this chapter is prefaced by a case study of J. S. Bach's Passions—works that deeply influenced David Lang and Craig Hella Johnson—and their reception history in the United States. I will show that as the Passion gradually moved towards the public arena, it also detached itself from its original context, indirectly setting the stage for the non-Christocentric Passion that emerged from this larger secularization movement. The second half of the chapter will survey notable non-Christocentric Passion compositions that illustrate the new trend of Passion writing.

Chapters three and four look at the two modern Passions in question: David Lang's *the little match girl passion* (2007) and Craig Hella Johnson's *Considering Matthew Shepard* (2016). Detailed analyses of Lang's and Johnson's Passions will show how the two works both allude to and diverge from past traditions, especially those established by Bach, and lead me to decipher the meanings that these allusions and divergences create, particularly when they are manifested

in the narrative and music. I will also examine how the two works elicit the listener's emotional response from the perspectives of 1) the composers, whom I had the privilege to dialogue with, and 2) my own experience as a conductor and chorister. Lastly, I will examine the political and uncomfortable elements in these two works in light of relevant social issues in the twenty-first century and how they can be interpreted as subversive.[4] I will approach this sensitive topic by considering the composers' intentions, materiality of their works, and aesthetic experience from the perspectives of the performer and the listener[5] (What do the composers want to express? How do they express it? How is it, then, received by the performer and listener?). By doing so, I will demonstrate how Lang's and Johnson's Passions exemplify many salient features of a new trend that continues to develop and flourish as we enter the third decade of the twenty-first century.

[4] In his 2018 monograph *Music and Politics*, James Garratt defines musical subversion as clandestine musical resistance "associated with micro actions rather than grand spectacles and with subversive activities rather than open dissent." "Critique, Subversion and Negation," *Music and Politics: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 156-158.

[5] These three perspectives are borrowed from Garratt's approach to music's ability to exercise political agency. Garratt considers politics in a broad sense, which does not necessarily involve an institution or government, but also shared norms, beliefs and values of a society. "Key Concepts and Issues," *Music and Politics: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 23.

Chapter One

A Survey of the Passion Genre

The Passion, in the context of the Christian Church, is the story of the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth as recorded in the four canonical Gospels of the Bible: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. According to the Roman Catholic liturgy, it is customary to recite the Passion texts as Gospel lessons during Holy Week—the last week of Lent before Easter: Matthew (26-28) on Palm Sunday, Mark (14-16) on Holy Tuesday, Luke (22-24) on Holy Wednesday (also called "Spy Wednesday"), and John (13-21) on Good Friday. Throughout history, Passion compositions have taken many forms, some even detached entirely from liturgical practices, but the concept of using Gospel texts as the basis of the narrative remained unchanged until the second half of the twentieth century when Passion composers began to challenge the tradition by adopting suffering protagonists other than Jesus. The past few decades saw a trend in secularization of the Passion genre with increasing diversity in subject matter, style, and expression. In order to examine this new trend, a survey of the history of the musical Passion is necessary.

1.1 Middle Ages

Musical settings of the Passion narratives date back at least to the fifth century.[6] The earliest report of the use of the Passion in a religious ceremony is that of the pilgrim Egeria who visited Jerusalem in the fourth century and described the services held there during Holy Week.[7]

[6] Manfred F. Bukofzer, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton), **quoted in** Johann Jacob Van Niekerk, "Messiahs and Pariahs: Suffering and Social Conscience in the Passion Genre from J.S. Bach's St. Matthew Passion (1727) to David Lang's *the little match girl passion* (2007)" (DMA diss., University of Washington, 2014), 1, accessed November 2, 2020, http://hdl.handle.net/1773/26540.

[7] Kurt von Fischer and Werner Braun, "Passion," *Grove Music Online*, accessed January 9, 2022.

Although it is believed that the chanting of the Passion originated in the early Middle Ages, it was not until the twelfth century that it was notated with precise pitches. By the thirteenth century, the Passion can be found in neumatic or square notation, first in French sources and later in English, Spanish, Hungarian, German, and Italian ones,[8] but there was not a standardized practice within the Roman Catholic liturgy.

By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it became universal to indicate different characters in the Passion narrative—the letter "C" (Cantor) for the Evangelist, the Maltese cross "✠" for Jesus, and the letter "S" (Synagoga) for the *turba* (a chorus that sings the text of more than one person, often in a mob mentality), and other minor characters, such as Judas, Peter, and Pilate. Medieval notation of the Passion was usually not explicit because singers would rely on cantillation models for performance. Figure 1 shows an excerpt of a Plainchant setting of the Passion according to St. John from the pre-1955 Holy Week rites, prior to the liturgical reforms of Pope Pius XII. It can be assumed that this would resemble how the Passion was chanted in the late-medieval church, where specific voice types are assigned for the characters: the Evangelist is a tenor, Jesus is a bass, and the rest are higher voices approximately in the alto range.[9]

[8] Fischer and Braun, "Passion."

[9] Chester L. Alwes, "Sacred Choral Music of the Renaissance, II (1525-1600)," *A History of Western Choral Music, Volume 1* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

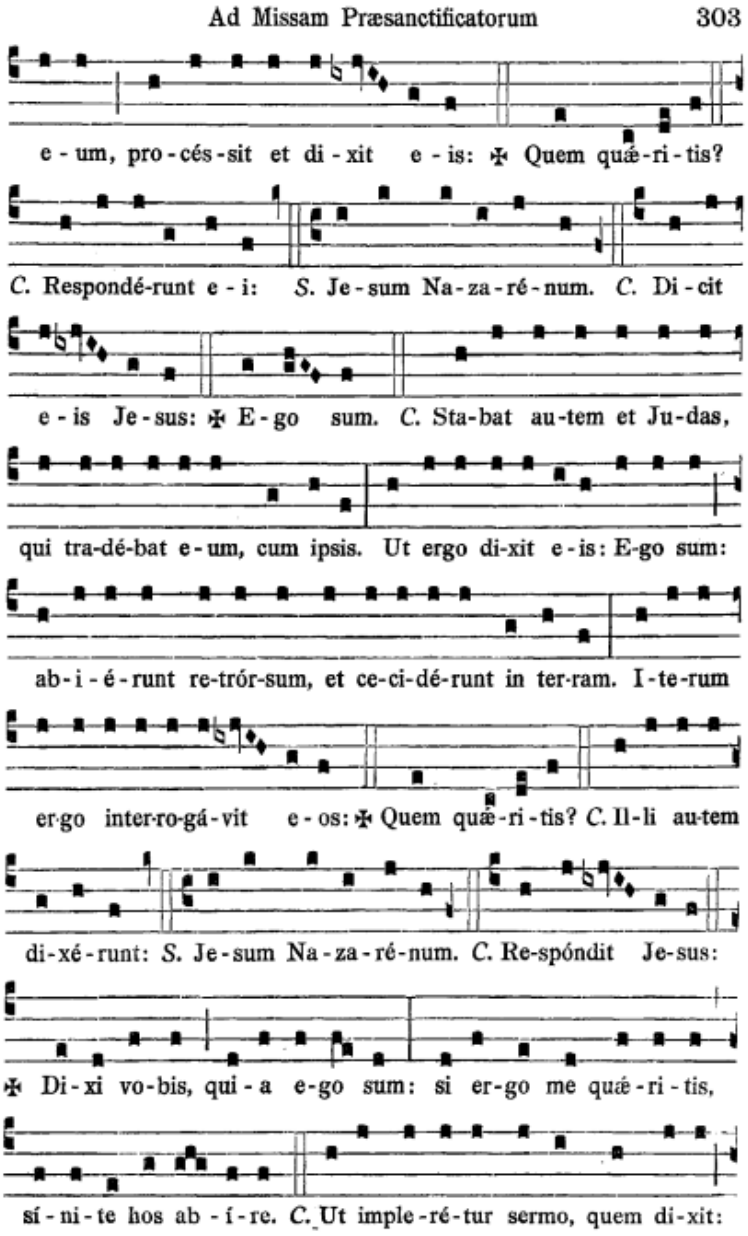

Figure 1: Ratisbonae, ed., "St. John Passion," from "Feria VI in Parasceve [Good Friday]" in *Officium Majoris Hebdomadae et Octavae Paschae* (Germany: n.p., 1923).

1.2 Renaissance

The earliest polyphonic Passion settings can be traced back to the fifteenth century. They existed mainly in two types: the responsorial Passion of English origin and the through-composed Passion (also referred to as the "motet Passion") of Italian origin. The responsorial Passion sets

the narrative portions in monophony and the words of Jesus and the *turba* in polyphony,[10] such as Richard Davy's *St. Matthew Passion* (c. 1490) from the Eton Choirbook (Eton MS 178). The through-composed Passion sets the complete text including the narration in polyphony,[11] such as Antoine de Longueval's *Passio Domini nostri Jesu Christi* (c. 1504),[12] written for Ercole I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara. Longueval's Passion is also considered a *summa Passionis*, meaning that its narrative is made up of sections taken from all four Gospels, including all seven words of Jesus on the cross, and a polyphonic *exordium* and *conclusio*.[13]

In the sixteenth century, the responsorial Passion became the predominant style of the Catholic Passion. Notable settings include an unnamed Passion by Claudin de Sermisy (Paris, 1534) as well as the *St. Matthew* and the *St. John Passions* by Tomás Luis de Victoria (Rome, 1585). After the Protestant Reformation, the Italian *summa Passionis* was highly influential and widely imitated in Lutheran Germany. Another popular model in Germany was the German responsorial Passion, such as Johann Walter's *St. Matthew Passion* (c. 1530), in which the narrative portions are set monophonically while the *turba* sections are set in the Italian *falsobordone*, a recitation style based on root-position triads.

1.3 Baroque Period

In the late seventeenth century, German-speaking areas largely dominated the scene of Passion composition. Among the most famous settings of this century are three Dresden Passions by Heinrich Schütz (*St. Matthew*, *St. John* and *St. Luke*, c. 1664-6), which are based on the responsorial style of Walter. Out of these three settings, the *St. Matthew Passion* is by far the

[10] Fischer and Braun, "Passion."
[11] Ibid.
[12] The work has also been attributed to Jacob Obrecht, Pierre de la Rue, and a certain Johannes à la Venture.
[13] Fischer and Braun, "Passion."

most ambitious—a complete performance lasts approximately an hour. Another related but separate genre is the setting of sayings of Jesus on the cross, commonly known as the "Seven Last Words." The most notable setting of the "Seven Last Words" in the Baroque period was also composed by Schütz around 1645. It is a German cantata for five voices, five instrumental parts, and continuo. Around the mid-century, instruments were first added to the Passion, such as the three settings by Thomas Selle (*St. Matthew*, 1642 and two settings of *St. John*, 1640/3).

By the early eighteenth century, the instrumental accompanied Passion became the prevailing model for elaborate settings. The two main types of Passion from this period are the Passion oratorio and the oratorio Passion. The Passion oratorio uses completely original texts and is closely related to the "oratorio proper," while the oratorio Passion adheres to the actual Gospel narrative. Two of the most well-known Passion oratorios were composed by George Frideric Handel and Carl Heinrich Graun. Handel's *Brockes Passion* (c. 1715) sets a popular libretto by Barthold Heinrich Brockes (1680-1747). The same text was also set by many other German composers, including Georg Philipp Telemann (1716) and Johann Mattheson (1718). Graun's *Der Tod Jesu* (1755), one of the most performed Passions in eighteenth-century Germany, sets a libretto by Karl Wilhelm Ramler in the *galant* style. Another popular Passion libretto is Pietro Metastasio's *La Passione di Gesù Cristo*, to which more than 50 compositions were set.

The most famous oratorio Passions were written by J. S. Bach. Of the five Passions attributed to Bach according to his 1754 obituary (written by the composer's son Carl Philipp Emanuel and student Johann Friedrich Agricola), two are definitely lost; a *St. Luke Passion* (BWV 246 Anh II, 30) had previously been misattributed to Bach and is now generally attributed to his younger contemporary, Johann Melchior Molter (1696-1765). The music of the *St. Mark*

Passion is lost, but the libretto has survived, which allows reconstruction based on parodies.[14] The two extant settings, the *St. John Passion* (1724) and the *St. Matthew Passion* (1727/9) for double chorus and orchestra, are monumental works that pushed the genre to new heights. However, J. S. Bach was by no means a prolific composer of the Passion in his time. In fact, Telemann wrote over 40 settings (of which 22 have survived). C. P. E. Bach, who succeeded Telemann as Kapellmeister in Hamburg, also wrote 21 settings, far surpassing the quantity of his father's output. The large number of Passion settings in Baroque Germany attests to the popularity of the genre at that time.

1.4 Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Although the Passion genre reached its golden age in the Baroque period, it was then largely forgotten in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, overshadowed by the rise of new genres. In 1829, Felix Mendelssohn organized a performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* for the first time after the composer's death. While this historical event marked the revival of Bach's music in Europe, it did not bring about an overall resurgence of the Passion genre. Very few Passion settings were composed in the nineteenth century, and these works usually did not bear "Passion" in the title. Ludwig van Beethoven's only oratorio, *Christus am Ölberge* [Christ on the Mount of Olives] from 1802, depicts the agony of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane prior to his arrest and concludes before the crucifixion. Another partial setting of the Passion from a larger work is the third part of Franz Liszt's three-hour-long oratorio *Christus*, which is based on the life of Jesus from birth to passion and resurrection.

[14] There are at least twelve modern reconstructions of the *St. Mark Passion*, including those completed by Ton Koopman (1999) and Robert Koolstra (2017).

The first half of the twentieth century did not see a significant change of scene. Some of the most notable settings from this period include Hugo Distler's *Choral Passion* (1933) and Frank Martin's *Golgotha* (1946). Robert Ward argues that it was not until Krzysztof Penderecki (1933-2020) composed the *St. Luke Passion* (1966) that the genre of Passion oratorio came out of its hibernation and was reinvented in the twentieth century.[15] Penderecki's Passion is a ground-breaking work that pays tribute to Bach by using the "Bach motif" (B♭-A-C-B♮). Similar retrospective approaches have been adopted by many composers in the following decades.

After Penderecki, there was an increasing number of Passion compositions in the second half of the twentieth century. A vast majority of them are intended to be performed in concert halls rather than in churches, a trend of secularization that can be traced back to the early-nineteenth-century Bach revival. Following this trend of secularization, some biblical characters other than Jesus also became new protagonists of the Passion, which will be further discussed in Chapter 2. Despite the wide variety of Passion compositions in the late twentieth century, the transformative moment for the genre did not come until the turn of the century.

1.5 Traditional Passions in the Twenty-first Century

In 2000, the Bach specialist Helmuth Rilling and the International Bach Academy in Stuttgart commissioned a Passion on each of the four canonical Gospels. This storied project, known as "Passion 2000," was initiated to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Bach's death, resulting in four monumental settings: *La Pasión según San Marcos* by Osvaldo Golijov (b. 1960), *St. John Passion* by Sophia Gubaidulina (b. 1931), *Deus Passus* by Wolfgang Rihm (b. 1952), and *Water*

[15] Penderecki mostly sticks to Luke's text, but he also uses non-scriptural sources such as traditional Catholic hymns and Old Testament texts from Psalms and Lamentations. Robert C. Ward, "Passion Settings of the 20th- and 21st- Centuries Focusing on Craig Hella Johnson's *Considering Matthew Shepard*" (DMA diss., University of North Texas, 2016), 11, accessed October 6, 2019, https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc862740/.

Passion after St. Matthew by Tan Dun (b. 1957). While composed in honor of Bach, these works bear little resemblance to the music of the Baroque composer. Rilling reportedly once said that "it was all very well that we have original instruments and original performance practices but unfortunate that we have no original listeners."[16] Thus, it is clear that the aim of the commission was to create four unique Passion settings that reflected the styles and values of the new millennium.

Argentine composer Osvaldo Golijov's *La Pasión según San Marcos* was such a unique setting that Helmuth Rilling questioned the composer as to whether it could be considered a Passion at all.[17] Scored for multiple soloists, chorus, and orchestra, the Spanish-language setting combines several Latin and African styles with a gigantic group of non-Western percussion, digital effects, and choreography. Musical repetitions are used frequently throughout the work, putting the listener into a quasi-trance experience while exerting exoticism on those who are unfamiliar with the styles. For example, in the first movement alone, out of its 52 measures, 24 are repeated twice or thrice. Another uncommon feature is that the role of Jesus (Jesús) is not a fixed one, neither is it confined to a particular voice type or gender. For example, in "Agonía" (No. 19), Jesús is represented by three soloists: an alto, a contralto, and a baritone. Further, on the one hand, the readily accessible music and Latin-inspired rhythms of the work physically engage the performer and listener alike; on the other, they challenge the expressions of bereavement normally associated with the Western classical tradition.

[16] Daniel R. Melamed, "Introduction: Hearing Passions in Bach's Time and Ours," *Hearing Bach's Passions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 3, accessed October 29, 2020, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[17] Boston Symphony Orchestra, "Interview with Osvaldo Golijov by Brian Bell: *La Pasión Según San Marcos*," *YouTube* video, 20:47, December 13, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELO90llngpg.

Similarly, Chinese-born composer Tan Dun also adopts non-Western styles in his *Water Passion* with "a remarkably wide range of vocal styles, from the overtone singing of Mongolia to…the 'calligraphic' high-pitch writing of Peking Opera,"[18] evoking the soundscape of the ancient Silk Road and the composer's cultural roots. That said, the English-language setting, scored for soprano, bass baritone, chorus (doubling Tibetan percussion), and a modest ensemble of a violin, a cello, percussion, and an electronic sampler, largely hails from the Western classical tradition at its core. The composer-librettist uses water to symbolize different events in Jesus's life, from baptism and temptation to death and resurrection. In order to involve actual water in performance, seventeen hemispherical transparent water basins and twenty floor-base lamps are positioned in the shape of a cross, which, when combined with the strings and soloists, resemble the Chinese character for water: "水." Special instructions are provided for the three percussionists to "play" with water, such as patting it and letting it drip down from a tube. The theatricality of the work recalls opera and film music, two genres that the composer is widely known for.

Comparatively, the settings of Sofia Gubaidulina and Wolfgang Rihm more closely stick with the Western idioms, but they are nonetheless unique in their own way. Russian composer Gubaidulina's *St. John Passion*, scored for SATB soloists, two mixed choirs, organ, and large orchestra, is the first part of the two-work cycle *Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ According to St. John*.[19] Perhaps the first Passion setting by a Russian woman, the work exists in two versions: an earlier Russian-language version premiered by Valery Gergiev in 2000 and a

[18] Tan Dun, "Water Passion after St. Matthew," *Tan Dun*, accessed December 5, 2019, http://tandun.com/composition/water-passion/.

[19] The second part, *St. John Easter*, scored for the same performing forces, was completed in 2001. Along with the Passion, the diptych was presented in Hamburg in 2002, conducted by Valery Gergiev.

subsequent German-language version premiered by Rilling in 2007. Throughout the work, the narrative from John is interspersed by passages from Revelation (also penned by John), an unusual feature that connects the Passion story with the apocalypse. In Russia, the Passion is not presented musically in the Eastern Orthodox Church, where the use of musical instruments is strictly prohibited within its liturgy. Despite this cultural conflict, Gubaidulina is still able to preserve much essence of Russian music in her work with the use of bells characteristic of the Orthodox Church and a chanting *basso profundo* as narrator that recalls Russian vocal music.

At first listen, one might find German composer Wolfgang Rihm's *Deus Passus* to be the most conventional setting out of the four. The discontinuous narrative, which draws from fragments of Luke, Isaiah, and the Roman Catholic liturgy in both German and Latin, is emulated by the intermittent, almost disinterested, music. Free atonal lines often pass from one part to another with few overlaps, resulting in a sparse texture. The archaic style of the work, reminiscent of Arnold Schoenberg's early expressionist music, is mitigated at the end by an unexpected veering into Paul Celan's post-Holocaust poem *Tenebrae* (1957), in which the Jewish poet compares the suffering God—the namesake of Rihm's work—to the suffering humanity. Celan undoubtedly had the Holocaust in mind, for both of his parents were put into a concentration camp and later died there during World War II.[20] After all the scriptural and liturgical texts that come before, the insertion of Celan's poem functions as a commentary, even antithesis, on God's response to human tragedies and the effect—or lack thereof—the Christian Church has on the world.

[20] John Felstiner, *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 15.

"Passion 2000" is an important milestone in the development of the Passion. It challenged the tradition of Passion writing that has been previously dominated by male composers of European descent and suggests possibilities of a cross-cultural reimagination of the centuries-old form. The diverse cultural backgrounds of the four composers have evidently influenced the musical languages of their works. Gubaidulina, Golijov, and Rihm choose to use their native language for the Passion narrative. Tan's choice of adopting an English libretto perhaps adds another layer of meaning to his Passion as the Chinese composer approaches a Western tradition that seemingly has little to do with his own upbringing. Even Rihm, who hails from Germany, did not entirely resort to conventions.

Since "Passion 2000," at least 30 further Passions have been written (Appendix F)—a flourishing of the genre rivaled only by the Baroque period. The Passion genre continued to evolve in the past two decades with more diversity than ever before. Even traditional Passions have seen innovations that unmistakably point to the twenty-first century. For example, in James MacMillan's *St. Luke Passion* (2013), the voice of Christ (Christus), traditionally sung by a bass soloist, is assigned to a three-part children's choir instead. MacMillan explained this conscious choice in a 2014 interview: "any Passion that casts Christ as a soloist immediately makes him take human form as an adult male whereas I wanted to examine his otherness, sanctity, and mystery."[21] Jeremey Begbie, the dedicatee of the Passion, thinks that the children's choir connotes a sense of *innocence* (italicization his), which is particularly in line with Luke in which

[21] "James MacMilllan: Interview about St Luke Passion," February 2014; accessed December 15, 2018, https://www.boosey.com/cr/news/James-MacMillan-interview-about-St-Luke-Passion/100345&LangID=1, **quoted in** Jeremy S. Begbie, "Making the Familiar Unfamiliar: MacMillan's *St Luke Passion*," *James MacMillan Studies*, ed. George Parsons and Robert Sholl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 117.

Jesus is shown as the innocent sufferer and the Righteous One of God.[22] Musically, the voice of the innocent Jesus is sung either in unison or parallel triads, which seems to hint at the Trinity.

Another innovative setting within the framework of the traditional Passion is Gabriel Jackson's *The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ* (2014). It not only follows in the footsteps of MacMillan by not casting Jesus as a soloist, but it also takes that idea one step further by not assigning any fixed roles to specific characters. While the work calls for soprano and tenor soloists, they merely imply the characters they portray, without labelling them as such. The chorus sings in every movement with multiple functions: 1) acting as the Evangelist, Jesus, and other individual characters in the narrative, 2) acting as the crowd, and 3) reflecting on the action.

While a more detailed study of the traditional Passion is beyond the scope of this paper, it is fair to infer that the twenty-first century is an extraordinary time in history for the Passion as the genre continues to thrive and becomes an increasingly international and cross-cultural phenomenon.

[22] Begbie, "Making the Familiar Unfamiliar," 117.

Chapter Two

Secularization of the Passion and the Non-Christocentric Passion

Theodor Adorno, a twentieth-century German philosopher who wrote extensively about music, believes that a work of art is not a fixed object. He states that "as spiritual entities, works of art are not complete in themselves…. Objectively, new layers are constantly detaching themselves, emerging from within; others grow irrelevant and die off."[23] In this quote, Adorno is referring specifically to the works of Richard Wagner, but the validity of his observation could potentially extend beyond a single composer's output. To examine whether such claims are also applicable to Passion compositions, one must look no further than Bach and the American reception of his two extant Passions—works that both David Lang and Craig Hella Johnson adored and constantly sought inspiration from as they wrote their own Passions.[24] My understanding is that the Passion historically possesses a humanistic aspect. Therefore, prefaced by a brief but useful study of Bach's Passions in the United States, the following chapter explores the major changes in performance practice of the Passion that took place in history and how the genre's shift towards secular/non-liturgical contexts anticipated the emergence of the non-Christocentric Passion, which embraces many values of the traditional Passion but opens up to a wider audience.

[23] Theodor W. Adorno, "Wagner's Relevance for Today," translated by Susan Gillespie, *Grand Street*, no. 44 (1993): 37.

[24] David Lang, interview by author, Zoom, April 21, 2021; Craig Hella Johnson, interview by author, Zoom, May 12, 2021.

2.1 Revival and American Premieres of Bach's Passions

It is well-known that Bach's *St. John* and *St. Matthew Passions* were originally intended as liturgical music, performed within Good Friday services in Leipzig, Germany. Since their initial performances during the composer's lifetime, the two works were largely forgotten and rarely heard again in the next few decades. In 1829, Felix Mendelssohn organized and conducted a renowned performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* at the Berlin Singakademie, a newly-built major concert hall in Berlin, setting the precedent for performing Bach's sacred vocal works beyond the confines of the church building and the Christian liturgy. In essence, the focus of the event was on Bach's achievement as a composer, and thus there was a de-emphasis of the sacred purpose of the *Passion* in favor of human genius in a concert setting.

Another forty years or so passed before Bach's Passions were first introduced to the New World. It is recorded that the Handel and Haydn Society gave the American premiere of the *St. Matthew Passion* in the Boston Music Hall in 1879.[25] The premiere of the *St. John Passion* followed in 1888, which was given by the Bethlehem Choral Union in the Moravian Parochial Day School in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.[26] As with Mendelssohn's revival, these American premieres took place in civic spaces instead of churches. They also used monumental performing forces that far exceeded what Bach would have had or even imagined.[27]

2.2 Moving Towards the Public Arena

With the advancement of technology after World War II, classical music was less and less dependent on physical spaces. Besides the concert stage, performances of Bach's Passions could

[25] Alannah Rebekah Taylor, "J. S. Bach's Passions in Nineteenth-Century America" (MMus thesis, Florida State University, 2017), 79, accessed October 3, 2020. http://purl.flvc.org/fsu/fd/FSU_2017SP_Taylor_fsu_0071N_13882.

[26] Ibid., 1.

[27] Ibid., 110.

be heard in the media. Notably, on March 31, 1957, the *St. Matthew Passion* was featured on the American television program *Omnibus* as part of the episode "The Music of J. S. Bach," curated and hosted by the legendary conductor Leonard Bernstein.[28] Launched by the Ford Foundation in the 1950s, the Emmys-winning *Omnibus* series aimed to improve Americans' cultural knowledge.[29] In the Bach episode, several excerpts of the *St. Matthew Passion* are sung in English translation, conducted by Bernstein himself, in addition to many other choral and instrumental works by Bach. Bernstein speaks highly of Bach's *Passion* among other compositions of his, declaring it to be the glorious work that started the conductor off on his own private passion for Bach.[30]

Fast-forwarding to the twenty-first century, interpretations of Bach's Passions, like the Passion genre itself, underwent substantial changes with increasing interdisciplinarity. There have been some attempts to perform Bach's Passions in blended liturgical settings. For example, the 2018 Good Friday service of New York's Saint Peter's Church integrated the *St. Matthew Passion* with the Evangelical Catholic liturgy, including congregational singing of the chorales in English and a short sermon after the first part of the work.[31] Despite the fact that the performance took place at church, the liturgy and congregational singing were probably far from what Bach would have intended.[32] Another new trend in performing Bach's Passions is the

[28] "Leonard Bernstein's Omnibus: The Music of Johann Sebastian Bach," *Medici TV*, accessed March 16, 2020, https://www.medici.tv/en/documentaries/leonard-bernstein-omnibus-the-music-of-johann-sebastian-bach/.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] The chorales were translated by the Rev. Canon John Troutbeck of Saint Peter's. Saint Peter's Church, New York City, "J.S. Bach: Saint Matthew Passion," *YouTube* video, 3:08:33, May 10, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akellsW26qk.

[32] Heather Mitchell has proposed that the congregation would not participate in the singing of the chorales in Bach's Passions but that only the professional choristers did. "A Reconsideration of the Performance of the Chorales in J.S. Bach's Passio secundum Johannem, BWV 245," *Choral Journal* 57, no. 9 (2017): 28-29, accessed June 8, 2021, ProQuest Ebook Central.

inclusion of staging and choreography, bridging the concert stage and the world of opera. Although many ensembles have attempted this, perhaps no production was more widely publicized than Peter Sellars' 2010 semi-staged *St. Matthew Passion* with the Berlin Philharmonic and conductor Simon Rattle, which had its U.S. premiere at New York's Park Avenue Armory.[33] Subsequently, Sellars and Rattle produced another critically acclaimed, semi-staged version of the *St. John Passion* in 2014 with almost the original cast, which was likewise highly successful.

The Bach examples above show that the canonic Passions, like any works of art, are not fixed entities, as Adorno would say, but they keep evolving throughout history. The new trends in performing Bach point to the fact that external influences, such as technological advancement and shifts in musical tastes, inevitably impact the reception of the Passions. In effect, Passion performances often reveal less about the circumstances surrounding the composition of the musical works than the values of contemporary society where these performances take place. The reception history of Bach's Passions is long and complex, but the brief survey above affirms Adorno's views on the transforming qualities of a work of art. Christopher Small even goes so far as to completely renounce the role of a composer's intention in relation to the listener: "Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*…is today performed in concert halls as a work of art in its own right, whose qualities and whose meaning for a modern listener are supposed to depend solely on its qualities 'as music' and have nothing to do with the beliefs that Bach believed he had embodied in it."[34] Along similar lines, one can also contend that the musical Passion has the

[33] Bettina Varwig, "Beware the Lamb: Staging Bach's Passions," *Twentieth-Century Music* 11, no. 2 (2014): 264, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478572214000097; Alex Ross, "Atonement: The *St. Matthew Passion*, at the Armory," *The New Yorker*, October 20, 2014, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/10/27/atonement-2.

[34] Christopher Small, "Prelude: Music and Musicking," *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press), 7, accessed October 1, 2020, ProQuest Ebook Central.

capacity to become a universal form that is relevant to the twenty-first century without negating the tradition.

2.3 The Non-Christocentric Passion

The narrative portion is the central part and main body of any Passion setting. It is also what sets a non-Christocentric Passion apart from its traditional counterpart. The traditional Passion has a narrative that is guided by the Gospel account—one that begins with either Jesus's enemies plotting to arrest him or the arrest itself and ends with Jesus's crucifixion, death, and burial—everything that happened around Jesus's final days in Jerusalem. In this sense, all traditional Passions have a common plot that is predetermined by the Gospel text itself with few surprises for those who are familiar with the story. Eighteenth-century Passion oratorios, even if they did not adhere to the Biblical text, still referred to the basic plot found in the Gospel. On the contrary, the non-Christocentric Passion no longer has to rely on the Gospel and hence avails itself of virtually unlimited possibilities with regard to subject matter and narrative.

I have devised a helpful system of categorization for the non-Christocentric Passion. There are mainly three forms of narrative: 1) legendary/historical narrative, 2) realistic narrative, and 3) allegorical/literary narrative. The legendary/historical narrative depicts events that actually occurred in the past or that are popularly regarded as historical although not verifiable,[35] such as those transmitted by faith traditions other than Christianity. The realistic narrative depicts contemporary events associated with the composer or time of composition, often with a certain degree of activism or social conscience. The allegorical/literary narrative depicts imaginary

[35] This description is borrowed from Merriam-Webster Dictionary's definition of "legend." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. "Legend," accessed October 27, 2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/legend.

events, such as those found in fairy tales and fables. These three categories are not mutually exclusive; a Passion setting could be identified with more than one of them.

No musical genre comes into existence overnight. The non-Christocentric Passion, as an outgrowth of the traditional Passion, is no exception. Michael Tippett's secular oratorio *A Child of Our Time* (1941) might be considered an antecedent of the non-Christocentric Passion. Taking the tripartite form of George Frideric Handel's *Messiah* and the structure of Bach's Passions (particularly with the insertion of chorales),[36] Tippett's work deals not with Jesus, but a Jewish refugee named Herschel Grynspan, whose assassination of German diplomat Ernst vom Rath on November 7, 1938 precipitated an antisemitic pogrom known as the *Kristallnacht* across Germany. There are moments of unexpected sacred commentary: Tippett interpolated five African American spirituals in the work, whose function, as the composer described, is equivalent to the chorales in Bach's Passions.[37] It is difficult to know if Tippett intended to write a Passion per se,[38] but it is certain that *A Child of Our Time* did not inspire any immediate successors.

Daniel Pinkham's *Passion of Judas* (1976) is one of the first Passions to adopt a suffering protagonist other than Jesus. The work takes on the story of none other than Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus's disciples who betrayed him to the Sanhedrin in the Garden of Gethsemane for thirty pieces of silver. In his note, Pinkham explains: "*The Passion of Judas* at once reflects my interest in the mystery play of the medieval church (such as *The Play of Daniel*) as well as my interest in

[36] Kenneth Gloag, *Tippett, A Child of Our Time*, Cambridge Music Handbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 25.

[37] Ibid., 28.

[38] We do know, however, that Michael Tippett thought of Grynspan as "the protagonist of a modern passion story—not of a man-god, but of a man as such." Michael Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues* (London, 1994), **quoted in** Gloag, *A Child of Our Time*, 5.

the experiments with chronology as found in Bach's two extant Passion settings (prophecy, dramatic action, and reflection and commentary)."[39] Before Pinkham, Andrew Lloyd Webber's 1970 rock opera,[40] *Jesus Christ Superstar*, also focuses on Judas. Using a colloquial/slangy libretto, Webber's work is definitely part of the secular trend, and was a huge hit. The 1980s saw two large-scale Passions with drastically different approaches. Mikis Theodorakis's *Sadduzäer-Passion* [Passion of the Sadducees] (1982) is a complex allegorical work based on the history of the ancient Jewish sect, but written as an elegy to the contemporary Greek political left that the composer was heavily involved in, for which he was sent to prison.[41] Mauricio Kagel's *Sankt-Bach-Passion* [Saint Bach Passion] (1985) reverses the role of Bach by casting him as the suffering protagonist. The work loosely adopts the structure of Bach's Passions, an approach that has been described as "a respectful, even reverent, tribute from one composer to a great predecessor."[42] These works, though eccentric at the time, possibly with small audiences, eventually inspired other non-Christocentric Passions with a wider appeal.

Between 2000 and 2019, at least ten further non-Christocentric Passions were composed:

Year	Title	Composer (Dates and Nationality)
2002	*The Passion of Ramakrishna*	Philip Glass (b. 1937, American)
2006	*La Passion de Simone*	Kaija Saariaho (b. 1952, Finnish)
2007	*the little match girl passion*	David Lang (b. 1957, American)

[39] Daniel Pinkham, *The Passion of Judas*, (Boston: E. C. Schirmer Music Company, 1978 [1976]).

[40] Webber explains that the work was initially intended for a rock album, and that it is more of an oratorio than a staged show. Jesus Christ Superstar, "Interview with Andrew Lloyd Webber – UK Arena Tour," *YouTube* video, 19:21, November 11, 2015, https://youtu.be/eFZFQPQX8Mc.

[41] Neil Horner, "Review of Mikis Theodorakis' *Sadduzäer-Passion*," *MusicWeb International*, accessed October 22, 2020, http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2002/jun02/theodorakis.htm.

[42] Arnold Whittall, "Mauricio Kagel 8: *Sankt-Bach-Passion*," *Gramophone*, accessed October 22, 2020, https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/mauricio-kagel-8.

2016	*Considering Matthew Shepard*	Craig Hella Johnson (b. 1962, American)
2016	*But Who Shall Return Us Our Children: A Kipling Passion*	John Muehleisen (b. 1955, American)
2016	*Aluta continua: The Passion of David Kato Kisule*	Eric Banks (b. 1969, American)
2017	*The Judas Passion*	Sally Beamish (b. 1956, British)
2017	*La Passion selon Marc – une passion après Auschwitz*	Michaël Levinas (b. 1949, French)
2018	*The Passion of Octavius Catto*	Uri Caine (b. 1956, American)
2018	*Buddha Passion*	Tan Dun (b. 1957, Chinese American)
2019	*Annes Passion*	Yevhen Orkin (b. 1977, Ukrainian German)

Table 1: Non-Christocentric Passions in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

These new Passions contain a wide array of subject matters and a strong social conscience. Historically, male composers of European descent have dominated the composition of Passions. This exclusive circle began to expand in 2000, spearheaded by Osvaldo Golijov, Tan Dun, and Sofia Gubaidulina's worthy contributions to the genre, thanks to Helmuth Rilling's ground-breaking commission already mentioned in Chapter 1. When Kaija Saariaho wrote *La Passion de Simone* in 2006, she joined the ranks of Gubaidulina as one of the first women/female identified persons to compose a Passion. Saariaho's work is also notable for adopting a female protagonist. Modeled after a Christian devotion known as the Stations of the Cross, Saariaho's Passion is a musical journey of fifteen stations that sheds light on different moments in the life of the French-Jewish philosopher Simone Weil and interprets some of her ideas.[43]

[43] Kaija Saariaho, "Programme Note for *La Passion de Simone*," *Wise Music Classical*, accessed January 1, 2021, https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/34900/.

To cast minorities as suffering protagonists has been a significant trend of modern-day Passions. One particular setting that might have been influenced by the Black Lives Matter movement is Uri Caine's *The Passion of Octavius Catto* (2018), which takes on the life and activism of the nineteenth-century African American civil rights activist. Catto's story is, sadly, still largely relevant to this day: he was shot and killed by a white voter in the 1871 Election Day violence in Philadelphia.[44] Eric Banks's *Aluta continua: The Passion of David Kato Kisule* (2016) takes on the story of another Black man, albeit in different contexts, whose beliefs and activism similarly cost him his life. Often described as "Uganda's first openly gay man," Kato was murdered in 2011 apparently because of his homosexuality, according to a 2012 article in the *Economist*. Another LGBTQ+-themed Passion is Craig Hella Johnson's *Considering Matthew Shepard* (2016), a response to the life and death of the gay University of Wyoming student who became an international gay rights icon. Johnson's work will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

While non-Christocentric Passions in the twenty-first century vary significantly in style and subject matter, they also have much in common. For example, these works tend to focus not on the suffering of the protagonist per se, but the broader theme that the protagonist's suffering represents. Most commonly, these themes are relevant to social (in)justice issues contemporary to the composition. Further, these works are mostly commemorative in nature, creating a space for reflection without an explicit call to action. All these features point to the universality inherently found in the Passion that seems to attract many contemporary composers. Howard Goodall, composer of the Christocentric *Invictus: A Passion* (2017), in his program note

[44] Uri Caine, "Note for *The Passion of Octavius Catto*," *Uri Caine*, accessed January 1, 2021, https://www.uricaine.com/.

eloquently articulates the genre's unique qualities: "much of the Passion in general—persecution of the innocent, malevolent authority exerting itself against ideas that threaten and challenge, the power of a peaceful, loving humility in the face of tyranny, the facing-down of fear—holds profound universal resonance for people of many faiths and those of none."[45] I argue that these unique qualities of the Passion precipitated its resurgence in the past few decades. At a time when people are probably more socially conscious than ever before, the Passion then becomes a vessel for evolution and innovation, creating new meanings for the modern listener.

[45] Howard Goodall, "Invictus: A Passion." *Howard Goodall*, accessed January 24, 2021, http://www.howardgoodall.co.uk/works/choral-music/invictus-a-passion.

Chapter Three

the little match girl passion (2007) by David Lang

3.1 Composer Biography

David Lang (b. 1957) is one of the most respected and frequently performed living composers in the United States. In the words of *The New Yorker*, "with his winning of the Pulitzer Prize for *the little match girl passion* (one of the most original and moving scores of recent years), Lang, once a post-minimalist *enfant terrible*, has solidified his standing as an American master."[46] As the co-founder of New York's contemporary classical music organization Bang on a Can in 1987,[47] Lang is an advocate for new music. He is equally eloquent in vocal and instrumental genres. His most recent large-scale work is the opera *prisoner of the state* (libretto also by Lang), co-commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, Doelen Concert Hall, Barbican Centre, L'Auditori, Bochum Symphony Orchestra, and Concertgebouw Bruges. It was premiered by the New York Philharmonic in June 2019. Lang's works have been performed by major orchestras, opera houses, and other ensembles around the world, including the BBC Symphony, Santa Fe Opera, the Netherlands Chamber Choir, and the Boston Symphony, among others. He is the recipient of numerous awards and honors, most notably the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for music composition, and Academy Award and Golden Globe nominations.

Lang attended Stanford University (AB 1978), the University of Iowa (MM 1980), and Yale University (DMA 1989),[48] where he currently serves as a Professor of Music Composition.

[46] "Biography," *David Lang*, accessed June 1, 2020, https://davidlangmusic.com/about-1#.

[47] Lang and the other two co-founders, husband and wife Michael Gordon (b. 1956) and Julia Wolfe (b. 1958), studied at Yale in the 1980s with Martin Bresnick.

[48] Kyle Gann, "Lang, David," *Grove Music Online*, accessed March 24, 2020.

I had the privilege to study with him while pursuing a Master of Musical Arts degree in choral conducting at the Yale School of Music. In addition, Lang is the Artist in Residence at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, where he is based at the time of the writing of this paper.

3.2 Musical Settings of H. C. Andersen's "The Little Match Girl"

"The Little Match Girl" is a fairy tale by the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875), published in *Dansk Folkekalender for 1846*. The story takes place on a cold New Year's Eve where a poor girl had to sell matches in the streets. Afraid to return home and get beaten by her father for failing to sell any matches, the shivering girl huddled in a corner and lit the matches that she was supposed to sell to keep warm. For as long as these matches burned, she saw visions that comforted her—a warm iron stove, a table filled with delicious food, a beautifully decorated Christmas tree, and her loving grandmother—but they appeared to be mere delusions. In the end, the girl froze to death and was carried up into heaven by her grandmother. Her corpse was seen by passersby the next morning, but no one knew what beautiful things she had seen.

Popularly regarded as a classic among children's stories, "The Little Match Girl" has a wide appeal around the world. Its moral is somewhat ambiguous. Maria Tatar notes that "The Little Match Girl" was partly inspired by Andersen's own mother's experience of being a child laborer and that his sympathies were always with the downtrodden.[49] In this sense, the story is perhaps meant to inspire action against poverty and child abuse. From another perspective, the story is also cathartic, as the grandmother "gathered up the little girl in her arms and together

[49] Hans Christian Andersen, *The Annotated Hans Christian Andersen*, 1st ed., translated and edited by Maria Tatar (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), chapter 17.

they flew in brightness and joy higher and higher." Tatar interprets it as an upward flight that leads to redemption, and that Andersen takes advantage of the childhood fantasy of flying to capture the power of the girl's spiritual transformation.[50] Furthermore, Andersen's story has a Christian framework: the little girl was taken above the earth to where "there was neither cold nor hunger nor pain, for they were with God." This alludes to the Christian beliefs of heaven and afterlife: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more…God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. (Revelation 7:16-17 [KJV])" Lang, in *the little match girl passion*, also draws a comparison between the suffering girl and the suffering Christ, which will be examined later. The full text of the story in English translation can be found in Appendix B.

There are a number of musical adaptations of "The Little Match Girl" that came before and after *the little match girl passion*, including a 2020 off-Broadway musical directed by Greg Ganakas in collaboration with composer Alastair William King, but none of them can be considered a Passion. The most substantial contribution among these works is arguably Helmut Lachenmann's avant-garde opera *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* (1988-96). The work was commissioned by the Staatsoper Hamburg and was premiered there in 1997.[51] Its North American premiere came much later at the 2016 Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, South Carolina. Lasting around 105 minutes, Lachenmann's first and only opera is complex and controversial. It is non-traditional in the sense that "there are no arias and no melodies or characters," but it "creates an intricate and abstract soundscape filled with the shush of falling snow, the tinkle of breaking icicles, and the bitter suffering of a child slowly, slowly freezing to

[50] Ibid.

[51] Alastair Williams, *Music in Germany since 1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 108, ProQuest Ebook Central.

death," says music critic Johanna Keller.[52] As winner of the Ernst von Siemens Music Prize in 1998, some have praised *Das Mädchen* to be "the first opera of the twenty-first century," although it was actually composed at the end of the twentieth.[53] Others are unimpressed: one music critic at the 2016 Spoleto performance writes that "sitting in total darkness for one hour and forty-five minutes listening to atonal avant-garde music was torturous to say the least,"[54] but that might well be the whole point that Lachenmann was after.

Notwithstanding its mixed reviews, *Das Mädchen* is undoubtedly provocative both sonically and textually. It offers a unique take on Andersen's story, notably by using words from a letter by Gudrun Ensslin (1940-1977), co-founder of the West German far-left militant group Red Army Faction. Ensslin was eventually charged with murders, bomb attacks, and bank robberies and sentenced to life in Stammheim Prison. There, she wrote a letter to profess her anarchist political ideology, which was used by Lachenmann and is excerpted below:

> A criminal, a madman, a suicide.
> They embody this protest.
> Protesting, they die like animals.
> Their dying shows
> That there is no way out and that an individual is helpless
> When confronted with the system.[55]

Most media described Ensslin as a terrorist, but Lachenmann had known her as a playground companion from early childhood.[56] Using Ensslin's text as is without any judgement,

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[52] Johanna Keller, "The Tragic Visage of Lachenmann's *Little Match Girl*," *Classical Voice America*, last modified June 7, 2016, https://classicalvoiceamerica.org/2016/06/07/the-tragic-visage-of-lachenmanns-little-match-girl/.

[53] Tomasz Cyz and Mikołaj Sekrecki, ed., "Helmut Lachenmann, *The Little Match Girl* (1988-96)," *Hi-Story Lessons*, accessed May 31, 2020, https://hi-storylessons.eu/culture/helmut-lachenmann-the-little-match-girl-1988-96/.

[54] Sandy Katz, "Helmut Lachenmann's *The Little Match Girl*: Cutting Edge Opera at Spoleto Festival in Charleston," *Berkshire Fine Arts*, last modified June 7, 2016, https://www.berkshirefinearts.com/06-07-2016_helmut-lachenmann-s-the-little-match-girl.htm.

[55] Cyz and Sekrecki, ed., "Helmut Lachenmann, *The Little Match Girl* (1988-96)."

[56] Ibid.

Lachenmann portrays her as a "a particularly sensitive person who felt the cold around her and reacted to it in her own, possibly inhuman, way."[57] Just as Ensslin and her confederates embodied a protest against the society by which they were oppressed, her text adds a layer of subversion in Lachenmann's opera. Her imprisonment was not only a physical one, but also an ideological one. In the opera, she becomes a doppelgänger for the little match girl. Both Ensslin and the little girl suffer from the coldness of the system, one metaphorically and the other more literally; they are denied and crushed by the system, but there is no escape. As it happens, the story of "The Little Match Girl" not only deals with the girl's suffering and death, but also a dysfunctional, hierarchical society that she lives in, which David Lang also explores in his Passion.

3.3 Background

David Lang's major influences in *the little match girl passion* are the prose of Andersen's *The Little Match Girl* and the music of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. The work exists in two versions. The original version of 2007, for four singers, was commissioned by Carnegie Hall for Theatre of Voices. It was premiered in Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall by Theatre of Voices in the same year, conducted by Paul Hillier, who founded the ensemble in 1990. The group later made a recording of the work that received the 2009 Grammy Award for Best Small Ensemble Performance. A subsequent choral version—the subject of this paper—was commissioned by the National Chamber Choir of Ireland and premiered in Dublin in 2008, also conducted by Hillier. It is scored for mixed chorus and SATB soloists who also play simple percussion: brake drum, sleigh bell, crotales, glockenspiel, bass drum, and tubular bells. The libretto is by Lang, after texts by Andersen, H. P. Paull (the first translator of the Andersen story into English, in 1872),

[57] Ibid.

Picander (the *nom de plume* of Christian Friedrich Henrici, the librettist of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*), and the Gospel according to St. Matthew.[58]

Hailing from a Jewish background,[59] Lang's interest in a traditionally Christian form is perhaps surprising. In an interview with me, Lang revealed that his personal experiences with Christian music were deeper than one might think:

> I am pretty religious. Being Jewish is really important, but I actually think of this in terms of classical musicians. I love classical music. I sang in a Gregorian chant choir in a Catholic church when I was in college. I've spent a lot of time thinking about Christian music and dealing with it and singing it and performing in it. And so, for me, I'm trying to figure out how to do something that fits into that tradition so that I can feel myself getting experienced enough [to] ask Bach questions about what he is doing. That's very exciting for me. I feel like I'm not trying so much to get into the religious message of it, but I'm trying to get into the classical music message of it. I'm trying to figure out how I can pose a question which fits squarely into the tradition of Western classical music.[60]

To achieve that, Lang "substituted" the suffering of Jesus with that of an allegorical character by turning to Andersen's little match girl. In his program note, Lang writes,

> There are many ways to tell this story…What has always interested me, however, is that Andersen tells this story as a kind of parable, drawing a religious and moral equivalency between the suffering of the poor girl and the suffering of Jesus. The girl suffers, is scorned by the crowd, dies and is transfigured. I started wondering what secrets could be unlocked from this story if one took its Christian nature to its conclusion and unfolded it, as Christian composers have traditionally done in musical settings of the Passion of Jesus.[61]

Lang also mentioned to me how the collaboration with Paul Hillier, the commissioner of *the little match girl passion*, helped him come to terms with the conflict between his own Jewish identity and background in Western classical music:

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[58] David Lang, "Notes to *the little match girl passion*" (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 2007).

[59] Dominic Wells, "In the Footsteps of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*: The Passion Settings of David Lang and James MacMillan," *Tempo* 67, no. 264: 42, accessed June 3, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0040298213000065.

[60] Lang, interview by author.

[61] Lang, "Notes to *the little match girl passion*."

> Paul is a totally modern man. He worked with Stockhausen and Berio and Cage and Arvo Pärt. But he's not a religious person…and most of what he has recorded in his life is religious music. I just thought, this is the…problem that I've been thinking about for a million years, and maybe now's the time to deal with it. So, I tried to make a piece that he and I both would feel comfortable singing about, which was a religiously themed piece not about Jesus. And that's what led me to this kind of thinking about "what is the core of Christianity?" and "what is the core of Christian music?" "What's the core of the Passion and Passion settings in particular?" And that led me to think that what really works in a piece like the *St. Matthew Passion,* or the *St. John Passion,* or whatever is that you are watching someone else's suffering. And I just wondered, maybe someone else is suffering and watching that other person's suffering maybe would elevate that to a religious level.[62]

3.4 Dualities and Uniformity

Andersen's story is one of many opposites: violence and love; poverty and wealth; struggle and redemption; life and death.[63] These dualities are largely retained in *the little match girl passion,* both enhanced and mitigated by the uniformity of Lang's hallmark post-minimalism. This section gives a detailed analysis of Lang's work focusing on its embedded musical dualities and uniformity. I will illustrate how these opposing and unifying forces can elicit emotional response in the listener and create meanings, both musically and extra-musically, in light of social justice issues around the time of composition.

3.4.1 Duality of Structure

Lang explains that "there is no Bach in my piece and there is no Jesus—rather the suffering of the Little Match Girl has been substituted for Jesus's, (I hope) elevating her sorrow to a higher plane."[64] While there is indeed no direct quotation of Bach in *the little match girl passion,* allusions to the Baroque master are overt and prevalent. Johann Jacob Van Niekerk has categorized two kinds of movement types in the work: "the 'recitatives', called thus for their

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[62] Lang, interview by author.

[63] Daniela Capano, "Analysis and Comparison of 'The Little Match Girl' by Hans C. Andersen and 'The Little Match Girl Passion' by David Lang," 5-7, accessed January 24, 2021, https://www.academia.edu/14583727/.

[64] Parentheses his. David Lang, *the little match girl passion* (New York: Red Poppy, 2007), score.

plot-advancing role in the same way recitatives are used in traditional Passion settings; and the 'chorales' which serve the function of the chorale of drawing the audience into the narrative, taking a moment to reflect on the happenings of the narrative."[65] To add to Niekerk's observation of the duality of movement type, I further suggest that many movements of the work are based on the music and libretto of the *St. Matthew Passion.* Table 2 compares Lang's movements to their alluded models in Bach's Passion. On the macro-level, the prototypical movement types of Bach—chorus, recitative, aria, and chorale—remain the structural backbone of Lang's work. The odd-numbered movements are the Bachian movements based on the *St. Matthew Passion* and the even-numbered movements are the narrative based on Andersen's prose, always accompanied by the glockenspiel. There are two movements that can be considered as hybrids: "penance and remorse" (No. 5) functions as both an aria and a chorale; "from the sixth hour" (No. 11), the only recitative that quotes the Gospel text also used by Bach, begins as a recitative and consolidates into a chorus.

the little match girl passion	**Type**	***St. Matthew Passion***
"come, daughter"	Chorus+ *Cantus Firmus*	"Kommt, ihr Töchter, helft mir klagen" (No. 1)
"it was terribly cold"	Recitative	
"dearest heart"	Chorale	"Herzliebster Jesu, was hast du verbrochen" (No. 3)
"in an old apron"	Recitative	
"penance and remorse"	Aria	"Buß und Reu" (No. 6)
	Chorale	"Ich bins, ich sollte büßen" (No. 10)
"lights were shining"	Recitative	

[65] Niekerk, "Messiahs and Pariahs," 87.

“patience, patience!”	Aria	“Geduld” (No. 35)
“ah! perhaps”	Recitative	
“have mercy, my God”	Aria	“Erbarme dich” (No. 39)
“she lighted another match”	Recitative	
“from the sixth hour”	Recitative→ Chorus	“Und von der sechsten Stunde an” (No. 61)
“she again rubbed a match”	Recitative	
“when it is time for me to go”	Chorale	“Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden” (No. 62)
“in the dawn of morning”	Recitative	
“we sit and cry”	Chorus	“Wir setzen uns mit Tränen nieder” (No. 68)

Table 2: Movement types in *the little match girl passion* and their models in Bach’s Passion.[66]

It has been argued that the structure of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* follows the Medieval practice of Passion chanting in which the *exordium* and the *conclusio* of the Passion chants evolved into the two large-scale choral movements that frame Bach’s Passion.[67] Likewise, the first movement of the Lang is an elaborate chorus based on Bach’s opening chorus with identical meter (12/8) and a similar texture. Lang’s movement has three musical layers. The first layer is created by the alternating soprano and alto in the opening that resembles Bach’s antiphonal double chorus. Then, a second layer is introduced by the tenor and bass that enter in unison in measure 5 (doubled by the bass drum), roughly assuming the role of the chorale *cantus firmus* in the Bach. Concurrently, a third layer is introduced by a tenor solo who repeats the word “come”

[66] Movement numbers in the Bach follow the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* (NBA), as does all numbering of Bach’s Passions in this paper.

[67] Markus Rathey, “The Passion and the Passions,” *Bach’s Major Vocal Works: Music, Drama, Liturgy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 112.

in a “stuttering style.” The association with Bach deepens if one considers the function of the opening of the *St. Matthew Passion*. As a prologue to the narrative sections, Bach’s movement calls for believers—the Daughters of Zion—to mourn for Christ. In Lang’s work, the invocation becomes even more intimate: “come daughter help me cry.” The chorus is no longer addressing an intercessor, but it directly invokes the suffering protagonist. In effect, the little match girl is treated like Jesus in the traditional Passion. However, she is more than a surrogate because her story speaks to an even wider audience, Christians and non-Christians alike.

The last movement of the Lang also corresponds to Bach’s final chorus, functioning as an epilogue after the temporal flow of the Passion narrative. In a recent program note for the *St. Matthew Passion*, Bach’s final chorus is described as the quintessential manifestation of tragedy in music, leaving the dramatic tension of the crucifixion unresolved: Christ has died, humankind mourns (Cincinnati May Festival 2019). To further explore this “unresolvedness” of the Passion, Lang inserts three questions into his final movement: *Where is your grave, daughter? Where is your tomb? Where is your resting place?* These questions, on the one hand, respond to the unanswered questions of the first movement; on the other, they leave the listener with even more uncertainties than Bach’s movement. According to the biblical account, after the death of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea took his body, wrapped it in a pure shroud and laid it in his own new tomb (Matthew 27:57-60). Conversely, in Andersen’s story, the girl’s corpse is seen by passersby the next morning after her death, but no one would do anything for her. Lang’s setting loosely follows the open ending of the original prose, asking the listener: “where to go from here?” The girl represents more than an individual in that she represents the anonymous sufferers, the forgotten, the homeless, the marginalized, and those overlooked by society.

3.4.2 Duality of Tonality

According to Niekerk, *the little match girl passion* revolves around a tonal center of F.[68] While it is clear that most of the even-numbered recitative movements are in F, the odd-numbered Bachian movements have multiple tonal centers (Table 3). This duality of tonality further reinforces the duality of movement type (Table 2). In addition to tonality, there is a duality of style that is often signified by the change of tonality. The Bachian movements are more elevated in their rhetoric, which may be interpreted as a representation of an elevated society. On the contrary, the recitatives, using the ordinary language of Andersen, depict the suffering of the lower class amidst the cruelty of reality.

No.	Title	Tonal center
1	“come, daughter”	E→F♯→G♯
2	“it was terribly cold”	F
3	“dearest heart”	C?
4	“in an old apron”	F
5	“penance and remorse”	C→G→C
6	“lights were shining”	F
7	“patience, patience!”	(spoken words only)
8	“ah! perhaps”	B♭
9	“have mercy, my God”	F
10	“she lighted another match”	A♭
11	“from the sixth hour”	C

[68] Niekerk, “Messiahs and Pariahs,” 92.

12	“she again rubbed a match”	C
13	“when it is time for me to go”	G
14	“in the dawn of morning”	F
15	“we sit and cry”	F

Table 3: Tonal centers in *the little match girl passion*. This table illustrates the dichotomy between the movements that are centered on F (columns shaded in gray) and those that are not.[69]

Like the *St. Matthew Passion*, Lang’s first movement roughly begins in E minor. Then, it modulates up to F♯ minor, and finally, G♯ minor. F♯ and G♯ minors are distant from F, the supposed “home key” of the whole work. The rest of the work dwells largely in flat keys, which produce a “cold and bleak” timbre, as the composer describes.[70] If one ignores the first movement, the work both starts and ends in F, thus forming an arch shape. The first movement, as the *exordium*, does not fit into the grand scheme of the work with regard to tonality.

3.4.3 Uniformity of Motifs

An ascending four-note motif is used throughout *the little match girl passion*, outlining the scale degrees 5-1-2-3 (both in major and minor). Niekerk describes this motif as a “germinal cell.”[71] The term is useful in describing the continuous development of the motif throughout the work. In this paper, the term “girl motif” will be used instead to capture its symbolic meanings. This “girl motif” not only unifies the whole work at the musical level, but it also embodies the consciousness of the suffering protagonist that is ever-present. Further, it recalls the opening of

[69] Capital letters are used in this table without the implication of major-minor tonality, but rather a pitch center. Lang’s music is always tonal but non-functional, and thus should not be analyzed with common-practice terminologies.

[70] David Lang, interview by Johann Jacob Van Niekerk, SoHo, New York City, NY, March 18, 2014, **quoted in** Niekerk, “Messiahs and Pariahs,” 113-114.

[71] Niekerk, “Messiahs and Pariahs,” 91.

one of the most famous arias in the *St. Matthew Passion*, "Erbarme dich" (No. 39), specifically the first four notes played by the solo violin. In Bach's obbligato part, only two of the first four notes are written out: F♯4 and D5. The middle notes are indicated by a slide, otherwise known as *Schleifer* in German, an ornament commonly found in Baroque music. When the slide is realized in performance, four notes would be played: F♯, B, C♯, and D (5-1-2-3 in B minor). Ignoring rhythm and actual pitches, the intervallic content of these four notes is identical to the "girl motif."

As shown in Table 4, Lang's motif is used mostly in the recitative movements. It goes through multiple transformations throughout the work in three forms: Scale degrees 5-1-2-3 (No. 1, 2, 4, 9, 14, and 15), 1-2-3-4 (No. 6, 8 and 11), and 1-3-4-♭5 (No. 13). These three variations of the motif are similar in that they all consist of four notes in an ascending order, imitating a "reaching out" gesture. The music surrounding the motif is always diatonic/triadic but non-functional. Because of that, the triads indicated do not imply key centers.

No.	Motif	Scale degrees / Key	Basic note value	Parts
1	B-E-F♯-G	5-1-2-3 in E minor	Dotted 8th	S
	A-D-E-F♯	5-1-2-3 in D major		A
2	C-F-G-A♭	5-1-2-3 in F minor	Triplet 8th	SA
3				
4	C-F-G-A♭	5-1-2-3 in F minor	Triplet 8th	AB
5				
6	F-G-A♭-B♭	1-2-3-4 in F minor	Triplet 8th	All voices
7				

No. *(cont.)*	Motif	Scale degrees / Key	Basic note value	Parts
8	B♭-C-D♭-E♭	1-2-3-4 in B♭ minor	Triplet 8th+Triplet Quarter	STB
9	C-F-G-A♭	5-1-2-3 in F minor	Quarter and Quintuplet Quarter	SA
10				
11	C-D-E♭-F	1-2-3-4 in C minor	Multiple values	All voices
12				
13	G-B♭-C-D♭	1-3-4-♭5 in G minor	Whole	All voices
14	C-F-G-A♭	5-1-2-3 in F minor	Triplet 8th	SA
15	C-F-G-A♭	5-1-2-3 in F minor	8th+Triplet 8th	Crotales+ Glockenspiel

Table 4: Transformations of the "girl motif" in *the little match girl passion.*

Given the strong pull towards the tonal center of F, "C-F-G-A♭" (Do-Fa-So-La in fixed do) should be considered the basic form of the "girl motif," first introduced by the alto in the beginning of the second movement (Figure 2). But this is not the first appearance of the "girl motif" in the whole work. A different presentation of the motif can already be found in the first movement, albeit more cryptic, sung by the soprano in measures 18 and 20 in E minor (outlining B-E-F♯-G) and immediately imitated by the alto at a major second below (outlining A-D-E-F♯).

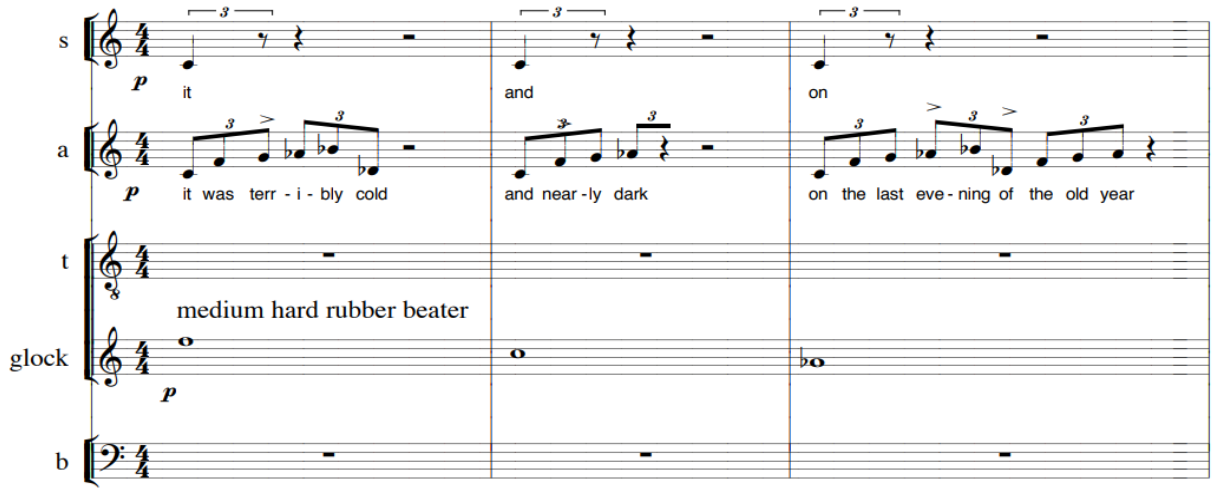

Figure 2: David Lang, "it was terribly cold" (No. 2), measures 1-3, from *the little match girl passion* (New York: Red Poppy, 2007).

At the beginning of the sixth movement, the first variant motif "F-G-A♭-B♭" (1-2-3-4 in F minor) is sung by the soprano and alto in a quasi-canon. Lang creates this variant motif simply by altering one note of the basic form: the initial C is replaced by a B♭ at an octave above and is transported to the end of the tetrachord (Figure 3).

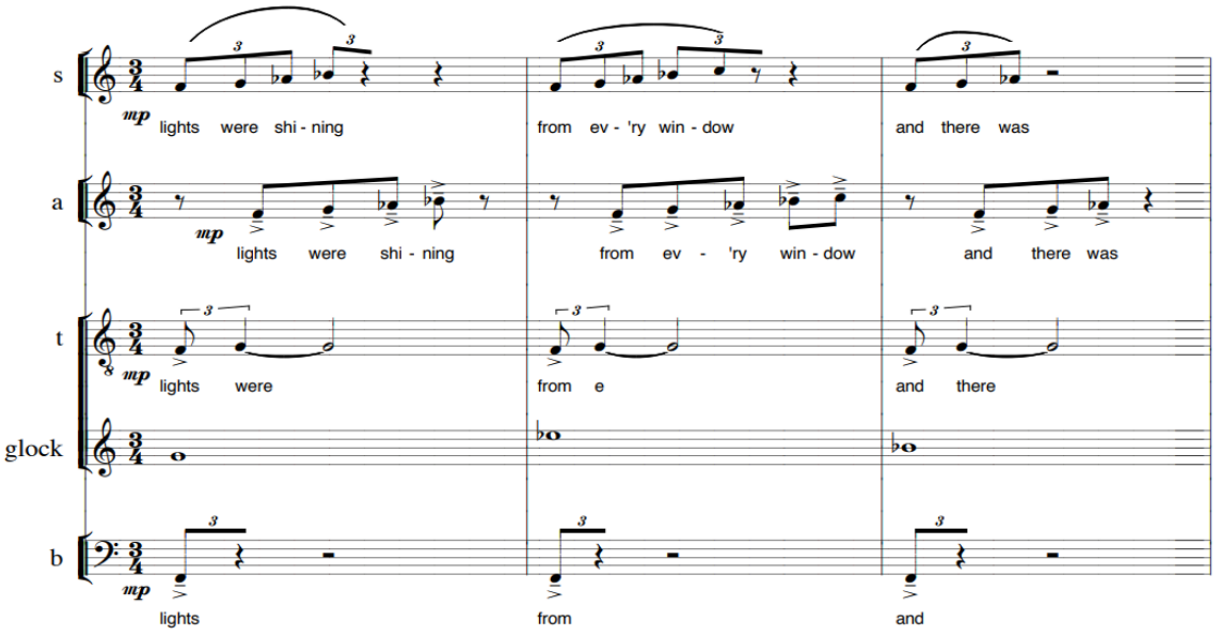

Figure 3: David Lang, "lights were shining" (No. 6), measures 1-3, from *the little match girl passion* (New York: Red Poppy, 2007).

The above examples present the four notes of the "girl motif" in quick succession, but the motif is also found at a more background level of structure within certain movements in augmented rhythm. In No. 13, another variant motif G-B♭-C-D♭ (1-3-4-♭5 in G minor) is sung by all voices, including the solo part. This movement is structured as a strict four-part canon. The subject is first introduced in the soprano, followed by the tenor, alto/alto solo, and bass, creating a sonorous, static sound that conceals the canonic structure:

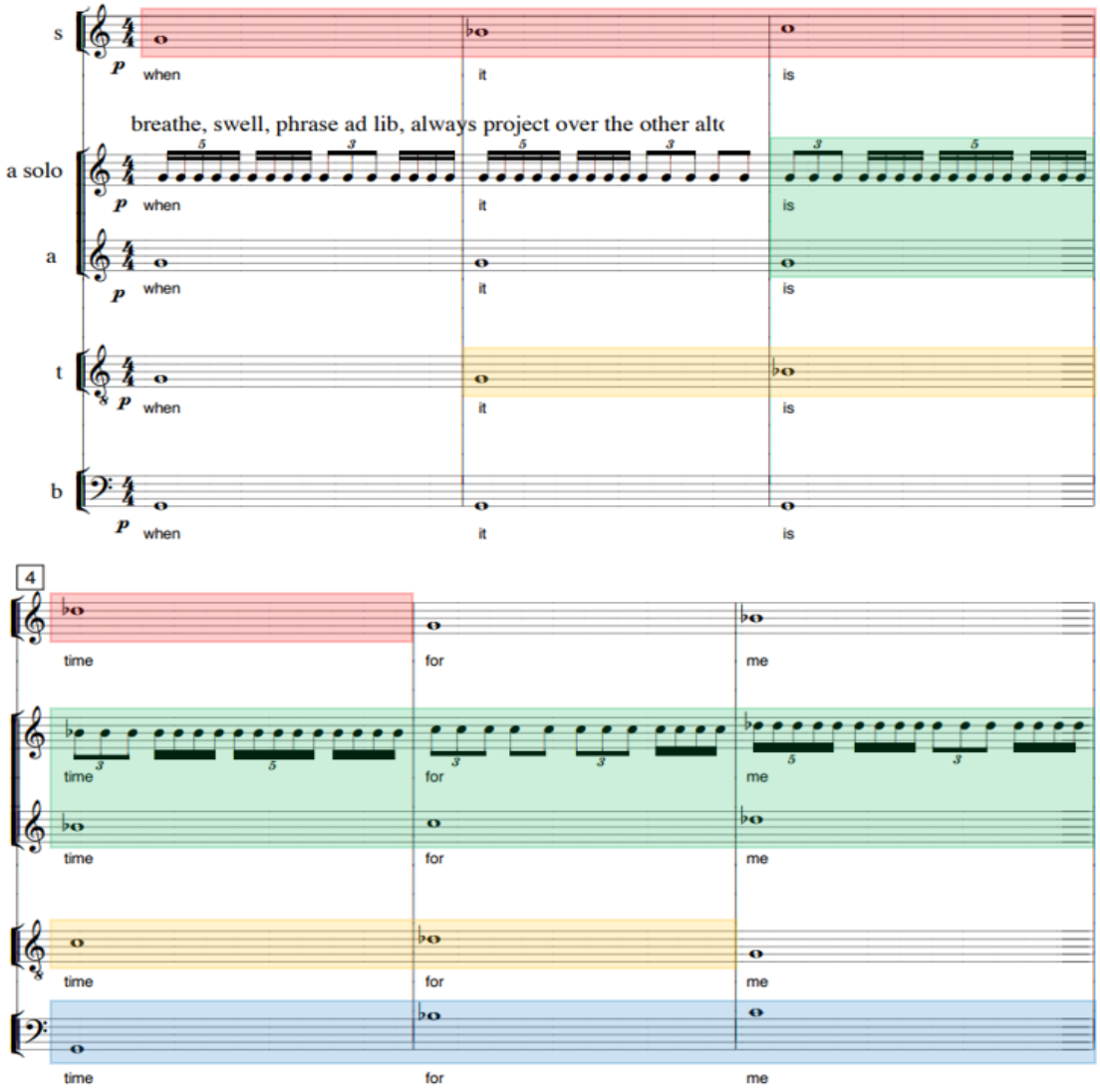

Figure 4: David Lang, "when it is time for me to go" (No. 13), measures 1-6, from *the little match girl passion* (New York: Red Poppy, 2007). Only the first canonic entries are highlighted, but the canon continues throughout the movement.

The music begins on a unison G. Each part repeats on G until its canonic entry. As the subject unfolds at the time interval of one measure apart, the harmony is gradually enriched. Such canonic writing loosely recalls the counterpoint of Bach and even Renaissance *cantus firmus* writing.

In the framework of a post-minimalist form, Lang uses the "girl motif" in different ways to create varieties in texture. If the "girl motif" is interpreted as personifying the girl, then the transformations of the motif can be viewed as a symbol for resilience: the girl has no real place in the social system, but she keeps on living by adapting to different circumstances.[72] Musically, the girl does not sing a role in the Passion, but the fact that all voice parts get to sing the "girl motif" allows her spirit to be embedded in the chorus even without her own part. In the last movement, the girl has passed, but her spirit lives on in those who are left behind mourning for her. This time, the "girl motif" is no longer sung by the chorus, but it is played by the crotales and glockenspiel that evoke a quasi-funeral march, as if it were the girl's heavenly reflection.

3.4.4 Uniformity of Vocal Forces

By giving the voices of the girl and the narrator (an equivalent of the Evangelist in the traditional Passion) to members of the chorus, Lang creates a space in which every performer partakes in the storytelling. The continuity of Andersen's story is preserved in the even-numbered recitative movements. These movements can be sung one after the other and the work would still make sense without the interjection of the reflective odd-numbered movements. This uniformity of

[72] When I mentioned this personal interpretation to Lang, he admitted that he never thought about it that way but welcomed my idea: "I didn't think of it as being her heavenly reflection or something, but I definitely wanted to remind people that that was the motive of the piece, and then it had moved into the instruments. So, I didn't have a better story for it. I mean, your story is better than mine, so you can use it." Lang, interview by author.

narrative throughout the work can also be observed in the vocal texture where there is a progression towards unity. Lang explains,

> [The Andersen movements] start and then they very quickly become contrapuntal, and then the rest of the form…are voices coming into rhythmic unison. The whole idea of telling the story that way was that I imagined that the girl is on a path towards spiritual purification, and I thought maybe a metaphor for purification was to have all the singers agree with each other rhythmically. So, you feel the friction as they get closer and closer to singing in unison, until the very last possible one before there's a recapitulation.[73]

While this path towards spiritual purification, as Lang described, is never fully realized in the recitative movements, the fact that all voices actively participate in the journey creates a communal experience that contrasts with the detached role of the Evangelist in the traditional Passion.

This communal experience is even more apparent in the Bachian movements. While there are four SATB soloists, they almost never sing independently of the chorus. No. 11 gives an example where a solo/recitative passage consolidates into a chorus (Figure 5). The movement begins with the girl's lament on a single word, "Eli" (Hebrew for "my God"), sung by the soprano solo in measures 1-3. Simultaneously, the tenor solo reads: "From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour / And at the ninth hour she cried out." Then, the chorus interrupts and continues the opening lament by expanding it into six parts. There is a strong religious atmosphere here. Lang's text, mostly spoken by the narrator, is based on Matthew 27:45-46, but replacing "Jesus" with "she [the girl]."[74] The only word that the chorus sings—*Eli*—is repeated incessantly throughout the movement. It is also one of the last words of

[73] Lang, interview by author.

[74] The original biblical passage runs: "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:45-6 [KJV]).

Jesus on the cross, even using the Hebrew word as Jesus would have. The girl is treated almost as a surrogate Christ, but it is unclear whom she is addressing here. Overall, the structure of this movement is roughly modeled after No. 61 of the *St. Matthew Passion*, a movement that alternates between recitative and *turba* passages. Unlike Bach's *turba*, Lang's crowd is an empathetic one that intensifies the plea for mercy, responding to the invocation in the opening of the whole work, "help me cry."

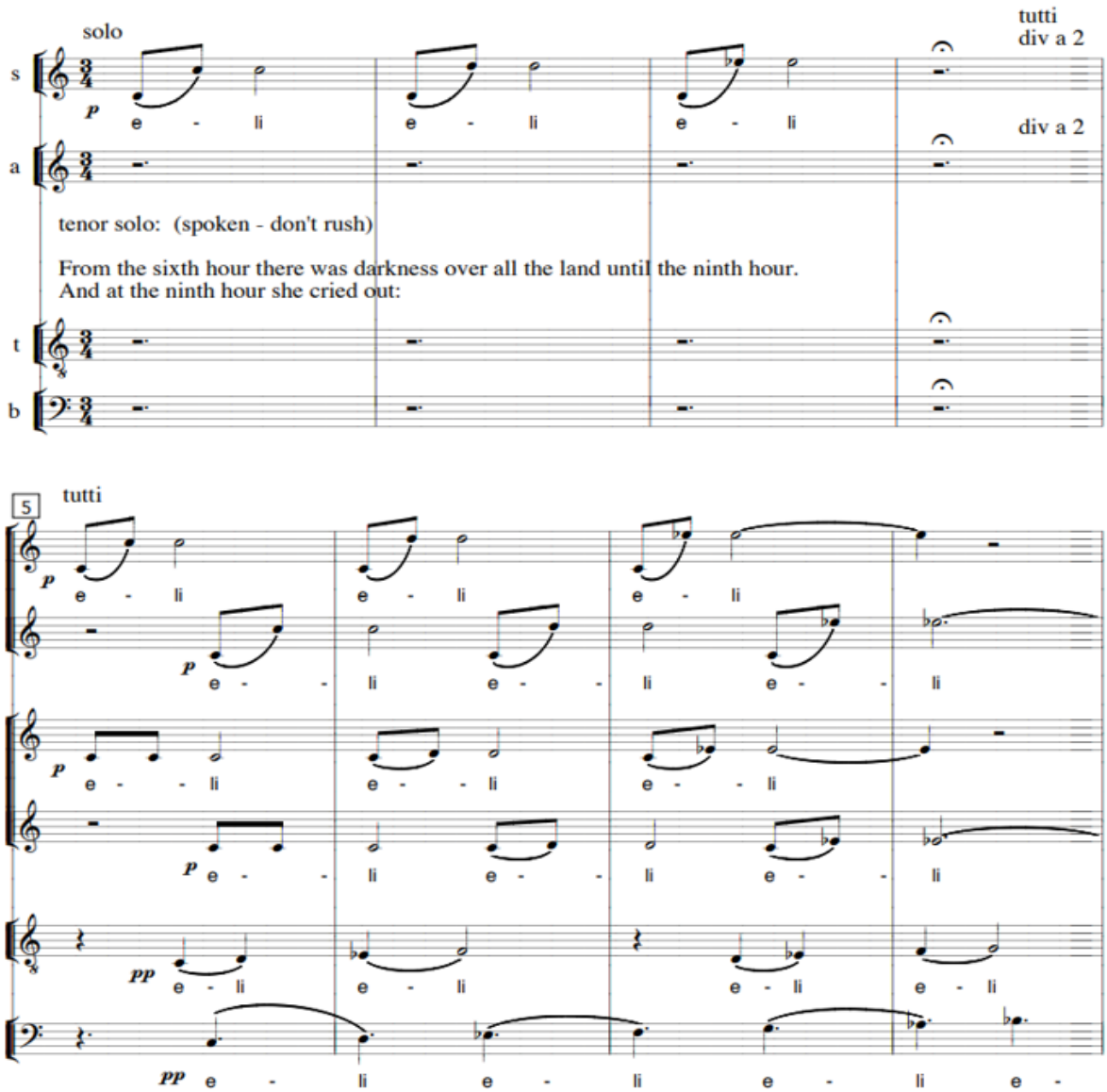

Figure 5: David Lang, "from the sixth hour" (No. 11), measures 1-8, from *the little match girl passion* (New York: Red Poppy, 2007).

Lang's idea of suffering is not only a musical one, but also a literal one. For example, in the first movement, the composer specifically instructs the tenor solo to "breathe as needed—sing as long as you can and exaggerate slightly the struggle for air when you run out and reenter" (Figure 6). The repetitive line looks deceptively easy, but it can be vocally taxing because the soloist has to maintain the pitch throughout the movement that is basically unaccompanied with hardly any time to breathe. This requires a high level of vocal stamina and an active presence of the singer, imitating the physical suffering and shivering of the girl.

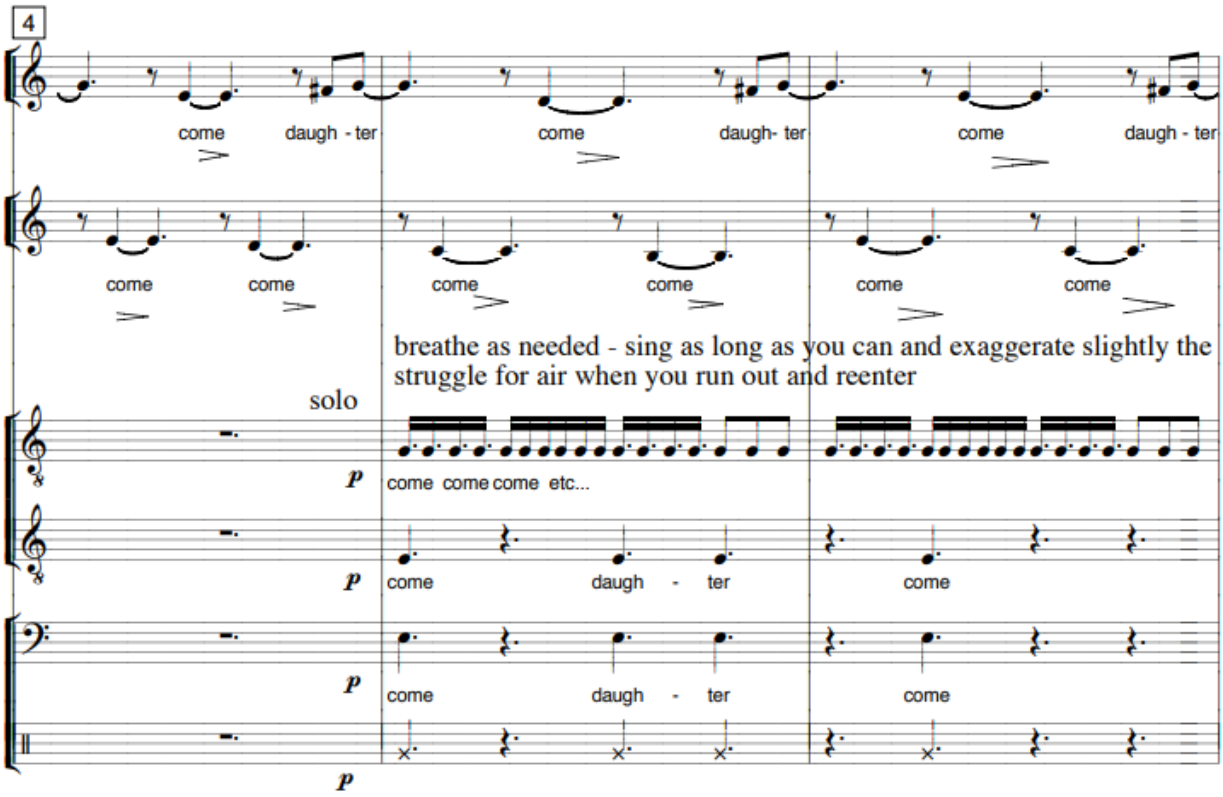

Figure 6: David Lang, "come, daughter" (No. 1), measures 4-6, from *the little match girl passion* (New York: Red Poppy, 2007).

3.4.5 Opposites and Uniformity in Mutual Impact

With the exception of the first movement, Lang's work has the same metronome mark of quarter note equals 72 throughout. The first movement, which has already been pointed out as tonally

non-conforming, is marked as dotted quarter note equals 48. Joshua Shank argues that if one considers the eighth note as the basic value, the first movement also comes down to the same tempo as the rest, or 144 eighth notes per minute.[75] While this argument is valid at the theoretical level, the actual tempo relationship is hardly perceived that way. Taking the first two movements as an example: the first movement is in compound meter (12/8) with three eighth notes in a beat, while the second movement is in simple meter (4/4) with two eighth notes in a beat. The three-to-two ratio is not immediately perceptible. What further weakens the tempo relationship is that the first movement is dominated by eighth-note pulses while the second movement is dominated by triplet-eighth-note pulses; the ordinary eighth note is not introduced until measure 34, more than halfway through the movement.

The lack of a perceptible tempo relationship between the first and second movements distinguishes the former from the rest of the work where tempo relationships are securely established, situating the listener outside of the temporal flow of the narrative. Conversely, the last movement (No. 15), as the *conclusio*, does not separate itself from the main body of the Passion like the first movement does. Written in 4/4 (quarter note equals 72) with a tonal center of F, it conforms to the preceding movement in terms of meter, tempo, and tonality. Further, while the last movement deploys all performing forces (*tutti* chorus and four percussion), it does not stand out as the finale of the work. Instead, the "girl motif" is played by the instruments for the first and last time, further reinforcing a connection with the narrative portions. The different

[75] Joshua Shank, "David Lang's *the little match girl passion*: Reportage and Emotionality (Paper, Contemporary Styles and Techniques Class, University of Texas, 2012), **quoted in** Niekerk, "Messiahs and Pariahs," 88.

treatments of the bookend movements in relation to the main body of the Passion can be interpreted as a symbolic transformation towards reconciliation and unification.

3.5 The Myth of Progress

Andersen's story has a limited temporo-spatial framework: the narrative takes place overnight, starting on New Year's Eve and concluding at the dawn of the next morning. But the author sets a slow pace for the story that distorts one's sense of time. To the dying girl, time becomes irrelevant such that it no longer adheres to the logical perception of reality. There is also the impression of a fixed physical space. The story both begins and ends on the wintry streets where the girl roams and struggles to survive. She makes several attempts to warm herself by lighting matches that she is supposed to sell. For as long as these matches burn, the girl sees visions that comfort her. Whether these visions are memories, hallucinations, or near-death experiences, they only exist in the girl's mind and do not correspond to the external world.

This non-developmental nature of the original story is manifested in the stagnant music of *the little match girl passion*. Constantly involved in the action, the listener is empathetic towards the girl and even symbolically suffers with her, but is unable to save her or change the course of events. After moments of hope expressed in the reflective movements, the suffering of the girl continues, and this cycle repeats until the girl eventually dies. Musically, while the multiple opposing elements create a wide variety throughout, there is no real sense of resolution or cadence. Sometimes progress comes in disguise even when practically nothing changes. An example of this is found in No. 6 where Lang, under the fixed metronome mark of quarter note equals 72, adds a seemingly contradictory note "pushing a bit forward," which likely indicates an increase in intensity rather than actual tempo.

One can look at this lack of linear progress in Lang's music from a more philosophical perspective. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines progress as "gradual betterment."[76] This definition can be problematic because it suggests a certain linearity towards a single, more preferable, direction. With technological advancements in modern society, linear historical progress is widely accepted and taught in the Western culture. But such interpretation was certainly rejected by Richard Taruskin who, in a lecture delivered at the Chicago Seminars on the Future in 1989, said: "The history of music in the twentieth, the most violent of centuries, has not been a straight line but a zigzag. To be exact, there have been two zigs [of periods of optimism] and an equal number of zags [of pessimistic retrenchment]....We are now living in the Second Zag, which will surely take us to the century's end and beyond."[77] Indeed, Taruskin's words were prophetic. Lang's work was composed in 2007 when the United States was confronted with wars in the Middle East and the beginning of the Great Recession of the late 2000s. Capitalism was endangered and brought to the verge of collapse. The historical events in the Western world surrounding Lang's composition betrayed the myth of progress, drawing a parallel to the music's post-minimalistic style. Taruskin's view on musical progress as an inseparable part of the broader scope of world history also recalls some ideas of Marx and Engels expressed in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848). According to Henry M. Pachter, "[the *Communist Manifesto*] did not see history as an escalator bound to carry humankind from one floor to the next in predetermined stages…but discuss[ed] progress as the dynamism of capitalistic society."[78] As a

[76] *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "Progress," accessed March 22, 2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/progress.

[77] Richard Taruskin, "Et in Arcadia Ego: Or, I Didn't Know I Was Such a Pessimist until I Wrote This Thing," "*The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 7, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[78] Henry M. Pachter, "The Idea of Progress in Marxism," *Social Research* 41, no. 1 (1974): 154, www.jstor.org/stable/40970172.

leftist composer who often uses music to express overtly political themes,[79] Lang treats the opposites and uniformity of *the little match girl passion* in comparable ways to the dynamism described by Marx and Engels, in which they always exist in mutual impact to propel the narrative and the music forward, but do not serve a teleological purpose. The composer has explored similar leftist sentiments in the choral piece *statement to the court* (2010) and the opera *prisoner of the state* (2019), among other instrumental works such as *symphony for broken instruments* (2017).[80]

3.6 Reception: A Case Study in Montreal, Canada

When interviewed by the National Public Radio, author and former *Washington Post* music critic Tim Page declared, "with all due respect to the hundreds of distinguished pieces I've listened to as a Pulitzer juror, I don't think I've ever been so moved by a new, and largely unheralded, composition as I was by David Lang's *Little Match Girl Passion*, which is unlike any music I know."[81] Lang's Passion has been well-received and performed numerous times in the United States and internationally since its premiere. Within a few years after its genesis, the work had been recognized as part of the twenty-first century's standard choral repertoire. It is also one of the most performed Passion settings written in the last twenty years. There are several reasons that explain its popularity. Traditionally, Passion compositions are usually concert-length works,

[79] Benjamin Safran, "Sounding Strategy: Composers' Uses of Social Justice and Political Themes in Contemporary Classical Concert Music" (PhD diss, Temple University, 2019), 2, accessed January 29, 2022, http://dx.doi.org/10.34944/dspace/541.

[80] *statement to the court* is a setting of the passionate and intelligent speech by Eugene Debs, the pioneering nineteenth-century American socialist who was accused of sedition for speaking out against American participation in World War I. David Lang, "Note to *statement to the court*." *David Lang*, accessed May 25, 2020, https://davidlangmusic.com/music/statement-to-court. *prisoner of the state* is a reworking of Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*, which Lang describes as "[a] great political statement about freedom." Lang, interview by author. A detailed analysis of *symphony for broken instruments* can be found in Safran, "Sounding Strategy," 47-92.

[81] Tom Huizenga, "David Lang Wins Music Pulitzer," *National Public Radio*, last modified April 7, 2008, https://www.npr.org/2011/01/24/89442735/david-lang-wins-music-pulitzer.

lasting at least more than an hour. Lang's setting, however, lasts only approximately 35 minutes. The relatively short duration of the work allows more flexibility for other pieces to be programmed in the same concert, either with or without an intermission. Moreover, the fact that the percussionists are also members of the chorus means that no additional instrumentalists are required, making the work one of the most budget-friendly Passions to perform. The timely topics of poverty, homelessness, and child protection implied by the work inspire social justice-themed and charitable performances.

On February 9, 2019, a candlelight vigil for the homeless was held at the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul (A&P) in downtown Montreal, Quebec.[82] According to the Rev. Dr. Glenn Chestnutt, the Lead Minister of the church, the vigil was "a liturgical blend of secular and sacred to raise our awareness [to the problems of homelessness]."[83] This event was an interdisciplinary experience with a variety of contents. The main content was music: *the little match girl passion* and other unaccompanied pieces were sung by the twenty-voice A&P Chamber Choir, conducted by Jean-Sébastien Vallée.[84] Known as the "pro core," the singers were professional members of the regular A&P Choir that sang for every Sunday service before the pandemic. The event was open to all, free of charge with a freewill offering. In addition to the performance itself, several other items were interposed between the music, including speeches and prayers by the minister as well as readings of biblical passages and secular poetry in both English and French. One of the poems was written and read by a person who had personally experienced homelessness.

[82] I am a singer of this choir but was not involved in this event.

[83] The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, "The Little Match Girl Passion Livestream," *YouTube* video, 1:24:15, February 9, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_vuIpALBUE.

[84] Dr. Jean-Sébastien Vallée, former Choir Director at A&P, is the Director of Choral Studies at McGill University, where he serves as my supervisor.

There was a charity sale in the narthex of the church immediately following the vigil, in which participants were encouraged to pick up an item of clothing to offer to someone in need as they left. Vallée explained,

> This idea of having a piece of clothing at the end was not decided, it kind of all happened. You know, we actually performed it just by talking about it. It kind of drew different forces together…But that all came like about 48 hours before. So, I think sometimes when you create the right space, things just happen in a kind of magical way.[85]

The "space" that Vallée mentioned was not just a metaphorical one, but also a physical one. Instead of the traditional concert hall, the vigil took place in a church sanctuary, which unavoidably created a certain religious atmosphere for the performance. To Vallée, however, the church, as a building, has meanings beyond religion:

> I think one of the challenges is to make a difference between religion and the space within the church…For some people, there's no church without religion; but for some people, and I'm one of them—my religious views are different—that my appreciation for the church being a building [and] a space of beauty, sound, visual, smell, and experience is so unique.[86]

It was obvious that Vallée wanted the event to be more than a religious one. First, he called it a "candlelight vigil" instead of a service. On the poster of the event, there is no mention of God or religion (Figure 7). The graphic design of a frozen match house is inexplicit but provocative.[87] It does not project any value judgement on the content of the vigil, but opens up for interpretation and invites reflection on homelessness. Second, the performance space was slightly altered to diminish religious connotations. The chorus did not sing from the choir loft as they usually would. Instead, they stood on a black platform specially assembled for the performance (Figure

[85] Jean-Sébastien Vallée, interview by author, Zoom, May 25, 2020.

[86] Ibid.

[87] "The Little Match Girl Passion," *The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul*, accessed March 15, 2020, https://www.standrewstpaul.com/events/little-match-girl/.

8). The platform extended from the front steps of the chancel towards the audience, elevated approximately two feet above the ground. Candles were lit in the chancel while lights in the sanctuary were dimmed. Only minimal stage lights were used for the singers to see their scores on the music stand. Third, the performers did not dress up in formal concert attire. Instead, they wore dark-colored street clothes and shoes, making the event more accessible and intimate.

In his opening prayer, the Rev. Chestnutt portrays a humanized image of God who empathizes with human sufferings and is present in the middle of the needy: "Tonight is for those who share most deeply in His suffering—those who, like Him, know the insecurity of poverty, of homelessness, [and] of displacement." There are two mentions of God's home in the prayer, which is described as having "many mansions" and "a dwelling place secure." The heavenly dwellings are representations of God's abundance. They are sources of hope and assurance for those who do not have a permanent home on earth, recalling Psalm 84 that is famously set by Johannes Brahms in the fourth movement of his *Ein deutsches Requiem*, "Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen" (How lovely are thy dwelling places). Most importantly, the prayer calls for the fortunate ones with no housing worries—the vast majority of those who were present—to be grateful, hospitable, and generous with the resources that they have.[88]

[88] The following is a transcription of the whole prayer, transcribed by the author based on the livestream video: "God, whose home has many mansions, we raise up to you all who have no home to call their own. Help them to find the strength, the resilience, and the resources that they need to meet the challenges of each new day. And may they find shelter, warmth and hospitality as they journey through life. God, whose home is a dwelling place secure, please enter the hearts and the minds of those of us who have no housing worries. Encourage our hospitable instincts; welcome our gratitude for our own comfort and call us to imitate your generosity with the resources that we have. God, above all, we give you thanks for Jesus Christ, present in the face of the poorest, present where two or three are gathered in His name, present *here* this evening, present *out there* on our streets. Tonight is for those who share most deeply in His suffering—those who, like Him, know the insecurity of poverty, of homelessness, of displacement. And may we all know Christ as the one who suffers with us, the one who challenges injustice, and who delivers the oppressed. Loving God, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our Savior Jesus Christ, as it is in His name we pray. Amen."

Musically, Lang's Passion was the centerpiece of the concert, surrounded by several other shorter choral pieces with themes of love and hope, including Ola Gjeilo's *Ubi caritas*, Tomás Luis de Victoria's *"*O Vos Omnes" from the *Tenebrae Responsories*, Randall Thompson's *The Best of Rooms*, Jake Runestad's *Let My Love Be Heard*, and Dominick DiOrio's *You Do Not Walk Alone.* It is worth noting that there was a mix of sacred and secular pieces that mirrored the nature of the vigil itself. The concert started with the *Ubi caritas* chant and ended with the incipit of the same chant, followed by René Clausen's *Set Me as a Seal.* In effect, the chant served as a constant reminder of the divine presence amidst charity and love.

Certainly, for an event like the candlelight vigil, there are always greater meanings that transcend what is being presented. But these meanings were not imposed on the audience in this instance. Vallée explained that he meant to give the impression of being organic without any call to action and create a safe space of reflection on a topic that people would be inspired by,[89] approaches that were closely aligned with Lang's intentions. When asked what, if anything, he wanted the listener to take away from his music, Lang replied,

> I don't want to tell people what to do…I like to have experiences that make me feel like my thoughtfulness is valued, that I can see something more deeply. And then I am able to decide for myself how to act upon my new vision and feeling. And to me, that's a valuable contribution to the discussion. We have lots of music all the time now that tells us what to do…I feel like it's kind of noble to have pieces that respect you enough as a listener to say, I just want you to see this. Just look at it, like it's something that you might not have seen…And then if you want to do something about it, if it moves you to think of something else, then that's of great value.[90]

[89] Vallée, interview by author.
[90] Lang, interview by author.

To be sure, Lang's Passion does not provide any answers, but rather raises questions. The end of the vigil was also the beginning of change for each and every participant, whatever that change might be.

Figure 7: The poster of A&P Chamber Choir's production of *the little match girl passion*. The simplistic design is in line with the post-minimalist style of Lang's music.

Figure 8: A snapshot of the performance in the sanctuary of the church, showing the extended stage from the chancel and candles behind the singers.[91]

[91] The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, "The Little Match Girl Passion Livestream."

3.7 Conclusion

Lang's music intensifies the inherent dialectical oppositions in Andersen's story. The allusions to Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*—a work that is often considered the pinnacle of Western classical music—evoke a privileged culture in which the lower class is historically excluded. The dualities of movement type and tonality mirror such social hierarchy both musically and extra-musically. However, amidst all these opposites is the uniformity also espoused in Lang's music. Throughout the work, a "girl motif" propels the music forward, providing variety and impetus within the post-minimalist form. There is also a strong sense of communal participation.

In Andersen's story, the little match girl is portrayed as a *persona non grata*: she is rejected, made to suffer, and left to die in the cold of winter. It ends in an unsatisfactory way in that there is a sense of indifference as to how people respond to the victim's death: "In the dawn of morning there lay the poor little one, with pale cheeks and smiling mouth, leaning against the wall; she had been frozen to death on the last evening of the year…No one imagined what beautiful things she had seen, nor into what glory she had entered with her grandmother, on New-year's day." This ending poses a challenge to the reader, but it does not necessarily provide any spur to action or specific moral lesson. As with other fables and fairy tales, Andersen's story has an open ending that invites numerous interpretations. Such an ending is powerful because it provokes the reader's imagination, but it would not provide a good dramatic conclusion. As a comparison, imagine Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* ending immediately with Jesus's death ("und verschied" in No. 61) and omitting the movements that follows it, especially the final chorus "Wir setzen uns." Lang feels that something is missing in the original:

> [It] is very abrupt, and the abruptness of it is very painful. So, I definitely felt like in order to incorporate that story into the piece, it needed a moral lesson. I'm not sure what the moral lesson is of the original. It doesn't really tell you, oh, you notice this, and you

> need to change, or you see this and isn't that bad? Right? It just says, oh, she died. It seems…there are things that happened for a great shock value. But that wasn't really the point of this piece. The point of this piece was to have that story in a frame of contemplation and real kind of thoughtfulness about what that story meant.[92]

Lang's Passion does not stop at where Andersen has left off. Instead, it offers a more personal and intimate ending of the original with the insertion of "we sit and cry" (No. 15), a movement that meditates on the girl's death. It is hard for the listener not to see themselves as part of the crowd that gathers around the girl. But unlike how the *turba* is depicted in Bach's Passions, Lang's crowd is a compassionate one—one that has been constantly involved in the girl's suffering and eventually *becomes* her, saying, "you closed your eyes, I closed my eyes" (measures 25-40). Perhaps when the girl dies, a part of humanity dies too. Through a contemplation of the girl's story, Lang's Passion implicates compassion as a vehicle for change and new beginnings.

[92] Lang, interview by author.

Chapter Four

Considering Matthew Shepard (2016) by Craig Hella Johnson

4.1 Composer Biography

A Minnesota native, Craig Hella Johnson (b. 1963) is the founder and Artistic Director of the Texas-based professional choral ensemble Conspirare, with which he won a Grammy Award for Best Choral Performance in 2015 for their album *The Sacred Spirit of Russia*. Currently, he also serves as Music Director of the Cincinnati Vocal Arts Ensemble and Artist-in-Residence at Texas State University School of Music. Several of Johnson's popular choral arrangements including *I Love You/What a Wonderful World, Let the River Run,* and *Light of a Clear Blue Morning* are frequently featured in choral concerts across North America. In recent years, Johnson's status as a composer is on the rise, especially after the composition of *Considering Matthew Shepard*, his first and only concert-length work to date.

Johnson received degrees in piano performance and choral conducting from St. Olaf College, the University of Illinois, the Juilliard School, and Yale University, and studied conducting in Germany with Helmuth Rilling.[93]

4.2 Artistic Legacy of Matthew Shepard (1976-1998)

Matthew Shepard (1976-1998) was a University of Wyoming student who was tortured, tied to a split-rail fence, and murdered in 1998 in Laramie, Wyoming apparently because of his homosexuality. The incident was widely reported on national media, as candlelight vigils were held across the country in memory of Matthew, who became a global gay rights icon. In 2009, then U.S. President Barack Obama passed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes

[93] Ward, "Passion Settings of the 20th- and 21st- Centuries," 6.

Prevention Act in honor of the two hate-crime victims. The legislation expanded the 1969 American federal hate-crime law to include crimes motivated by a victim's sexual orientation.

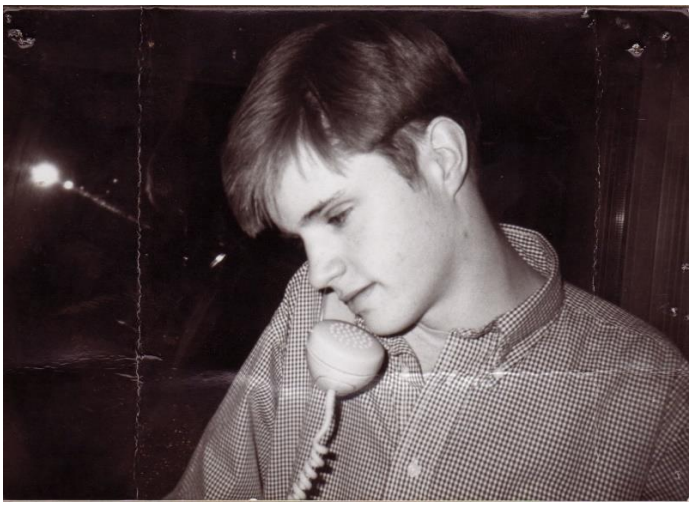

Figure 9: Matthew Shepard on the phone. Courtesy Matthew Shepard Foundation.

Since Matthew's death, his legacy and spirit have lived on in the form of art and music. The first substantial artistic tribute to Matthew is *The Laramie Project* (2000), a docudrama by Moisés Kaufman and members of New York's Tectonic Theater Project. It draws on a compilation of more than 200 interviews with residents of Laramie over the company's six visits to the town. The play premiered in February 2000 in Ricketson Theatre, Denver, Colorado, with subsequent performances across the United States, including those at the Off-Broadway Union Square Theatre in New York City. In 2001, the script for the play was published under the same title, which was then turned into an HBO film the following year.[94] In 2008, members of the Tectonic Theater Project returned to Laramie and conducted follow-up interviews with those featured in *The Laramie Project*, which culminated in *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*, a

[94] Moisés Kaufman, *Laramie Project* (New York: Dramatists Play Service Inc., 2001). The film was later published on YouTube with over 760,000 views as of November 2021. Laramie Project Movie, "The Laramie Project," *YouTube* video, 1:35:00, June 7, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1qiTmF0p4A.

companion play to the original.[95] The sequel premiered simultaneously in 150 theaters in all 50 states and eight countries on October 12, 2009, the eleventh anniversary of Matthew's death, reaching an audience of 50,000 in one night.[96] The two plays were presented together for the first time at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, in February 2013.[97]

An important scene in *The Laramie Project* depicts a silent demonstration known as "Angel Action," organized by radio host and close friend of Matthew, Romaine Patterson (played by Christina Ricci). It is based on the true story where Patterson encountered a group of anti-gay protestors picketing at Matthew's funeral who held signs with hateful slogans that read "God hates Fags," "Matt in hell," and "AIDS cures Fags." Distressed by what she saw, Patterson decided to do something for Matthew. She and her friends came up with the idea of dressing up as white angels with giant wingspans that rose seven feet high. They would appear in every Matthew Shepard event, silently walk up to the hateful protestors and turn their backs on them so that they are out of sight from the Shepards. The impact of "Angel Action" was significant. After their initial counter-protests, the "angels" started getting requests for do-it-yourself angel kits to be used all over the United States.[98] From its conception, "Angel Action" is more than a demonstration, but also a kind of performance with eye-catching props and grand spectacles.

With regard to music, the most notable musical work about Matthew prior to *Considering Matthew Shepard* is arguably Randi Driscoll's song "What Matters" (2000), a benefit single in the style of country pop that the singer/songwriter declared to be the most important piece she

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[95] Moisés Kaufman, Leigh Fondakowski, Greg Pierotti, Andy Paris, and Stephen Belber, *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later* (New York: Dramatists Play Service Inc, 2012).

[96] "The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later," *Tectonic Theater Project*, accessed May 18, 2020, https://www.tectonictheaterproject.org/?avada_portfolio=thelaramieproject10yearslater.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Romaine Patterson, "Angel Action," *Laramie & Matthew*, accessed May 19, 2020, http://eatromaine.com/1/laramie-angels.html.

ever wrote.[99] Within two years of its release, Driscoll had traveled to over sixty cities in North America performing the song at charity events, pride festivals, and concerts.[100] The chorus of the song puts forth four questions that help the listener reflect on the core message of the song, each with the implied answer: "it doesn't matter":

> Who cares whose arms I'm all wrapped up in,
> Who cares whose eyes I see myself in,
> Who cares who I dream of,
> Who cares who I love?[101]

A subsequent choral version of the song, arranged by Kevin Robison, was commissioned by the Matthew Shepard Foundation in 2002 and published by Yelton Rhodes Music. It has been performed by over fifty choirs internationally, and is available in TTBB, SATB, and SSAA voicings, all with piano accompaniment. [102]

Other than music, the most notable poetic tribute to Matthew is *October Mourning*, a collection of poems by American author Lesléa Newman.[103] Several poems from the collection were used as libretto in *Considering Matthew Shepard*, an interdisciplinary collaboration between Johnson and Newman.

4.3 Background

Considering Matthew Shephard (2016) is a powerful musical response to the tragic death of Matthew Shepard. Being one of the first Passion settings that takes on an LGBTQ+ subject, the 105-minute work of three parts—Prologue, Passion, Epilogue—is Johnson's most ambitious

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[99] All proceeds of the song go to the Matthew Shepard Foundation. "Randi Driscoll: What Matters (2002)," *Choralicious!*, last modified July 21, 2008, http://choralicious.com/YRMblog/?p=132.

[100] "Randi Driscoll: What Matters (2002)," *Choralicious!*.

[101] Ibid.

[102] "About Randi Driscoll," *Randi Driscoll*, accessed May 18, 2020, https://www.randidriscoll.com/bio.

[103] Lesléa Newman, *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard* (Somerville: Candlewick Press, 2012).

composition to date. The piece is scored for mixed chorus, vocal soloists/narrators, piano, clarinet, strings, percussion, and guitar. Johnson set a wide range of poetic texts by Hildegard von Bingen, Rumi, Lesléa Newman, and Michael Dennis Browne; additional texts are sourced from Matthew's own notebook, words from his parents Judy and Dennis Shepard, and newspaper reports, compiled and crafted by Johnson and Browne. The work premiered in 2016 in Austin, Texas with Conspirare, conducted by the composer, and was featured at the Western American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) conference in Pasadena, California in the same year.[104]

Despite its rising popularity in the North American choral scene, *Considering Matthew Shepard* has not received much attention in academia, partly because of an initial exclusivity for Johnson/Conspirare. The full score was made available to the public in 2019. There are two dissertations thus far that focus on the work. The first is by Robert Ward (2016) from the University of North Texas. A member of Conspirare who sang in the work's premiere, Ward had immediate access to the composer and the performers of Conspirare. His paper examines *Considering Matthew Shepard* against the backdrop of twentieth- and twenty-first-century Passion settings, which became a significant inspiration to me. It is also largely informed by personal interviews with Johnson and Lesléa Newman. A more recent dissertation that offers an outsider's view is by Joshua Boggs (2021) from the University of Notre Dame. Though not a member of Conspirare, Boggs led an interdisciplinary performance of *Considering Matthew Shepard* at Notre Dame in 2019.[105] His paper examines the interrelated themes of gender, sexuality, and religion in the work through the lens of Christianity. He argues that while

[104] Ward, "Passion Settings of the 20th- and 21st- Centuries," 3.

[105] "Joshua Boggs – Conductor," *Toronto Mendelssohn Choir*, accessed January 14, 2022, https://www.tmchoir.org/profile/joshua-boggs/.

conservative Christian viewpoints and American liberal Christian viewpoints often come into conflict in the work, there is an eventual reconciliation of this tension by an overwhelming conclusion of love, acceptance, unity, and the humanity in all of us.[106] In this chapter, I will further explore these themes of universality and inclusivity in Johnson's work that are certainly not confined to any religious or faith backgrounds.

Six years having passed since the genesis of *Considering Matthew Shepard*, it is time for a reappraisal of the work, especially in light of recent events: 1) the 2018 interment of Matthew's remains at Washington National Cathedral, in which excerpts of the work were performed within the service, and 2) the rise of hate crimes targeting multiple minority groups across North America and the social movements that they triggered. For me, a more personal goal is to sensitively promote *Considering Matthew Shepard* to a wider audience than it is currently reaching. As an international student from Hong Kong, Matthew Shepard's name was unknown to me until very recently. On October 26, 2018, while a master's student at Yale University, I accidentally came across the livestream of Matthew's interment on the internet. Deeply moved by the music, I decided to look up Matthew Shepard and his story. Little did I know that this initial encounter, albeit delayed for twenty years, would eventually lead to the fruition of my doctoral project three-and-a-half years later in a different country. Indeed, my research is equally motivated by Matthew's story and the artistic merits of Johnson's musical response that has touched the hearts of many. This chapter examines the core messages of universality and inclusivity in *Considering Matthew Shepard* by showing a cathartic transformation embedded in the work's narrative and music—one that leads to a deeper understanding of the human condition

[106] Joshua Boggs, "Gender, Sexuality, and Religion in *Considering Matthew Shepard*" (DMA diss., University of Notre Dame, 2021), 80, https://doi.org/10.7274/t435gb23079.

and a hope of an eventual reconciliation for all. Matthew's story is timely and relevant not only in the United States but globally.

4.4 Structure

Considering Matthew Shepard is structured in three parts: Prologue, Passion, and Epilogue. The Passion is the longest part where the story takes place, while the shorter outer parts "set the scene and speak outside of the temporal flow of the narrative in the Passion by breaking the fourth wall and speaking directly to the audience."[107] This disproportionate tripartite structure recalls Bach's Passions, in which the *exordium* and *conclusio* of the medieval Passion chanting are turned into two large-scale bookend movements.[108] In *Considering Matthew Shepard*, the *exordium* and *conclusio* are further expanded into multiple movements. Unlike the traditional Passion, there is no trial before killing in Matthew's story. To whatever extent the historical Matthew underwent a trial, it only occurred after his death. This presents a particular challenge for the composer-dramatist, who must begin the Passion part in an abrupt way. Thus, the outer sections serve to mitigate this abruptness and provide a necessary framework for contemplation.

4.4.1 Prologue (movements 1 to 3)

The Prologue consists of three movements that prepare the listener for the Passion. The first movement "Cattle, Horses, Sky, and Grass" begins with a partial quotation of Bach's Prelude in C from *Well-Tempered Clavier* Book One,[109] evoking the tranquility of Wyoming where Matthew was born, raised, and eventually died. This idyllic depiction of the state contrasts with

[107] Daniel Cockayne, "*Considering Matthew Shepard*: Normative and Anti-Normative Queer Spatial Narratives and the Politics of Performance in Choral Music," *Cultural Geographies* 26, no. 4 (2019): 476, accessed January 13, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474019856409.

[108] Rathey, "The Passion and the Passions," 112.

[109] This Bach piece is also the basis of the Bach/Gounod *Ave Maria*.

common descriptions of rural America as unfit for and hostile towards queer lives and bodies.[110] The text of this movement reflects on the beauty of Wyoming's nature, but also comments on its transience, foreshadowing the tragic event that follows: "these are the things that sway and pass."

The second movement "Ordinary Boy" gives an account of Matthew's birth and childhood. In the traditional Passion, there is no mention of Jesus's life before his ministry. In fact, the Bible rarely mentions anything about Jesus's formative years. Johnson takes on a different approach to offer the listener a full perspective of Matthew as a normal person. This is particularly important because, unlike the traditional Passion in which composers can assume the listener's prior knowledge of the subject, Matthew's story requires more background information to contextualize the listener. "Ordinary Boy" does exactly that to set the stage for the Passion like a prequel to the main story.

The third and last movement of the Prologue, "We Tell Each Other Stories" begins as a soprano aria that extends an invitation to enter the story, followed by an unaccompanied choral passage that acts on behalf of the listener who willingly responds to the invitation: "I am open to hear this story about a boy…."

4.4.2 Passion (movements 4 to 29)

The Passion is the central part of the whole work. It loosely follows the structure of Bach's Passions where four prototypical movement types—chorus, recitative, aria and chorale—alternate to propel the drama forward (Table 5; for a more detailed breakdown with specific instrumentation and voicing, see Appendix A). While none of these movements corresponds to a

[110] Cockayne, "*Considering Matthew Shepard*," 477.

specific movement in Bach's Passions, the influence of the Baroque composer is apparent through allusions and quotations.

The chorus is present in almost every movement including the arias, with the exception of the recitatives. In fact, there is only one aria in which the chorus is entirely absent: "Keep It Away from Me" (No. 10). But even in this movement, the soloist (mezzo-soprano) is accompanied by an SSA trio that functions like backup singers commonly found in popular music. Another notable aria is "The Innocence" (No. 17) in which the tenor solo reflects on memory and loss of innocence as the chorus mostly sings on neutral syllables in the background.

Besides the choruses and arias, Johnson's recitatives and chorales also function similarly to those movements in Bach's Passions. For our purpose, the chorale must satisfy two requirements: 1) it must be largely homophonic and homorhythmic, much like Lutheran hymnody; 2) it must be removed from the temporal flow of the narrative both preceding and following the chorale, while actively commenting on it. It is this second feature that makes Johnson's chorales so powerful in the way they engage the listener to reflect on the story.

Movement	Chorus	Recitative	Aria	Chorale
4. Recitation I		x		
5. The Fence (Before)			x	
6. Recitation II		x		
7. The Fence (That Night)	x		x	
8. Recitation III		x		
9. A Protestor[111]	x			

[111] This is how Johnson spells it; the same spelling is adopted throughout the paper.

Movement *(continued)*	**Chorus**	**Recitative**	**Aria**	**Chorale**
10. Keep It Away from Me (The Wound of Love)			x	
11. Recitation IV		x		
12. Fire of the Ancient Heart			x	x
13. Recitation V		x		
14. Stray Birds	x			
15. We Are All Sons (Part 1)	x			
16. I Am Like You/ We Are All Sons (Part 2)	x			x
17. The Innocence			x	
18. Recitative VI		x		
19. The Fence (One Week Later)			x	x
20. Recitation VII		x		
21. Stars		x		
22. Recitation VIII		x		
23. In Need of Breath			x	
24. Gently Rest – Optional	x			
25. Recitation IX		x		
26. Deer Song	x			
27. Recitation X		x		
28. The Fence (After)/ The Wind	x			
29. Pilgrimage	x			

Table 5: Movement types in the Passion part of *Considering Matthew Shepard.*

4.4.3 Epilogue (movements 30 to 33)

The Epilogue signifies the end of the Passion and the beginning of healing. It consists of four movements. The first movement, “Meet Me Here” (No. 30), is a popular stand-alone piece with a melody loosely based on the pentatonic scale and harmonized in a way that is reminiscent of the shape-note singing tradition in the American South. While Matthew and the fence are evoked, the reference is so implicit that one can easily adapt the piece for a wide range of occasions, inviting the listener to gather at a painful event and move forward with a sense of renewal. The chronology of the movement corresponds with that of the narrative: Matthew has died but the work for justice has just begun.

“Thank You” (No. 31) corresponds to the opening of the Prologue by quoting Bach’s Prelude again, this time in its entirety. It considers the possibility of being grateful even when there seems to be no reason for it. There are many words of gratitude that do not address a specific person or object—it could be Matthew or anyone else, including the listener.

The penultimate movement “All of Us” (No. 32) is a climactic quasi-finale that culminates the whole work, calling for all to be more compassionate towards one another. This ecstatic fanfare is followed by a reprise of “Cattle, Horses, Sky, and Grass” (No. 33) from the Prologue, forming an overarching symmetry. At first listen, the quiet ending to a 105-minute work might seem unsatisfactory, especially when it immediately follows a big chorus. From another perspective, the tasteful insertion of the reprise allows the work to come full circle and end contemplatively just as it began. While “All of Us” celebrates the metaphorical coming together of all people, the ending sends them off to the world with a grateful spirit.

4.5 Quotations and Allusions

The use of pre-existing materials is prevalent in *Considering Matthew Shepard*. These quotations and allusions range from short passages such as the collage of three children's songs, *Frère Jacques*, *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*, and *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* in "Ordinary Boy" (No. 2; measures 50-55) to more extended ones. A significant source is the music of Bach. As mentioned earlier, the work opens with a partial quotation of Bach's Prelude in C. This quotation is not idle: it not only establishes the main tonality of the work, but also prepares the original music that will emerge out of the quotation. For example, the harmonic progression in measures 13-19, if one ignores the bass pedal, is identical to the beginning of the Bach:

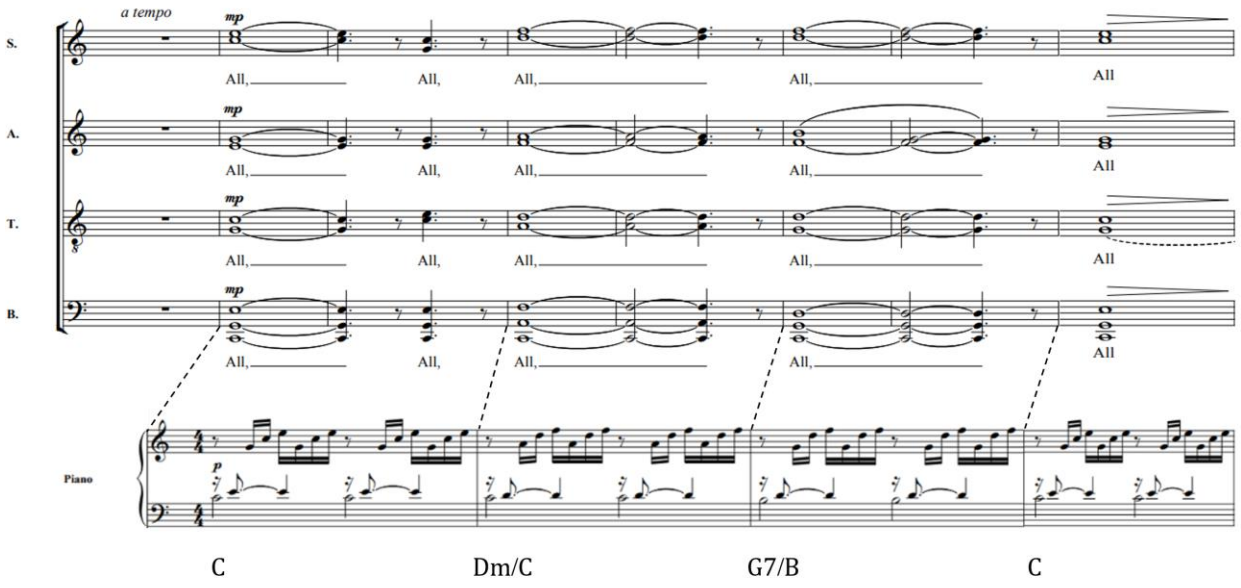


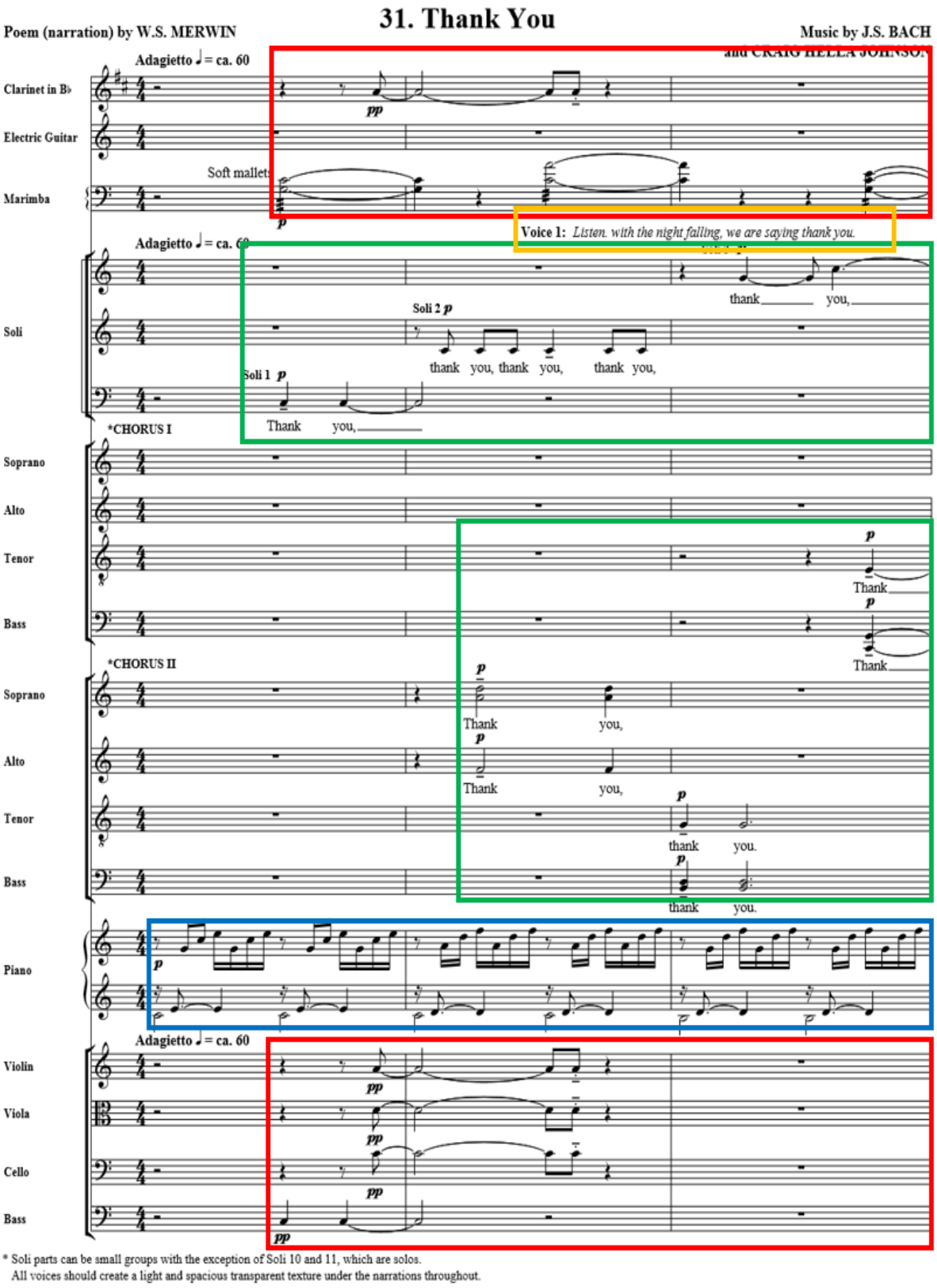
Figure 10: Craig Hella Johnson, "Cattle, Horses, Sky, and Grass" (No. 1), measures 12-19 [chorus only], from *Considering Matthew Shepard* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2016), as compared to measures 1-4 of the same movement with a harmonic analysis.

The quotation of Bach arrives on a dominant cadence in G major in measure 11, followed by the interruption of the strings on a C drone. In measure 13, the chorus enters on the word "all," which is repeated five times, recalling the opening chorus of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* "Kommt, ihr Töchter, helft mir klagen" (Come, daughters, help me lament) where the word

"kommt" is repeated many times as an invocation to enter the Passion. But Johnson's invocation extends an even more universal invitation in that it excludes no one regardless of their faith. Bach's music mainly has two functions in the first movement. First, at the personal and artistic level, the reference to Bach is the composer's tribute to an admired predecessor. Second, at the more metaphorical level, Bach's music represents the ideology of interconnectedness with a sense of familiarity and nostalgia: anyone who plays the piano beyond the beginner level or knows anything about classical music would probably know Bach's Prelude. Thus, the quotation serves a similar function as the pre-existing chorales do in Bach's Passions, which any Leipzig churchgoer in Bach's time would have known.

After the Passion part, Bach's Prelude returns in the Epilogue where it is quoted in its entirety in "Thank You" (No. 31). Figure 11 shows that three more layers are added to the original music of Bach, which remains the harmonic backbone of the movement (in blue). The first extra layer is instruments other than piano (in red), which serves to enrich the sonority of the Prelude without drawing attention to itself. The second extra layer is the double chorus and vocal trio (in green), which stays in the background throughout. The third and most prominent extra layer is the narration (in yellow), which is done by two speakers labelled as "voices 1 and 2" who recite W. S. Merwin's poem "Thanks" (1988) in alternation.[112]

[112] The full text of the poem can be found in W. S. Merwin, *Migration: New and Selected Poems* (Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 2005), 280. In the second edition of *Considering Matthew Shepard*, Merwin's poem is replaced by Michael Dennis Browne's original poem, "Even in the Rain." Ann McNair, the Managing Director of Conspirare, explained to me upon inquiry about the change: "There was a very practical reason for the new text – the Merwin text requires additional permission to perform and can be quite pricey." Ann McNair, email message to the author, February 15, 2022. There is no change to the music of the movement.


31. Thank You
Poem (narration) by W.S. MERWIN
Music by J.S. BACH
and CRAIG HELLA JOHNSON
Adagietto ♩= ca. 60
Clarinet in B♭
Electric Guitar
Marimba
Soft mallets
pp
p
Voice 1: Listen. with the night falling, we are saying thank you.
Soli
Soli 2 p
thank you, thank you, thank you,
Soli 1 p
Thank you,
thank you,
*CHORUS I
Soprano
Alto
Tenor
Bass
Thank
*CHORUS II
you,
you.
Piano
Violin
Viola
Cello
* Soli parts can be small groups with the exception of Soli 10 and 11, which are solos.
All voices should create a light and spacious transparent texture under the narrations throughout.

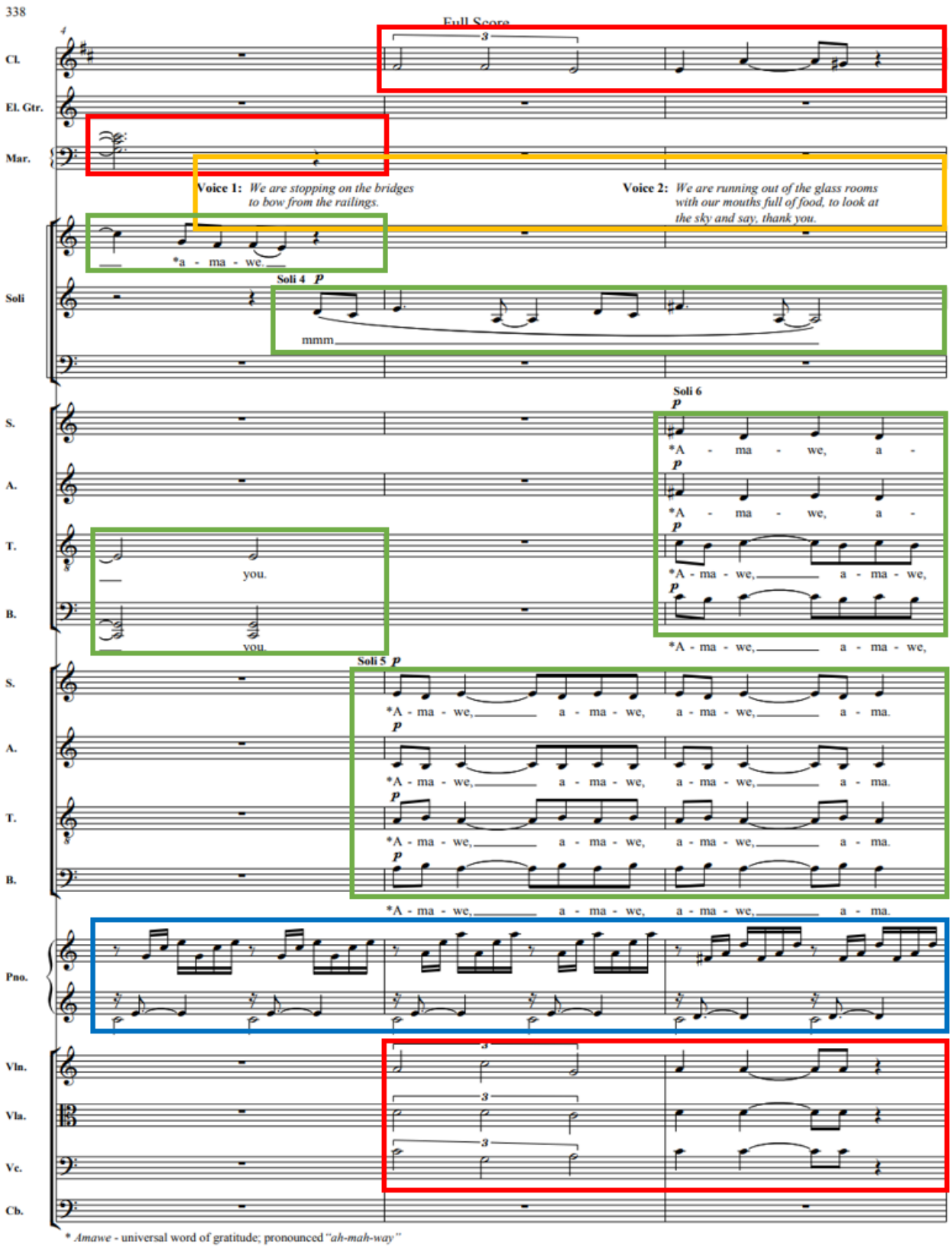


Figure 11: Craig Hella Johnson, "Thank You" (No. 31), measures 1-6, from *Considering Matthew Shepard*, 1st ed. (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2016).

Another example of quotation is found in No. 9 "A Protestor." Unlike the traditional Passion, there are limited actions in Johnson's work. There was no trial before the death of Matthew. The "trial" and "crucifixion" (if we contend with these terms) come afterwards when the anti-gay pastor Fred Phelps and members of the Westboro Baptist Church protested outside Matthew's funeral at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Casper, Wyoming. At the onset of "A Protestor," Johnson quotes the first three measures of Benjamin Britten's "This Little Babe," from *A Ceremony of Carols,* originally written for three-part treble chorus. Britten's piece is not as well-known as Bach's Prelude, but it is by no means obscure in the choral repertoire. In fact, it is popular among children's choirs, especially during Christmas.[113] Being the sixth movement in *A Ceremony of Carols*, "This Little Babe" is a turning point in the cycle that contrasts with what comes before by taking on a much darker subject matter. In his program notes, Britten writes:

> This piece depicts a battle between the baby Jesus Christ and Satan (good and evil), which is conveyed in its swift tempo, polyrhythms, overlapping segments between the voices, and the fact that the song grows progressively louder over the duration of the movement. The song reaches its climax with an intense key change and conflicting rhythm from the rest of the piece.[114]

Robert Southwell's poem "Newe Heaven, Newe Warre" (1595) that Britten uses vividly depicts the imagery of hell: "This little Babe so few days old, is come to rifle Satan's fold. All hell doth at his presence quake, though he himself for cold do shake." The musical setting of the text conveys a similar agitated, martial feeling unusual for a carol.

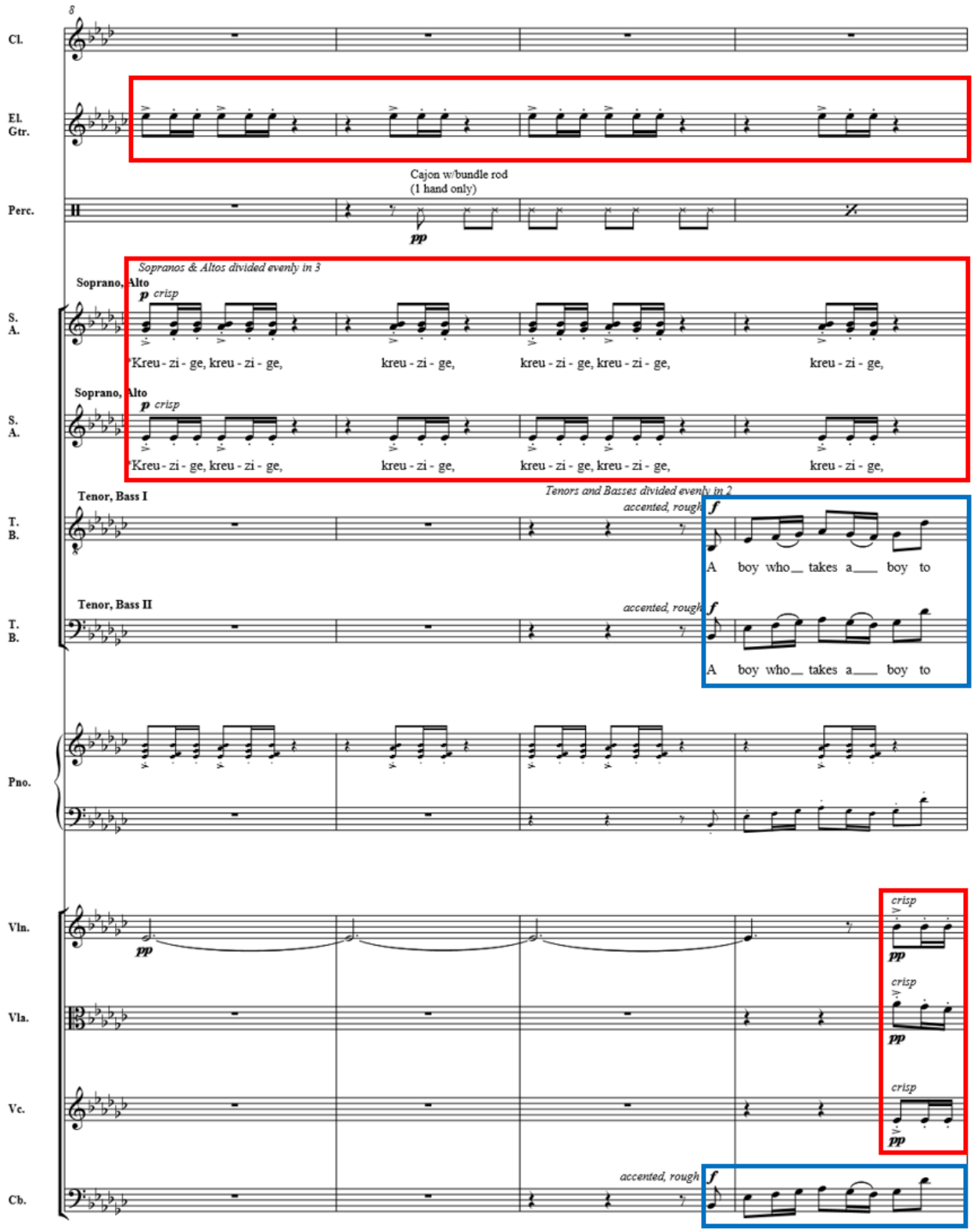
"A Protestor" is modelled after the structure of the Britten. There are two musical layers in the chorus (Figure 12). The foreground layer is the three-part canon based on the

[113] A less popular SATB arrangement by the composer is also available.

[114] Benjamin Britten, *A Ceremony of Carols,* arranged by Julius Harrison (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1994 [1943]), score.

Britten, sung by the tenor and bass in an accented, rustic style that spans the wide interval of a tenth. Concurrently, an unsettling ostinato in the soprano and alto functions as the background layer. The only word of this ostinato, "kreuzige," especially in its German form, decidedly recalls Bach's *turba* that demands Jesus's death (No. 45 and No. 50 in the *St. Matthew Passion* and No. 21 and No. 23 in the *St. John Passion*), confronting the listener with their responsibility for the suffering and death of an innocent man comparable to Jesus. Boggs suggests a gender-oriented reading of the split roles in the vocal texture, explaining that while the tenor and bass, perceived as men, espouse their views on gender and sexual deviance: "A boy who takes a boy to bed? / Where I come from that's not polite / He asked for it you got that right"; the soprano and alto, perceived as women, are going along with their behavior, even encouraging it by chanting "crucify."[115]

[115] Boggs, "Gender, Sexuality, and Religion in *Considering Matthew Shepard*," 34.


8
Cl.
El. Gtr.
Perc.
Cajon w/bundle rod
(1 hand only)
pp
Sopranos & Altos divided evenly in 3
Soprano, Alto
p crisp
S. A.
*Kreu - zi - ge, kreu - zi - ge,
kreu - zi - ge,
kreu - zi - ge, kreu - zi - ge,
kreu - zi - ge,
Soprano, Alto
p crisp
S. A.
*Kreu - zi - ge, kreu - zi - ge,
kreu - zi - ge,
kreu - zi - ge, kreu - zi - ge,
kreu - zi - ge,
Tenor, Bass I
Tenors and Basses divided evenly in 2
accented, rough
f
T. B.
A boy who takes a boy to
Tenor, Bass II
accented, rough
f
T. B.
A boy who takes a boy to
Pno.
Vln.
pp
crisp
pp
Vla.
crisp
pp
Vc.
crisp
pp
accented, rough
f
Cb.

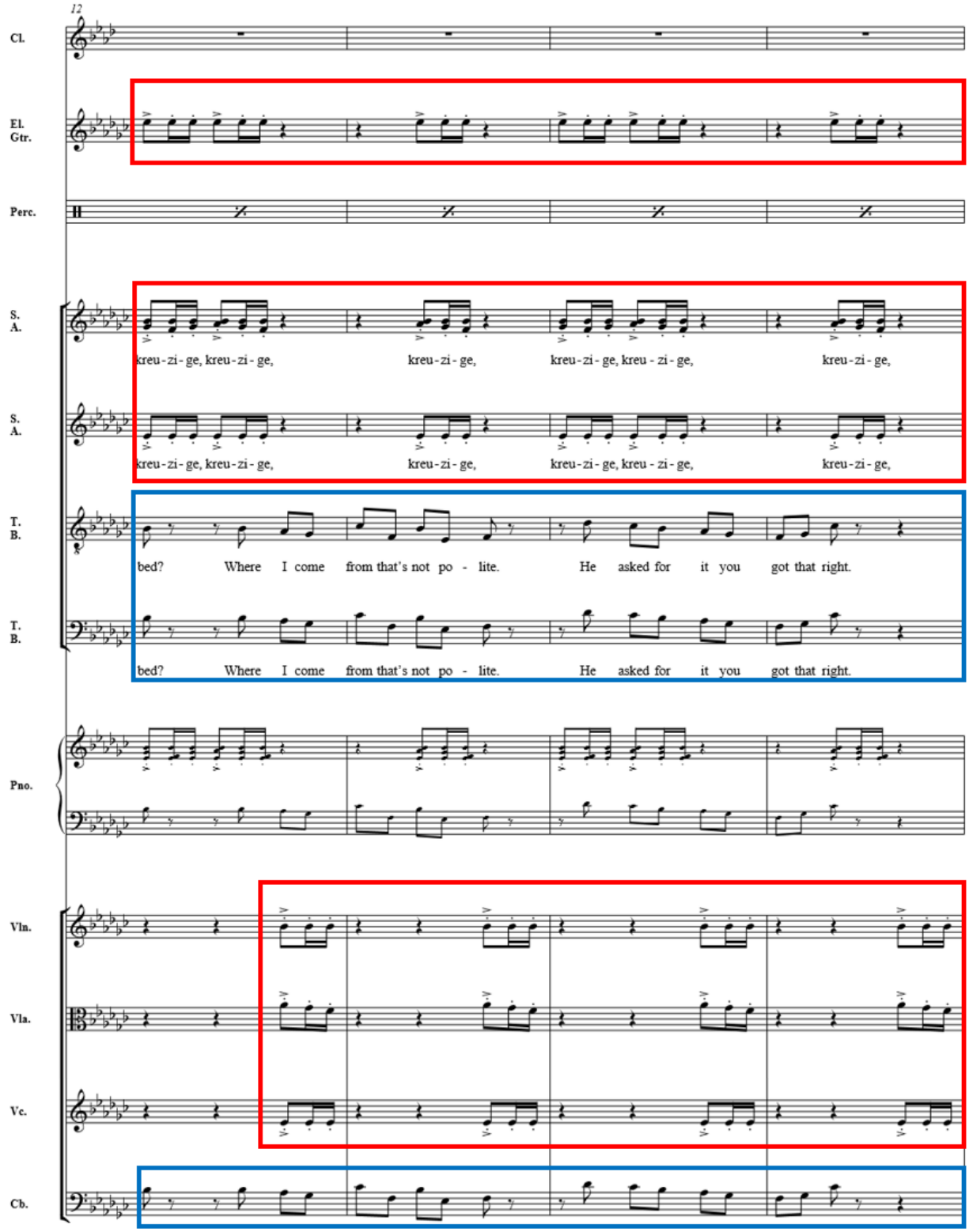


Figure 12: Craig Hella Johnson, "A Protestor" (No. 9), measures 8-15, from *Considering Matthew Shepard* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2016).

Johnson explains that there is a conflict between innocence and the power of hate in "This Little Babe."[116] This conflict is certainly retained in "A Protestor." At first glance, the quotation of Britten seems to be completely out of context: how can a Christmas piece be justifiably turned into a movement that depicts a hateful crowd? The battle between good and evil, as Britten calls it, becomes an anti-gay protest at a peaceful funeral. Two interpretations are plausible here. From the protestors' perspective, perhaps Fred Phelps is "Christ" and Matthew is "Satan"; or alternatively, the narrative can be reversed from a more justifiable perspective: Matthew is "this little babe so few days old" and the protestors are "Satan's fold." Boggs would agree on this latter viewpoint, arguing that Britten's piece "references a picture of an innocent Jesus coming to surprise the gates of Hell and defeat Satan," and thus the quotation "suggests a subtext that innocence will prevail over evil."[117] Whichever interpretation is taken, the quotation itself is unavoidably ironic in that the anti-gay protestors adopt a tune by an openly gay composer. In effect, "A Protestor" finds a parallel with the *turba* chorus, so critical in Bach's Passions and many other Baroque Passion settings. As with Bach's Passions, there is the same shock to the audience, who mostly find the chorus a voice of understanding and identification, when the chorus turns hateful.

Besides Bach and Britten, several instances in *Considering Matthew Shepard* recall an even older musical style, the medieval chant.[118] This is most obvious in two movements: "The Fence (That Night)" (No. 7) and "Stray Birds" (No. 14). "The Fence (That Night)" opens with a

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[116] Ward, "Passion Settings of the 20th- and 21st- Centuries," 51-52. See also "The Innocence" (No. 17). Johnson recounted that when growing up the church was a happy place—a physical and spiritual playground. Things drastically changed one day when a dedicated church person found out he was gay and said to him that he would "forever be outside the fold of grace." Johnson commented that it was when innocence certainly died, and that he had to see the church differently and experience it differently. Johnson, interview by author.

[117] Boggs, "Gender, Sexuality, and Religion in *Considering Matthew Shepard*," 36.

[118] In fact, this retrospective approach is not entirely unrelated to Bach, since it is well-known that the Baroque composer also frequently hearkened back to older styles that were considered archaic in his time.

monophonic setting of the poem *O nobilissima viriditas* (in English translation) by Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179), sung by the unison bass. Johnson's musical influences are unmistakable: the frequently changing meter resembles the free rhythm of chanting, and the use of D Dorian mode creates a medieval atmosphere, although Johnson's music evokes a much simpler, more conjunct chant style than Hildegard is known for (Figure 13).

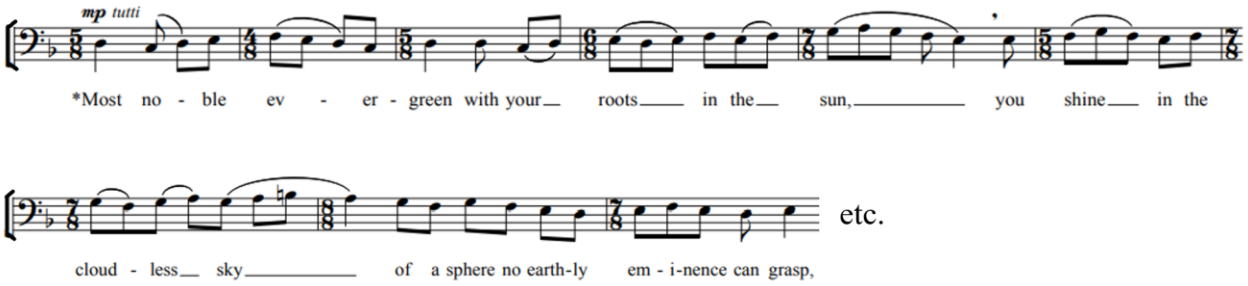

Figure 13: The D Dorian mode with an unexpected B-natural that highlights the word "sky" in measure 7. Craig Hella Johnson, "The Fence (That Night)" (No. 7), measures 1-9 [bass only], from *Considering Matthew Shepard* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2016).

Hildegard's text addresses the evergreen that is clearly more than just a plant. The opening of the poem gives an ethereal image: "Most noble evergreen with your roots in the sun: you shine in the cloudless sky of a sphere no earthly eminence can grasp…." In Christian theology, the evergreen is traditionally interpreted as a symbol of self-renewal associated with the everlasting life in Christ. In Johnson's work, the evergreen refers to the lodgepole pines from which the fence is built.[119] Singing to the evergreen can also be interpreted as singing to Matthew, whose story possesses a similar timeless quality like the plant does. Near the end of the whole work, the evergreen is mentioned again in "All of Us" (No. 32). This time, the evergreen becomes a manifestation of Love (with the capital "L"): "Only in the Love, Love that lifts us up! This evergreen, this heart, this soul…reminds us how we are to be Your people born to dream."

[119] Ward, "Passion Settings of the 20th- and 21st- Centuries," 26.

"Stray Birds" (No. 14) is another movement that uses chants. The text comes from a collection of short poems of the same title by the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), first published in Bengali with a subsequent English translation that Johnson uses. Like "The Fence (That Night)," the music of "Stray Birds" is unrestricted with frequent meter changes. The tonality is mainly rooted in E natural minor until G sharps and C sharps are first introduced more than halfway through the piece, suggesting a shift to E-Mixolydian mode. Instead of addressing an abstract character such as the evergreen, "Stray Birds" directly addresses the listener and calls on them to be "dear to each other," a phrase that is repeated four times at the end of the movement.

4.6 Narrative

Johnson's recitation movements are loosely modeled after recitatives of the traditional Passion, but they also diverge from them in many ways. In Bach's Passions, for instance, the texts of the recitatives are drawn exclusively from the Gospel, mostly sung by an Evangelist (tenor) in either *secco* or accompanied styles. In Johnson's work, recitation texts are compiled from news reports, crafted by the composer himself and librettist Michael Dennis Browne. A non-prescribed narrator, labelled as "one voice," replaces the role of Evangelist and reads the texts plainly and distinctly like a news reporter.

The piano plays a major role in the narrative: all recitation movements, with the exception of No. 8, are accompanied by a solo piano. It mainly has two functions. The first of these is atmospheric: the piano sets up the mood for the narrator, elevating the meditative experience. The second involves dramatic continuity: it establishes an emotional connection with or signifies a change of mood from the movements both preceding and following the recitations. Figure 14 shows the general style of Johnson's recitation where the slow and pensive piano part

creates a sparse texture that enhances the intelligibility of the spoken voice. There are only four chords—G, A, B and D—all presented in open position; four of them have no thirds. The tonality is ambiguous until it settles on G in the last measure, setting up for the following movement in the same key. While the narration is fairly short, it does effectively set up the time and place for the Passion that follows. Johnson gives a certain degree of freedom to the speaker as for when they enter by putting the instruction "recitation begins" in between measures 4 and 5.

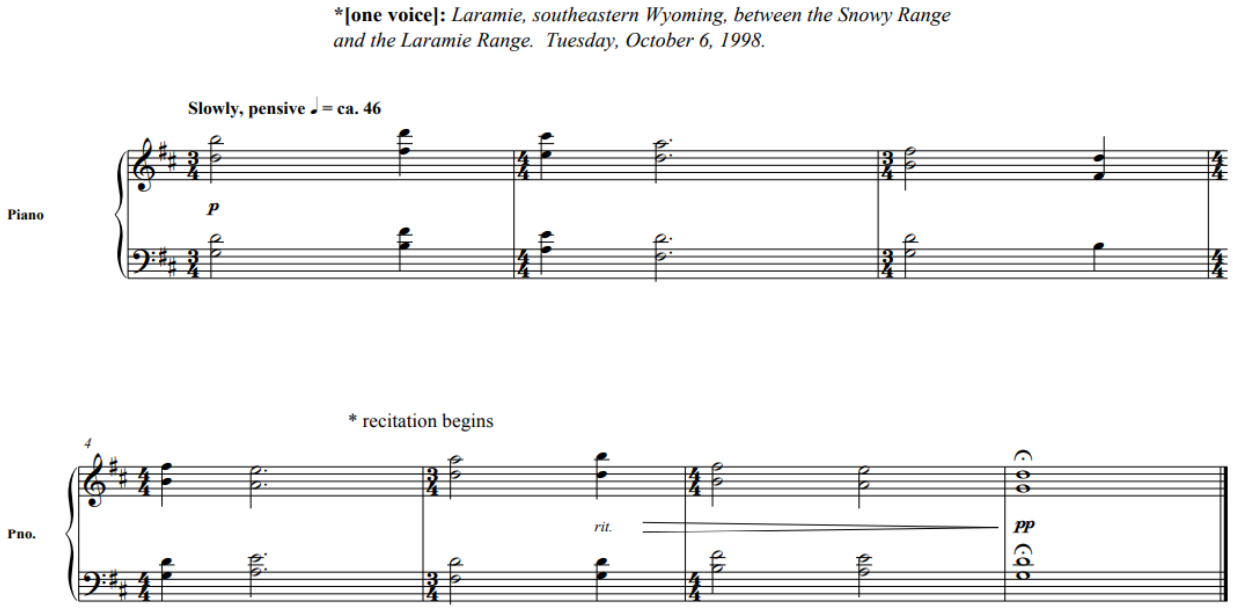

Figure 14: Craig Hella Johnson, "Recitation I" (No. 4), from *Considering Matthew Shepard* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2016).

Another defining feature of Johnson's recitation style is that the role of narrator is gender-neutral. In the traditional Passion, specific voice types are normally assigned to the characters (see section 1.1). In contrast, Johnson's recitation movements are meant to be reflections rather than representations. By using gender-neutral narrators, the composer creates a space for all people to participate in the storytelling that is traditionally done by a tenor. These

narrators are also members of the chorus, creating a communal experience that bridges the inevitable separation between the traditional Evangelist and the rest of the ensemble.

There is one movement that does not bear the title "recitation" but nonetheless functions as such: "Stars" (No. 21). It is scored for the full performing forces with "one voice" representing Dennis Shepard, Matthew's father, as he reads a statement to the court describing the final hours of his son's life:

> By the end of the beating, his body was just trying to survive. You [Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson] left him out there by himself, but he wasn't alone. There were his lifelong friends with him—friends that he had grown up with. You're probably wondering who these friends were. First, he had the beautiful night sky with the same stars and moon that we used to look at through a telescope. Then, he had the daylight and the sun to shine on him one more time—one more cool, wonderful autumn day in Wyoming. His last day alive in Wyoming. His last day alive in the state that he always proudly called home. And through it all he was breathing in for the last time the smell of Wyoming wind—the ever-present Wyoming wind—for the last time. He had one more friend with him. One he grew to know through his time in Sunday school and as an acolyte at St. Mark's in Casper as well as through his visits to St. Matthew's in Laramie. I feel better knowing he wasn't alone.

Compared to the emotionally detached news reports, Dennis's speech is much more emotional and personal. It is more than just a statement to the court, but also a eulogy that offers comfort and condolence to himself as well as those grieving for the loss of his son. According to Dennis, Matthew remained conscious throughout the night, but the pain was seemingly removed, and he was kept company by his "friends"—Wyoming's beautiful nature and God—both of which he knew so well. For the first and only time in the whole work, aleatoricism is used in the music: the chorus and the instruments are divided into small groups, each provided with specific instructions to improvise on. The text of the chorus, sourced from Lesléa Newman's poem "Stars" from *October Mourning*, is sung one syllable at a time as with pointillism in painting, mirroring the physical form of the poem where words are scattered across the page like stars

scattered across the sky (Figure 15).[120] Newman's poem has a sense of helplessness and separation, where the stars are sympathetic towards the dying Matthew, but they are "unable to help being light years away." Yet, there is also a sense of intimacy and soothing quality for the chorus to sing these words as if they were physically present at the site of the attack.

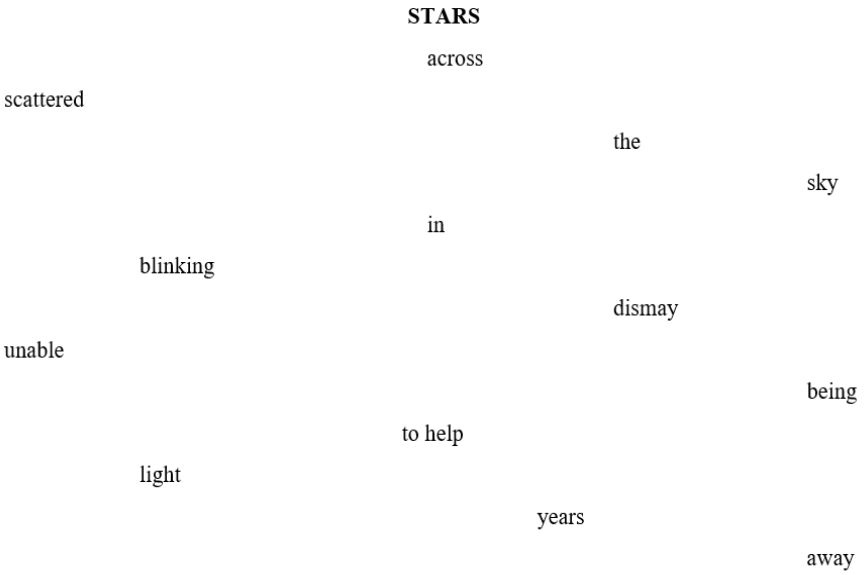

Figure 15: Lesléa Newman, "Stars," from *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard* (Sommerville: Candlewick Press, 2012). Reproduced by author.

4.7 From Matt to Matthew

Considering Matthew Shepard shapes the image of the protagonist in two ways: first, an ordinary boy named Matt, as he was known to his family and friends; and second, a "martyr" named Matthew, as he was known to the rest of the world. The second movement, "Ordinary Boy," belongs to the first kind for obvious reasons. The movement draws on a compilation of words by the composer, Matt's mother (Judy Shepard),[121] and Matt himself. It begins with a female soloist saying, "let's talk about Matt," immediately followed by the chorus interjecting "ordinary boy"

[120] Newman, *October Mourning*, 106.

[121] Judy Shepard, *The Meaning of Matthew: My Son's Murder in Laramie, and a World Transformed* (New York: Plume, 2010).

three times. Judy, represented by a mezzo-soprano, sings for the first time in measure 31, where she describes a close relationship with her son: "You knew him as Matthew; to us, he was Matt."

After several other solo and choral passages, Matt, represented by a baritone, enters in measure 82 and introduces himself in the first person, with words sourced from his own notebook:

> I am funny, sometimes forgetful, and messy and lazy. I am not a lazy person, though. I am giving and understanding and formal and polite. I am sensitive, I am honest, I am sincere. And I am not a pest. I am my own person, I am warm, I want my life to be happy and I want to be clearer about things; I want to feel good.
>
> I love Wyoming; I love Wyoming very much. I love theatre, I love good friends, I love succeeding, I love pasta, I love jogging, I love walking and feeling good. I love Europe and driving and music and helping and smiling and *Charlie* and *Jeopardy*. I love movies and eating and positive people and pasta and driving and walking and jogging and kissing and learning and airports and music and smiling and hugging and being myself, I love theatre! And I love to be on stage!

One can imagine that it is no easy task for Johnson to set these words convincingly in a single movement without any alteration. The major challenge is the lack of organization. There are two main sections: the first is a series of sentences beginning with "I am" and the second is another series of sentences beginning with "I love." Perhaps it is this haphazard nature of the text that helps shape the twenty-one-year-old as a real person who lived and loved his life with unassuming innocence and youthful energy.

In the media, Matt was portrayed as more than an ordinary boy. After all, he attracted an intense, almost obsessive, interest in the United States that surpassed many other victims of hate crimes. Some scholars have argued that class and race played an important role in this.[122] As a

[122] Beth Loffreda, *Losing Matt Shepard: Life and Politics in the Aftermath of Anti-gay Murder* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 1-31; Jennifer Petersen, *Murder, the Media, and the Politics of Public Feelings: Remembering Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 28-60.

white male born to a middle-class family, Matt should have been an unlikely victim of hate crime. However, there are also traits about Matt's stature that contrast with this stereotype. These descriptions, which are commonplace even to this day, tend to cast Matt as someone who is an archetypal victim. According to one of Matt's friends, "He was the boy next door. He looked like everybody's brother and everybody's neighbor. He looked like he could have been anyone's son."[123] Judy also notes that her son "was small for his age—weighing at the most 110 pounds and standing only five feet two inches tall. He was rather uncoordinated and wore braces from the age of thirteen until the day he died."[124] This image of an innocent boy drastically contrasts with the image of his assailants, Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson. Jennifer Petersen has pointed out the two kinds of masculinity portrayed by mainstream media: the descriptions of Matthew's small size referenced what might be termed a "soft" or "sensitive" masculinity, while the descriptions of Aaron and Russell suggested manual labor, aggression, and lack of education—all traits associated with a "hard" or "tough" masculinity.[125]

Despite portrayals of Matt as an ordinary boy-next-door in the opening of the music, or the allusions to Matt as a victim or martyr by the media, Johnson transforms Matt within the context of his music. By the seventh movement there is an elevated image of Matt that becomes Matthew, which is indirectly portrayed by four movements known as "The Fence." This section title is a reference to the split-rail fence on which Matthew was tied during the last hours of his life. Each movement features a setting of a "fence poem" from Lesléa Newman's *October Mourning* with a subtitle that gives the chronology of the narrative: "Before" (No. 5), "That

[123] This friend of Matthew's was Jim Osborn, a graduate of the University of Wyoming's education program and the ex-chair of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Association that Matthew joined as a freshman. See Loffreda, *Losing Matt Shepard*, 2-27.

[124] Shepard, *The Meaning of Matthew*, 237.

[125] Petersen, *Remembering Matthew Shepard*, 37.

Night" (No. 7), "One Week Later" (No. 19), and "After" (No. 28). In all but the last of these movements, the fence is personified by a soloist (baritone in No. 5 and No. 7; soprano in No. 19). In No. 5, the fence constantly muses on existential questions: "Will I always be out here exposed and alone?"; "Will I ever know why I was put here on this earth?"; "Will somebody someday stumble upon me?"; "Will anyone remember me, after I'm gone?" The movement ends with these questions unresolved: "Still, still, still, I wonder." Then, in No. 7 and No. 19, the fence becomes a witness of crime. Disturbed by the violence it sees, the fence sympathizes with Matthew and protests for him; though in reality, it is unable to intervene and remains a bystander. Dennis did not mention the fence as one of Matthew's "friends" in his statement to the court, but this is exactly what Newman and Johnson are after. Finally, in No. 28, the fence has been torn down *in situ* and is no longer given words to sing. The chorus commemorates its passing as if it were a person:

> Prayed upon, frowned upon, revered, feared, adored, abhorred, despised, idolized, splintered, scarred, weathered, worn down, broken up, ripped apart, ripped away, gone, but not forgotten.

The fragmented text here mimics the fence that has been broken up, roughly recalling a biblical passage from Isaiah also set in Handel's *Messiah*: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (53:3 [KJV]).

There is an overt Christian influence here: Matthew was killed on a wooden fence and Jesus was killed on a wooden cross. But the Fence (capitalization intended) is treated as more than a physical fence. There is a sense of intimacy that results from the way it gives voice to the dying Matthew who lacks a voice, a fantastical addition to the historical narrative. This humanization manifested in the fence movements has its parallels in the traditional Passion narratives, where there are many instances in which Jesus identifies with human emotions and

needs. For example, immediately before his arrest, Jesus prayed on the Mount of Olives, pleading for the cup of suffering to be taken away. The Gospel of Luke records that Jesus was terrified to the point that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (22:44 [KJV]). Another example is when the crucified Jesus said, "I am thirsty" (John 19:28 [KJV]), after which he was offered a vinegar drink soaked in a sponge and brought to his mouth upon hyssop, as recorded in all four Gospels. Unlike Jesus, Matthew does not explicitly have a voice in the Passion section, so the Fence plays a key role in humanizing him, even comforting him. In return, there is also a sense of comfort for the listener knowing that Matthew was not alone that night but kept company by the Fence, albeit metaphorically, as the Fence recalls in No. 7: "We were out on the prairie alone…I cradled him just like a mother / I held him all night long." While the fence movements have kept the image of Matthew as martyr, they also highlight Matthew's humanity with emotions and needs that we all share.

Figure 16: Split-rail fence in Laramie, Wyoming. Courtesy Matthew Shepard Foundation.

This intimate image of Matthew is not static. Rather, there is a certain point when the "private person" of Matt becomes the "universal Matthew." The composer draws parallels between this and the Gospels (particularly John and Matthew), where there was Jesus the man who lived and worked, but also there was the cosmic Christ—the universal Christ—who was the divine itself.[126] A comparison with the Gospel and the Roman Catholic liturgy can shed light on such transformation in the work. For example, in No. 10 "Keep It Away from Me," alternatively titled "The Wound of Love," the mezzo-soprano soloist, having witnessed the hateful protest, struggles with the negative emotions that the event has caused and distances herself from these emotions: "some son, somebody's pain, some child gone, child never mine." In the midst of this emotional turmoil, the SSA trio, functioning like backup singers, comments "[it is] the wound of love"—love that is greater than the pain. The presence of the trio in the background resembles the women at the crucifixion who remained with Jesus after his disciples had fled (Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40; Luke 23:49; John 19:25). At the end of the movement, the trio addresses a certain "you" for the first time: "*You* take away the wounds of the world."

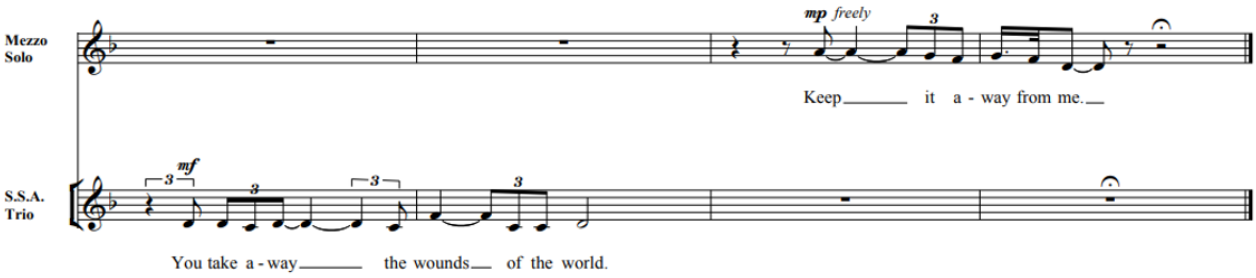

Figure 17: Craig Hella Johnson, "Keep It Away from Me" (No. 10), measures 64-67 [mezzo and vocal trio only], from *Considering Matthew Shepard* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2016).

It is uncertain who this "you" refers to, but Matthew is a plausible candidate. A similar line is found in the opening of the "Agnus Dei" from the Mass Ordinary: "Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata

[126] Johnson, interview by author.

mundi, miserere nobis" (Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us). This reference casts Matthew as a symbol for healing and catharsis, reinforcing the image of a "universal Matthew." To Johnson, the transformation from Matt to Matthew is complete in No. 22 "In Need of Breath."[127] The text, originally by Hafiz, runs:

> When the Nameless One debuts again
> Ten thousand facets of my being unfurl wings
> And reveal such a radiance inside
> I enter a realm divine
> I too begin to sweetly cast light,
> Like a lamp,
> I cast light
> Through the streets of this World.

"This is where Matt's story goes out into the world just like the Christ story [does] after the point of Jesus's death," Johnson explained.[128] As the son of a Lutheran minister who grew up in church and remains close to the Christian faith,[129] Johnson's comparison of Matthew to the central figure of Christianity presents itself as a contemporary reading of the Christ story.

4.8 From "I" to All of Us

Considering Matthew Shepard portrays Matthew's death and reactions to the event in ways that both conform to and contrast with popular framings of the event in mainstream media.[130] It avoids good-and-evil descriptions about Matthew and his assailants, emphasizing instead that even Matthew's assailants are wholly human. This approach is best exemplified in the quasi-recitative "I Am Like You" (No. 16). On the one hand, the composer-librettist, as a generic "I," is disturbed by what Aaron and Russell did to Matthew; on the other, as he contemplates them,

[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Cockayne, "*Considering Matthew Shepard*," 472-474.

he is even more disturbed by the many similarities they share. This movement is essentially the composer's "note to self," where the spontaneous, fragmented text is set to minimalist music, in the style of Arvo Pärt, John Tavener, Henryk Górecki, David Lang, and others. There are passages that especially recall the *tintinnabuli* style of Pärt. For example, in measures 17-19, the soprano and bass arpeggiate, albeit not in triad as Pärt would use, while the alto and tenor move diatonically in stepwise motion (Figure 18). Robert Ward has pointed out the resemblance between the vocal writing of this movement, originally sung by a vocal quartet, and that of the Evangelist quartet in Pärt's *Passio* (1982).[131] If one compares the Johnson passage in Figure 18 with the opening of Pärt's work, the similarities are striking: both passages begin in *tutti*, reduce into an unaccompanied bass part, and re-consolidate into *tutti*. However, unlike Pärt, Johnson uses a self-written text that is reflective in nature and detached from the overall narrative of the work—qualities that are typically associated with the chorale instead of the recitative. Perhaps the composer is acting as the "Evangelist" himself as he speaks these words from a private meditation.

[131] Ward, "Passion Settings of the 20th- and 21st- Centuries," 29.

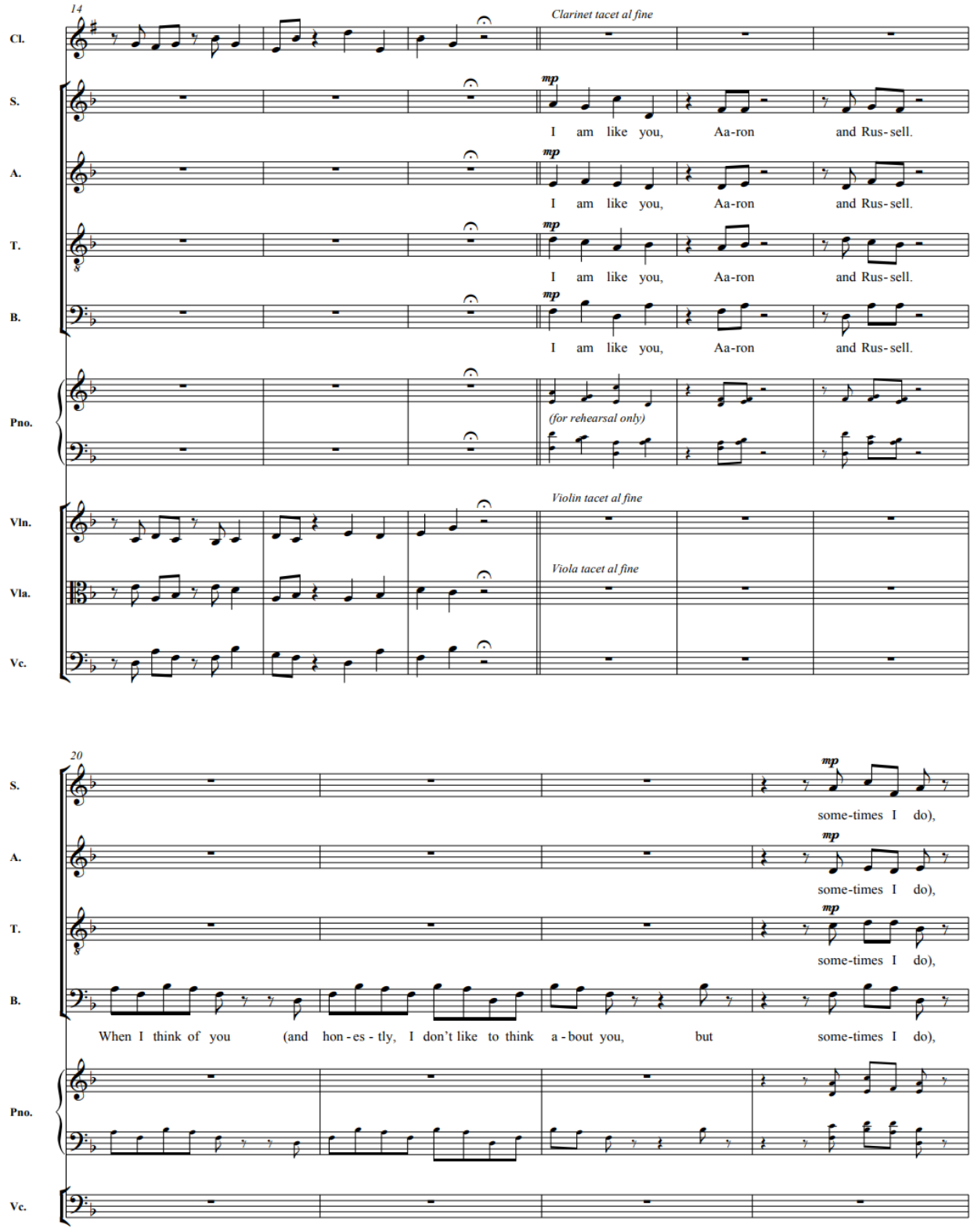

Figure 18: Craig Hella Johnson, "I Am Like You" (No. 16), measures 17-23, from *Considering Matthew Shepard* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2016).

"I Am Like You" is a turning point in the work. It explores the human condition and offers an unbiased reading of Matthew's killing that significantly deviates from common descriptions of the event by the media.[132] The austerity of Johnson's vocal writing creates an intimate space for reflection, but it also confronts the listener with their own role in the story. There is a similar instance in Bach's *St. John Passion*: in chorale No. 11, Bach draws the listener to weigh their sins that cause Jesus's death with a repeated "ich, ich" (I, I) in the opening of the second verse, followed by a remarkable dissonance on the word "Sünden" (sin) in the second measure,[133] highlighting the conflict between the repentant "I" and their "sins." The full text and translation of the second verse run:

***Ich, ich** und meine **Sünden**,*	**I, I** and my **sins**,
Die sich wie Körnlein finden	that can be found like the grains
Des Sandes an dem Meer,	of sand by the sea,
Die haben dir erreget	these have brought You
Das Elend, das dich schläget,	this misery that assails You,
Und das betrübte Marterheer.	and this tormenting martyrdom.[134]

This could be the open confession of the congregation; or, following the narrative of the Passion, this could also be the private meditation of Peter, who denied being one of Jesus's disciples in the preceding recitative. Another similar instance can be found in the *St. Matthew Passion*: the disciples call out in No. 9 "Herr, bin ich's?" (Lord is it I?), which is followed in the succeeding chorale with the text "Ich bin's…" (I am…[the source of your misery]); the eleven entrances represent the disciples (minus Judas), where the following chorale equates the congregation's "Ich bin's" with Judas. Like the Bach examples above, "I Am Like You" focuses on the question

[132] Cockayne, "*Considering Matthew Shepard*," 472-474.

[133] This dissonance is also discussed in Michael Marissen, *Lutheranism, Anti-Judaism, and Bach's St. John Passion: With an Annotated Literal Translation of the Libretto* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 34, accessed June 22, 2021, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[134] Pamela Dellal, "Bach Cantata Translations: BWV 245 – 'Johannes-Passion,'" *Emmanuel Music*, accessed May 29, 2020, http://www.emmanuelmusic.org/notes_translations/translations_cantata/t_bwv245.htm.

of universal accountability. It does not put Matthew's assailants at a higher level of guilt but holds all of us responsible as one interconnected people.

4.9 Universality and Eclecticism

Despite the Christian influences found in *Considering Matthew Shepard*, the work presents itself as largely humanistic instead of religious, evoking the ideology of interconnectedness that articulates the core message of the whole work. One way to achieve this ideology is by means of intertextuality. In "Pilgrimage" (No. 29), Johnson sets Lesléa Newman's poem of the same title in which the first line of each stanza is modeled after a traditional Navajo prayer followed by interpolations of Christian, Jewish, and Buddhist texts.[135] The Christian passages are sourced from both the Old Testament and the New Testament: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1; also found in the Hebrew Bible of Judaism) and "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit" from the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:5); The Jewish passage is sourced from the Mourner's Kaddish, traditionally said at funerals: "Yit'gadal v'yit'kadash" (exalted and hallowed); The Buddhist passage is sourced from the mantra:[136] "Om Mani Padme Hum" (variously transliterated in Latin alphabet, invoking deep universal teaching and compassion[137]). While the structure of the music strictly follows Newman's poem, it is Johnson's own idea to set the first lines of each stanza as a choral refrain to represent the collective experience of pilgrimage to the fence, followed by the religious texts sung by soloists to represent the diverse backgrounds and demographics of the individual pilgrims. The end of the movement recapitulates the words of the Fence from No. 5: "Still, still, still, I wonder." Perhaps the Fence is still contemplating the purpose of its existence even after it no longer exists. In the context of this

[135] Newman, *October Mourning*, 107.
[136] Ibid., 108.
[137] Johnson, *Considering Matthew Shepard*, 313.

movement, the word "still" seemingly has a double meaning: as an adverb, the spirit of the Fence continues to ask existential questions; as an adjective, the beautiful tranquility of Wyoming's nature has taken over the horrific crime scene.

Another example of intertextuality can be found in "Thank You" (No. 31), in which words of gratitude are sung in four languages: thank you (English), "amawe" (a created word by the composer as a "universal word of gratitude"), "hohou" (Arapaho language), and "yontonwe" (Huron language).[138] The collage of languages, mostly foreign to the Western listener, symbolically represents a cultural synthesis. But this so-called universal approach is not without controversy: since every word or expression belongs to a family of language with specific linguistic and cultural contexts attached to it, it is hard to imagine the meanings of a universal word or teaching when it is removed from its original contexts. Thus, to use words that are not widely understood and to create a new word and claim it to be universal, as in the case of "amawe," can be seen as counterintuitive despite the admirable intention.

A parallel of this intertextuality exists in the music. *Considering Matthew Shepard* uses a myriad of popular styles of music to create variety. These distinct styles do not drown each other out; instead, they create a satisfying whole, which mirrors the diversity that exists throughout humanity. Sometimes, multiple styles are used within a movement, as in No. 1 "Cattle, Horses, Sky, and Grass," where at least four distinct styles are used. The beginning of the movement uses a partial quotation of Bach's Prelude in C from *Well-Tempered Clavier* Book 1 that hints at the composer's upbringing as a classical musician. But the music does not stay in the Baroque sound

[138] Johnson explained that *Amawe* "was a created word using phonetic shapes that could be universal with the intention that this word would not carry history or roots in any tradition." Ann McNair (Managing Director, Conspirare), email message to the author, January 7, 2020. The Arapaho are Native Americans historically from Wyoming and Colorado; The Huron are Iroquoian-speaking people historically from the north shore of Lake Ontario.

for long. Following the Prelude and a short choral invocation based on Bach's music, a "lone cowboy," represented by a tenor, sings the following passage in the style of country music:

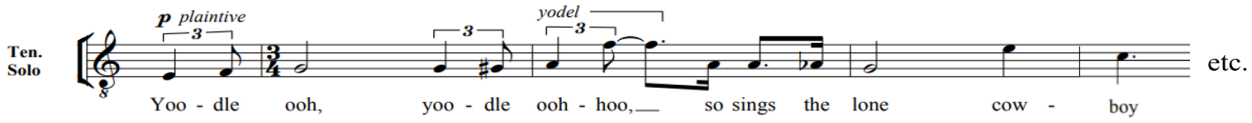

Figure 19: Craig Hella Johnson, "Cattle, Horses, Sky, and Grass" (No. 1), measures 20-24 [tenor solo only], from *Considering Matthew Shepard* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2016).

Instantly, the imaginary "concert hall" created by Bach's music vanishes and is replaced by the imagery of Wyoming's open ranges and Rocky Mountains. Following the unrestrained tenor solo, the piece shifts to a third, fusion style that combines jazz and gospel influences. This section begins in measure 29 with a wood block playing steady quarter notes in a fast tempo (perhaps personifying the "throbbing earth" sung in mm. 66-69), followed by a vamp that establishes a lively character to contrast with the previous section. As more and more layers have entered, the vamp gradually intensifies and reaches a climax in measure 73, where the chorus exclaims "I'm alive!" multiple times with much enthusiasm. This "I" could be the cowboy or Matt himself. The movement ends with a fourth style as the energy of the preceding sections recedes into a slow, unaccompanied choral passage that draws on previous motifs and returns to the tranquility of the opening.

The second example is No. 12 "Fire of the Ancient Heart," a *turba* chorus-like fantasia based on the candlelight vigils held after Matthew's death. Its title probably took inspiration from a book by the Italian writer Carlo Levi (1902-1975), *Il futuro ha un cuore antico* (the future has an ancient heart),[139] meaning what one becomes is predestined by what one was born of, and thus one must return to their most primitive self. The movement begins by alternating solo and

[139] Carlo Levi, *Il futuro ha un cuore antico: Viaggio nell'Unione Sovietica*, 2nd ed. (Torino: G. Einaudi, 1956).

choral passages. The baritone soloist represents an individual who seeks the ancient heart in the face of violence, while the chorus, representing the rest of the vigil-goers, sings a hypnotizing refrain: “Called by the candle, led to the flame, called to remember; enter the flame.” Characterized by the repetition of root position triads, the choral refrain loosely recalls the Italian *falsobordone*. Following this opening call-and-response section is a new style first introduced in measure 24 where the chorus, divided into five smaller groups, enters a quasi-trance by speaking furiously in specific rhythmic patterns. A member from each group also plays an unpitched percussion instrument (bass drum, low conga, medium tom, high conga, and djembe) that doubles the speaking parts. These intricate and syncopated percussion parts point to the African drumming tradition:

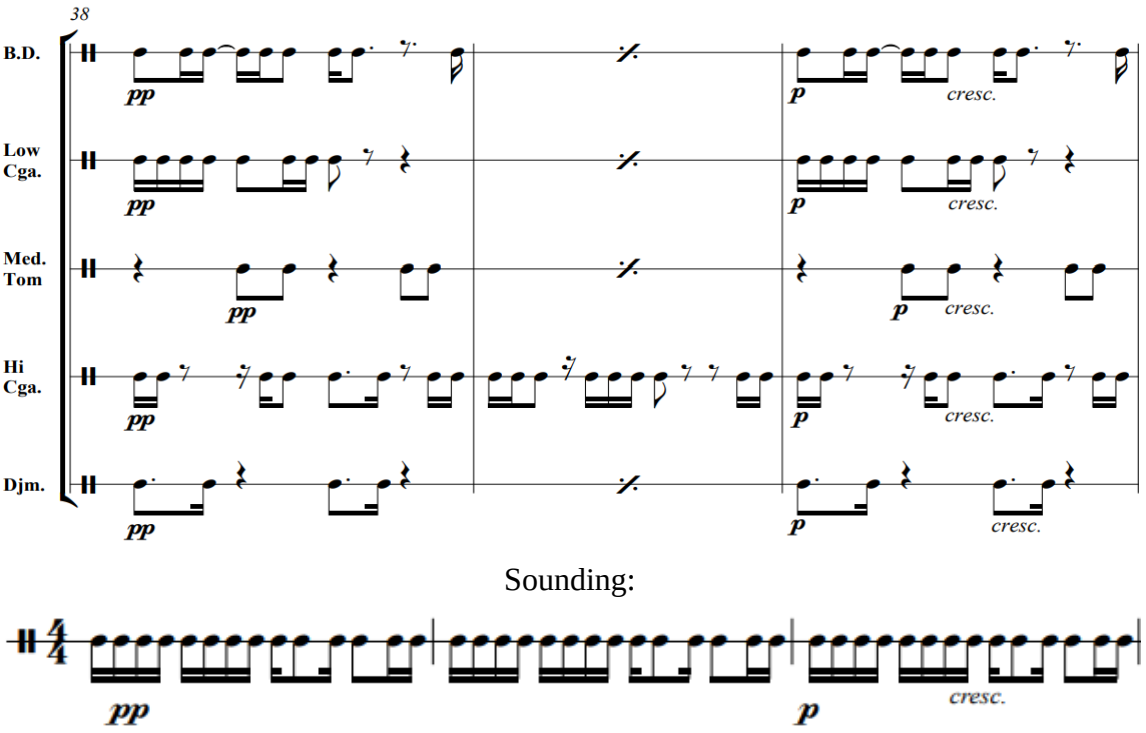

Figure 20: The five “choral percussion” parts and how they sound when combined, transcribed by author. Craig Hella Johnson, “Fire of the Ancient Heart” (No. 12), measures 38-40 [choral percussion only], from *Considering Matthew Shepard* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2016).

The last example is No. 32 "All of Us," the climax of the Epilogue that also culminates the whole work and accentuates the ideology of interconnectedness. It begins with a slow piano introduction in free rhythm and three "gospel singers"[140] (SSA) that act on behalf of the listener by asking a series of challenging questions: "What could be the song? Where [could we] begin again? Who could meet us there? Where could be the joy?" After the Passion section, the listener is left with more questions than answers. Though this opening section does not directly offer answers to those questions, it proposes a collective approach as a way to move forward from the tragedy. The slow introduction cadences in measure 12, followed by more hope-filled music in a moderate gospel style. Another major change takes place in measure 34 as a Lutheran-style chorale suddenly interrupts while all instruments drop out, except the cello and bass that double the choral bass like basso continuo. The gospel style returns in measure 50 and eventually combines with the vocal trio, the chorale, and the rest of the performing forces, as the music modulates up from B♭ major to C major, resulting in one of the densest, most climactic moments of the work (Figure 21). Johnson explains that C major is an important key in the work because of its open quality (a higher major third on the equally tempered piano) and simplicity.[141] In this sense, the ascent from B♭ major to C major can be interpreted as a symbolic spiritual purification. This eventual return to C major within the overarching structure of the work alludes to the tonal structure of Bach's Prelude in C that ends in C major after going through the circle of fifths. It is also a musical manifestation of the poetic text used in the first and last movements: "This chant of life cannot be heard / it must be felt; there is no word to sing that could express the true significance of how we wind through all these hoops of Earth and mind…."

[140] A tribute to the use of three oboes often found in Bach's compositions. Johnson, interview by author.
[141] Johnson, interview by author.

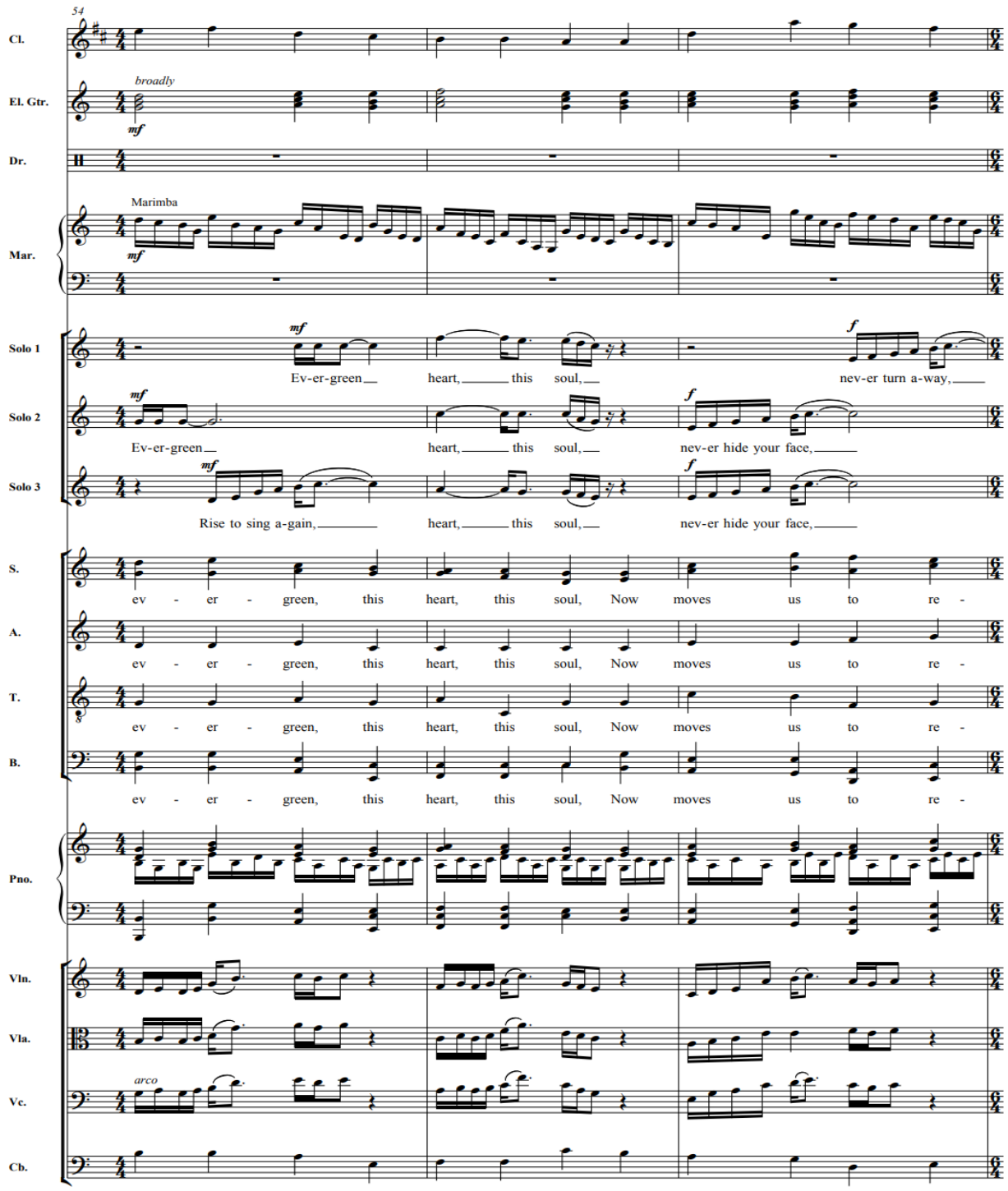

Figure 21: Craig Hella Johnson, "All of Us" (No. 32), measures 54-56, from *Considering Matthew Shepard* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2016).

This form of superimposing a four-voice chorale/hymn setting over more "contemporary" writing finds parallels in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* movement 1 and movement 29. There is no

instance, however, in Bach's Passions where a movement begins by presenting two different styles consecutively and then combines them in the end. Furthermore, Johnson's chorale is an original composition rather than a pre-existing chorale setting (as in movement 1 of the *Passion*). One rarely encounters gospel music and Lutheran hymnody in the same piece. Though both styles hail from Christian roots, the former is usually associated with evangelical churches of the American South and Black churches throughout the United States, and the latter is associated with the Lutheran Church. By combining them in the same passage, Johnson metaphorically brings two Christian communities—and more broadly, humanity—together. It also further reinforces the imagery of a transcendent, Christ-like Matthew. The chorale has another personal meaning for the composer. Growing up in church where he also played the organ, Johnson is particularly fond of the chorale, declaring, "almost nothing moves me more than really good congregational singing of wonderful hymns."[142] The use of the chorale, especially in its central position of the penultimate movement, can be interpreted as a personal statement of faith that connects with the composer's own identity.

The musical and textual eclecticism of Johnson's work is not only manifested at the macro-level, but also at the micro-level, in that a single movement can constitute several styles in itself. These distinct styles do not drown out each other; instead, they complement each other to create a satisfying whole, mirroring human diversity in society. This all-embracing quality of the work reflects the composer's understanding of different musical genres and his ability to synthesize them in an eloquent, respectful manner.

[142] Johnson, interview by author.

4.10 Performance at Matthew's Interment

The universality of *Considering Matthew Shepard* often finds its parallel in performances of the work. One of the most notable examples is the performance at Matthew's interment. On October 26, 2018, Matthew's ashes were interred in the National Cathedral in Washington, D. C. twenty years after his death, joining the ranks of President Woodrow Wilson and author Helen Keller, who were also interred there.[143] The gigantic neo-Gothic cathedral, second largest in the United States with its length extending some 160 meters and seating capacity of about 4000,[144] was packed with people from all over the country. On the second page of the service bulletin is an eye-catching portrait of Matthew also used on the cover of Judy Shepard's book, *The Meaning of Matthew: My Son's Murder in Laramie, and a World Transformed.* This black-and-white picture shows Matthew's natural blonde hair and angular facial features. His look is gentle and unthreatening, and his smile beckoning. All these traits conform to how he is commonly portrayed. But the image is also a curious one in that the wooden window frames at the background coincidentally resemble the shape of a cross that imposes a religious feeling, making it even more fitting for the occasion.

Held at the Cathedral of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, the service was structured after Episcopalian liturgy that combined prayers, readings, music, and a homily.[145] However, it was more of a humanistic service rather than a strictly Christian one. In their welcome speeches, Bishops Mariann Budde and Gene Robinson described the cathedral space as a "house of prayer

[143] "Facts & Figures," *Washington National Cathedral*, accessed June 4, 2020, https://cathedral.org/architecture/facts-figures/.

[144] Ibid.

[145] The interment service was live streamed on YouTube. It can now be accessed on Washington National Cathedral, "The Celebration of Life and Interment of Matthew Shepard," *YouTube* video, 2:42:34, October 26, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSXtHMXuaPI.

for all people." Robinson, the first openly gay consecrated bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States, extended a universal invitation:

> If you are a person of faith, but not Christian, please know that you are our special guests. Be you Jew or Muslim, Hindu or Sikh, or Buddhist or whatever—you are welcome here. And even if you are not a person of faith…please know how welcome you are. Let the beauty of this service—the words and the music—wash over you and comfort you in whatever ways you need to be comforted.[146]

Dennis Shepard, in his speech that followed, confirmed his son's preference for the style of worship that Bishop Robinson described. He told the congregation that Matt liked the Church and the ceremony, and that he was "blind" because he did not see skin color, religion, or sexual orientation, but all he saw was a chance to have another friend.[147]

The inclusive atmosphere of the service was perhaps best manifested in the music, which was an integral part of worship. In addition to the standard liturgical hymns and chants, the service used a mix of sacred and secular pieces performed by four ensembles: Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, D. C. (GMCW) and its subset the Rock Creek Singers, directed by Thea Kano; the GenOUT Chorus, directed by C. Paul Heins; and Conspirare, directed by Craig Hella Johnson. The choice of music was progressive, including pieces that one might not expect to hear at church.[148] Perhaps the most striking example of this was an *a cappella* arrangement of John Lennon's *Imagine*, a song that has commonly been known as an "atheist anthem" with explicit text as such: "Imagine there's no heaven / No hell below us / And no religion too." As a prelude sung by an octet from GMCW, the song immediately made a bold statement and set the tone for the rest of the service. Another notable choral prelude was Allan Naplan's *Al Shlosha*

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[146] "The Celebration of Life and Interment of Matthew Shepard," *YouTube* video.

[147] Ibid.

[148] For the full list of music, see service leaflet "A Service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance for Matthew Wayne Shepard."

D'Varim, a setting of the popular Maxim from Jewish morality laws, sung by the GenOUT Chorus, an outreach program of GMCW for LGBTQ+ and allied youth, and led by Heins from the piano. The text is simple but direct: The world is sustained by three things, by truth, by justice, and by peace. There is no direct mention of a god, but only universal values that transcend religion. Further, American Sign Language was incorporated into the music, which not only enhanced the visual effect, but also made the performance more accessible to an even wider audience.

The highlight among the diverse musical selection was ten movements from *Considering Matthew Shepard.* No. 7, 14, 15, 24, 30 and 32 were performed as paraliturgical pieces, and No. 2, 3, 23 and 26 were performed during the Time of Reflection following the service. The appearances of these excerpts, taken from all three parts of the larger work, did not follow the original order. Instead, they were carefully re-positioned and, in some cases, re-arranged, to fit the liturgy as introit, anthems, and other musical reflections, mostly performed by Conspirare. These Johnson pieces complemented the liturgy in unique ways.

Following the choral preludes, the service officially began with the opening chant of No. 7 "The Fence (That Night)," sung by the tenors and basses. Johnson's music evoked a mysterious and religious feeling that drew the participants into worship. To fit as an introit, the end of the chant was modified into a humming in unison that signified the start of the procession.

The anthem after the first reading was a combination of two movements from *Considering Matthew Shepard*: No. 14 "Stray Birds" and an extended version of No. 15 "We Are All Sons." This section is the most substantial passage in the work that is only sung by the tenor and bass. Boggs comments that "We Are All Sons" alludes to the depth and strength of relationships among men (as suggested by tenor and bass voices), which are all too uncommon

and unknown to some men.[149] He also notes that the text "we are all rivers, the roar of waters, we are all sons" evokes biblical themes about the lineage of man and Abraham.[150] While these observations are certainly plausible, I further suggest a broader implication of this movement. "We Are All Sons" has two parts, serving as the bookends of the quartet "I Am Like You." The "You" in the latter, as it has been discussed (Section 4.8), is Aaron and Russell. While the use of tenor and bass voices both preceding and succeeding this movement could be a reference to these two men and male aggression at large, it can also be extended to address the mental and bodily experiences of all male identified people: "If you could know for one moment how it is to live in our bodies within the world, you ask too much of us; you ask too little." Besides, Boggs's biblical interpretation of the "rivers" can be alternatively understood in a secular context, in which rivers refer to different human qualities, at times gentle like a stream and at times violent like a flood. We are reminded that there is always a choice about the way we treat others.

No. 32 "All of Us" was sung as a response to Bishop Robinson's homily. In addition to Conspirare, the other three participating choirs also joined forces in singing the chorale. Two conductors were needed to make this happen: Johnson conducted Conspirare from the piano at the front while Kano mirror-conducted the rest of the singers in the chancel. Despite the significantly larger number of tenors and basses in the combined chorus, a nice balance was achieved so that the lower parts did not drown out the upper ones. Not only was the result sonically and visually impactful, but it was also a moving communal experience.

After the Lord's Prayer, No. 24 "Gently Rest" was sung to replace the "Requiem aeternam." Bishop Robinson mentioned in his homily that this movement was alternatively titled

[149] Boggs, "Gender, Sexuality, and Religion in *Considering Matthew Shepard*," 46.
[150] Ibid.

"Deer Lullaby." He shared that when police officer Reggie Fluty arrived at the fence after Matthew's attack, she saw a deer lying beside Matthew's body, of which she later said, "that was the good Lord, no doubt in my mind." In the traditional Requiem Mass, it is the living who plead with the Lord to grant the departed eternal rest. However, "Gently Rest" turns that tradition around: it is now the Lord, embodied in the form of a deer, who sings to the dying Matthew and comforts him. From this perspective, the piece was meant for those who were mourning more than the departed, for they could rest assured that Matthew was not alone in his final hours. This sentiment finds a parallel in Johannes Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* movement 1: Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (Matthew 5:4). Another movement in Johnson's work that gives voice to the deer is No. 26 "Deer Song."

The last Johnson piece performed during the service was No. 30 "Meet Me Here," which signifies the beginning of the healing. As the recessional, the piece was sung when Matthew's remains departed the nave, along with his family and the clergy. In the context of the larger work, the movement extends a personal invitation to the listener, as the title suggests, to gather at the painful event and lay down their sorrows. Its final line was especially relevant for the interment: "We can learn to offer praise again, coming home to the light." Mathew was finally laid to rest at his permanent home twenty years after his death. This had a huge meaning, above all, for Dennis and Judy Shepard, as Johnson recalled,

> I had gotten to know Dennis and Judy quite well. That day, they were different. I didn't have a sense of the impact that it had on them to never feel like they could lay their son's ashes to rest, that anywhere they might do that might be a place of desecration. Not only was he not safe in life, but his remains…were not safe. I don't think they were thinking about that every day, but it was kind of a low-grade anxiety that was always with them…. And there, they knew that his ashes would be safe in this holy place. They would [not

only] be physically safe and protected behind locked gates, but also emotionally and spiritually safe.[151]

Just as *Considering Matthew Shepard* itself, the service did not end in a depressing way, but it offered solace and hope to those whose lives were touched by Matthew's story.

4.11 Conclusion

Compared to other non-Christocentric Passions, *Considering Matthew Shepard* does not deal with an allegorical character like *the little match girl passion*, nor does it deal with a historical character who is removed from our time. Instead, the work's strength lies in the relevance of the story that bridges the gap between the fictional character and the real person who lived and died. The partial performance of the work at Matthew's interment made it an inseparable part of Matthew's legacy that continues to live on through the incarnation of music. But it is not just about Matthew: Johnson explained that *Considering Matthew Shepard* was as much about the listener's story as it was about Matt Shepard.[152] True enough, at the end of the day, it is the living, and not the departed, who can make real changes in the world. In 2009, the United States federal hate-crime bill was passed and signed into law by President Barack Obama. It bore not only Matthew's name, but also that of James Byrd Jr., the African American man in Texas who was murdered by three white supremacists in 1998. The world was certainly transformed by Matthew's legacy, as Judy Shepard would say, but much work is still left undone. Unfortunately, hate crimes remain a tangible threat to many minority groups.

In a broad sense, *Considering Matthew Shepard* is Johnson's response to hatred towards the LGBTQ+ community. There is a strong message behind the powerful music; but as the work

[151] Johnson, interview by author.

[152] Kayla Moore, "Q&A with Craig Hella Johnson," *May Festival*, accessed June 5, 2020, http://www.mayfestival.com/2019-program-guide/qa-with-craig-hella-johnson/.

unfolds, it becomes clear that the composer does not dictate how the listener should feel or react, nor does he impose any judgement on the event or the people involved. An inevitable corollary to this approach is the inclusion of uncomfortable passages such as "A Protestor" and "I Am Like You," which confront the listener like Bach's *turba* choruses do. At the same time, they express a wide range of emotions that encompass the human experience. After all, the whole work is about the life journey itself, as Johnson said, alluding to a quote by Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926): "You ask the questions, and then you live your way into the answers."[153] This journey is essentially a cathartic transformation from the individual to the collective—just as the small-town Matt became the universal Matthew, the generic "I" in the work, transformed by the journey, is eventually able to say: only in the Love, Love that lifts us up ("All of Us").

[153] Johnson loves the quote by Rilke and frequently mentioned it when discussing with the author. The full quote comes from a 1903 letter to the budding poet Franz Xaver Kappus, it runs: "I would like to beg of you, dear friend, as well as I can, to have patience with everything that remains unsolved in your heart. Try to love the *questions themselves*, like locked rooms and like books written in a foreign language. Do not now look for the answers. They cannot now be given to you because you could not live them. It is a question of experiencing everything. At present you need to *live* the question. Perhaps you will gradually, without even noticing it, find yourself experiencing the answer, some distant day." Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, translated by Mark Harman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 61-62.

Conclusion

> Art cannot change events. But it can change people. It can affect people so that they are changed…. And because people are changed by art—enriched, ennobled, encouraged—they then act in a way that may affect the course of events.[154]
>
> —Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990), in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* (1972)

It is impossible to generalize about a genre that is as heterogeneous as the non-Christocentric Passion. The current study, which primarily focuses on North America, inevitably has geographical limitations. The new trend of Passion writing in the twenty-first century is a huge topic that requires cross-cultural examinations to get the full picture. This paper principally aims to shed light on the trend through the lens of two notable American settings, but it by no means offers an exhaustive study of non-Christocentric Passion compositions.

A comparison of *the little match girl passion* and *Considering Matthew Shepard* reveals three similar ways in which Lang and Johnson approach the modern Passion. First, both works adopt non-standard narratives that differ from how their stories are normally told. Andersen's "Little Match Girl" has an abrupt, cold ending, where the passersby respond to the girl's death with much indifference: "In the dawn of morning there lay the poor little one, with pale cheeks and smiling mouth, leaning against the wall…'She tried to warm herself,' said some. No one imagined what beautiful things she had seen, nor into what glory she had entered with her grandmother, on New-year's day."[155] Lang's work, on the contrary, does not simply stop there but inserts a new, more satisfying ending, which Lang described as the moral lesson.[156] There is

[154] Leonard Bernstein, "John Gruen Interview." *Los Angeles Times*, December 31, 1972.

[155] Hans Christian Andersen, *The Little Match-Seller*, trans. H. P. Paull, last modified December 13, 2007, http://hca.gilead.org.il/li_match.html.

[156] Lang, interview by author.

also a moral lesson in *Considering Matthew Shepard* in that it does not trivialize the humanity of Aaron and Russell like most media do, but it accepts the fact that they are just like the rest of us, which the composer hesitantly expresses in "I Am Like You." Throughout the narrative of the work, Johnson also gives voice to the fence and the deer for the listener to experience the story through the personification of these characters as the imaginary witnesses to the event.

Second, both Lang and Johnson portray their protagonists as representations of a larger suffering group in society. The two works can be interpreted as Human Passions, in which the pain and suffering of the protagonists are dignified, as those of Jesus are elevated in Bach's Passions. They do not blame any individual or group of people for the tragedy that happened. Contrarily, they reflect on and lament individual narratives to create a generalized sense of ethical responsibility in the listener. For example, *Considering Matthew Shepard* does not specifically ascribe blame to the anti-gay protestors; instead, it draws attention to the hatred expressed by these protestors and leads us to consider its negative impacts to the society, especially towards minority and underrepresented groups. *the little match girl passion* achieves similar results, in that it does not ascribe blame to anyone, neither the girl's father who makes her suffer in the cold of winter nor the passersby on the street who turn a blind eye to the suffering girl; rather, by interpolating the Bachian movements, it, like the Stations of the Cross, asks the listener to stop at certain points within the narrative, reflect on the action, and to zoom out for a moment to consider the plight of all who suffer under similar circumstances. As such, the two works do not entail a call to action as much as they create discomfort and challenge for the audience in light of social issues. But these uncomfortable elements are followed by a release of tension after the narrative portion. This is particularly apparent in Johnson's Epilogue that gives a sense of reconciliation and understanding. It may be true that a more radical composer

would want to create a greater discomfort or challenge for the audience with different endings, just as Andersen shocks the reader with an abrupt conclusion. In contrast, Lang and Johnson want to stimulate the audience to think about social justice issues, but, at the same time, they also allow them to assuage some liberal grief/guilt with a cathartic ending.

The third similarity is that there is a focus on collective empowerment. In both works, a communal experience is manifested not only physically (as naturally achieved in any ensemble setting), but also musically and emotionally. In *the little match girl passion*, the storytelling is done entirely by the chorus. There is no aria in the traditional sense of the term: the four soloists, who also play simple percussion, almost always sing with the rest of the group. There is also a transformation from the personal to the collective—from "come, daughter…help *me* cry" in the first movement to "*we* sit and cry" and "*you* closed *your* eyes / *I* closed *my* eyes" in the last movement. In *Considering Matthew Shepard*, the narration is done by an unassigned role. This "one voice" could be anyone from the chorus regardless of gender and voice type. It is also not a fixed role, allowing multiple singers to take part in the storytelling. There are several solo passages, but they are always preceded or followed by the chorus in the same movement. Further, a wide range of styles are used throughout the work to embrace musical diversity that mirrors diversity throughout humanity.

the little match girl passion and *Considering Matthew Shepard*, as two of the most significant and performed non-Christocentric Passions composed in the past two decades, exemplify many important features of the new trend of Passion writing and the Passion genre at large. Often, the modern Passion establishes a worldview that challenges, even attempts to replace, the current one by evoking a sense of *com*passion, which literally means "suffering with." If this etymological interpretation is taken, then what compassion connotes is not simply

an emotional capacity of being compassionate, but also actions that result from contemplating and engaging in someone else's suffering. This transformation from passion to compassion is a great example of how choral music can advocate for social justice in the twenty-first century.

Appendix A

Performing Forces, Solos, and *Divisi* by Movement in *Considering Matthew Shepard*

Performing Forces

Movement	Type	S	A	T	B	Solo	Cl	Gtr	Perc *	Mar *	Pno	Vln	Vla	Vc	Cb	Note
Prologue																
1. Cattle, Horses, Sky and Grass	Chorus	x	x	x	x	Soli TBar, "4 Voices"	x	El.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	*Tutti*
2. Ordinary Boy	Chorus+ Aria	x	x	x	x	Narrator/ Female Solo Judy, Matt, Solo T	x	Ac.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	*Tutti*
3. We Tell Each Other Stories/ I Am Open	Aria→ Chorale	x	x	x	x	Solo S	x	Ac.	x		x	x		x		
Passion																
4. Recitation I	Recitative					Narrator					x					
5. The Fence (Before)	Aria	x	x	x	x	Solo B	x	Ac.	x		x	x	x	x	x	*Tutti*
6. Recitation II	Recitative					Narrator					x					
7. The Fence (That Night)	Chorus+ Aria	x	x	x	x	Solo B	x	El.	x		x	x	x	x	x	*Tutti*
8. Recitation III	Recitative					Narrator	x				x	x	x	x	x	
9. A Protestor	Chorus	x	x	x	x		x	El.	x		x	x	x	x	x	*Tutti*

Movement *(cont.)*	Type	S	A	T	B	Solo	Cl	Gtr	Perc *	Mar *	Pno	Vln	Vla	Vc	Cb	Note
10. Keep It Away from Me	Aria					Solo Mez, SSA Trio		El.	x		x	x	x	x	x	
11. Recitation IV	Recitative					Narrator					x					
12. Fire of the Ancient Heart	Aria+ Chorale	x	x	x	x	Solo Bar, 5 Choral Percussions	x	El.	x		x	x	x	x	x	*Tutti* Choral Perc.: bass drum, low conga, medium tom, high conga, djembe
13. Recitation V	Recitative					Narrator					x					
14. Stray Birds	Chorus			x	x						x					
15. We Are All Sons (Pt. 1)	Chorus			x	x						x			x		
16. I Am Like You/ We Are All Sons (Pt. 2)	Chorale/ Recitative →Chorus	x	x	x	x	Soli SATB	x				x	x	x	x		"I Am Like You" w/ SATB quartet
17. The Innocence	Aria	x	x	x	x	Solo T	x	Ac.	x		x	x	x	x	x	*Tutti*
18. Recitation VI	Recitative					Narrator					x					
19. The Fence (One Week Later)	Aria+ Chorale	x	x	x	x	Solo S	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	
20. Recitation VII	Recitative					Narrator					x					
21. Stars	Recitative	x	x	x	x	Narrator	x	El.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	*Tutti*; Chorus in 7 groups
22. Recitation VIII	Recitative					Narrator					x					
23. In Need of Breath	Aria	x	x	x	x	Solo T	x	El.		x	x	x	x	x	x	*Tutti*

Movement *(cont.)*	Type	S	A	T	B	Solo	Cl	Gtr	Perc *	Mar *	Pno	Vln	Vla	Vc	Cb	Note
24. Gently Rest	Chorus	x	x	x	x					x		x	x	x	x	Optional
25. Recitation IX	Recitative					Narrator					x					
26. Deer Song	Chorus	x	x			Soli SSS	x	Ac.		x	x	x	x	x	x	*Tutti*
27. Recitation X	Recitative					Narrator					x					
28. The Fence (After)/ The Wind	Chorus	x	x	x	x		x	El.		x	x	x	x	x	x	*Tutti*
29. Pilgrimage	Chorus	x	x	x	x	Multiple Soli (see table below)	x	El.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	*Tutti*
Epilogue																
30. Meet Me Here	Aria+ Chorale	x	x	x	x	Solo S	x					x	x	x	x	Only movement w/o piano
31. Thank You	Aria+ Recitative +Chorus	x	x	x	x	Multiple Soli (see table below), "2 Voices"	x	El.		x	x	x	x	x	x	*Tutti*
32. All of Us	Aria+ Chorus+ Chorale	x	x	x	x	3 Soli Treble	x	El.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	*Tutti*
33. Reprise: Cattle, Horses, Sky, and Grass	Chorus	x	x	x	x	Solo T					x			x	x	

* The percussion and marimba parts can be played by one percussionist, but separate parts exist.

Solos and *Divisi* (Recommendations based on a 24-voice choir with 6 singers per section)

Note: The conductor should indicate the normal *divisi* for each part in 2- and 3-part splits.

Movement	Measures	Type (# of bars / Aria)
1	mm. 20-28 mm. 67-72 mm. 100-103; mm. 106-110	Tenor Solo (8 bars, w/ No. 33) Choral Baritone (6 bars) Four Voices (9 bars)
2	mm. 1; 8-30; 80-81	Narrator/Female Solo (25 bars)
	mm. 31-34; 61-77	Judy – Mezzo Solo (20 bars)
	mm. 82-129	Matt (38 bars)
	mm. 146-159; mm.183-213	Semi-Chorus – 8 singers (44 bars)
	mm. 157-163	Tenor Solo (7 bars)
3	mm. 6-27	Soprano Solo (27 bars)
4	Whole movement	Narrator
5	mm. 10-end	Bass Solo (Aria)
6	Whole movement	Narrator
7	mm. 14-end	Bass Solo (Aria)
8	Whole movement	Narrator
9	Whole movement mm. 10-28 mm. 29-41	S/A Normal *divisi* T1/B1 3rd line / T2/B2 4th line T/B 3-part split
10	mm. 19-end	Mezzo Solo (Aria)
	mm. 25-end	SSA Trio (½ aria, w/ No. 32)
11	Whole movement	Narrator
12	mm. 1-23; 87-end	Baritone Solo (22 bars)
	mm. 40-47	Narrator – can be the same Baritone Solo; it is suggested that the narration begins in m. 39
	mm. 24-86	Choral Percussion – 5 singers
	mm. 24-37	Groups 1 to 5 – spoken parts; singers randomly allocated to each group, regardless of vocal parts
13	Whole movement	Narrator
14	N/A	No solo or special *divisi*
15	N/A	No solo or special *divisi*

16	mm. 17-81	SATB quartet (½ aria)
17	Whole movement	Tenor Solo (Aria)
18	Whole movement	Narrator
19	mm. 8-end	Soprano Solo (Aria)
20	Whole movement	Narrator
21	Whole movement	Narrator
		Group 1 – SATB
		Group 2 – SATB
		Group 3 – SATB
		Group 4 – SATBB / SATB with T or B singing both B flats
		Group 5 – SAT
		Group 6 – SB
		Group 7 – AT
22	Whole movement	Narrator
23	Whole movement	Tenor Solo (Aria)
24	N/A	No solo or special *divisi*
25	Whole movement	Narrator
26	Whole movement	Soprano Solo I
		Soprano Solo II
		Soprano Solo III
27	Whole movement	Narrator
28	N/A	No solo or special *divisi*
29	mm. 23-28	Soprano Solo I
	mm. 33-37	Bass Solo I
		Bass Solo II
	mm. 43-45	Alto Solo I
		Tenor Solo I
		Bass Solo I
	mm. 50-52	Soprano Solo II
	mm. 64-68; 88-end	Soprano Solo III
		Soprano Solo IV
	mm.72-76	Alto Solo II

		Alto Solo III
30	Whole movement	Soprano / Mezzo Solo (Aria)
31	Whole movement	Chorus I – S/A no *divisi*
	Whole movement	Chorus II – Alto no *divisi*
	Whole movement	Voice 1
	Whole movement	Voice 2
	mm. 1-2	Soli 1 – One Bass
	m. 2	Soli 2 – One Alto
	mm. 3-4	Soli 3 – One Soprano
	mm. 4-8	Soli 4 – One Alto
	mm. 5-6	Soli 5 – Chorus II
	mm. 6-8	Soli 6 – Chorus I
	mm. 9-11; 16-19	Soli 7 – One Bass
	mm. 11; 16-20	Soli 8 – One Alto
	mm. 25-32	Soli 10 (one voice) – One Soprano
	mm. 25-32	Soli 11 (one voice) – One Alto
32	mm. 4-12	Solo 1 (½ aria, w/ No. 10)
		Solo 2 (½ aria, w/ No. 10)
		Solo 3 (½ aria, w/ No. 10)
	mm. 82-end	Chorus I (Tenor no *divisi*)
	mm. 82-end	Chorus II
33	mm. 26-35	Tenor Solo (9 bars, w/ No. 1)

Appendix B

"The Little Match Girl" (1846) by Hans Christian Andersen – Full Text

It was terribly cold and nearly dark on the last evening of the old year, and the snow was falling fast. In the cold and the darkness, a poor little girl, with bare head and naked feet, roamed through the streets. It is true she had on a pair of slippers when she left home, but they were not of much use. They were very large, so large, indeed, that they had belonged to her mother, and the poor little creature had lost them in running across the street to avoid two carriages that were rolling along at a terrible rate. One of the slippers she could not find, and a boy seized upon the other and ran away with it, saying that he could use it as a cradle, when he had children of his own. So the little girl went on with her little naked feet, which were quite red and blue with the cold. In an old apron she carried a number of matches, and had a bundle of them in her hands. No one had bought anything of her the whole day, nor had anyone given her even a penny. Shivering with cold and hunger, she crept along; poor little child, she looked the picture of misery. The snowflakes fell on her long, fair hair, which hung in curls on her shoulders, but she regarded them not.

Lights were shining from every window, and there was a savory smell of roast goose, for it was New-year's eve—yes, she remembered that. In a corner, between two houses, one of which projected beyond the other, she sank down and huddled herself together. She had drawn her little feet under her, but she could not keep off the cold; and she dared not go home, for she had sold no matches, and could not take home even a penny of money. Her father would certainly beat her; besides, it was almost as cold at home as here, for they had only the roof to cover them, through which the wind howled, although the largest holes had been stopped up with straw and rags. Her little hands were almost frozen with the cold. Ah! perhaps a burning match might be some good, if she could draw it from the bundle and strike it against the wall, just to warm her fingers. She drew one out—"scratch!" how it sputtered as it burnt! It gave a warm, bright light, like a little candle, as she held her hand over it. It was really a wonderful light. It seemed to the little girl that she was sitting by a large iron stove, with polished brass feet and a brass ornament. How the fire burned! and seemed so beautifully warm that the child stretched out her feet as if to warm them, when, lo! the flame of the match went out, the stove vanished, and she had only the remains of the half-burnt match in her hand.

She rubbed another match on the wall. It burst into a flame, and where its light fell upon the wall it became as transparent as a veil, and she could see into the room. The table was covered with a snowy white table-cloth, on which stood a splendid dinner service, and a steaming roast goose, stuffed with apples and dried plums. And what was still more wonderful, the goose jumped down from the dish and waddled across the floor, with a knife and fork in its breast, to the little girl. Then the match went out, and there remained nothing but the thick, damp, cold wall before her.

She lighted another match, and then she found herself sitting under a beautiful Christmas-tree. It was larger and more beautifully decorated than the one which she had seen through the

glass door at the rich merchant's. Thousands of tapers were burning upon the green branches, and colored pictures, like those she had seen in the show-windows, looked down upon it all. The little one stretched out her hand towards them, and the match went out.

The Christmas lights rose higher and higher, till they looked to her like the stars in the sky. Then she saw a star fall, leaving behind it a bright streak of fire. "Someone is dying," thought the little girl, for her old grandmother, the only one who had ever loved her, and who was now dead, had told her that when a star falls, a soul was going up to God.

She again rubbed a match on the wall, and the light shone round her; in the brightness stood her old grandmother, clear and shining, yet mild and loving in her appearance. "Grandmother," cried the little one, "O take me with you; I know you will go away when the match burns out; you will vanish like the warm stove, the roast goose, and the large, glorious Christmas-tree." And she made haste to light the whole bundle of matches, for she wished to keep her grandmother there. And the matches glowed with a light that was brighter than the noon-day, and her grandmother had never appeared so large or so beautiful. She took the little girl in her arms, and they both flew upwards in brightness and joy far above the earth, where there was neither cold nor hunger nor pain, for they were with God.

In the dawn of morning there lay the poor little one, with pale cheeks and smiling mouth, leaning against the wall; she had been frozen to death on the last evening of the year; and the New-year's sun rose and shone upon a little corpse! The child still sat, in the stiffness of death, holding the matches in her hand, one bundle of which was burnt. "She tried to warm herself," said some. No one imagined what beautiful things she had seen, nor into what glory she had entered with her grandmother, on New-year's day.

English translation: H. P. Paull (1872)

Appendix C

Transcript of Interview with David Lang (April 21, 2021)

Author:
First of all, why a Passion? Did the Theatre of Voices specifically commission a Passion, or was it more of your idea?

Lang:
It had been on my mind for a really long time, of something that I was interested in doing, you know, you grow up singing in choirs, and you end up spending a lot of time talking about Jesus. And for those of us who are not Christian, it's always on your mind, you know, this is not…I'm singing about this other religion. I can tell the sensitivity of the composer and the sincerity of Bach, writing about, you know, his belief, but it's not my belief. And so when you are writing music, you have to deal with that as a choral composer, you have to deal with, am I going to avoid religious issues? Am I going to fake religious issues? I mean, there are many people who are not Christian who have written Masses, just because that's where the core of the repertoire is. And so you always try to figure out how to do whatever you're going to do in the way which gives you the least amount of discomfort. And then I decided when I was working with Paul Hillier, Theatre of Voices, you know, Paul is a totally modern man. And he worked with Stockhausen and Berio, and Cage and Arvo Pärt, but he's not a religious person. We are not particularly religious. And when I went to, you know, I just checked his discography on Amazon. And most of what he has recorded in his life is religious music, and I just thought, well, this is the same age-old problem that I've been thinking about for a million years, and maybe now's the time to deal with it, so I tried to make a piece that he and I both would feel comfortable singing about which was a religiously themed piece not about Jesus. And that's what led me to this kind of thinking about, what is the core of Christianity? And what is the core of Christian music? What's the core of the Passion and Passion settings in particular, and that led me to thinking that what really works in a piece like the *St. Matthew Passion*, or the *St. John Passion*, or whatever, is that you are watching someone else's suffering. And I just wondered, maybe someone else is suffering and watching that other person's suffering, maybe would elevate that to a religious level.

Author:
I see. In your program notes I think you talked about the religious and moral equivalency between the suffering of the girl and the suffering of Jesus. Do you think that in Andersen's story it initially invites that kind of reading, portraying the little girl as a kind of surrogate Christ in the story?

Lang:
The reason why the story works is because it's already in…that kind of equivalency is already there in the story. I think one of the reasons why it works so well is because Anderson asked you to make that conclusion himself. He's asking you to say, look at this girl and think of God, and so because of that, it was a really easy substitution. And I have to say, I tried other texts before I came up with the Little Match Girl texts. I tried looking at obituaries from the New York Times

and I tried the Kennedy assassination, because that was like a major event in my life. I tried looking at all sorts of different kinds of public death that would be equivalent suffering. And then eventually, it just turned out that this story, which as you say, has it already baked in, just worked very well for it.

Author:
So I know that you are not a Christian, you come from a Jewish background. When you take on this very Christian form, historically and traditionally, how do you reconcile that kind of relation?

Lang:
I am pretty religious. And so being Jewish is really important. But I actually think of this in terms of classical musicians. I love classical music. I sang in a Gregorian chant choir in a Catholic church when I was in college. I've spent a lot of time thinking about Christian music and dealing with it and singing it and performing in it. And so, for me, I'm trying to figure out how to do something that fits into that tradition so that I can feel myself, you know, getting experienced enough. So inside, I can ask Bach questions about what he is doing. That's very exciting for me, you know, I feel like I'm not trying so much to get into the religious message of it. But I'm trying to get into the classical music message of it. I'm trying to figure out how I can pose a question which fits squarely into the tradition of Western classical music. As far as being Jewish, I do think that there is a sense as a Jew, that you always have a kind of outsider status to Western classical music. And there's a way in which, you know, Jews have always tried to phrase classical music as something which is potentially universal and international. So it's probably no coincidence that all the early virtuoso pianists in Paris in the 19th century were Jews, because they're trying to go, how can we redefine this field so that we can have a place in it, right? If the place, up until that moment, was you are the musician who works for a court, and that means you are responsible for writing their religious music and writing their entertaining music and writing their dinner music. That's not a good position for a Jew, right? So it's probably no surprise that these challenges occasionally, to classical music, are challenges that are trying to open it up, so that people from other cultures, in particular Jews can figure out how to participate. So I look at it…this is one of those.

Author:
Yeah, but I think some people might think it's kind of problematic when you're using this traditionally Christian form, but you replace Jesus's suffering with someone else's suffering, and there have been a lot of discussions on anti-Semitism in Bach's Passions, do you think that you are going the other side of the spectrum and, by taking Jesus away or making him irrelevant, you are kind of subverting the whole Christian culture here?

Lang:
I wanted to make a really humane piece. So I wasn't trying to do something that would be poking fun at anyone or pulling anything down. I really wasn't trying to do anything that was blasphemous, although I understand that some people might be unhappy. But I tried to replace that with taking it very seriously with saying, if I actually do take this suffering of this girl seriously and tell the story, not for kitsch, and not for jokes, and not to tear it down, but to actually try to do the best I can musically to tell it honestly and nobly that maybe I would be able

to do something that wouldn't be seen as a challenge. I never expected that the piece would become a Christmas or Easter staple. But of course, you know, the piece is, right? The piece has been done probably over 500 times in the world. And it's done regularly by different church choirs for Christmas or for Easter, including in Canada, there's a choir in Canada, that's the Pro Coro Canada which has done it I think 10 years in a row as a Christmas concert. But I never really intended it to be a Christian piece and I never really intended it to be a Jewish piece. And I never really intended it to be any bit of a blasphemy at all. I really was just thinking for myself can I make a piece which allows me to identify, even if just for myself, what the core of Christianity is so that I can understand it, so that then I can go back and listen to Bach and I can say this is what I understand now.

Author:
It's really interesting as a Christmas piece because it doesn't really fit into how we think about Christmas with all the carols like Joy to the world, that's so joyous, but this piece is so dark and it has a really strong message.

Lang:
It's just cold. It's just cold. That's it.

Author:
It's cold and it makes us think and it makes us feel uncomfortable. And I think it's making a much bigger impact on people who go to a Christmas concert expecting to hear joyous music and glorious music, I think, finding more meanings to that.

Lang:
The thoughtfulness is a nice thing, actually. And I do think that that's the point of it. And part of it is personal, that…I live in New York, and New York has a lot of suffering people all the time, you know, this huge inequality, and there are homeless people on my street. And the way you are taught to live in New York, is to not see the things which embarrass you, or sadden you or cause you to challenge your worldview, you just don't see them. So the idea that you would write a piece of music that would say, just for this one moment, can we see these people? Can we just look around and see the suffering of these people and pay attention to it? You know, and I think that that's valuable, not in religion only, but it's valuable, just as a citizen, to have a moment where you get a chance to say, well, who is in pain around me, and it's my obligation too to help them and before I can make that decision, I have to notice them before I can make the decision to help them. But I do think that there is a kind of cynical thing, probably, which is the corollary to that, which is that if the point of Christianity is to pay attention to the suffering of other people through the lesson of Jesus, how can my supposedly Christian country allow these things to happen? How can my supposedly, you know, my country, which is supposedly built on Christian ideals, how can that allow these things to happen? And certainly there are other issues, which are deeper, you know, the Evangelical Church in America has been completely polarized. And so, the idea that rich and Christian are associated and poor and outside the grace of God are equated. These are troubling things. And so, a piece which might make you think a little bit about how we are all connected through our poor, maybe something, which is useful.

Author:
I'm so glad that you brought up the gap between the rich and the poor, I think that's also kind of manifested in the music that you write in the Passion. I see so many opposites and dualities in the music itself. For example, the structure, I really see that there are two kinds of movements, there are the reality movements that are only based on the text of Anderson. And then there are the movements, which I call the Bachian movements that are influenced by Bach's Passions. So you kind of alternate the two movements to make it work. Are you trying to highlight this gap, this dichotomy between the rich and poor with these two movement types?

Lang:
What I tried to do was to tell the story straight through the Andersen and so that music, all of those movements, as you know, are related to each other. So those things are all the same kind of music, they're all accompanied by the glockenspiel. They all actually can be played one after the other. And they have a general progression that they begin, they start, and then they very quickly become contrapuntal. And then the rest of the form of those are voices coming into rhythmic unison. So, the whole idea of telling the story that way was that I imagined that the girl is on a path towards spiritual purification. And I thought maybe a metaphor for purification was to have all the singers agree with each other rhythmically. So, you feel the friction as they get closer and closer to singing in unison, until the very last possible one before there's a recapitulation. The Anderson is told with three singers singing in rhythmic unison and the bass almost painfully close singing in rhythmic unison. But then I thought, because I have this one story that I want people to hear as one thing, as one kind of music that has its own trajectory. I thought I'm going to use the Bach to interject and to comment on what you're seeing. And that made me think that the Bach shouldn't have its own linear connection. Those Bach movements should be individual, so that we can see them more as punctuating a moment in the larger story. So, it alternates from being the story, which is told to being these momentary things that are all kind of looking at the story from different angles. And those different angles all come from paraphrases of the *St. Matthew Passion*.

Author:
Interesting. Do you see an irony in using Bach's Passion? Because Bach's music is often regarded, as you know, this pinnacle of Western classical music, this high culture, in which the lower class and the girl, they don't have a part in all that, and when we think of performances of your work it's [they're] often in fancy places, like the concert hall, beautiful churches [where] the poor is kind of excluded from all those situations. So do you see an irony in all that?

Lang:
Well, I don't see the irony in that. I mean, I think, first of all, my pieces are often done as a fundraiser. And oftentimes, when someone tells me that the piece is being done as a fundraiser, I send them money, because I feel like that's a very good use of it. So I know that it has been used to raise money for the homeless to raise money for different causes, which I love, I think that's really good. And so, the only place you can raise money is in a place where there already is money. And so, the idea that you have to have a piece in a certain kind of setting in order to enable money flow into a different kind of setting is sort of built into the system that we have to fund music. In America, certainly. But in most of the world. The Bach thing is interesting for me, because I definitely see Bach as someone who is sincere about his own belief. And so, I

understand what you're saying about the environment that created Bach, and the environment that Bach wrote for. But I think that Bach actually is really sincere. I think Bach really is writing these pieces from a place of saying, I do believe in God. And I do believe in this way of worshipping. And I do believe that music can be perfected, that there can be formal things that happen in music, that show how perfect the universe is. And it's only perfect because of my belief in Christianity. So I mean, if you look at the Credo of the B-minor Mass, which is, of course, split symmetrically, you don't hear this when you hear a performance of it, it's not something that is in your bones when you hear this piece, you don't hear that there's this huge crucifix time going on, you know, you only see it, when you look at the score, it's only there for him, it's only there so that he can say, I've divided this Credo up and I have put this thing because it's the core of my personal belief. And so, I love that idea that what a composer is doing is using the formal and the musical aspects of a piece to explore and proclaim what he or she actually believes. And for me, one of the things that was so beautiful about this piece for me, and the reason why I think the model for Bach was so powerful for me, was I tried to do that for myself.

Author:
I see, yeah, interesting. I think the performance practice nowadays would be very different from Bach's time, or how Bach would have envisioned his music to be performed. The *St. Matthew Passion*, of course, was first performed as part of the Good Friday liturgy in St. Thomas's church. But nowadays, especially in the 19th century, when the Handel and Haydn Society first took it to America, we see a very different reception history of the Passion in this high art culture, and now, you see, Bach's Passion is rarely performed in churches, but it's often performed in concert halls with a larger ensemble than it was originally intended, and the venue, and the audience would be very, very different. So, I just wonder if there's an extra layer of meaning that has evolved through history.

Lang:
I think as the culture becomes less religious. I think a lot of the music gets taken out of its religious context, and put someplace else. I mean, if you think about Handel's *Messiah* or something, I don't think anyone listens to it for its religious content anymore. And you know, you listen to it, because it's just a fun piece that everyone knows. And I think all of those Handel pieces already in that era had moved out of the…we are making a religious piece for a church environment to we're making a public entertainment that we are selling tickets for. And so that process began a long time ago. But I do think, for me, as I said, I am religious, and my interest in religious music is personal. And I believe, fundamentally, whether I am right or wrong, I have no idea. But I believe fundamentally that making music is a religious activity, because I am sharing something, I'm sharing these vibrations with you. And I believe before I share them with you that these vibrations are capable of carrying an emotional message. And in order for you to receive that emotional message, you have to believe before you hear my piece, that these vibrations are capable of carrying an emotional message. In other words, for you and for me to communicate through the music that we do, we have to already believe in the faith that this music can carry this message between us. And to me, that's the core of religion, the core of religion is that I am in a room in a tradition. And I believe in advance that there is something which unites me, to the people around me and to the history of the people around me. And that's something you can't prove. It's something you can't demonstrate. It's something you can't

quantify. It's something you just have to believe. And I think music works that way as well. I think you have to believe that it is capable of moving you before it can move you. And to me, that's why, you know, I think I've become a more religious person through my desire to have the music mean more to me.

Author:
Let's move on to discuss the music itself a little bit more. So I see that you used a basic motif in the piece, which I call the girl motif. I just took the liberty. But, you know, it's the motif of scale degree 5-1-2-3 in most of the reality, recitation movements. Do you think that it represents the girl's conscience that travels through the piece and all the difficult situations that she has to go through?

Lang:
What I really wanted to do…I don't think it represents anything, but it took me a while [inaudible] how to tell that story. And what I decided was that any melody that changed could not tell the story. So I needed to find a way of telling the story that was kind of inert, you know, that was not something where you would be listening for pitches, where you would be listening for drama, where you would be listening for great change and great excitement, I decided that I had to step back and just use the most simple and bland and repeated kind of non-melodic statement, it's not really a melody, right? It's just, you know, like a scale with one alternating note. And what I discovered, which was kind of interesting through this piece, was that anytime the piece became demonstrably musical and beautiful, it was too much. You know, because if I tried to tell the story with a melody that changed or that had a different kind of shape, or that didn't repeat, then you as the listener would always be listening for how the notes changed. And so instead, I want you to listen to how the words change. And so I had to take the attention away from the music and I had to use the barest amount of music to tell the story. And that happened a lot, like there was one movement that I ended up throwing out, I used in a different piece eventually. That was very beautiful that I wrote, and it was just too beautiful. And I thought there's no way that I can have this beautiful music in the piece because then the action stops and you can't really have the action stop.

Author:
I'm curious, did you take that melody from the Bach? It really recalls the opening of "Erbarme dich" in the *St. Matthew Passion*, God have mercy. And of course, you also use that same text in English.

Lang:
I didn't really take it from it. But I was aware that it was pretty similar. So, I didn't say, this is the reason why I am embedding this is because it is from "Erbarme dich," but I did think it seemed like it was an appropriate thing. And I did actually begin before I wrote by listening to the *St. Matthew Passion* many, many, many times and, originally, I thought the whole piece was going to have a much closer connection to the music of the Bach. And then I realized that there was no way that I could compete with it. The minute I referred to something self-consciously as Bach, I would take the attention away from my story. So I cut that, but there's still certain things that are left. I mean, some of them are in the same keys and the opening time signature. And I mean, it's like some of it is still left from previous sketches. But anyway, yeah, so I was aware of

that, but it's not a copy.

Author:
Yeah, and that motif is not the first time you use it in music compositions. I was listening to the LA Master Chorale, and they have the *national anthems* and the Passion on the same album, and I was listening to the first movement of the *national anthems*, and it's exactly that motif.

Lang:
Oh, I only know how to do one thing. [laughter] You know, it won't be the last time I use it either.

Author:
It's beautiful. And it's interesting that in the last movement "we sit and cry" that this motif is not sung by the choir anymore, but it is played by the percussion instruments for the very first time, actually. And I, again, take the liberty to interpret that as the spirit of the girl that kind of lives on after her death and is picked up by other people, maybe the passersby, maybe the people who walk on the street, who see this girl. They kind of continue her spirit in some way.

Lang:
I like that idea. It's definitely supposed to be…I didn't think of it as being her heavenly reflection or something. But I definitely wanted to remind people that that was the motive of the piece, and then it had moved into the instruments. So I didn't have a better story for it. I mean, your story is better than mine, so you can use it. But I did want to say, you know, this is the thing which has linked the entire piece. And now we're going to conclude it by staying there.

Author:
To me, that has a certain Christian sentiment to it, as it really invites a story of…there's something after death, you know, there's a redemption, maybe there's eternal life after that, death itself is not the ending, but there's something more. So that's how I read that. There is also duality of key in your piece, that most of those recitations are in F and the Bachian movements are in other different keys. So you're kind of using tonality to reinforce that idea of duality.

Lang:
Exactly. Yeah.

Author:
And interestingly, in the last movement, it ends in F. But the last movement, as we know, you took it from the last movement of the Bach "We Sit and Cry" and it's supposed to be not a reality movement, but the Bach movement, but you are using the reality movement key, which is F major. Are you trying to invite this kind of reconciliation after the suffering of the girl? There's a sense of this communal experience of people coming together to mourn her death.

Lang:
It just sounded better in the same key, you know, it resolved, but what you say is definitely true. Those other interjecting movements taken from the Bach are in different keys because they are supposed to sort of challenge the narrative. But the last piece actually does have a different

function, which is to solve the narrative. And so, it just had the same…it just sounded like it was ending in the right place to be in the same key.

Author:
And, of course, you are also harkening back to the structure of Bach's Passion with this *exordium* and the *conclusio,* and the middle portion will be the narrative. I think you are also looking back to that structure.

Lang:
I really tried. The original sketches of this piece were really based on the Bach. And some of that is still in there. The original sketch, you know, it's like the alto is named the evangelist. And I mean, I really thought I was going to do something that was an exact parallel. And then as the piece went on, there are little bits in the Bach left, but it's definitely true. I listened as carefully as I could.

Author:
Yeah, I think Andersen's story has a really cold ending, right? You have, on New Year's Day, people walking by, and they see this dead body, but they are not doing anything for her. Or, of course, they didn't do anything to help her when she was suffering the night before. And I think your work has a really humanistic twist to the story by the interjection of Bach, you are inviting a kind of more compassionate reading to the end where those people really gather together and kind of mourn for her. Do you think that is more of a warmer ending to that?

Lang:
I definitely think that the original is very abrupt and the abruptness of it is very painful. And so I definitely felt like in order to incorporate that story into the piece, it needed a moral lesson. And I'm not sure what the moral lesson is of the original, it doesn't really tell you, oh, you notice this, and you need to change, you know, or you see this and isn't that bad? Right? It just says, oh, she died. You know, and so it seems really like as a storyteller, and I think probably there are others of his stories that I can think of that do this as well, where there are things that happened for a great shock value. But that wasn't really the point of this piece, the point of this piece was to have that story in a frame of contemplation and real kind of thoughtfulness about what that story meant.

Author:
Yeah, so there's no call to action, right? Because, you know, some choral pieces, when they talk about suffering, they end with this cheesy ending, where they tell people to change, you have to do this way, it becomes kind of instructive that you have to do this way to become better human beings, but you're not trying to do that, you're leaving kind of an open ending to how people take on this story. And it's more of a contemplation and reflection on, okay, now, this is the story and what should we do after that?

Lang:
Well, I want to be talked to in music in a particular way, like, I don't want people to tell me what to do in music. I don't want to go to a movie theater and have the music come up and cry. And you know, make me cry, right? You know, every time I hear the Barber Adagio for Strings, I get

really angry at Barber because it's so emotional, and you can't help it, and I feel like it's really, really beautiful. And it's really fantastic. And it's really great. And he's making you feel terrible, you know, I mean, he's manipulating you to feel really bad. I don't want to do that, right? I don't want to tell people what to do. I certainly don't want to have a movement that says everyone rise up now and give your money to charity. Whatever I feel like, for me, I like to have experiences that make me feel like my thoughtfulness is valued, that I can see something more deeply. And then I am able to decide for myself how to act upon my new vision and feeling. And to me, that's a valuable contribution to the discussion. We have lots of music all the time now that tells us what to do. You know, it's like you watch television and the music comes on and it's supposed to make you want to buy a car or whatever. I feel like it's kind of noble to have pieces that respect you enough as a listener to say, I just want you to see this. Just look at it. You know, like it's something that you might not have seen. Why don't we just look at it? And then if you want to do something about it, if it moves you to think of something else, then that's of great value.

Author:
Yeah, it's interesting that you mentioned the Barber because later he actually put the Agnus Dei to the music, which doesn't make it better, right? Because it tells you what to think now [that] it's an overtly Christian piece.

Lang:
It's so beautiful, though, it's so beautiful. And I always think, you know, I shake my fist at him for getting me every time.

Author:
Do you think there are political messages in your piece? Your music often strikes me as very political. At Yale, I have sung your piece *statement to the court* for Hannah's recital. And that, of course, is a very political piece with a strong text. And do you think there's a similar political message in this piece, especially, I see there's no sense of linear progress in your piece. And not only in this Passion, but also in other music, you know, with the post-minimalist style, it reminds me of Marxist and Engelsian thoughts where there is no linear progress, and it's all this capitalist idea that we are going to be better, you know, and I see a metaphor in your music, because it doesn't lead us anywhere, it doesn't have a beginning, it doesn't have an end, it just flows and continues, right? Do you think I'm thinking too much or is there a political message?

Lang:
No, I think you're absolutely right. And I think, again, it's me trying to figure out the way to speak about politics the way I want to be spoken to in politics. So I don't want to be spurred to be part of a crowd. I don't want to have music that makes my energy flow so that I am moved to jump up and do something, you know, I want political things, which make me see more carefully and more closely. The political inequalities in the world around me. And so, because that's the kind of way I want to be spoken to, that's the way I want to write and to write the music, and pieces like *statement to the court*. I think this piece is political, *the little match girl passion*. I think the idea that, again, it's like my life would be impossible without ignoring the suffering of the people around me in New York. And why is that good?

You know, last year, I rewrote Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*. I wrote my opera *prisoner of the state*,

which was premiered at the New York Philharmonic. And that's, again, it's not trying to say: everyone rise up and march. But it's trying to say here is an opera that we take as being this great political statement about freedom. And yet, we have prisons that…we have children in cages on the southern border of the United States at this moment, even with our new administration, we have more people incarcerated in America than anywhere in human history. And so we have this great piece, which is supposed to be politically important to us, which avoids that topic, right? Which comes to the edge of saying, here's a political message, and then it steers away from it. And it becomes this, you know, Beethoven moves it into this opera about a man and his wife. And so, I just thought, what would it be like to take out all the things that are about the husband and wife and about the mistaken identity, and see if we can redeem its promised value of being something that's about noticing the plight of prisoners? So again, it's not about saying, here's your action message. And here's the way you're supposed to react. And here's what you're supposed to do. It's just supposed to say: See this. How does seeing this make you pay attention to this? And so, I think those are political. I think, you know, they're not rabble-rousing. They're not trying to change your opinion. They're just magnifying glasses to see what the problem is. So if we can see a problem, maybe we will be able to solve a problem.

Author:
That's powerful. In the past two decades, I think there's been a resurgence of the Passion genre. There have been more Passion settings being written than probably the last century combined. Why do you think that's the case? Do you think that composers can really see a humanistic kind of element to the Passion and certain universality? As you did see in the story of the Passion and make parallel[s] to Anderson's story, there are some Passions that have been written without Jesus in there. Of course, I'm also studying Craig Hella Johnson's piece *Considering Matthew Shepard*, which is also based on Passion. And also, you have, for example, Kaija Saariaho's piece *La Passion de Simone*, which, of course, talks about Simone Weil. And I almost see there's a new trend here with Passions that are not focusing on Christ. Why do you think that's the case?

Lang:
I don't really know, actually.

Author:
Do you think you started it?

Lang:
I didn't start it. Because, you know, one of the pieces that I thought about was the Sylvano Bussotti piece, the *Passion According to Sade*, with its texts from Marquis de Sade. And so I didn't start it.

Author:
I don't know that piece. Who's the composer again, I'm sorry?

Lang:
His name is Bussotti. B-U-S-S-O-T-T-I. And this was a piece that I had on a record when I was 15 years old. But it's not a religious piece. I'm not totally sure why, but certainly…I'm probably the wrong person to ask. I don't really know, I wasn't really doing it because I thought I was part

of a trend of people, you know, transforming a religious form. It just seemed like the right format for me. And I don't really know about…I think the idea of anyone suffering, like in common parlance, people just say, oh, you know, the suffering is the passion. The Passion of Simone Weil is, you know, I wouldn't expect that to be a religious piece, right? I expected it to be a colloquial use of the word passion.

Author:
Yeah, when was the Bussotti piece written?

Lang:
Must be the 60s [author's note: 1965]? I don't know.

Author:
Yeah. So that really predates Daniel Pinkham's Passion of Judas. He wrote it in the 70s, taking on the story of Judas, who betrayed Jesus of course. And also, there's another piece called *Sankt Bach Passion* by Mauricio Kagel, it takes on the story of Bach, putting him as the protagonist of the passion. So there have been other non-Christocentric Passions before you but I really see it as a big increase of this kind of piece of this nature after you have written your piece.

Lang:
Well, maybe people liked my piece.

Author:
Yeah, we do. Yeah. So, this is really my last question. So, 14 years have passed since you wrote your piece and since the premiere. Do you see anything that changed? And do you see your piece has taken on new meanings with the pandemic, for example, and with all the social movements that we have seen in the past few years, like Adorno would say, a piece is not static, and we have new meanings that are added to it. Do you see that?

Lang:
I don't necessarily see the new meanings, but I think people do keep performing it and they keep adding little touches to it, you know, like, this is something to raise money for this cause, or we're going to stage this or we're doing this now to highlight the issues of children or…I mean, I definitely see that it opens itself up to being attached to other kinds of topics. I don't know that it's changed. But I've changed through this piece, which is, you know, I got the chance to write this piece about something that I believed very deeply and I was trying to figure out what I believed. And miraculously people were interested in that, and so I think the lesson for me was that this kind of self-examination is the way to go. It made a lot of these pieces for me change from being pieces of music to being more like essays. So a piece like *the national anthems* is kind of like an essay, or a piece like *love fail* or whatever is like an essay. And all of those pieces changed for me because of *the little match girl passion*, like, it all made it possible for me, because I did this thing that was really only aimed at me, I mean, it sounds selfish, but it was really just sort of aimed at me trying to figure out what I think, you know, how is it possible to make a religious message out of a Christian subject that I can embrace and the political messages were messages…Again, they're not to make other people feel things, but they were to make me feel something. And so, what I realized was something really powerful, which is that if I can be

honest with myself about what I am trying to accomplish in a piece, then it may actually be useful as a tool for other people to be honest with themselves. And that made me just want to write choral music for the rest of my life. You know, I mean, that made it a really powerful experience for me. And that is the thing that I think really changed in my life. I'd never really written a choral piece before. I've written you know, like…I had a couple of little, tiny things, right? And then this piece came, and since then, I've written hundreds of choral pieces since then, and I think I sort of fell in love with it because there's something that makes it so possible and call them music to tell an important and personal story in words and music. And that made it a place I really feel like it's important for me to be.

Author:
Yeah, please write more choral music. We would love that and perform more of your works.

Lang:
Thank you. I'm going to, so.

Author:
Thank you so much. It was a beautiful interview.

Appendix D

Transcript of Interview with Craig Hella Johnson (May 12, 2021)

Author:
Hello, Craig, thank you once again for agreeing to be interviewed and to talk about your wonderful piece *Considering Matthew Shepard* with me today. Previously, I have read the dissertation by Robert Ward, so I try not to repeat all the questions that he has already asked. And I know that you had two interviews with him. So I try to add on to what has been said so wonderfully by him in his dissertation. First of all, can you talk about your Lutheran background because I knew that you grew up in the Lutheran Church and your father was a Lutheran minister, and how that experience influenced your decision to turn to the Passion genre, which, you know, from the Baroque period onward has been such a Lutheran genre?

Johnson:
Well, let me know if you can't hear me, my voice is sort of very sore. So I might be a little quiet. My father was a Lutheran minister, and I had many uncles and cousins, lots of family members who were all Lutheran clergymen, it was an important part of our family life. And the Lutheran Church that I grew up in originally had been called the Lutheran Free Church. So this was the sort of brand of the church that was a little bit less intensely liturgical than some of the other branches, but still, plenty of liturgy there too. And eventually, the Lutheran Free Church became the American Lutheran Church, which then became the ELCA Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, that's kind of when they kept merging and merging and merging. So, I was a part of…growing up, it was the ALC. They call it the American Lutheran Church. And, you know, I was very immersed in…excuse me, sorry. Just a second.

Here we go. Yeah, I was very immersed in all of the services. I began playing as an organist at church, probably, I think in seventh or eighth grade it was. So I was playing all the services, all the hymnody, the liturgy that we did was very much in my body and my DNA, kind of in my regular practices, even as a young boy. Especially the hymns, you know, the hymns were just core to who I am still to this day, almost nothing moves me more than really good congregational singing of wonderful hymns. It wasn't until college that I really encountered the Passions because I grew up in northern Minnesota far away from any cultural center. They certainly weren't performing the Passions there. But I did have a wonderful organ teacher. We would drive down to Duluth, it was down for us because we were way up north, to Duluth for organ lessons every other week for about five years as a young guy. And I played a lot of Bach and played all the chorale preludes and played some of the big toccatas and fugues and fantasia prelude and fugues on the organ, the trio sonatas. And so, through that, I really got to know also so many of the chorales, so they were very much in me.

So then the experience that I think you might have read about from Robert Ward…for me when I was a freshman in college was very, very impactful. Yeah, I wasn't even planning to go to this performance everyone was talking about. It was *St. Matthew Passion* and I felt very much like a little kid from the sticks, you know, kind of from the boondocks, not a part of it at all. I didn't know enough was kind of that fear I had, and I sometimes now call that sort of museum fear and

I noticed a lot of people have that if they didn't grow up with music. And so, that was me, you know, I felt sort of intimidated, like I didn't know enough to be able to encounter the piece and I didn't want to be embarrassed. But I remember when everyone else was across campus over at the performance, it just got started. They were broadcasting on the radio, and you know, hearing that first magnificent movement of the *St. Matthew Passion*. It was impressive, but you know, it didn't totally move me yet. Until the chorale tune entered. And once the chorale tune enters: "Lamb of God most holy," I mean, I was just totally absorbed because that was what I know. And so I threw my jeans on, I went running across the campus, and I heard the rest of the Passion and then just became a huge part of my life. So I think I tell you that just because it's that act of Bach where he offers an invitation with that chorale, every time he places a chorale in the Passions, it's a touchpoint of familiarity. And it immediately says to that lay person, the parishioner me, come in, enter this experience, even though it's a grand structure, there is a place for you. And so, it was a huge, important metaphor for me too right away. Yeah, so I mean, I love those works, I got to experience them a little bit in college like that. And then of course, when I was with Helmuth Rilling, I sang quite a lot. After I had been with Rilling, then I started to perform them quite frequently, *St. Matthew* and *St. John*, and the B-minor Mass too of course, so they were just a part of my life, felt very important. And they felt very strangely accessible to me because of the hymn invitation and because of how I'd grown up. So when I think of Passions, it was just a very natural place for me to look, given where I'd come from. And yeah, I didn't feel it was anything I shouldn't touch or that it was too grand for me, because I had already been invited in, Bach said, this is for you, you're a part of this universe, you're a part of this experience of the world, you belong here. And so I felt that very much.

But it was important to me then to translate that and pay it forward. And so that just became a natural part of *Considering Matthew Shepard* too is that…You know, the oratorio, even, it's a long piece by many people's standards, the people I grew up with aren't accustomed to going to choral concerts that last 105 minutes or whatever. And yet, I wanted to somehow make this large-form choral work be something that could be accessible and available to them. And this is really important to me. And therefore, I mean, I went to the Passion right away, but I decided against calling it a Passion. I always thought, you know, after Matt died, I thought, you know, maybe someday I'll read a Passion setting. And so that was always what was with me. But when I finally got around to doing this workshop performance, I called it *Considering Matthew Shepard* because it felt like it was very safe to do that. You know, that's all we're doing here is considering, but afterwards, and then I at first thought, well, I'm going to go complete this and call it a Passion. But I didn't need or want to, *Considering Matthew Shepard* was exactly what it was meant to be. And I kind of think that the intersection is the middle section, I mean, as being the Passion portion. But the Prologue and Epilogue aren't necessarily a part of that passion story, because I wanted to experience Matt before his passion story, if you will. And after I didn't want to leave it just with his dying. But there needs to be something that went beyond. Yeah, that was a difficult part for me to contemplate. But that was what my intention was.

Author:
Yeah, so you mentioned the influence of Bach, which has been a big part of your life and also your studies with Helmuth Rilling in Germany. So how does it feel to be writing a Passion in the footsteps of Bach, this great Baroque Master? I think about it in the same way as Brahms was trying to write a symphony after Beethoven. Do you feel the pressure of writing after such a great composer?

Johnson:
Yeah. Well, I didn't feel so much pressure from Bach because I never had any thought that I would ever compare myself to him. So it wasn't even a question. I had no concern in terms of needing to follow in Bach's footsteps. I think of him as sort of a great teacher, and he continued to teach me through this process. And so, he was always a teacher for me. But I never planned, you know, I don't…it wasn't my thought that I was going to set my work up against his in any way. So, in that way, it didn't feel stressful. The thing that felt much more stressful for me, Andrew, was Matthew's story. It's such an important and sacred story in our modern world, too. And I didn't want to screw it up, I wanted to hold the story in some way that felt deeply respectful of Matt, of his family. Yeah, that was what caused me stress and also just, frankly, writing up a 100-minute-long piece. You know, I've said a few times that there was my own coming out as a gay man. But then there was always also kind of a coming out as a composer, long into my conducting career. I've been writing things, but I hadn't been writing anything of this scope at all. And, you know, it's always a big risk. It's a hard thing to do to sustain 100, 105 minutes, and that was just more of my pressure of just writing itself, not necessarily that it was a Passion.

Author:
Yeah, it's obvious that Matthew Shepard's story is very impactful on your life. But I also think that there are many ways to pay tribute to him, you know, you can either do a concert, or you can write smaller pieces in honor of him. So, why a passion, especially, you mentioned your background as mostly a conductor, and also arranger, and it was the first time that you're writing in this scope, such a big concert-length piece. So why did you have that idea to write such a Passion…I shouldn't use Passion…such a concert-length work in tribute to him?

Johnson:
Yeah, I mean, Passion was what I had in mind too, so it's okay to use that. I think part of it is just because I know it so well. You write from what you know, and I was trying very much to write this in an authentic way. And so, yeah, I wasn't going to write something that was foreign to my nature and foreign to my experience. So, you know, this was true, both from this the Passion structure, because that it's been something I'd spent a lot of time with, and knew it, I understood it, I admire it, I love it, I'm held by it, I'm moved by it. And so, for me to write a tribute in the form of some kind of Passion just made very natural sense because it's what I grew up, especially from college on, really knowing. And also, when we say write from what you know, I'm also a gay man. And so, they're right there, the gay journey, is something that I know as well. And so, all of these were sort of opportunities for me just to be simply authentic, you know, because I wasn't writing from an unknown format or framework.

Author:
Do you see something special or universal about the Passion that carries this story of Matthew Shepard so well? Because, you know, when we talk about the traditional Passion it's all about Jesus and his suffering and his death. So, by replacing Jesus with an ordinary character, do you feel that it can be problematic sometimes? When I'm doing this research of these non-Christocentric Passion settings, I talked to some people, some of them are Christians, and they…one of the questions that they asked me was, "Can a Passion be really not about Christ?" So, you know, taking this form, which is traditionally Christian, but you are telling a completely

different story. So, do you think that it can be problematic or subversive somehow to the Christian culture, and whether you see a more universal quality in the Passion that can…it's not just about Jesus, but there's a more humanistic side to it, which is relevant to many social issues in the 21st century as well?

Johnson:
Yeah. You know, that's just my take for sure. That it's…Yeah, I felt...no, even though I'm aware that there are people who sort of say that the Passion is just a Christian thing, based on Jesus Christ, the man who lived and worked, and, you know, that's not how I experienced it. That's not how I experienced the Christian Gospels. That's not how I experienced Christ and I speak of both Jesus the man, but also Christ, the universal Christ that transcends from that, you know, this is something that's very similar to me that I very much brought with me into CMS, we can talk about the historical Jesus who lived for 33 years. But when we talk about the story of the cosmic Christ…I sometimes use that phrase, that is the story of the Christ, which is sort of the divine itself, you know, not just the son of the divine, but the divine itself, it's the Christ that enters this world. In a broader sense, that is the story that lives on today. I don't think these Passion settings and that the great admiration is just only for a 33-year-old man. There is something much broader. And then I think my own spiritual approach, you might say theology even, is such that I believe that's true, potentially, for every one of us. I mean, that's the whole point of Jesus, that's the whole point of the Christ, the crucified Christ. You know, it is, God became man, the divine enters the human. And so, the place, Andrew, that place, most sort of prominently in CMS, is the difference between Matthew and Matt, sort of Matt is really sort of the historical Matt, we might say, if we want to compare that, you know, the guy who lived to be aged 21. And Matthew would correspond to the larger universal self. And the moment that in CMS Matt expresses himself as Matthew as the larger unit is when he sings from the fence "In Need of Breath." So that, to me, is the moment of transformation, I believe. I'll have to go back and look what made the score or not, but I believe we start changing the naming there to where it's Matthew used to be Matt, that starts to happen in the middle of the piece. And that all came from Judy Shepard when I asked her once, how she did this, this work…of this kind of sorrowful work to carry on, it just blew me away. They take such a personal grief and do that work in the world over and over and over again. And she said, "Well, Matt was our son, that's our personal loss, that we grieve every day." Yeah, she said, "you know, Matthew Shepard, that's the name you know, that's the name the world knows, we do that work." So they had that same sense to me of sort of a larger story, and the Hafiz poem that I set for "In Need of Breath," you know, refers quite literally to that it was just a gift dropped in my lap one day when I found it. I'm gonna go there. Now just read that to you. Well, you think I would know where it is by now. So, in Hafiz's poem: "When the Nameless One…both Nameless and One are capitalized…when the Nameless One debuts again ten thousand facets of my being unfurl wings and reveal such a radiance inside." And here's where that story goes out into the world. Just like sort of the Christ story that leaves after the point of Jesus Himself…death. "I enter a realm divine; I too begin (here it is) to sweetly cast light. Like a lamp," you know, you think like a lamp unto the world…"Like a lamp, I cast light through the streets of this World." So that's where that all happens. That's that moment of transformation. And so, it's a very meaningful thing to place this inside of Passion for these very reasons.

I've never sort of bothered myself too much if someone's theology says no Passions, not that…I

guess it's one of those things. If I could try and think about it and be more profound and articulate…but the thing is, life is too short. And this is not my perspective. And so, I totally respect that someone might view it in the way that you just described. And I've heard that, of course many times before. It's just not my experience. And it's not my reading of what this can be. And who says so anyway, everything we do when we're creating new works is to take often old forms, and turn them on their side, create something new, you know, this is how we liberate forms so that they stay alive. And this is very much my hope and intention. I do want to say at this point that Judy and Dennis Shepherd have no interest in seeing Matt as a martyr. You know, they'll say very often, he was not Jesus, he was not Christ. They just don't associate with that. And I think they just think that's kind of beyond what they would want to perceive, and it's very humble, and they can't speak about this in ways that you and I can more objectively, you know, we're not family members. But there are, as you know, many aspects that just reflect kind of the iconic images. You know like Matthew on a fence sprawled out, it's no wonder people started to think of Matt in that martyr kind of way, similar to Christ, you know, spread out on the cross. Yeah, there were so many visual images that were just, you know, the fact that he was connected to the wood on the fence looked like he was bearing the burden of that fence just like the cross. And so, as family members, they're very clear about that. And so, when I speak, out of respect, I don't go there. But I mean, I always clarify that that's their expressed intent. And for me, I think it's just multi-layered. And I think one can experience this piece without ever having heard of what a Passion is, and it's just fine. You know, for me, it just gave me a place to put my feet down, and a place to, you know, it gave me a structure and a framework that had meaning for me. And so, it fueled my work. But, you know, if nobody knows what a Passion is, I don't think they miss all that, they might just like to learn to see what some of these aspects are, but it's not important for the experience of the piece.

Author:
Let's talk about the music a little bit more. So, you start this work with a quotation of Bach's Prelude in C. And I know that you have this experience of improvisation, both at church on the organ and also on the piano as well. How [does] that experience of improvisation influence all the quotations that you decided to use? In this work, not only in the beginning of the Bach, but also quotations of Benjamin Britten and also allusions to older music, like chants of Hildegard. So it seems that there is an improvising quality in those quotations and then with the new music that grows out from those quotations, so it's kind of spontaneous in a way.

Johnson:
Yeah, the Bach, I just have passed over, the Prelude in C. I think you mentioned some of this even in your question that you sent to me. The key of C major is really important. It's an open key, like on our equally tempered piano, the intervals, the thirds are more spacious than they are if it were, say C minor or something. So, I wanted that spacious quality, I wanted C major, that particular Prelude that goes through the circle of fifths. This was a very beautiful way of…and also because it's so well known and you address it's maybe simplicity in the sense that maybe a person could feel like oh, even I could play that, I could mean this. So it immediately serves a lot of purposes for me, with the piece, but very much also it is meant to represent the…the soul at peace, the soul at home, you know a sense of peace and exquisiteness and quiet, deep ecstasy…being at home. And it's interrupted. It's more visionary at that point. That I interrupted then to begin the rest of the piece because in our separation from one another, that total feeling of

the soul being at home is not something we experience in our lives day to day, generally. And it's something many aspire to experience and to seek to experience that, but it's not our normal experience. And so, it's meant to be interrupted. And that's when we begin the piece.

Improvisation, I think, plays a role here at the core. I know myself to be freedom, freedom itself, I think I believe in my experience, that's what you are too, and that every human being is at their core identity, freedom of being. And so, improvisation is important in that way too. Because, you know, there are some traditions that I certainly break here. Certainly, with a number of different types of music for one thing, you know, I traveled between this and that, that chant to the choral polyphony to the kind of bluesy folky thing to the Broadway-ish thing. You know, from a certain perspective, you could say that breaks certain rules or certain practices, and that was intentional. And it's meant to paint that picture of a very broad tent of extraordinary inclusivity. You know, by no means does it extend to all genres and styles, of course, but enough styles, enough approaches that, I hope end up feeling cohesive, also, that we can get that picture of all of us. One fabric, one framework, one love, and yet diverse as all of these musical styles, diverse as we.. beyond our imagination…here's a way in which I had all those references that you mentioned…that Britten and Hildegard and Gregorian chant and lots of Bach references and Bach cantatas and many other things that were just sort of at my fingertips, they're part of the kind of Rolodex of my life experience. And so, I think that improvisational aspects of my own life and expression did make use of that, and I think, express some of the inclusivity, as well as the freedom that I spoke of too. And that was important to me.

Yeah, I also wanted to anchor this piece, I think because I had a sense of awareness that there could be voices that say, a Passion is not this, a Passion is that it needs to be Christ, or an oratorio does not include all these styles, or you know, any number of things that with some of the approaches, especially like, it's kind of subversive in a way to include popular music, to include musical theater, I think that is challenging for some people who might be more purists with certain strains of choral repertoire. And I wanted to move about that freely, but also respectfully to sort of…I didn't want someone who had an initial take, like maybe right off the experience or the piece, because they heard a strand that might sound like pop music, or it might sound like folk music, or might sound like blues, or Broadway, you know, I wanted this piece to be anchored in…I spent my life in choral literature and repertoire, I'm devoted to it. And so, it was important to me to anchor the whole piece so that it didn't let those people off the hook that easily. You know, I'm like, sorry, you need to confront this too. And that's part of what I was trying to do.

Author:
Can you talk about your compositional procedure? Do you have the new music first? Or do you have the quotation in mind, and you decide to use the quotation and then you write something that emerges from those quotations? Like, what is the priority?

Johnson:
Yeah, I think it's both for me, Andrew. Yeah. I mean, what had to come first was the arc of the story. And, you know, I knew from the beginning, from very early on, that I wanted to have the fence as some kind of character or some kind of figure. And so, I was sorting out how to do that. I had all kinds of ideas or sketching. But I wanted it to be a role of witness. And it was a few months after I had been really sketching some of those things that I was so delighted to discover

Lesléa's poems. Lesléa Newman and the *October Mourning*, and those six fence poems that she has, so…But yeah, you know, I had some fun with Michael Dennis Brown. There're a lot of librettists who will write words into music. But he was really open to that, and I loved it because I probably more intuitively started with music first. And then and then the idea that is inherent in that. So, you know, I would send him "All of Us"…I was thinking of Handel a lot in that "All of Us" chorus for a while even though it's really more loosely based in a Bach cantata with the three oboes and the three sopranos and it's just a bit all mixed up. I sent him some music for that opening, and then I sent him all kinds of words, you know, like, these are the concepts I want, this is what I'm going for. So I had a very strong feeling that this is the end result here, I want to get to this, it's the way I'd like to travel, these are some keywords and lots and lots and lots of phrases that I would send him. And he was always so great at taking my piles of things and shaping them beautifully. Within the music, he has a very beautiful sense of meter, natural and easy. And yeah, so that's probably how I did a little bit more, although there was plenty that came from the other way, I would say "I Am Like You" the words came first. I needed to write those words myself, I tried and tried and tried and tried to find something. I knew exactly what I wanted to achieve in that movement. But I just couldn't find a text and so I felt really, you know, very much backed into a corner from the creative process. Like you have to write this one, Craig, because it's very personal.

Author:
Your musical styles always strike me as very accessible, they're very easy to listen to. Even for someone with limited musical training, they can still appreciate your music. And when you start your piece with a quotation by Bach, this is such a popular, such a famous piece that maybe non-musicians will also know. So do you think that it creates a sense of familiarity or nostalgia that kind of invites everyone, musicians and non-musicians alike, into the story or into the greater message that you're trying to say in your piece?

Johnson:
Yeah, I mean, it's an interesting connection, you know, I want to connect with the listener. The whole piece, as you know, I mean, it's very much about union and finding our way back to our sense of being united, to being in union with one another, it's our natural state. And so, it's very natural for me then to say that for this piece, I wanted to do everything I could to make it as available to as many people as possible. So, this is the real direct intention. I wanted those people in the audience who never have heard the word oratorio, or Passion in this sense, or don't go to choral concerts, don't go to classical concerts, I wanted them to find a way in. Somehow it was important because I want to connect with them as audience members, I mean that quite personally, my heart wants to feel in connection with others. And so that motivated these aspects of my writing for sure.

Author:
I think one of the most impressive manifestations of that communal, bringing together everyone kind of quality, is in the recitation movements where you label the part as "one voice" without an assigned gender or assigned voice type to those recitations. Whereas in the traditional Passion, that part is usually given to the tenor with this Evangelist part. So that now kind of everyone has a part in that storytelling, and you are not assigning all the recitation to one person, but different people from the choir can also participate in that. So I think that's a really good manifestation of

like…this is a story for all people.

Johnson:
Yeah, no, that's right, Andrew, you're exactly right about that. And not just the recitations though, but it's all the parts too that, you know, that Matt can be played by two or three different people, essentially, Judy could be…the idea is to say, we're all telling the story, the story's unfolding through our lives. And we can experience it, we can also tell it. But I am Judy, and I am Matt. And I am Aaron, and I am Russell, I am all these things. I have aspects of them all in my own human experience, you could even say in my heart, in my intentions, good or evil, or anywhere in between. So that was a real intended message too, that the characters themselves could be played by any one of us. And then because of that, when it gets to Aaron and Russell, it forces the listeners to suddenly have to say, "am I like you in any way?" You know, I mean, "do I contribute to this sense of separateness that is so rampant in our world, this sense of projecting onto the other all that is unresolved in ourselves?"

Author:
Yeah, I'm glad you brought up that movement "I Am Like You." We often talk about "us" in this piece, [as in] "All of Us." And it's such an appealing idea to bring all people together. But there's also a very introverted and intimate aspect in your piece, when you talk about a generic "I" it can be anyone. So you're not focusing on the historical question of who killed Matthew, but you're holding basically everyone accountable for what has happened and how we can move on from that tragedy. So there's a kind of transformation of this generic "I" to "all" at the very end, right, this reconciliation?

Johnson:
Yeah, exactly. Right. And it starts with this "I" for sure. I mean, that's the only way that the transformation is really meaningful, is if people get that. It starts here first. You know, not unlike "let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me." But so too the conflict began with me and the betrayal. You know, when we chant, whisper-chant, in the big fire movement "we all betrayed the ancient heart, we all betray the ancient heart…." That's what this gets at every one of us, betrays the ancient heart, forgets who we are, what is our essential divine nature.

Author:
Can you talk about your experience of performing CMS at the interment service of Matthew in 2018, at the National Cathedral, because that was a very moving moment, I am sure for you, as well as the rest of the group as well. And to me, that was the first time I actually listened to your work. I knew your work before that, in 2016. I was studying at the University of Cincinnati at the time, and of course, you work in Cincinnati. So I knew the piece, but the first time I actually listened to it was at that broadcast of the interment service. It really moved me a lot and I really dived deeper into the music and now I'm doing research on it. So it really is a fascinating experience for me. Can you talk about that experience for you and what it means for you?

Johnson:
Yeah. Excuse me…it was a very special day. One of my favorite days ever. Yeah. I'll say a few things. But really, it's the kind of a day that you can't speak about because it's so special. I mean, it goes too deep. It's beyond what I can really say, it kind of trivializes it. But it was just a

tremendous honor that they asked us to be a part of that. I mean, it just blew me away. When you say personally, also it was because…it's just the very thing that you spoke about earlier, there was a way in which somebody says you can't write a Passion unless it's about Jesus Christ. You know, that might be an academic comment, I suppose, in one context, but that's not too far away from something that I heard when I was growing up when…a dedicated church person I'd known for a long time, and I loved the church growing up, but this person had said to me when he found out I was gay and had accepted this about myself, he said, well, you will forever be outside the fold of grace. And it's a pretty bold thing to say, and, you know, pretty terrible thing to say, I never forgot it. Yet I knew it wasn't true, it still hurts when people say and do hurtful things, it still stings, and it carries a residual effect. And so, to be in that service that day, and to have my Passion, which was, I suppose, in that person that you kind of quoted earlier, in their eyes kind of a secular passion or something, to have that be called on as part of the actual liturgy of this service was beyond extraordinary, just amazing. And I think also, I mean, who knows, I guess I might have been a church musician. I don't really know, but had I not kind of felt shunned by the church itself…But I, as a kid that church is my playground, I used to run up and down the aisles. And I mean, the church was that for me, my dad was preaching a lot about grace. And I knew it kind of as this literal, physical and spiritual playground, and it was a happy place. And then there was a day when that innocence certainly died. And I had to see it differently and experience it differently. And so having gone through that and to have the leaders at the National Cathedral say we'd love for you to really take a huge role in planning this service, to me was…it's hard to speak about it, it's really touching.

Another aspect, Andrew, that was very amazing and beautiful was I had gotten to know Dennis and Judy quite well. That day, they were different. I had not…I didn't have a sense of sort of the impact that it had on them to never feel like they could lay their son's ashes to rest, that anywhere they might do that might be a place of desecration, like, not only was he not safe in life, but his remains because he was such a world-known figure, his remains were not safe. I don't think they were thinking about that every day, but it was kind of a low-grade anxiety that was always with them. And that they were there. And there, they knew that his ashes would be safe in this holy place. You know, they would be physically safe and protected with…behind locked gates, but also emotionally and spiritually safe. Yeah, there were a lot of fun things about that day, I remember looking at the aisle when we were kind of doing some music that served as a kind of a processional. And Judy was coming in, right behind was Dennis carrying her purse, you know, it was just like all these beautiful sort of gender roles too. And we sang about a 40-minute sort of mini concert afterwards while they went down to the columbarium. And we were invited to do that. And I remember it was kind of wild because, in some ways, you could say it was maybe a solemn day. But the truth is, I think all of us there just felt like we were absolutely in heaven, just in whatever the literal sense of that is for people, but there was so much joy. And when we were singing that last half-hour, it felt like for those two hours we had crossed over and there was no more separation. Everyone's intention and spirit felt aligned in that room. And then I even had a fun…got to have a fun 20-minute conversation with Katie Couric because she's so invested in Matthew Shepard's family and in the story. She was one of the first people to carry the story when she'd been on the Today Show, and I mean, it was just a very special day, and I'll never forget it, it's always in my heart.

Author:
Such a wonderful day, first time hearing from you, yes, very emotional. And, you know, for me, as a non-American, I didn't know who Matthew Shepard was before hearing your piece. Your piece really introduced him and his story to me, so I really have to thank you for that. Otherwise, I would not have known this person. His story is not being discussed enough in the rest of the world. For some reason, I have never heard of this person before. So, your music, it's really not only the music, but it really has a bigger impact on the rest of us, in that it really talks about an important event in US history. I really thank you for that. So, five years have passed since the premiere, and you have had a lot more performances since then, do you see new meanings in your piece that emerged? In the current pandemic, and also all the social movements of our time, do you see that there are certain new meanings that grew out from your work? Or, should we receive or perceive your work differently, in light of all these that are happening around us?

Johnson:
Well, there was a large part inside of me that I thought I was writing something that was going to be a memorial piece, and a tribute piece as you said, something we might do to honor a historical figure. Never in a million years do I realize things would get as bad as they have gotten. For example, with hate crimes, from about the time the Trump presidency began, for the last handful of years, we've seen hate crime spiked, and the toxicity in language in the culture has intensified and become so obscene and so hurtful. It's almost like backsliding. And so, it's strange to me that all of a sudden, these messages are so relevant again. I mean, they never stopped being relevant. But it's, I'm sorry about that. And yet, I would say, that's one thing that has been an observation. And I do think there's something rather universal about Matt's story that ultimately people get and can apply to, you know, hate crimes and hateful acts, and separating…speech that separates, if you know, involves Black Americans, or Asian Americans, or trans, or anyone who could be considered slightly different, or other than that basic white, Anglo model, and straight and all that.

But I think one of the things that's really interesting to me though is that this piece has not just grown as a telling of Matt's story because I always said from the beginning that I'm sort of engaging Matt's story, it's at the centerpiece of all this, of course, and yet the piece is really about us, it's about you and me even more, and that was my intention. And I'm so touched that that people get that when anyone who spends time with the piece starts to feel that expansive thing and that expansive space and a very broadening of sort of the borders of the heart and I know when we perform it, each time we do it, it's just amazing to me because people will say, "don't you get tired from it?" because it must be emotionally exhausting. And you know, there are still a lot of tears that get shed as we do it, but never do we leave a performance not feeling really renewed, and not feeling encouraged, not feeling hope. That's been something that has grown, Andrew, I think over these years, it just continues to break the envelope open and be more about hoping, love, more inclusive. And so, I feel like, well beyond just what I put down on paper, I think there's some kind of spirit that's at the center of this piece that is influenced and shaped by all the people who have touched it. Like the co-creators, the performers, the dissertation writers, the conductors, the singers, I feel like it carries a piece of each of their contributions. And I know that sounds very lofty and maybe, I don't know, like, not true, possibly even. But I do find it to be my actual lived experience of it. And I think there's the movement of love in it that moves me very much. Because, as you know, I think probably from

reading things that my operating question was that simple one, which was just, you know, my sincere question for writing this piece, in a world where such dark and confounding things happen that I do not understand, in the midst of this world, that's such a confounding world, is love anywhere to be found at the core of this? I mean, sincerely, authentically. And that was like Rilke says, you ask the questions, and then you live your way into the answers. And so, for me writing this piece was trying to live my way into the answer, and it's ongoing. So I'm still doing it today with you.

Author:
Thank you so much.

Appendix E

Transcript of Interview with Jean-Sébastien Vallée (May 25, 2020)

Author:
Thank you for talking to me. Let's talk about *the little match girl passion*, particularly the A&P performance last year for the candlelight vigil. I'm interested to know why *the little match girl passion* was appropriate for this occasion of a candlelight vigil for the homeless. Why do you think it's relevant?

Vallée:
I think we can look at it in different ways. The actual story, the actual tale, the little match girl, has a natural kind of flow, of hope, and kind of pain at the same time. So, the whole story of the original tale puts in this list of contrasting elements. The young girl is dying on the street, but she dies with a smile on her face because she has hope, so there's this conflict between positive elements and more dramatic ones. In the context of David Lang's setting, he puts that as a Passion. I mean the whole story is pretty much there. Most of the little match girl tale is put in the story in the way David Lang puts it, but by adding the Passion component on it adds an extra layer with Passion being the word for pain or suffering, which would kind of cast that light towards the suffering on this person. But also, at the same time, the story itself has a lot of hope because this little girl sees all those memories and that hope for something else to happen. And even when it ends, it ends with a smile on her face, meaning that the end is not just that, it's actually still hope. And she died with the hope of things to change and things to be better. So, in that context, to me, it was easy to connect that with homelessness.

Although I have to tell you when I put this project together, it all came in pieces. It all started several months before with the desire to create something, a place where music would drive what we tried to say, as opposed to often in churches, the music is there to support whatever someone else wants to say. Like we would have on Ascension Sunday or Easter. So, we use the music to support something that's already there, but I wanted in that case, and that's what we did this year, and we hope to do year after year, to use the actual music as a driving force in what we try to express. So I wanted to have something. That was really abstract. I wanted to have something that is anchored in social justice and anchored in something that the singers, who are, you know…we talk a lot, we have time together, and we're all kind of concerned about different things that are often not musical. In Montreal, you know, every time you walk out of a Metro station, you would encounter homeless people and homelessness. And some of us know how to deal with that, some of us don't know how to deal with that. I could find my own lack of comfort with that, not knowing what to say, what to think. And then we had one singer that you may not have met, his name was Clayton. He started the previous year a program where he was raising socks and was asking people to give socks. And he was giving those dry socks to homeless people who he would see on the street. And he became friends with some of them. And he was posting things on Facebook about that. And Clayton sang in that performance. And when I saw his experience and read more about what he did, it made sense to me that, for the first project, this would be a good topic because it was really present. It felt to me that was something that we will all see day after day. And some of us…we see it so much that we don't see it anymore. We

see it every day, but we ignore it so much that it's there, we know it's there, we just ignore that.

So, then I figured what kind of music…and clearly *the little match girl passion*, even though it's not directly associated with that. But the fact of what I said before, the kind of suffering mixed with hope and in the case of David Lang in a setting where he kind of cast a specific light on it, where there's this pain of that little girl, and there's also a kind of third part that we may have talked about before, but whereby using the term Passion with any kind of story, I think you put the life when one figure takes the blame for everyone else. One person represents everyone else. And that's what the Passion does somehow. This little girl being the symbol of what in a Passion would be Christ. Jesus becomes her. So she becomes the symbol for anybody who's experiencing a specific kind of suffering. So that was kind of a third layer. There was this contrast of hope and pain and that light because of the Passion, that person may be the symbol of everybody sharing that Passion. She has this symbol. So that felt pretty universal. It felt like the perfect piece for that, although I knew that this feeds by itself, like most pieces of music.

If you want to do something meaningful that would connect people, the music itself is not enough. Somehow you need to either put other pieces around it or put some spoken words somehow to create the right context., so people who come in would be able to engage with what we tried to say. So that's why we had different readings put as part of that vigil and other musical pieces to kind of set the mood and also kind of ease. We had more music before *the little match girl passion* because I found we had to set the mood instead of…starting right with it was too much when you have to create the right mindset and I need a little bit to get out of it. But when it ends, I think even if the idea of the little girl dying with a smile on her face and that hopeful vibe is there, the way the music ends and almost with a question mark. It ends with that, you don't know how to react, which is good, but I thought I needed to kind of emphasize the hope after. So that's why we had those two extra pieces at the end. And the readings that were read were poems written by homeless people in Montreal. So that was discovered just a few weeks before, I had no clue, we had an art center for homelessness in Montreal, I had no clue. And then, we discovered that they have published books and that all came together. So that was really a work-in-progress for it to make sense. But in the end, I think it mostly made sense. And the only part that after reflection on the video that was missing, I think, was a bit more words at the beginning to put things better in context. I think the risk with any kind of social justice concerts or performance is to put people where we feel we, from a point of privilege, talk about the value of other people and that's what we try to avoid. So I think sometimes it takes a little bit more context at the beginning and that's what maybe I thought lacked when we did that specific piece. I feel it could look a little bit like privileged people are talking about something that affects other people.

Author:
Right, I have seen the performance on YouTube. I think it's a really moving experience. And you actually have talked a lot about the event itself that answers my following questions already, so I would just let the interview go in a more natural way. I remember the concert started with the *Ubi caritas* chant as the singers processed on the stage. And then it leads to the Ola Gjeilo piece, *Ubi caritas,* and also the concert ends with you singing the incipit of the *Ubi caritas* and then they join in. And then it ends with *Set Me as a Seal*. I think that's a really good idea because to include a chant as a message that is not very explicit, like you're talking about something that

you could have done better is, you know, put something into more contexts. But I think the beauty of it is also to not make it super specific and a little bit more general about love and compassion. So I think the chant really connects everything together in a very beautiful way. Talk to me about what message you want the people to get away from this event, because obviously there's something greater than the music itself that you want the people to receive. It's always the message behind the presentation of the music that is so important. So, what is the core consideration or message that you want the people or the listener themselves to get away with?

Vallée:
I think that may be almost surprising, but I think the plan was to have nothing specific to offer. I didn't expect people to get away with, you know, take something home with them necessarily. The fear was to make it a kind of a place where we teach or where we tell people what they should feel or what they should think. And the way I came up with the title of the vigil, I think like a vigil, it means keeping watch, it's gathering and keeping watch together. And when we keep watch, we are not doing any action except being there together. So I think the plan was to create this space where we can all be in a space together and let ourselves be kind of inspired by the music or by whatever is happening on a specific topic, but create our own reflection. I didn't want it to be "go out and help people" or "go out and save the world" or "if you don't do that, you should feel bad." No, it was not about telling people what to do, what to think. It was really just about "walk here together." We're not trying to seek actions, we're not in the action. We're actually in the opposite of action in the contemplation of the topic. And the music is powerful because it creates different feelings, like you would…You know, I have people who know the one movement where you have the little girl breathing and freezing to death, and some people got freaked out by that. They hated that part…as well as people who loved that. So, it was just meant to be…have your own reaction to that time. And hopefully when you go home, you feel somewhat changed, but we don't know how, and we don't tell you how we want you to change because we don't know. So that was a little bit how it goes.

Also, the whole process of designing it was different. Usually, most projects that way would be kind of created from the top down somehow where things are kind of decided, we'd come to the first rehearsal, we rehearsed it, and we'd do it. I mean, it was still done somehow from the top down in the sense that I had the idea with a few people and we worked it out, but then I really wanted to do this kind of gathering a few weeks before the same way we did this this year for the one we did this past February. And that's when we all gathered that…the question about how we should present ourselves came, such as "what should we wear?" and "should we enter the stage?" And that's what we all discussed. And that didn't come from anyone specifically. I think we said it should really feel organic. So that's why we wanted to start from the pews with the people and come up and come back there and dress in street clothes, but not in clothes that look like "oh, we're going to look like homeless or whatever…just what would you wear? Like individuals, what would you wear in front of people or with people? So there were no guidelines. There was just "wear what you wear…[be] who you are there. And the fact that we started from the congregation, from the pews and came and went back there, our hope was also not to make it feel like we are going to tell you something, we're all going to give you something, we're out there with you. And that's why the chant *Ubi caritas* I think made sense and people were assigned different…they didn't all start singing together. I think they were starting a few singers and more kind of joining as they kind of moved forward. So, I mean, that was rehearsed, but I

was meant to give the impression to be organic and a little bit in that kind of organic matter where it's not the call to action.

So the short answer to all that was I didn't, or we didn't, want to have anything specific to get. We wanted to create a safe place of reflection on a topic because we all felt even with what we gathered a few weeks before, we all stood at very different places with this topic. Some people have been working with homeless people, have been dealing with homelessness, some people had a family member who struggled with that, and some people that, like me, had never really experienced it, to have no one close to me who dealt with homelessness in any way. And my own way was not…I don't feel really comfortable when I walk on the street, I don't know how to act, I don't know what to think. So I did the research, I tried not to understand, but it felt that if it were to try to present ourselves as experts in how to deal with the situation, that would be a fraud because we were all at different places, which is where we want it to take people, and from there create a space where we just think about it, not about action, but about how it is for us, and hopefully when people deal with the situation in the future, that at least is the start of the reflection on that topic.

Author:
Yeah, I think it's a really good idea because the danger of choral music and music-making, I think, is to really be in a bubble like the university or the church where we are more privileged people or more educated people making music, just maybe to our own enjoyment, we try to sing about situations in the world, but we are actually not making any real changes to the world. So I really like the idea of creating a space for reflection and to really change people's mind rather than a call to action, a wonderful idea. But I also liked the idea of having pieces of clothing at the end at the narthex where people could pick up to really give to people that they see when they walk out of the church. So that's something substantial or practical to help those who are really homeless on the streets.

Vallée:
And the beauty of that, just on that topic, I think that's…because this idea of having a piece of clothing at the end was not decided, it kind of all happened. It all came…And that's where I think by creating a space, even before it…you know, we actually performed it just by talking about it. It kind of drew different forces together…that it drew that youth group who was collecting clothing for a different reason to say, hey, we'd like to do that with you. And then that homeless center, also that art center…They have paintings, and we could explore that…I don't know if you went up there, but the lobby had several paintings, framed and made by homeless people at that art center and people could see them. But that all came like about 48 hours before…it all kind of just came. So I think sometimes when you create the right space, things just happen in a kind of magical way, but I would not have, I mean…we don't think of it.

Author:
I'm glad that you talked about the space that is in a church setting. It's not the traditional venue that one would expect to go for a concert. So, I'm sure that has some influences on the reception of the concert and the pieces, as well as the overall experience for those in the space because of the venue and its association with the church and religion. And I think it's a special occasion because it's also an interdisciplinary event. It doesn't have any particular religion and it really

invites all people to come together, whether they have a religion or not. So can you talk to me a little bit about the performance venue and what is the advantage of having such an event in the church and do you think it's a little bit intimidating for people who don't usually go to church to go to church without knowing that it's actually an interdisciplinary event, you don't have to be a Christian to come here, it's open for all? Can you talk to me a little bit about the advantages or disadvantages?

Vallée:
Yeah, I think one of the challenges is to make a difference between religion and the space within the church. I think there's a lot of people that have different feelings with one of them or both of them, but churches as a space may have a different meaning. That's what religion means to some people. For some people, it's fully kind of connected that there's no church without religion, but for some people, and I'm one of them, my religious views are different that my appreciation for the church being a building or…but more than a building, [it's] a specific space, I think, space of beauty, space where sound, visual, smell, and the experience is so unique. And I think that does exist for a lot of people where they would travel and they would love to visit churches, visit cathedrals. And not just because it's a nice building, because it has something [to do with] the beauty of the space, the sound of the space…So that's something. So I think using the space as a way to create this kind of a moment of reflection is perfect because it has a sense of grandeur that makes it a bit ethereal. It's not like a small building, it's different from your house. It has something that connects you with something grand because this space is vast. The sound flows a specific way. So I think one of the advantages of that is…if it's a place where anybody could come in and feel connected to something that is not everyday life, it's kind of something that you just…because you're in that space.

The downside is for many people…and depending on where you are in the world, people have different connection with the church where the church building that's associated with organized religion and organized religion is associated with…for some people trauma or not being accepted or being controlled or being…and for some people being on the street, it may be for the exact reason of that church because of the family being religious and that accepting a specific lifestyle, accepting certain things and being there. On the other side, churches are having homeless shelters associated with a specific church and the ministry of specific churches. So I think everybody has a different connection, especially here in Quebec and Montreal where, you know…Quebec is probably one of the provinces in Canada where religion is the least appreciated or the way it's perceived mostly as the thing that through history or it, for the past hundred years, has been oppressing people. This is not really kind of something that is seen as positive, although I think the appreciation of the space as being not just a nice space, but a connection to something grand and beyond human understanding is. So I think that's in this light that the church building is a great space. And that's also a good occasion for organized religion such as A&P as a church to help connect the dots by not making it too "churchy." And that's a term that I used with the pastoral staff, not so much when we did the one on *the little match girl passion*, but this year we did one on suicide [prevention]. And I told the pastoral staff saying that if possible, don't make whatever you say "churchy." I think if you make it too "churchy," it's going to be not well received…it's going to go against…They didn't fully appreciate it. And they understood what I meant. I'm not sure if they liked my use of that, but I think that's an occasion for also the church to welcome people and say something that can be said without making it

"churchy," whatever that means. I had in mind a little bit what that meant, but it may mean something different for everybody.

Author:
Yes. So we are living in a very strange time, of course, under COVID-19 and that we are not able to meet in person. And I think the idea behind the candlelight vigil is a very innovative idea of presenting choral music in the 21st century. It's a very innovative concept of how to put together a program in the 21st century. So, does it inspire you? Does the experience inspire you in any way of how choral music or how a program of choral music can be in the 21st century, especially under this COVID-19 situation? Do you envision an "online vigil" for next year if, touchwood, the pandemic is still here next year? Do you take away anything from your experience of the vigil these two years and how does it inspire you on what choral music is like [in] the future?

Vallée:
Clearly the use of space has always been something that I've been interested in…how we use a space, not just to convey the sound, but the visual, but also the kind of physical experience. When you're in a church with candles, it has a smell, it has a feeling in it. So, all of that, to me, has been part of trying to build the experience, trying to make people be in different formations in a given space. And churches, especially with the nature of the space, have so many options of how we can put people in, which is really perfect in the time we're in where because of social distancing, we have to create space. Therefore, we have to use space in different ways. So clearly we all made a bunch of plans for how we can do singing in the church like A&P using space in different ways, but not just space for the sake of it, but space for the…that would become part of the music or the experience. So it becomes a little bit what we tried to show.

Then the challenge is, and that's where I can kind of add is…I don't know how it's received when it's seen at home as a live stream because the experience is so different, right? And there's also a sense of being more and more tired of screens. Like I feel now, after two and a half months, I'm done with this screen thing myself. So even if you present something really well done, will people be able to receive it [and] for how long? So, I'm thinking, and I'm not there yet, but I think the next step is to think about how we can move the experience. If we cannot have an audience, how do we move it outside of only the screen? Is there a way to do it? I don't have the answer yet, not clearly. I think the answer of why we sing needs to lie in the fact that singing is powerful and this kind of program we've talked about is powerful in its own way. It's not, as you mentioned, singing because we like it or singing for our own enjoyment, which is there, I mean, and we're always going to like doing it, but it needs to have a bigger purpose for it to be worth working so hard to preserve in some ways. But I think my own kind of practical thinking is when small audiences will be possible, even if it's just a hundred people in a large space, then using the space should become part of the artistic experience, how we give a little bit of space between the listeners and between the singers where this kind of isolation within a common space become part of what we try to share with the listeners. That should be a part of what we do.

Author:
I'm sure you have already been thinking about the next vigil if this pandemic didn't happen. So, what is in your mind for the next vigil? You had a vigil for homeless people last year, and this

year, we had the mental health and suicide prevention. So, what is the idea or concept for the next vigil?

Vallée:
The next one? The plan for the next one, if it happens as planned, was to do with…hold on, let me just think…it feels like a long time ago…so was on that theme of displacement and being a pilgrim in the 21st century. So, what does it mean? But I wanted to have something less dramatic or more positive. I wanted to look at them at the meaning of being a pilgrim or being displaced, but always kind of on the move, but in a not only kind of dramatic way, but also in a positive way. So the piece that was to be performed, we want to do…I'm forgetting the title…Talbot's piece, *Path of Miracles*, which talks about the journey of a pilgrim in four movements, and then have texts that would mostly be poems read by people who either immigrated or came or were displaced, but mostly came to Canada and Montreal, but also share a positive experience. How actually coming here was a good thing and how it was a shock, but [it] changed their life, and also look at what being a pilgrim means to the 21st century. So that was a bit of an abstract topic, but I thought it was relevant because…last [this] year, the one on suicide felt fine, but felt a bit hard to put together because everything is so sensitive that we can easily do kind of a misstep…you can like say something wrong, it'll be like, do more damage than good trying to talk about that topic. It gets pretty emotional and a bit hard. So I wanted to have something that would be a bit more general, but also kind of show the positive aspect of this situation that we…that's never been changing focus for centuries…displacement and being a pilgrim and changing has been part of human history and it has dramatic sides of it. We see it every month, you know, migrants, how dramatic that can be. But it also has positive stories there, it has life-changing stories, also showing this kind of balance there as part of the vigil and Talbot's piece *Path of Miracles*, I think showing the miracle of that journey worked well. And that text being in several languages, Latin, it has some English, some Spanish, I think, felt like a good piece and that's also a wonderful piece to perform.

Author:
Yeah, it's a very challenging piece. I sang it two years ago with the [Yale] Schola Cantorum. Yeah. We actually brought it to Spain. We sang it on the Camino, five locations, five churches in Spain and it was a wonderful experience.

Vallée:
We hope to be able to do it, and that now I'm thinking we could even do more with, you know…when you do a pilgrimage, you have this kind of loneliness that comes with that. And maybe we could tie it back with isolation that came in the current context of COVID-19…this sense of isolation from people. So maybe there's a way to use the same theme but twist it a bit.

Author:
Right. I mean, displacement is also a very timely topic, especially in the U. S. when we talk about immigration policies, and refugee situations internationally. You mentioned that the topic this year on suicide was more controversial, but I think it can also be controversial when you talk about something that is so timely and so sensitive, and especially in North America. But I think that the topic of displacement might be less like…it may be more distant for many of us because…maybe we don't know anyone who is a refugee or who has experienced displacement.

But, maybe mental health issues are more prominent or [we're] more easily affected with all the friends around us, like something that's really closer to us. So, in general, I think my question is, what is your vision about choral music and social justice? It was obvious that this candlelight vigil has a different theme every year, but it's also tied with themes of social justice. Do you envision this event to be something about social justice, and do you want to do a different topic every year so that people will be more aware about what's happening in society?

Vallée:
Yeah, the plan was to give a chance for the music to be the main drive of a specific evening, a specific concert or service. So the idea comes from the power of the music and the musical piece itself. So I think this lies in…by performing really meaningful music, so it's not so much, we're going to do any piece that talks about a specific topic to serve the topic, but the music itself. So that's what with *the little match girl passion* and with Talbot's *Paths of Miracles.* Last [this] year, with the one on suicide was a bit harder to find a masterwork, but it still had a wide range from the Britten, the Byrd to different things. I think the power of the music has to lead the reflection. So clearly social justice is there, but it's not music serving the topic, but to me, it's music creating a space where the topic can be explored by the listener. It's to create a moment of reflection, exploration, and being open to a topic. So it's a little bit different than if I sing something to support the cause, like it's not that I sing to support the cause…the music itself in that moment creates a space. But clearly, I wanted to do something that does not happen often. Most choirs, especially professional choirs, would do either. At A&P, we sing for a service where the music is a powerful moment of reflection, but mostly there to support what's around. If you do a concert concert, usually it has a more kind of performance, it's based on presenting works from the musical history where we are there to serve a purpose that is not necessarily reflection. It's there, oh, we have to present that piece, cause that's a wonderful piece that you need to discover, but it's not anchored into a moment of reflection. So that was to create something that is unique for the listeners, but mostly also for the performers. I think it kind of stemmed from a lot of conversations with singers that they…we want it to create something that's a bit unique in terms of experience, based on why we sing and why we do it. And I think both times, and this year even more than the previous year, the number of comments we got from the performers themselves, I'm not talking about what it meant to them and for…from people whom I would not have expected to hear, who wrote emails to the whole group of performers, sharing about their own personal experience with mental health or depression, it really brought something unique to the ensemble, which is usually never…I mean, that would never happen for bigger concerts necessarily, especially for professional performers, while you used to just do this every night. They learn the piece, they sing, and then they move on. It seems to be slightly unique. So I think there was also to engage people there. The reflection is not just for the listener. It's really for everybody who kind of works together.

Author:
Yes. I think this year's concert…I was very glad to be a part of it. It's a very moving experience for me as a performer as well. And it creates the space for me to reflect on something that maybe I don't normally think about. And in that moment, I'm really engaged with that thinking and the music really helped with that reflection. So yeah, it's a really good experience and I hope that we'll be able to do it next year if this pandemic is gone. Thank you very much for talking to me and I hope you are doing well, and stay healthy!

Appendix F

Notable Passion Settings Composed Between 2000 and 2019[157]

Year	Title	Composer (Dates and Nationality)	Female ID	BIPOC
2000	*Water Passion after St. Matthew*	Tan Dun (b. 1957, Chinese American)		POC
2000	*La Pasión según San Marcos*	Osvaldo Golijov (b. 1960, Argentine)		POC
2000	*Deus Passus*	Wolfgang Rihm (b. 1957, German)		
2000	*St. John Passion*	Sofia Gubaidulina (b. 1931, Russian)	x	
2000	*Passio et Resurrectio*	Sergio Rendine (b. 1954, Italian)		
2001	*Passia*	Hafliði Hallgrímsson (b. 1941, Icelandic)		
2001	*The Passion and Promise of Our Lord Jesus Christ**	Daniel Gawthrop (b. 1949, American)		
2002	***The Passion of Ramakrishna***	Philip Glass (b. 1937, American)		
2004	*Passion and Resurrection*	Jonathan Harvey (1939-2012, British)		
2004	*A Swedish St. Mark Passion*	Fredrik Sixten (b. 1962, Swedish)		
2005	*Passion and Resurrection*	Eriks Esenvalds (b. 1977, Latvian)		
2006	*Passion and Death of Jesus Christ according to the Gospels*	Scott R. King (b. 1955, American)		
2006	***La Passion de Simone***	Kaija Saariaho (b. 1952, Finnish)	x	
2006	*The Passion of Jesus of Nazareth**	Francis Grier (b. 1955, British)		
2007	*St. John Passion*	James MacMillan (b. 1959, British)		

[157] This is an expanded version based on Robert Ward's 2016 list of twenty-first-century Passion settings. Works added by me, including but not limited to those composed after 2016, are labelled with an asterisk (*). Non-Christocentric works are bolded. The "Female Identified" and "Black, Indigenous, and People of Color" columns are added by me. For the original list, see Ward, "Passion Settings of the 20th- and 21st- Centuries," 37-38.

Year *(cont.)*	Title	Composer (Dates and Nationality)	Female ID	BIPOC
2007	***the little match girl passion***	David Lang (b. 1957, American)		
2008	*St. Luke's Passion*	Calliope Tsoupaki (b. 1963, Greek)	x	
2009	*St. Luke Passion*	Kjell Karlsen (b. 1947, Norwegian)		
2009	*Transylvanian Passion Music for Good Friday after the Evangelist Matthew*	Hans Peter Türk (b. 1940, Romanian)		
2012	*The Gospel according to the Other Mary**	John Adams (b. 1947, American)		
2013	*St. John Passion*	Bob Chilcott (b. 1955, British)		
2013	*St. Luke Passion*	James MacMillan		
2014	*St. Luke Passion**	Eriks Esenvalds		
2014	*St. Matthew Passion*	Sven-David Sandström (1942-2019, Swedish)		
2014	*Pietà*	John Muehleisen (b. 1955, American)		
2014	*Gnostic Passion*	Brad and Doug Balliett (b. 1982, American)		
2014	*Passion according to an Unknown Witness*	Robert Kyr (b. 1952, American)		
2014	*The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ**	Gabriel Jackson (b. 1962, British)		
2015	*The Debrecen Passion**	Kati Agócs (b. 1975, American / Canadian)	x	
2016	***Considering Matthew Shepard***	Craig Hella Johnson (b. 1962, American)		
2016	***But Who Shall Return Us Our Children: A Kipling Passion***	John Muehleisen		
2016	***Aluta continua: The Passion of David Kato Kisule****	Eric Banks (b. 1969, American)		
2017	*Invictus: A Passion**	Howard Goodall (b. 1958, British)		
2017	***The Judas Passion****	Sally Beamish (b. 1956, British)	x	

Year *(cont.)*	Title	Composer (Dates and Nationality)	Female ID	BIPOC
2017	*The Passion of Yeshua: a dramatic oratorio in fourteen scenes**	Richard Danielpour (b. 1956, American)		
2017	***La Passion selon Marc – une passion après Auschwitz****	Michaël Levinas (b. 1949, French)		
2018	***The Passion of Octavius Catto****	Uri Caine (b. 1956, American)		
2018	***Buddha Passion****	Tan Dun		POC
2018	*Passion Music**	Will Todd (b. 1970, British)		
2019	***Annes Passion****	Yevhen Orkin (b. 1977, Ukrainian German)		

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