MINIMALISM, EXOTICISM, AND ALTERNATIVE IN TARIK O'REGAN’S

*MAGNIFICAT AND NUNC DIMITTIS AND THE ECSTASIES ABOVE*

Sangyun Choi, B.M., M.M.

Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

December 2011

APPROVED:

Jerry McCoy, Major Professor
Stephen Morscheck, Minor Professor
Richard Sparks, Committee Member and
Chair of the Division of Conducting
and Ensembles
Lynn Eustis, Director of Graduate Studies
James C. Scott, Dean of the College of
Music
James D. Meernik, Acting Dean of the
Toulouse Graduate School

British composer Tarik Hamilton O’Regan is a significant choral composer of the early twenty-first century. O’Regan’s *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis* and *The Ecstasies Above* exhibit two notable compositional techniques: minimalism influenced by Steve Reich and exoticism representing Balinese gamelan and Andalusian music. Additionally, O’Regan joins the technique of minimalism with the Renaissance practice of alternatim. The examination of these works will demonstrate the application of these two compositional techniques and how he integrates them into a textural context to evoke specific historical and cultural practices. Furthermore, this study will provide guidelines for researching and performing O’Regan’s choral works by explaining O’Regan’s stylistic characteristics.
Copyright 2011

by

Sangyun Choi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to sincerely express my appreciation to Dr. Jerry McCoy, Dr. Stephen Morscheck, and Dr. Richard Sparks for their guidance and patience in helping me with my dissertation. In addition, I want to give my gratitude to Tarik O’Regan for his assistance and to Novello, G. Schirmer, Boosey & Hawkes, Universal Edition, and Oxford University Press publishers for allowing me permission to use music examples from their publications. Finally, I thank my cherished family and friends for their endurance and invaluable love.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT | ............................................................................................................. iii |
| LIST OF EXAMPLES | ..................................................................................................................... v |
| Chapter |
| 1. INTRODUCTION |
| Tarik O’Regan’s Biography | .................................................................................................1 |
| The Compositional Background of the Selected Choral Works | 2 |
| 2. MINIMALISM AS FOUND IN MAGNIFICAT AND NUNC DIMITTIS AND THE ECSTASIES ABOVE |
| Steve Reich’s Minimalistic Techniques | ..........................................................................4 |
| Tarik O’Regan’s Application of Steve Reich’s Minimalism | 8 |
| 3. EXOTICISM AS FOUND IN NUNC DIMITTIS AND THE ECSTASIES ABOVE |
| Tarik O’Regan’s Balinese Gamelan Exoticism in Nunc Dimittis | 15 |
| Exoticism in The Ecstasies Above | 20 |
| 4. MODERN APPROACHES TO RENAISSANCE PRACTICE OF ALTERNATIM |
| Renaissance Practice of Alternatim in Magnificat | 29 |
| Modern Approaches to the Renaissance Practice of Alternating Chant and Polyphony in Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis | 30 |
| 5. CONCLUSION | ..........................................................................................................................34 |
| APPENDIX: E-MAIL INTERVIEW WITH TARIK O’REGAN | .................................................................35 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | ..........................................................................................................................38 |
LIST OF EXAMPLES

All music examples are used with permission from G. Schirmer, Inc. & Associated Music Publishers, Inc.; Boosey & Hawkes Company; Universal Edition (London) Ltd., London; and Oxford University Press.

† MAGNIFICAT AND NUNC DIMITTIS
Music by Tarik O'Regan
Words: Traditional
© Copyright 2005 Novello & Company Limited.
All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured.
Reprinted by Permission.

‡ THE ECSTASIES ABOVE
Music by Tarik O'Regan
Words by Edgar Allan Poe
© Copyright 2006 Novello & Company Limited.
All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured.
Reprinted by Permission.

* Steve Reich:
Violin Phase für Violine und Tonband oder für 4 Violinen
© Copyright 1979 by Universal Edition (London)Ltd., London/UE 16185

^ Steve Reich:
Tehillim
© Copyright 1981 by Hendon Music, Inc., a Boosey & Hawkes Company
Revised Version © Copyright 1994 by Hendon Music, Inc.
Reprinted by Permission.

§ Oleg Tumulilingan by Pan Sukra and Ketut Maria.
Transcribed by Michael Tenzer.
Used by permission of Oxford University Press, Inc.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*1-1. Steve Reich’s Violin Phase, Rehearsal 2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*1-2. Steve Reich’s Clapping Music, mm. 1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>^1-3. Steve Reich’s Tehillim, mm. 157-161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†1-4. Tarik O’Regan’s Magnificat, mm. 35-38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†1-5. Tarik O’Regan’s Magnificat, mm. 57-58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†1-6. Tarik O’Regan’s Magnificat, mm. 75-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†1-7. Tarik O’Regan’s Magnificat, mm. 104-107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†1-8. Tarik O’Regan’s Nunc Dimittis, mm. 167-176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‡1-9. Tarik O’Regan’s The Ecstasies Above, mm. 74-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‡1-10. Tarik O’Regan’s The Ecstasies Above, mm. 63-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‡1-11. Tarik O’Regan’s The Ecstasies Above, mm. 343-346 and 355-360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-1. Balinese five-tone pelog system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§2-2. Balinese Gamelan – Oleg Tumulilingan: detailed transcription of 1:01 to 1:32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†2-3. Tarik O’Regan’s Nunc Dimittis, mm. 166-170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‡2-4. Tarik O’Regan’s The Ecstasies Above, excerpted from mm. 155, 168, and 177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‡2-5. Tarik O’Regan’s The Ecstasies Above, Solo S. I and Solo S. II, m. 155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‡2-6. Tarik O’Regan’s The Ecstasies Above, Violin I, m. 141 and Violin II, m. 143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-7. Nahawand Maqām</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‡2-8. Tarik O’Regan’s The Ecstasies Above, mm. 182-185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‡2-9. Tarik O’Regan’s The Ecstasies Above, Solo S. I, mm. 154-155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‡2-10. Tarik O’Regan’s The Ecstasies Above, String quartet, mm. 82-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‡2-11. Tarik O’Regan’s The Ecstasies Above, Solo S. I, mm. 52-53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
†3-1. Tarik O’Regan’s *Magnificat*, mm. 39-42 .............................................................................31

†3-2. Comparison of Magnificat Tone 7 and Tarik O’Regan’s *Magnificat*, Violoncello mm. 76-81 and Soprano of concertante choir mm. 31-33 .............................................................................32

†3-3. Comparison of Magnificat Tone 5 and Tarik O’Regan’s *Nunc Dimittis*, Violoncello mm. 145-149 ................................................................................................................................................33
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

British composer Tarik Hamilton O’Regan (born in 1978) is increasingly regarded as a significant choral composer of the modern era. His choral repertoire is internationally known and often performed. O’Regan’s Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis and The Ecstasies Above exhibit two noticeable compositional techniques, minimalism and exoticism, which he integrates into a textural context, drawing on the use of texture to evoke specific historical and cultural practices. Specifically, his minimalism is based upon a limited canonic idea borrowed from Steve Reich’s minimalistic technique. Secondly, his use of exoticism comes from the specific influences of Balinese gamelan and Andalusian music. Lastly, O’Regan joins techniques influenced by minimalism with the Renaissance practice of alternatim, a compositional technique in which performers alternate between plainchant and polyphony, thereby creating unique polyphonic textures. This study focuses on two of his choral works: Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis and The Ecstasies Above. The examination of these works shows the influence of these two compositional techniques and how he integrates them into a textural context.

Tarik O’Regan’s Biography

British composer Tarik Hamilton O’Regan was born on January 1, 1978 in London, England. O’Regan, whose mother is Algerian, spent part of his youth in Algeria and Morocco and thus experienced two uniquely different cultures: North African and British. These cultural backgrounds have influenced his outputs in terms of musical ideas and style.

---

1 Tarik O’Regan, e-mail message to author, March 8, 2011.
2 Dennis Shrock, Choral Repertoire (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 763.
4 Tarik O’Regan, e-mail message to author, October 4, 2011.
O’Regan studied percussion, which permeated his writing before he studied composition at the Junior Department of the Royal College of Music. He completed his undergraduate study at Pembroke College, where he exhibited the ability to write vocal pieces, as a result of commissions from the Choir of New College at Oxford. Additionally, O’Regan earned his Master of Philosophy in composition at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where he built his teaching and composition career as a Resident Composer.5

O’Regan has held several academic positions in the United States, including the Fulbright Chester Schirmer Fellowship in Music Composition at Columbia University, the Radcliffe Institute Fellowship at Harvard, and positions at Yale University (2005) and at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton (2010).6

O’Regan’s works have been recognized through a 2009 Grammy nomination for his second album, Threshold of Night; two British Composer Awards for Sainte in 20057 and Threshold of Night in 2007;8 and several commissions for events, including the 2010 BBC Proms featuring a performance of Latent Manifest by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.9

The Compositional Background of the Selected Choral Works

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis

O’Regan notes, “The Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis were both commissioned, separately, by Timothy Brown for the Choir of Clare College, Cambridge.” Although the two sacred settings

---

5 Fiona Maddocks, Tarik O’Regan: Composer (London: Novello, 2008), [2].
8 “Tarik O’Regan,” Chester Novello.
9 “Tarik O’Regan: Biography.”
are intended as concert works, these can be put together for liturgical uses at Evensong.\textsuperscript{10} The Choir of Clare College premièred the \textit{Magnificat} on December 15, 2000 in London.\textsuperscript{11} In 2001, O’Regan composed the \textit{Nunc Dimittis} for a BBC broadcast to be given by Clare College.\textsuperscript{12} The \textit{Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis} is set “for double-choir; soprano, alto, tenor and bass soloists and a solo soprano saxophone or violoncello.”\textsuperscript{13}

\textit{The Ecstasies Above}

Yale University’s Robert Baker Commissioning Fund for Sacred Music commissioned \textit{The Ecstasies Above} while O’Regan was a visiting Research Affiliate of Yale University’s Institute of Sacred Music.\textsuperscript{14} This work, set for chorus (SATB), eight soloists (SSAATTBB), and string quartet, adopts the text of Edgar Allan Poe’s poem “Israfel.” Simon Carrington directed the Yale Schola Cantorum in the première of \textit{The Ecstasies Above} on March 4, 2007.\textsuperscript{15} According to O’Regan, “The piece itself was written very much with those singers [the members of the Yale Schola Cantorum who premièred the piece] in mind and reflects the skills of particular soloists as well as the sound of the group as a whole: the richness of tone coupled with a clarity of line.”\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{10} Tarik O’Regan, \textit{Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis} (London: Novello, 2004), [ii].
\textsuperscript{12} O’Regan, \textit{Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis}, [ii].
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid. Concerning the choice of two instruments, O’Regan says “the piece was originally designed and composed for cello. The saxophone was added later for a concert.” O’Regan, e-mail message to author, October 4, 2011.
\textsuperscript{14} Tarik O’Regan, \textit{The Ecstasies Above} (London: Novello, 2006), [ii], and Maddocks, [2].
\textsuperscript{15} O’Regan, \textit{The Ecstasies Above}, [ii].
CHAPTER 2

MINIMALISM AS FOUND IN MAGNIFICAT AND NUNC DIMITTIS AND
THE ECSTASIES ABOVE

Tarik O’Regan’s minimalistic approach, found in Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis and The Ecstasies Above, is influenced by some of Steve Reich’s minimalistic techniques, including canon based upon phasing and rhythmic displacement. O’Regan applies Reich’s ideas to these two works through his use of minimalistic canon, inversion and fugato.

Steve Reich’s Minimalistic Techniques

American minimalist composer Steve Reich (born in 1936) belongs to the first generation to promote minimalist music in the 1960s. His works not only helped develop minimalism in music but also influenced other contemporary composers such as John Adams. In Reich’s early minimalistic compositional style of phasing, at least two identical elements, repeating at the same time, shift slightly out of phase due to the tempo change of at least one voice. Concerning the relationship between phasing and canon, Steve Reich says in his Writing on Music:

In retrospect, I understand the process of gradually shifting phase relationships between two or more identical patterns as an extension of the idea of infinite canon or round. Two or more identical melodies are played with one starting after the other, as in traditional rounds, but in the phase shifting process the melodies are usually much shorter repeating patterns, and the time interval between one melodic pattern and its imitation(s), instead of being fixed, is variable.

Steve Reich extensively employed a canonic idea in his early experimental works using an analog tape device creating phasing, then acoustic instrumental works, and then digital

---

sampling technology as a compositional device. Additionally, Reich develops a specific canonic usage according to the compositional method he employs.

Reich’s work, It’s Gonna Rain (1965), exhibits a specific canonic phasing technique. The phasing process was accidentally discovered in his experimental work’s process through the unexpected speed difference of two players playing identical tapes. In the first part of It’s Gonna Rain, two tape loops begin in unison and subsequently slowly shift out of phase, before moving back into unison. After two other similar tape works, his interest in phasing moves from taped works to instrumental pieces: Piano Phase (1967) and Violin Phase (1967).

In Violin Phase, the composer employs a solo violin and three prerecorded tapes for a performance; three violins may be substituted for the three prerecorded tapes. In this piece, Reich also shows a canonic idea through phasing techniques. At rehearsal 2 of the piece, one violinist and one tape track begin by playing identical elements with the same tempo, and then the violinist increases tempo very slightly until he or she is an eighth note ahead of the tape track. Later, the violinist resumes playing in the first tempo. In this process, a canon results. Keith Potter mentions that this phase piece exhibits “textural and contrapuntal elaboration” in spite of its instrumental economy. Example 1-1 shows the moment the phasing occurs.

---

21 Although Reich’s phasing was influenced by Terry Riley, phasing could be regarded as the result of effort “to find some new way of working with repetition as a musical technique.” Potter, 165 and Reich, 20.
22 Reich, 20.
23 Potter, 180.
Example 1-1. Steve Reich’s *Violin Phase*, Rehearsal 2-3

*Clapping Music*, composed in 1972, differs from the earlier phasing technique. In Reich’s phase works, a canon results from a tempo change of one player who plays the identical material with that of another player at the same tempo. However, the canon shown in *Clapping Music* comes from rhythmic displacement. “[The] rhythmic displacement creates a canon by suddenly moving the starting point of a pattern from one location in a measure to another location in a measure.”

In Reich’s *Clapping Music*, performers begin playing an identical rhythm pattern. (See example 1-2.) At measure 2, the second performer plays the rhythmic pattern one beat ahead of the first performer, and in each following measure moves ahead an additional beat, until the two voices are once more in unison. Once again in this process, a shifting canon results between the two voices yet without a change in tempo as in *Violin Phase*.

Example 1-2. Steve Reich’s *Clapping Music*, mm.1-3, canonic idea beginning at measure 2, beat 1

The canons found in Tehillim (1981) are different from the previous canons discussed. While those canonic processes usually result from phasing and rhythmic shift, the canons in Tehillim do not come from artificial tempo change or rhythmic displacement. Most of all, Reich does not employ a short melodic line as in earlier works. In the first movement of the piece, the melodic line of canon in Tehillim is 34 measures in length. Concerning these features, Reich says, “in contrast to most of my earlier work, Tehillim is not composed of short repeating patterns; although an entire melody may be repeated either as the subject of a canon or variation this is actually closer to what one finds throughout the history of Western music.”

The canon used in the first movement of Tehillim appears first as a two- and then four-voice canon. The two-voice canon repeats an entire melodic line, which appears in the beginning of the piece. The four-voice canon, doubled by two organs, repetitively uses only seven measures of the melodic line, in a little slower tempo. Additionally, when the bottom three voices imitate the first voice, the first two notes are slightly varied.

Example 1-3. Steve Reich’s Tehillim, mm. 157-161


25 Reich, 101.
Tarik O’Regan’s Application of Steve Reich’s Minimalism

As indicated earlier, Tarik O’Regan’s two works exhibit minimalistic qualities. In addition, his minimalistic usage is in some ways based upon a canonic idea borrowed from Steve Reich’s minimalistic technique containing rhythmic displacement derived from phasing.\(^{26}\) O’Regan’s main minimalistic usage consists of a canonic idea as applied to fugato and inversion.

*Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis*

In O’Regan’s *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis*, minimalistic usage is based in the repetition of a melodic pattern. Additionally, each voice sings the same repetitive melodic line, starting at different times, which results in a canon. Although O’Regan’s minimalistic canon is not identical to Steve Reich’s, the canonic idea grounded in minimalism exhibits Reich’s influence.

In *Magnificat*, the minimalistic usage of canon initially appears in measures 35 to 48. (See example 1-4.) Specifically, the four-part choir shows two different canons between soprano 1 and soprano 2, and alto 1 and alto 2. Two different melodic lines, which are each one measure in length, continuously repeat with the same text, beginning with “quia fecit.” After the first voice begins, the second voice imitates the first, delayed by one beat. To accomplish this delay, O’Regan employs two extra notes in the beginning of the soprano 2 line and the alto 2 line. These identical repeated patterns, shifted by one beat between voices, result in a canon with minimalistic qualities. The same two canons reappear with a different text at measures 124 through 139.

---

\(^{26}\) Tarik O’Regan, e-mail message to author, April 8, 2011. O’Regan comments that “[he] was always struck by how [Reich] is able to maintain a sense of forward movement by using intricate rhythmic techniques (be they phasing, or rhythmic displacement).” Tarik O’Regan, e-mail message to author, October 4, 2011.
At measures 51 to 64, the minimalistic usage contains another canonic idea, which consists of a four-voice canon on a single melodic line, unlike the previous canon section. Additionally, it has a melodic line almost three measures in length. Furthermore, the melodic relationship between measure 36 (C-Db-Eb-Gb) and measure 57 (D-C#-B-G) exhibits the idea of inversion. (See example 1-4 and 1-5.)
Example 1-6 shows an episode of minimalistic inversion found in measure 75 to 86. The ripieno choir’s alto 2 and tenor 1 are inverted in the concertante choir’s alto and tenor parts.

Example 1-6. Tarik O’Regan’s *Magnificat*, mm. 75-80

Additionally, at measure 201 of *Nunc Dimittis*, the soprano 2 and alto 1 have the same melody as in the section of the *Magnificat* beginning at measure 75, linking the *Nunc Dimittis* to the *Magnificat*. This borrowing only includes the original idea without the inversion.

From measures 104 to 125 of the *Magnificat*, there is an application of fugato style from the canonic idea. (See example 1-7.) At measure 104, tenor 1 sings a subject, five measures in length answered seven beats later by bass 1 a perfect fifth below. Tenor 2 then carries the melody a perfect fourth above bass 1, delayed seven beats behind bass 1. The remaining entrances are bass 2, alto 1, and alto 2 with the same melody.
Example 1-7. Tarik O’Regan’s *Magnificat*, mm. 104-107

In *Nunc Dimittis*, another variation of canon technique appears between measures 167 and 185. The four-voice rhythmic canon\(^{27}\) consists of a pentatonic scale (E, F, G, B, C) in the female voices of the ripieno choir. Each melodic line of the canon continuously repeats on the same text. Although each of the four voices exhibits a different melodic line, the melodic contour is similar and uses the same five tone scale. (See example 1-8.)

Example 1-8 Tarik O’Regan’s *Nunc Dimittis*, mm. 167-176

The Ecstasies Above

In *The Ecstasies Above*, O’Regan employs two minimalistic ideas: rhythmic displacement and minimalistic canons not derived from rhythmic displacement, often in forms influenced by Steve Reich’s compositional processes. O’Regan applies Reich’s techniques based on phasing, sometimes adding slightly varied musical elements to the fundamental minimalistic melodic idea.

One of O’Regan’s minimalistic characteristics is rhythmic displacement, similar to that found in Reich’s *Clapping Music* (1972). In *The Ecstasies Above*, four voices singing the same melody at measure 74 shift gradually until each line moves out of phase with the others. During the process, rhythmic displacement occurs first in measure 77 with paired voices (soprano and tenor, alto and bass), then in measure 83 with single voices producing a canon between soprano and tenor and between alto and bass (see example 1-9).

Example 1-9. Tarik O’Regan’s *The Ecstasies Above*, mm. 74-84

Another minimalistic trait is the repetition of rhythmic figures with a time interval between groups creating a quasi-canonic texture. For example, at measures 63 through 84, O’Regan employs a double canonic idea formed by short melodic and rhythmic motive. (See example 1-10.) O’Regan divides the solo choir into two groups. In the first group (solo soprano I,
solo alto I, solo soprano II, solo alto II), the solo soprano II and solo alto II imitate the solo soprano I and solo alto I one beat later. In this process, the women’s voices form a stretto at the time delay of a quarter note. The second group (solo tenor I, solo bass I, solo tenor II, solo bass II) also unfolds a stretto texture in the same manner.

Example 1-10. Tarik O’Regan’s *The Ecstasies Above*, mm. 63-66

In the relationship between two groups, the rhythmic figure of the second group is varied from the rhythmic figure of the first group. Furthermore, O’Regan varies the melody and rhythm of the original figure during the imitative procedure. For instance, O’Regan uses one extra quarter note to anticipate a canonic procedure. (See the circled 1 in example 1-10.)

In measures 343 through 377, another minimalistic canonic event occurs between two solo groups (solo I SATB and solo II SATB). (See example 1-11.) Unlike the usage of mm. 63-84, O’Regan increasingly varies the original melody. For instance, a canon between solo soprano I and solo soprano II beginning in measure 343 increasingly varies the original tune by adding notes and altering rhythm, changing the melodic gesture from a descending triplet to four descending sixteenth notes. (See the example 1-11, measure 357.) Furthermore, O’Regan repeats
the latter part of the entire tune in measures 359 through 360. In this process, a canon continuously happens between one solo voice and another solo voice.

Example 1-11. Tarik O’Regan’s *The Ecstasies Above*, mm. 343-346 and 355-360

In addition, from the anacrusis to measure 154 through measure 165, the canon between solo soprano I and solo soprano II works to either expand or vary a short tune. It is very close to the canon between two solo groups discussed above in that it shows an increasingly varied tune.

In summary, some of Steve Reich’s minimalistic canonic techniques clearly displayed ideas found in several of his works: canons resulting from phasing and rhythmic displacement in *It’s Gonna Rain* and *Clapping Music*, respectively, and a relatively strict canon in *Tehillim*. Tarik O’Regan applies Reich’s canonic ideas with minimalistic qualities to his works, expanding Reich’s ideas through inversion and fugato, thereby creating his own voice rather than strictly following Reich’s technique.
CHAPTER 3
EXOTICISM AS FOUND IN NUNC DIMITTIS AND THE ECSTASIES ABOVE

Tarik O’Regan employs two different types of exoticism in Nunc Dimittis and The Ecstasies Above: Balinese gamelan music and Andalusian music. To realize these exoticisms, O’Regan uses a five-tone scale, rhythmic gestures, and minimalistic qualities found in gamelan music; and ornamentations, vocal registers, and tetrachords found in Andalusian music.

Tarik O’Regan’s Balinese Gamelan Exoticism in Nunc Dimittis

In Nunc Dimittis, Tarik O’Regan unfolds exoticism through a five-tone melodic unit (E, F, G, B, C) and rhythmic gesture evoking an Indonesian bamboo flute, the suling. O’Regan mentions that this exoticism comes from the influence of Balinese gamelan.28 The study of characteristics of the Balinese gamelan is useful in understanding Tarik O’Regan’s gamelan usage.

Balinese Gamelan Music

Gamelan, referring to Indonesian musical ensembles, usually consists of “tuned single bronze gongs, gong-chimes, single- and multi-octave metallophones, drums, flutes, bowed and plucked chordophones, a xylophone, small cymbals and singers.”29 This gamelan music can be found on Indonesian islands such as Java and Bali.30 One difference between Javanese gamelan and Balinese gamelan is the use of the voice: Balinese gamelan consists primarily of instruments while Javanese gamelan usually adds voice to the instruments.31 In the primary function of

28 Tarik O’Regan, e-mail message to author, March 8, 2011.
gamelan in Bali, it plays an important role in accompanying “dance and dance-drama [for] religious and (in recent times) secular occasions.”

In Balinese gamelan music, one finds different scale systems comprised of four to seven notes. These scales can be categorized into two tuning systems: pelog and slendro. Pelog is “quasi diatonic, with distinguishable seconds and thirds” while slendro has “seconds augmented, [and] thirds diminished.” Although both systems basically consist of a pentatonic scale, the two tuning systems are different in whether they allow two additional notes or not: slendro is a pentatonic scale without semitones. On the contrary, the “pelog system allows for two additional tones within the octave.” (See example 2-1). These two tones were used as passing or substitute tones in the past; however, this usage does not appear in modern practice. Slendro, on the other hand, features “a smooth and harmonious progression [and] could be played A-C-D-E-G.”

Example 2-1, Balinese five-tone pelog system

The Relationship between Minimalism and Gamelan Exoticism

O’Regan’s usage of Balinese gamelan music in Nunc Dimittis is not unique; other composers use such music in their instrumental works and choral works. O’Regan’s attraction to the exoticism of Balinese gamelan may be reinforced by the inherent minimalistic qualities found within gamelan. Gamelan music exhibits repetitive and meditative characters consisting of

---

35 McPhee, 257.
36 Ibid.
37 Brita, 336.
38 Tenzer, Balinese, 32.
39 McPhee, 257.
rhythmic and melodic repetitiveness, which create complexity in that music.⁴⁰ (See example 2-2). Additionally, the repetitive character of the music reinforces many parts of a gamelan composition.⁴¹ Minimalist composers integrated the gamelan’s hypnotic repetitiveness of rhythm and texture into their musical language.⁴²

One example to show the relationship between minimalism and gamelan music is a modern Balinese gamelan piece, Oleg Tumulilingan.⁴³ This piece illustrates the minimalistic qualities of repetition and interlocking rhythm. Specifically, regarding the aspect of repetition, 24 out of 27 cycles in this piece have an identical core melody.⁴⁴ A cycle’s core melody is one of the elements that comprise the structure of gamelan music. The structure of gamelan music can be divided into two groups; one group plays a core melody or its variation, and the other group characterizes a framework for the core melody by marking structure points.⁴⁵ Based on the role of the groups, the gamelan music shows a repetitive cycle.

Concerning the interlocking rhythm, in example 2-2, the melodic ornamentation in the reyong⁴⁶ demonstrates kotekan.⁴⁷ Michael Tenzer says that “Although [kotekan] sounds as one melody it is actually composed of two interdependent musical lines that are incomplete when played alone and dependent exclusively on each other for obtaining the desired result.”⁴⁸

---

⁴¹ Tenzer, Balinese, 41.
⁴³ “Oleg…was commissioned… for the occasion of the first major international tour of Balinese music and dance.” Tenzer, Analytical, 210.
⁴⁴ Ibid., 219.
⁴⁵ Tenzer, Balinese, 42 and 133.
⁴⁶ The second and third lines from the top of the example 2-2 show the reyongs’ parts.
⁴⁷ It refers to “melodic ornamentation composed of two interlocking musical parts.” Tenzer, Balinese, 135.
⁴⁸ Ibid., 46.
Example 2-2, Balinese Gamelan - Oleg Tumulilingan: detailed transcription of 1:01 to 1:32.

Tarik O’Regan’s Application of Balinese Gamelan

Many Western composers developed an interest in gamelan music, including Claude Debussy, Olivier Messiaen, Francis Poulenc, Benjamin Britten, Lou Harrison, Murray Schafer, and Steve Reich. Although each composer differs in its reference to gamelan in his works, the works of each contains the reminiscence of gamelan music. Some composers tried to imitate the gamelan sound with a scale, rhythm, and instruments. Others just applied a few of its compositional principles; for example, Steve Reich was interested in “the polyrhythmic interlocking patterns found in Balinese and African music.”

---

50 Cooke, 258-80.
51 Reich, 107.
In Nunc Dimittis, O’Regan employs a five-tone scale (E, F, G, B, C) at measures 167 to 185. The pelog system of gamelan music is similar to this five-tone scale, although there is difficulty in comparing Balinese five-tone scales with O’Regan’s scale because of the absence of a standard Balinese tuning system\(^{52}\) with the Western tempered tuning system. This issue is further complicated since the gamelan is percussion-dominated.\(^{53}\) Nevertheless, O’Regan’s pentatonic scale is close to the gamelan five-tone pelog system because it contains two semitones. Examples 2-1 and 2-3 respectively show this Balinese five-tone system and O’Regan’s application thereof.

Example 2-3. Tarik O’Regan’s Nunc Dimittis, mm. 166-170

The exotic rhythmic gesture and pentatonic melody of the soprano saxophone evokes the suling in gamelan music. (See examples 2-2 and 2-3). The suling, a bamboo flute, plays a role in “[ornamenting] the core melody in an improvisatory style.”\(^{54}\) In the colotomic structure\(^{55}\) of example 2-2, the long notes of the suling refer to a core melody, while the fast rhythmic gestures

\(^{52}\) Tenzer, Balinese, 31.
\(^{53}\) Ibid.
\(^{54}\) Ibid., 46.
\(^{55}\) Michael Tenzer says that colotomic structure is “the technique of using gongs to mark important structural points in music.” The Havard Dictionary of Music says that the structural points occurred at “the beginnings and endings of successive sections, each characterized by recurrent melodic and rhythmic patterns.” Tenzer, Balinese, 133 and The Harvard Dictionary of Music, ed. Don Michael Randel (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003), s.v. “colotomic structure.”
ornament the long notes. In *Nunc Dimittis*, the soprano saxophone’s quintuplets and septuplet also ornament a core melody, although the exotic section of the *Nunc Dimittis* is not based on the colotomic structure.

In the gamelan section, O'Regan unfolds gamelan exoticism on top of the chant tune, especially in measures 177 through 185. The ripieno choir women’s voices sing a repetitive tune based on the gamelan scale discussed above, while the men’s voices sing a chant tune. In addition, the concertante choir adds short rhythmic interjections that support the men’s voices of the ripieno choir. Concerning this idea, O'Regan specifically states that

> I like the way the Balinese scale can be superimposed over the medieval plainchant … to create an interesting dialogue. It’s not so much that I wanted a minimalistic quality, but rather a conversation between two “ancient” cultural ideas.\(^56\)

Exoticism in *The Ecstasies Above*

In *The Ecstasies Above*, the exoticism is related to the influence of Andalusian music.\(^57\) Andalusian music usually refers to urban art music of North Africa and is derived from “the Moorish Islamic courts of medieval Spain.”\(^58\) The allusions to Andalusian music are related to O'Regan’s cultural background in Algeria and Morocco, because O'Regan spent part of his youth in both countries. Additionally, O'Regan specifically mentions that the Arabic exoticism is the result of the music of al-Andalus,\(^59\) the territory of the Iberian Peninsula governed by the Muslims between the eighth and fifteenth centuries.\(^60\)

---

\(^56\) O'Regan, e-mail message to author, October 4, 2011.
\(^57\) O'Regan, e-mail message to author, March 8, 2011.
\(^59\) Tarik O’Regan, e-mail message to author, March 18, 2001.
The Origin of Andalusian Music

In the early eighth century, Arabs conquered the Iberian Peninsula. During their rule, Arabic culture influenced southern Spain. According to Ruth Davis, Arab-Andalusian music began with the Arabian musician Ziryab (789-857). In 822, he arrived in al-Andalus from Baghdad to avoid a conflict between his teacher Ishaq al-Mawsili and opponents of the early Arabian music tradition. Ziryab, who settled in Córdoba, strove to convey to Spain the early Arabian music tradition. Later, he established an Arabic music school that furthered the traditions of andalusī music in southern Spain, a type of music that is still practiced in North Africa through the migration of the Arabs from southern Spain.

The Christian Reconquista of Spain eventually lead to three waves of immigration of Muslims to North Africa, because of “the Inquisition (1478), the expulsion of the Jews (1492), and the forced Christian conversion of the indigenous peoples.” The Muslims migrated from Seville to Tunis, Córdoba to Tlemcen, Valencia to Fez (Morocco), and Granada to Fez and Tetuan (Algeria). As a result of these migrations, Andalusian music was continuously cultivated in those regions. Additionally, the music of these regions, western Arab music is distinguished from eastern Arab music.

---

61The Iberian Peninsula belongs to Southwestern Europe, including Spain.
68Davis, 423.
Andalusian Music as Reflected in *The Ecstasies Above*

In *The Ecstasies Above*, allusions to Andalusian music include quasi-Arabic ornamentation, tetrachords (similar to the lower tetrachord of the Dorian mode) related to Arabic *maqāmāt*, an African *maqām* and a narrow vocal range. As *The Ecstasies Above* is not an ethnographic piece, there is difficulty in equating the Arabic references found in *The Ecstasies Above* with Andalusian music. Nevertheless, the exotic musical features do reflect an influence of Andalusian music.

In *The Ecstasies Above*, one of the most notable musical materials evoking Andalusian music is quasi-Arabic ornamentation. Concerning the importance of ornamentation in Andalusian music, Al-Tifashi makes note of “an Andalusian singer who improvised for two hours on a single line of poetry and of another singer who added seventy-four embellishments (*hazzat*) to a single phrase.” In measures 155 through 179 of *The Ecstasies Above*, the relatively fast melismatic passages of consecutive sixteenth notes play a role in ornamenting the melodic line (See example 2-4). The sixteenth-note passages starting with a three-tone pitch set (D-E-F) are made up of various turns. Later, O’Regan varies and transposes the three-tone pitch set: C-D-E, A-C#-D, and E-F#-G.

Example 2-4. Tarik O’Regan’s *The Ecstasies Above*, excerpted from mm. 155, 168, and 177

---

69 *Maqāmāt* is the plural of *maqām*, which refers to an Arabic mode.
In stanza six of the poem, the music evokes an ornamentation suggestive of Arabic music. For example, in measures 161-165, O’Regan highlights the text “The ecstasies above” and expressions of its specific emotions “Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love” with ornamentation. At this moment in the music, the string quartet reinforces the Arabic character with a similar rhythmic gesture. Additionally, from measure 182 through 188, the text “yes, Heaven is thine” is emphasized by ornamental rhythms and a pentatonic scale.

This work exhibits several types of quasi-Arabic rhythmic ornamentations. The vocal ornamentation consists mostly of consecutive sixteenth-note rhythms; however, in measures 182 through 188, the vocal ornamentation shows an eighth-note triplet followed by sixteenth notes. Another eighth-note triplet ornamentation can be found in measures 343-376. Sometimes, the two solo singers’ ornamentation sounds like extended ornamentation in that the first soprano solo always sings the ornamental figuration one beat earlier than the second soprano solo; therefore, the two ornamentations aurally sound like one line. (See example 2-5.)

Example 2-5, Tarik O’Regan’s *The Ecstasies Above*, Solo S. I and Solo S. II, m. 155

In the string part, O’Regan employs the similar ornamentation, like consecutive sixteenth notes and triplet rhythms. (See example 2-6.) Specifically, he states that

The string writing in the section beginning at 141 is [an] example of a gestural connection with the music [of] North Africa, specifically Moroccan al-Andalusian music.\(^71\)

---

\(^{71}\) O’Regan, e-mail message to author, October 4, 2011.
Example 2-6, Tarik O’Regan’s *The Ecstasies Above*, Violin I, m. 141 and Violin II, m. 143

At measure 155 of *The Ecstasies Above*, the melodic unit of the quasi-Arabic ornamentation consists of a tetra-chord (D, E, F, G). Later, this pitch set adds two more tones (Bb, A) while the ornamentation figure maintains the same tetra-chord. Although western Arabic music and eastern Arabic music differ in scale structure, the four notes of the quasi-ornamentation are compatible with the *nahawand* tetrachord on D of an eastern Arabic *maqām* because both intervallic structures involve a series of M2-m2-M2 when the Arabic mode is transcribed to a Western scale.

Example 2-7, *Nahawand Maqām* 

Among Arabic *maqāmāt*, there are five-tone *maqāmāt* which come from Africa, including “Rast Kanawi” from Morocco. In Africa, pentatonic scales are widely used. The five-tone scales differ according to the musicians’ dialect. In measures 182 through 188 of *The Ecstasies Above*, O’Regan employs a five-tone scale (E-F-G-B-C). Although the intervallic

---


73 Marcus, 38.


structure of the five-tone scale is not identical to the Arabic five-tone maqām, the melodic line of
the O’Regan’ scale contains ornamental rhythms that evoke Arabic music, strengthening the
reference to Arabic use of pentatonic pitch collections. (See example 2-8.)

Example 2-8, Tarik O’Regan’s The Ecstasies Above, mm. 182-185

A narrow ambitus is another characteristic of Arabo-Andalusian music, as is the
placement of the ambitus within the vocal range. As mentioned above, the pitch set in the
section beginning with measure 155 has a narrow ambitus based on a central tone G (d’-g’). (See
example 2-9.) Additionally, regarding the issue of vocal range, the tetrachord is placed in the
lower middle register for the soprano solos, implying a relationship to that of the tab, a mode
belonging to Andalusian maqām, an integral component of Andalusian music. “A tab played in a
low register has a particular expression which it does not have if played higher.”

Example 2-9, Tarik O’Regan’s The Ecstasies Above. Solo S. I, mm. 154-155

76 Owen Wright et al., Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online, s.v. “Arab music,”
77 Mahmoud Guettat, “The Andalusian Musical Heritage,” in The Middle East, ed. Virginia Danielson,
78 Ibid.
Along with the above allusions to Andalusian music, O’Regan says that “there is certainly the influence of al-Andalusian music (for example at mm. 82-89). These tend to be linear melodic ideas which go across fairly accented ‘straight’ rhythms.” Example 2-10 shows the influence of al-Andalusian music. The viola and cello play consecutive eighth notes, while the violins play irregular rhythmic patterns. The two contrasting rhythmic patterns highlight the tune of the violins.

Example 2-10, Tarik O’Regan’s *The Ecstasies Above*, String quartet, mm. 82-85

Islamic Literary Characteristics and Exotic Musical Factors within *The Ecstasies Above*

In this work, the evocations of Arabic music are strongly related to the text, a poem containing Arabic literary references. O’Regan used an adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe’s poem “Israfel” as the text for *The Ecstasies Above*. He omits Poe’s fifth stanza while lifting the title, *The Ecstasies Above*, from stanza 6 of the poem.

Poe incorporates the Muslim concepts of Houri and Israfel. Houri refers to “a nymph of the Muslim Paradise.” Similarly, Israfel refers to one of the Islamic archangels. “In Muslim

---

79 O’Regan, e-mail message to author, October 4, 2011.
tradition, [Israfel] will sound the trumpet on the Day of Judgement [sic],” 83 and Poe describes his music as having supernatural power because of its beauty. In describing Israfel in the first stanza, Poe directly quotes “whose heart strings are a lute” from the Koran. 84 O’Regan interprets Poe’s poetic description of Israfel as follows:

Through his creative description of the angel, Israfel, and the heavens, Poe creates a virtuous image of the supernatural. Poe compares this heavenly vision to the harsh reality of human existence. Whilst the beauty of Israfel’s voice and lyre can silence even the moon and the stars in the heavens, Poe suggests that if Israfel were placed in an earthly environment, he would not sing with such zest. From the Koranic source of the name for the protagonist, the story is refashioned by Poe into an homage of ecumenicity to an all-encompassing angel of music. 85

In setting this text, O’Regan employs specific musical figures to characterize each section. For this reason, the poem’s words from Islamic literature are not always wedded to the Islamic musical elements within the work. Nevertheless, from measure 47 through 84, O’Regan links a specific musical figure to the text, “Israfel.” The figure’s clarion rhythmic characterization could be seen as a reflection of the implied martial elements of the Arabic trumpet of judgment, the role of Israfel in the Islamic tradition. (See example 2-11.)

Example 2-11, Tarik O’Regan’s The Ecstasies Above, Solo soprano I. mm. 52-53

In conclusion, O’Regan employs aspects of Balinese gamelan music in Nunc Dimittis and Andalusian music in The Ecstasies Above. The usage of gamelan exoticism can be explained by

---

the fact that it has inherent minimalistic qualities. Additionally, the Arabic reminiscence of Andalusian music is rooted in the poem “Israfel,” referring to an Islamic angel, and O’Regan’s own cultural familiarity with North Africa.
O’Regan superimposes a modern approach upon the Renaissance practice of alternating chant and polyphony in *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis*. As a contemporary application of Renaissance practice, he uses contrapuntal minimalism to unfold polyphony, which he contrasts with a homophonic section carrying a chant tune.

**Renaissance Practice of Alternatim in Magnificat**

Alternatim, which originated in the medieval Catholic practice of antiphonal psalmody, usually refers to a manner to “alternate sections of certain liturgical items performed by distinct and normally dissimilar forces.”

In the Renaissance period, the compositional technique of alternatim represents alternation of polyphony and chant in various liturgical settings: Mass ordinaries, Magnificats, hymns, and sequences.

In the setting of the *Magnificat*, the verse-by-verse setting of discrete sections was very common until the early seventeenth century. Concerning this setting, Stefan Gasch says that “In the second half of the fifteenth century the verse-like structure of the canticle led to the development of those formal characteristics which still defined the form of Magnificats in the seventeenth century.” Namely, the “verse-by-verse setting facilitated the alternatim performance of the Magnificat.”

---

87 Ibid.
89 Schiltz and Blackburn, 254.
90 Ibid.
Modern Approaches to the Renaissance Practice of Alternating Chant and Polyphony in

*Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis*

In *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis*, O’Regan’s primary compositional idea is to intermingle modern approaches with the Renaissance practice of alternating monophonic chant and polyphony. Along with a modified use of the traditional alternation of chant and polyphony, O’Regan simultaneously employs polyphony and homophony. Specifically, the concertante group (the choir) sings a varied chant tune set in homophonic texture, while the polyphony of the ripieno group (the solo octet) unfolds more complex, minimalistic music. Although O’Regan employs two different textures simultaneously, causing great complexity, the entire concertante soprano section sings the tune as the top voice of the homophonic texture at the dynamic of *mezzo-forte*, while the ripieno group sings *piano*. In the following example, the ripieno choir, the top four lines in the example provided, shows a minimalistically-influenced canon while the concertante choir sings the varied chant tune.

---

91 O’Regan, *Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis*, [ii].
Example 3-1, Tarik O’Regan’s Magnificat, mm. 39-42

In another innovative approach to alternatim, O’Regan enhanced the chant by adding variation technique. (Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis is subtitled “Variations for Choir.”) During verses 1 and 11 in Magnificat and 1 and 5 in Nunc Dimittis, when O’Regan unfolds a chant tune prior to a polyphonic section, the two choirs share the chant tune: the ripieno choir sings the initial part of the chant and the concertante choir sings the latter part.

In the polyphonic sections, specifically, the varied chant melody predominantly appears in the concertante choir and the cello. For example, the varied chant tune of the concertante
soprano part shows a rhythmic variation at measures 31 through 45 of Magnificat Tone 7 found in the *Liber Usualis*.92 (See example 3-2.)

In a second example, O'Regan employs another variation technique: he distributes the notes of the tune throughout the various sections of the concertante choir so that when heard as a whole the chant tune is clearly audible. To strengthen this idea O'Regan adds an accent mark to highlight the chant note in each voice.93

Another variation technique can be found at measure 76 through 87. The chant tune is in the cello (or soprano saxophone) instead of the concertante choir, creating a different timbre in the chant variation. O'Regan also employs rhythmic variation in this section. (See example 3-2.)

Example 3-2, Comparison of Magnificat Tone 7 and Tarik O'Regan’s *Magnificat*, Violoncello. mm. 76-81 and Soprano of concertante choir mm. 31-33

In the fugato section (m. 104-125), the subject of the six-voice fugato is a variation of the opening melody of Magnificat Tone 7. The subject of the varied chant tune exhibits syncopated rhythms that evoke a jazz-like character. (See example 1-7.) In contrast, the soprano of the concertante choir and the soprano 2 of the ripieno choir are an example much like a cantus

92 Catholic Church, *The Liber Usualis, with Introduction and Rubrics in English* (Tournai, Belgium: Desclée, 1963), 211.
93 The composer says that “accented notes in the concertante group indicates the contiguous pitches of the chant melody as it permeates all four parts” in the score. O’Regan, *Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis*, 12.
firmus; they sing the chant in half notes against the fugato polyphony of the ripieno choir at measures 118 through 127.

In *Nunc Dímissis*, the introduction starts with a rhythmic and melodic variation derived from Magnificat Tone 5. (See example 3-3.) Once the melodic line of the violoncello (or soprano saxophone) indicates the pre-existing chant tune, it then grows in rhythmic and melodic complexity.

Example 3-3, Comparison of Magnificat Tone 5 and Tarik O’Regan’s *Nunc Dímissis*, Violoncello. mm. 145-149

In summary, in *Magnificat and Nunc Dímissis*, O’Regan recreates the Renaissance practice of *alternatim* in that two contrasting textures, polyphony and homophony, are simultaneously presented. In his realization of the alternation of chant and polyphony, O’Regan incorporates minimalistic techniques and variations of the chant tune.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

In Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis and The Ecstasies Above, O’Regan employs minimalism and exoticism with manipulation of texture to allude to specific historical and cultural practices. There are two primary reasons for using minimalism in Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis: to create polyphony that recalls elements of that found in Renaissance practice and to give the polyphony a contemporary application. Additionally, Nunc Dimittis shows the influence of Balinese gamelan music not merely in its exoticism but also in its minimalistic nature. In The Ecstasies Above, the Andalusian characteristics and word-music relationships create a sense of Middle Eastern exoticism.

The recognition of O’Regan’s minimalistically-based canonic ideas and their contrapuntal application will help performers approach the polyphony from a more clearly defined textural standpoint. Additionally, an understanding of the influence of Balinese gamelan music and Andalusian music can inform the application of desirable tone colors and microcosmic shaping of melodic elements during performance of these pieces. The study of O’Regan’s approach to minimalism, exoticism and alternatim in these works suggests guidelines for researching and performing O’Regan’s other choral works.
APPENDIX

E-MAIL INTERVIEW WITH TARIK O’REGAN
Question: According to the article in the September 2006 issue of *Gramophone*, you were influenced by the minimalistic composer, Steve Reich. Additionally, *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis* and *The Ecstasies Above* do show, in my opinion, an influence of Steve Reich’s minimalistic technique. How did Steve Reich become influential to you, and did any of his works in particular influence your compositional style?

Answer: I trained as a percussionist, so became familiar with the music of Steve Reich through works like *Clapping Music* and *Six Marimbas* etc. I was always struck by how he is able to maintain a sense of forward movement by using intricate rhythmic techniques (be they phasing, or rhythmic displacement). I wanted to adopt some of those ideas in my works for chorus.

Q: From measure 74 to 94 in *The Ecstasies Above*, it seems that the primary compositional manner is the application of Steve Reich’s rhythmic displacement, which is developed from a phasing technique like that found in *Clapping Music*. If this is true, would you elaborate upon this idea?

A: Rhythmically yes, but not tonally. Reich often uses the precise same patterning, which he phases or displaces gently. I don't use the phasing technique, and the displacement is there from the start. Also, here there are two melodic ideas each in canon. I guess you can call this some kind of interlocked rhythmic and melodic displacement.

Q: You mentioned in the notes published in *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis* that these pieces recreate the Renaissance practice of alternating chant and polyphony from a contemporary perspective. In my analysis, I have found that you used minimalism as a tool to give the polyphony a contemporary dimension in these works. Would you please discuss the blending of Renaissance practice and modern ideas in this piece?

A: Yes, I think you're right. Minimalism shares a lot with the renaissance ideas of isorhythm and - earlier, in medieval music, the hocket. Rather than fusing two ideas, I think I just sought to find the meeting point of the two and highlight the area where they cross over.

Q: In *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis*, you give the performer a choice between soprano saxophone and cello. Would you please discuss this specific compositional choice? Additionally, in measures 168 to 183 of *Nunc Dimittis*, you use a Balinese gamelan scale. Did you intend to depict the *suling* (Balinese bamboo flute) when the soprano saxophone or cello plays the exotic rhythmic gestures in this passage?

A: The piece was originally designed and composed for cello. The saxophone was added later for a concert. I wasn't sure about it, but quite liked it in the end, so I made it a formal part of the piece. Certainly I didn't want to [sic]

Q. In *Nunc Dimittis* (mm.167 to 185), you have used Eastern musical vocabularies, like a pentatonic scale and an exotic rhythm, to set a Western text. Am I right in thinking that you employ Balinese gamelan music for its minimalistic quality, and the exoticism it produces is a by-product? That is, that minimalism is a priority, and exoticism is secondary in this section? Would you please elaborate upon your inspiration for this?

36
A: I like the way the Balinese scale can be superimposed over the medieval plainchant more to create an interesting dialogue. It's not so much that I wanted a minimalistic quality, but rather a conversation between two “ancient” cultural ideas.

Q: *The Ecstasies Above* contains Middle Eastern exoticism both in the use of melodic fragments and rhythmic gestures. I believe this is the influence of your cultural background in North Africa, in addition to being a way to convey the character of the Israfel in the poem. Would you please elaborate upon what I found?

A: There is certainly the influence of Al-Andalusian music (for example at mm. 82-89). These tend to be linear melodic ideas which go across fairly accented “straight” rhythms. The string writing in the section beginning at, [m.] 141 is another example of a gestural connection with the music North Africa, specifically Moroccan Al-Andalusian music.

Q: According to Richard Morrison’s review concerning *The Ecstasies Above* in the November 5, 2009 issue of the London Times, he mentions that “there were audible influences here: Copland in the dancing folksiness of the string writing; the Charles Ives of *The Unanswered Question* in the mystery of some ethereal harmonies … and hints of Adams and Nyman about the minimalist touches.” Do you agree or disagree and would you please discuss this specifically?

A: I agree, these are all composers who have influenced me in their own way. I hope the way that I have melded these influences, together with my own voice, has formed something unique.

Q: I have discovered that you borrowed music from your symphonic work *Raï* (2006) to use in *The Ecstasies Above* (2007). Please discuss your thinking behind this borrowing from your earlier work.

A: I often re-use ideas (whether they be whole sections, or just melodic ideas) across pieces. I often view each new piece as a development of a prior one. Instead of going back to re-write an older piece, I may take an idea and re-work it or place it in a different context.

Q: At measure 155-165 of *The Ecstasies Above* solo soprano II imitates solo soprano I one beat later. Is this an extension of canon or a call and response reminiscent of Andalusian music? Additionally, the soprano solos’ vocal range is too low. Is there any specific reason for this?

A: It's just a textural effect (both the range and the canonic idea).

Q: At measure 75-86 of *Magnificat*, the relationship between the ripieno choir and the concertante choir shows melodic inversion: the ripieno choir’s alto 2 and tenor 1 against the concertante’s alto and tenor. However, it might also be regarded as retrograde. What is your idea concerning this device?

A: It's melodic inversion!
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Reference Books


**Dissertation**


**Journals, Newspapers, and Magazines**


### Sound Recordings and Scores


### Internet Sources


“Tarik O'Regan Wins British Composer Award 2005.” Chester Novello.
