

SACRED SOUND AT THE SYMPHONY: A CONDUCTOR'S GUIDE TO FAITH  
TRADITIONS IN CHORAL-ORCHESTRAL REPERTOIRE

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Since most historical composers of Western art music were European Christians (or resided in areas that were primarily populated by Christians), a vast majority of the sacred choral-orchestral repertoire is based on major figures and themes from the most prominent denominations, including Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Anglicanism. As a corollary this is also the case for analytical, pedagogical, and exegetical literature related to the topic. However, in the late nineteenth century some composers began to look to other faith traditions for inspiration, which resulted in compositions based on texts that are less-familiar to Western audience members and performers. Despite the fact that many of these pieces are innovative and well-written, few, if any, have entered the standard repertoire. Because of this they are under-represented in both performance and extant music literature.

The purpose of this study is to examine three compositions from this marginalized category in order to produce a guide that provides salient information on the religious/cultural background and musical aspects of each work. This guide will serve as a resource for conductors to facilitate an understanding of and connection with the text, allow informed programming decisions, and promote approaches that are appropriate and respectful to the religious source material. The pieces selected for investigation are Gustav Holst's *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda*, Op. 26: First Group, Lili Boulanger's *Vielle Prière Bouddhique* (Old Buddhist Prayer), and Robert Cundick's *The Redeemer*.

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By

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I labored over this page for some time, hoping to write a grand, eloquent message that would do justice to the support that has been given me over the course of my musical career. However, once I came to realize that no words can adequately express my appreciation I settled on the following simple messages. It is my hope that those whom I have acknowledged will recognize that my gratitude is deep, abiding, and, ultimately, inexpressible.

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I acknowledge the hand of God in my life, and offer my sincere thanks for His blessings. I feel that the words of a hymn most adequately express my thoughts and gratitude for His support: “Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed, for I am thy God and will still give thee aid. I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand, upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.”

Finally, I am thankful for the support of my wife, Tiffany, and our children: Tristan, Tavin, and Eleanor. They have sacrificed so much so that I could have the time and energy needed to finish this degree. My debt to them is unpayable, but I am glad to finally say that I will have much more time to play now that this is done.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES.....	vi
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Introduction and Purpose .....	1
Major Choral-Orchestral Compositions.....	2
Works for Liturgical Use .....	2
Works Based on Scriptures.....	5
Works Based on Other Religious Texts.....	6
State of Research.....	7
<i>Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda</i> , Op. 26: First Group .....	7
<i>Vieille Prière Bouddhique</i> .....	8
<i>The Redeemer</i> .....	10
CHAPTER 2. GUSTAV HOLST'S <i>CHORAL HYMNS FROM THE RIG VEDA</i> , OP. 26: FIRST GROUP.....	12
Music in the Vedic Religion .....	12
Gustav Holst.....	15
Holst's Sanskrit Works .....	17
Origin of the Text.....	18
Musical Style .....	23
Performance Considerations .....	26
CHAPTER 3. LILI BOULANGER'S <i>VIEILLE PRIÈRE BOUDDHIQUE</i> .....	29
Music in Buddhism .....	29
Music in Theravada Buddhism .....	31
<i>Vieille Prière Bouddhique</i> .....	34
Lili Boulanger .....	34
Origin of the Text.....	37
Musical Style .....	42
Performance Considerations .....	43

CHAPTER 4. ROBERT CUNDICK’S <i>THE REDEEMER</i> .....	45
A Brief History of Music in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints .....	45
Music in Church Worship .....	47
<i>The Redeemer</i> .....	51
Robert Cundick .....	51
Origin of the Text .....	53
Musical Style .....	58
Performance Considerations .....	59
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION .....	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	64

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Page

Tables

Table 1: Compositional Information for *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda*, Op. 26: First Group 15

Table 2: Textual Origins of Holst’s Libretti ..... 19

Table 3: Comparison of Holst’s “Distilled” Text to a Translation of the Original..... 21

Table 4: Syllabic Comparison..... 23

Table 5: Schools of Buddhism..... 30

Table 6: Composition Information for *Vieille Prière Bouddhique* ..... 34

Table 7: Comparison of Lili’s Text to a Translation of the Original..... 39

Table 8: Compositional Information for *The Redeemer* ..... 51

Table 9: Scriptural Origins of the Libretto ..... 57

Table 10: Vocal Soloist Combinations in *The Redeemer* ..... 61

Figures

Figure 1: Sacrament Meeting Agenda and Hymn #194..... 50

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Introduction and Purpose

Choral-orchestral works have delighted audiences with extended performing forces and heightened drama for over four hundred years. While a number of these pieces are secular in nature, many are based on sacred texts. Since most historical composers of Western art music were European Christians (or resided in areas that were primarily populated by Christians), a vast majority of the sacred choral-orchestral repertoire is based on major figures and themes from the most prominent denominations of that region, including Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Anglicanism. As a corollary this is also the case for analytical, pedagogical, and exegetical literature related to the topic. However, in the late nineteenth century some composers began to look to other faith traditions for inspiration, which resulted in compositions based on texts that are less-familiar to Western audience members and performers. Despite the fact that many of these pieces are innovative and well-written, few, if any, have entered the standard repertoire. Because of this they are under-represented in both performance and extant music literature.

The purpose of this study is to examine three compositions from this marginalized category in order to produce a guide that provides salient information on the religious/cultural background and musical aspects of each work. This guide will serve as a resource for conductors to facilitate an understanding of and connection with the text, allow informed programming decisions, and promote approaches that are appropriate and respectful to the religious source material. The pieces selected for investigation are Gustav Holst's *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda, Op. 26: First Group*, Lili Boulanger's *Vieille Prière Bouddhique* (Old Buddhist Prayer), and Robert Cundick's *The Redeemer*. These works were chosen not only because they are



overdue for detailed analysis, but because it is the opinion of the author that they warrant more regular performance on account of their artistic merit.

### Major Choral-Orchestral Compositions

A survey of notable sacred choral-orchestral works in the Western artistic tradition provides context for the state of the repertoire and the need for this study. At the outset the author acknowledges the challenge and subjectivity involved in determining which works from the large canon of regularly-played repertoire are most significant. To that end this review is not intended to be exhaustive or categorical, but to examine characteristics in order to develop an understanding of common trends within the genre.

Sacred choral-orchestral repertoire can be surveyed based on religious function and textual origin as follows: works for liturgical use, works based on scriptures, and works based on other religious texts. Compositions common to the first category include masses, requiems, church cantatas, and other sacred services. The second division is represented by oratorios and psalm settings. Finally, the third classification encompasses texts such the Stabat Mater, Kaddish prayer, Ave Verum Corpus, and Te Deum, among many others.

### Works for Liturgical Use

One of the liturgies most commonly set to music is the Roman Catholic mass ordinary, which consists of five fixed segments from the larger worship service: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus/Benedictus, and Agnus Dei. Composers occasionally omit one or more movements, creating a form known as *missa brevis* (short mass). The mass, which until the twentieth century was spoken or sung in Latin, “commemorates Jesus Christ and his redeeming work, especially his sacrifice for the sake of all humankind through his crucifixion. The church also recalls the

origin of the Eucharist in the Last Supper.”<sup>1</sup> While early compositions in this genre were appropriate for use within an actual worship service, increasing length and complexity – along with the expansion of instrumental forces – eventually transformed many works into de facto concert pieces. Representative examples include:

- Bach: Mass in B Minor (1749)
- Mozart: Mass in C Minor (1783)
- Beethoven: *Missa solemnis* (1823)
- Schubert: Mass in G Major (1815)
- Bruckner: Mass in F Minor (1868)
- Poulenc: Mass in G (1937)

Although this form was particularly common in the Renaissance, Baroque, and Classical periods, it became less popular thereafter. Moreover, composers who wrote masses in later centuries were more apt to take liberties with the text, language, form, and instrumentation, such as in Bernstein’s *MASS* (1971), which is a theater piece that interjects dance, popular music, and English spoken drama into the Catholic Tridentine Mass.

A requiem mass is a specific type of liturgy that is offered for the souls of deceased persons. Its sections differ from those of the mass ordinary, and due to their number many composers omit one or more when creating a musical setting. Those often included are the Introit, Kyrie, Sequence (including the *Dies irae*), Offertory, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei. Like the mass ordinary, some requiems are suitable for liturgical use whereas others are only appropriate in a concert setting. Representative examples include:

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<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Mass: Christian Religious Service,” by Robert Green, accessed December 16, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mass-Christian-religious-service>.

- Mozart: Requiem in D Minor (1792; finished by Süßmayr)
- Berlioz: *Grande Messe des Morts* (1837)
- Brahms: *Ein deutsches Requiem* (1868; text in German)
- Verdi: *Messa da Requiem* (1874)
- Fauré: Requiem in D Minor (1890)
- Britten: *War Requiem* (1962; interpolates secular poetry)
- Rutter: Requiem (1985; includes biblical verses in English)

The Lutheran church cantata is also designed for liturgical use, although it is not based on formulaic text as is the mass ordinary. Instead it is a “musical ‘sermon before the sermon’,” “sung between the Epistle and Gospel of the day and...related directly to the same, presenting and interpreting the texts of the lections.”<sup>2</sup> Some of these multi-movement works are based on a Lutheran chorale, while others are feely composed. In the Baroque era they were presented on most Sundays, with composers such as Telemann and Bach writing cycles of cantatas for the entire liturgical calendar. In a similar vein, the evening prayer service of Vespers was set to music by Monteverdi in 1610.

Finally, while there are compositions in the Western art tradition that are not centered on Christian liturgical sources, they are much less common. A notable example is Bloch’s *Avodath Hakodesh* (1933), which can function as a complete Sabbath prayer service for a reform Jewish congregation (although it is most often performed in concert).

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<sup>2</sup> “The Lutheran Church Cantata,” The Great Courses Plus, accessed December 16, 2019, <https://www.thegreatcoursesplus.com/how-to-listen-to-and-understand-great-music/the-lutheran-church-cantata>; “Cantata,” Christian Cyclopedia, accessed December 16, 2019, <http://cyclopedia.lcms.org/display.asp?t1=c&word=CANTATA>.

## Works Based on Scriptures

Compositions in this genre differ from those previously discussed in that they are strictly concert pieces. While they are based on sacred texts, they do not follow standard liturgical schemes and would not be used in a worship service. The most well-known form in this category is the oratorio, “an extended musical setting of a text based on religious or ethical subject matter, consisting of narrative, dramatic, and contemplative elements.”<sup>3</sup> Oratorios generally focus on a particular event or story – most often from the Bible – by drawing on assorted scriptures or writings related to the topic. They are also known for their large performing forces and diversity of musical style, which can include solo arias, duets, instrumental movements, and choruses.

Representative examples include:

- Bach: *Matthäus-Passion* (1727)
- Händel: *Messiah* (1741)
- Haydn: *Die Schöpfung* (1798)
- Beethoven: *Christus am Ölberge* (1803)
- Mendelssohn: *Elijah* (1846)
- Berlioz: *L'enfance du Christ* (1854)
- Saint-Saëns: *Le Déluge* (1876)
- Vaughan Williams: *Sancta Civitas* (1925)

Settings of individual or groups of psalms are abundant in Western music. While many are written for chorus and piano/organ for use in congregational singing, orchestral arrangements

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<sup>3</sup> *The Harvard Dictionary of Music Online*, s.v. “Oratorio,” edited by Don Michael Randel, accessed December 16, 2019, <https://libproxy.library.unt.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/harvdictmusic/oratorio/0?institutionId=4982>.

conceived as traditional concert pieces are common.<sup>4</sup> As the psalms are drawn from Old Testament poetry that was intended to be sung, they form a canon of texts that have inspired composers from a multitude of Judeo-Christian denominations. Representative examples include:

- Händel's *O be Joyful in the Lord* (1718; based on Psalm 100)
- Mendelssohn's *As the Hart Longs* (1837; based on Psalm 42)
- Bruckner's *Psalm 150* (1892)
- Vaughan Williams's *The Hundredth Psalm* (1929)
- Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* (1930; based on Psalms 38, 39, and 150)
- Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* (1965; based on Psalms 2, 23, 100, 108, 131, and 133)
- Wilberg's *The Lord is My Shepherd* (2002; based on Psalm 23)

#### Works Based on Other Religious Texts

In most every religion there exists a multitude of devotional material beyond liturgy and scripture that can be adapted for artistic use, including prayers, hymns, and poetry.

Representative examples of this in Western art music include:

- Vivaldi: *Magnificat* (1719)
- Mozart: *Ave Verum Corpus* (1791)
- Rossini: *Stabat Mater* (1841)
- Bruckner: *Te Deum* (1883)
- Elgar: *The Dream of Gerontius* (1900)
- Bernstein: *Symphony No. 3 "Kaddish"* (1963)

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<sup>4</sup> Additionally, psalms are frequently used as the basis for movements in larger works such as oratorios or church cantatas.

## State of Research

While there are countless books, articles, and websites that explicate the general history, theology, and practice of the religions examined in this study, resources on their musical aspects are much less common. However, as a comprehensive review of even this limited subset would practically require a separate published volume, the following short-list is presented as a starting point for further inquiry:

- Guy L. Beck (ed.), *Sacred Sound: Experiencing Music in World Religions* (2006)<sup>5</sup>
- Lewis Rowell, *Music and Musical Thought in Early India* (1992)<sup>6</sup>
- Ian W. Mabbett, “Buddhism and Music” (1993–1994)<sup>7</sup>
- Jay L. Slaughter, “The Role of Music in the Mormon Church, School, and Life” (1964)<sup>8</sup>

### *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda*, Op. 26: First Group

While the *Choral Hymns* are mentioned in many documents related to Holst and his music, most simply state that he was inspired by ancient Indian literature and that he drew from epics such as the *Rig Veda* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Some delve into analysis of musical elements such as orchestration, meter, tessitura, etc., but only Raymond Head’s “Holst and India” series (originally published as three articles in *Tempo* and later amalgamated into a short book) and the chapter “From India to the Planet Mars: Gustav Holst” in Nalini Ghuman’s *Resonances of the*

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<sup>5</sup> Guy L. Beck, ed., *Sacred Sound: Experiencing Music in World Religions* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Lewis Rowell, *Music and Musical Thought in Early India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> Ian Mabbett, “Buddhism and Music,” *Asian Music* 25, no. 1/2 (1993): 9-28, doi:10.2307/834188.

<sup>8</sup> Jay L. Slaughter, “The Role of Music in the Mormon Church, School, and Life” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1964).

*Raj: India in the English Musical Imagination, 1897-1947* investigate details of the text itself.<sup>9</sup> Head's second essay, "Holst and India (II)," which served as a starting point for this study, focuses on both the solo and choral hymns.<sup>10</sup> In the author's own words his analysis of Holst's "'Indian' works [explains] why [Holst] was interested in Indian literature and how this affected the music that was composed."<sup>11</sup> Head provides an excellent account of Holst's engagement with the Sanskrit language, traces many of the hymns to their Vedic originals, and discusses some musical elements. Ghuman's chapter on Holst builds on Head's work while going into greater detail. It includes analysis of "To the Unknown God," a discussion of the opera *Savitri* and its relation to Holst's other "Sanskrit" compositions, and a compelling, well-researched argument on Holst's inclusion of authentic Indian musical elements. This assertion challenges many flawed assumptions that had been promulgated for decades in biographies and other documents on Holst and his music – including, to an extent, by Head.

### *Vieille Prière Bouddhique*

Although Lili Boulanger was the first woman to win the *Prix de Rome*, there was a dearth of studies devoted to her music in the decades following her early death. Interest has been rekindled in recent years, with books and articles beginning to explore both her personal life and her compositions. Any serious examination must start with Léonie Rosenstiel's seminal biography, *The Life and Works of Lili Boulanger*.<sup>12</sup> Due to her interviews with Lili's sister,

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<sup>9</sup> Raymond Head, *Gustav Holst and India* (Chipping Norton: Sky Dance Press, 2012); Nalini Ghuman, *Resonances of the Raj: India in the English Musical Imagination, 1897-1947* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 105-67.

<sup>10</sup> Raymond Head, "Holst and India (II)," *Tempo*, no. 160 (1987): 27-36, [www.jstor.org/stable/944789](http://www.jstor.org/stable/944789).

<sup>11</sup> Raymond Head, "Gustav Holst and India," accessed December 16, 2019, <http://raymondhead.com/gustav-holst-and-india>.

<sup>12</sup> Léonie Rosenstiel, *The Life and Works of Lili Boulanger* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1978).

Nadia, and the access that was granted to many personal documents, Rosenstiel's monograph contains information, recollections, and insights that cannot be found anywhere else. This book is the primary resource for our understanding of the origin of the text to *Vieille Prière Bouddhique* and the history of its composition. Additional sources that comment on *Vieille Prière Bouddhique* include Caroline Potter's book *Nadia and Lili Boulanger*, April Renée Smith-Gonzalez's thesis, "Lili Boulanger (1893-1918): Her Life and Works, Cara Suzanne Tasher's dissertation, "A Conductor's Guide to the Choral Works of Lili Boulanger (1893-1918), and Birgit Stièvenard-Salomon's article, "Zwischen Fortschritt und Tradition: Zum Problem der Form im 'Vieille Prière Bouddhique' von Lili Boulanger."<sup>13</sup>

The discussion of *Vieille Prière Bouddhique* in Potter's volume is roughly two pages in length, and it primarily focuses on tonality and other surface-level musical elements.<sup>14</sup> Smith-Gonzalez's treatment is similarly limited, although it includes a comparison of the French and English versions of the text.<sup>15</sup> Tasher is much more thorough as she includes a list of sketches and manuscripts, an IPA guide for the French lyrics, information on premiere performance (including a picture of the concert program), and analysis that covers musical elements and suggestions for choral rehearsal.<sup>16</sup> Stièvenard-Salomon's article is the only one of these resources that is exclusively devoted to *Vieille Prière Bouddhique*.<sup>17</sup> In it she examines the

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<sup>13</sup> "Between Progress and Tradition: the Problem of Form in 'Vieille Prière Bouddhique' by Lili Boulanger."

<sup>14</sup> Caroline Potter, *Nadia and Lili Boulanger* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 102-04.

<sup>15</sup> April Renée Smith-Gonzalez, "Lili Boulanger (1893-1918): Her Life and Works," (Master's thesis, Florida Atlantic University, 2001), 122-25.

<sup>16</sup> Cara Suzanne Tasher, "A Conductor's Guide to the Choral Works of Lili Boulanger (1893–1918)," (PhD diss., University of Cincinnati, 2006), 47-56 and 163-164.

<sup>17</sup> Birgit Stievenard-Salomon, "Zwischen Fortschritt und Tradition: Zum Problem der Form im 'Vieille priere bouddhique' von Lili Boulanger," in *Lili Boulanger-Tage 1993. Bremen: Zum 100. Geburtstag der Komponistin: Konzerte und Veranstaltungen* 19, no. 22 (August 1993): 52-55.



musical climate in the early 1900's, the origin of the work and its text (relying heavily on Rosenstiel), and its formal design.

### *The Redeemer*

Of the three composers represented in this study, the least has been written about Robert Cundick. No detailed biography exists, nor have any books been written about his music. Only two research papers specifically explore *The Redeemer*: Bradley J. Thompson's thesis, "A Historical and Analytical Look at *The Redeemer* by Robert Cundick," and Brian Richard Bentley's dissertation, "The Philosophical Foundations and Practical Use of Choral Music in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the Twentieth Century, Focusing on the Music of Robert Cundick, with Emphasis on his Sacred Service, 'The Redeemer'." Thompson's thesis covers the genesis of *The Redeemer* and includes analyses on harmony, cadence, melody, form, meter, and text painting.<sup>18</sup> Bentley states that his inquiry, which covers each of the movements, focuses on "musical expression as it relates to text, as well as use of thematic and motivic material."<sup>19</sup> However, despite the fact that the title of his study indicates a focus on *The Redeemer*, discussion and analysis of the work constitutes only a third of the document.

While the aforementioned resources provide a considerable amount of useful information, they do not address the following topics: the significance and practice of music in the religions from which the works are derived; detailed analyses on the origin of the texts and how they are used within the denomination; information on cultural context and

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<sup>18</sup> Bradley J. Thompson, "A Historical and Analytical Look at *The Redeemer* by Robert Cundick," (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1983).

<sup>19</sup> Brian Richard Bentley, "The Philosophical Foundations and Practical Use of Choral Music in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the Twentieth Century, Focusing on the Music of Robert Cundick, with Emphasis on His Sacred Service, *The Redeemer*," (PhD diss., University of Cincinnati, 1999), 94.

recommendations for ways to appropriately perform and advertise the works in a modern setting.

This dissertation is designed to address these gaps in the literature.

## CHAPTER 2

### GUSTAV HOLST'S *CHORAL HYMNS FROM THE RIG VEDA*, OP. 26: FIRST GROUP

#### Music in the Vedic Religion

Holst's *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda* draws inspiration from a musical tradition that is at least 3,000 years old. The *Rgveda* is one of four volumes of scripture from the Vedic religion, a precursor to modern Hinduism that was practiced by tribes of Indo-Aryan peoples in northwest India from approximately 1500 to 600 B.C.<sup>1</sup> Their devotional texts, called the *Rgveda*, *Samaveda*, *Yajurveda*, and *Atharvaveda*, are particularly notable for their connection to “sacred sound,” an association that informed thousands of years of worship music on the Indian subcontinent.

Each individual Veda is a composite of multiple texts that were amalgamated over a period of several hundred years. Subjects touched on in different “layers” include praise of deity, sacrificial formulae, magical spells, exegesis, and even philosophic musings on the nature of God and the universe. The oldest and most important tome is the *Rgveda* (ca. 1500–1200 B.C.), a vast collection of 1,028 metrical verses – often referred to as hymns – that are dedicated to a number of important Vedic deities such as Indra, Agni, Soma, Varuna, and Ushas, among many others. According to Guy L. Beck, “Some of the deities have the appearance of being personifications of the phenomena of nature such as the sun, dawn, storm, and rivers. The precise nature of many others is indefinite.”<sup>2</sup> The text of the shorter *Samaveda*, which was compiled after the *Rgveda*, consists almost entirely of excerpts taken directly from the older document; however, it is still

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<sup>1</sup> From Sanskrit: ṛc “to shine (or praise)” and veda “knowledge.” Note that Holst uses an alternate Anglicization: *Rig Veda*. Following the lead of Guy L. Beck I have omitted diacritical marks from most non-English names and terms in this study (see Guy L. Beck, *Sonic Liturgy: Ritual and Music in Hindu Tradition* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012), xi).

<sup>2</sup> Beck, *Sonic Liturgy*, 39.

extremely significant in its own right as it also contains notated melodies – likely the oldest in the world.<sup>3</sup> Modern scholarship dates it as contemporaneous with the *Yajurveda* (ca. 1200–1000 B.C.), which also includes text excerpted from the *Rgveda*, though the *Yajurveda* differs from the *Samaveda* in that it also includes prose formulas for ritual offerings. The *Atharvaveda* was almost certainly the final Veda to be compiled, sometime after 1000 B.C. It contains metrical hymns (most of which were drawn directly from *Rgveda*), but like the *Yajurveda* it also incorporates written text, although in this case it is magical and healing spells.

The oldest material in the Vedas is revered as *shruti* scripture, meaning “that which is heard...because it is a revealed, inspired text, that was ‘heard’ by the seers to whom the gods spoke it.”<sup>4</sup> Tradition holds that the liturgical portions of these texts were revealed to *rishis* (certain seer-poets), and for hundreds of years the priestly caste of each tribe was solely responsible for their use and preservation. Michael Witzel explains that “the hymns were the intellectual property of certain clans...In fact, the bulk of the [*Rgveda*] represents only 5 or 6 generations of kings (and of the contemporary poets) of the Puru and Bharata tribes. It contains little else *before* and *after* this ‘snapshot’ view of contemporary Rgvedic history...”<sup>5</sup>

Vedic worship was centered on the performance of sacrificial rites, most often involving sacred fire, which was representative of the god Agni. There were a great number of public and private rituals that included offerings of food (milk, vegetables, rice, etc.), soma (a

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<sup>3</sup> Wayne Howard, *Samavedic Chant* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 8; Frits Staal refers to it as “the Rgveda set to music” in *Discovering the Vedas: Origins, Mantras, Rituals, Insights* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2008), 4.

<sup>4</sup> Wendy Doniger, *Textual Sources for the Study of Hinduism* (Totowa: Barnes and Noble, 1988), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Witzel, “The Development of the Vedic Canon and its Schools: the Social and Political Milieu,” in *Inside the Texts, Beyond the Texts: New Approaches to the Study of the Vedas: Proceedings of the International Vedic Workshop, Harvard University, June 1989*, ed. Michael Witzel (Cambridge: Harvard University Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, 1997), 261-263.

hallucinogenic libation created from a plant), and occasionally animals.<sup>6</sup> These varied in scope and method, but regardless of mode their purpose was to either propitiate or control the gods. Music – usually termed chant<sup>7</sup> – formed an important aspect as a “power-substance” that was believed to increase the efficacy of the ceremony.<sup>8</sup> Selina Thielemann summarizes the principle as follows: “In the Vedic tradition, sound is identified with the supreme reality, *śabda-brahman*, the prime object of worship and meditation. Being given concrete shape in the chanted syllable, sound acts as the principal vehicle of communication between man and the forces of the universe.”<sup>9</sup>

Text for these rituals was drawn from the Vedas and was originally chanted in a limited pitch system that utilized three tones: low, middle, and high. Although the pitches do not fully match the Western equal-tempered scale, the low tone was approximately one whole step below the middle pitch while the high tone was roughly one half-step higher.<sup>10</sup> Precise performance of each chant was considered to be of paramount importance; errors such as mispronunciation, incorrect accentuation, or improper tonal production were considered serious transgressions that could incur the wrath of the gods and endanger the life of the chanter.<sup>11</sup> By the time the *Samaveda* was composed this pitch system had expanded to a range of seven notes, making it possible to sing in a more melodic style. Rowell even goes as far as to say that the “hymns of the

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<sup>6</sup> Mariasusai Dhavamony, “Hindu Worship: Sacrifices and Sacraments,” in *Worship and Ritual in Christianity and Other Religions* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1974), 83 and 89.

<sup>7</sup> Rowell argues that there is some ambiguity as to whether the style should correctly be labeled “chant” or “recitation.” See *Music and Musical Thought*, 58.

<sup>8</sup> G.U. Thite, *Music in the Vedas: Its Macro-Religious Significance* (Delhi: Sharada Publishing House, 1997), 3.

<sup>9</sup> Selina Thielemann, *Singing the Praises Divine: Music in the Hindu Tradition* (New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, 2000), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Beck, *Sonic Liturgy*, 50.

<sup>11</sup> Rowell, *Music and Musical Thought*, 57.

*Samaveda* [were] conceived and rendered in specifically musical terms.”<sup>12</sup>

**Table 1: Compositional Information for *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda*, Op. 26: First Group**

Dates of Composition:	1908 – 1910
First Performance:	6 December 1911; Newcastle-on-Tyne Musical Union; conducted by Edgar Bainton
Duration:	Approximately 20 minutes
Movements:	3
Instrumentation:	2 Flutes, 2 Oboes, English Horn, 2 Clarinets, 2 Bassoons, Contrabassoon, 4 Horns, 3 Trumpets, 3 Trombones, Tuba, Percussion (Timpani, Bass Drum, Gong, Side Drum, Cymbal), Harp, Organ, SATB Chorus, Strings
Language:	English
Publisher:	Stainer and Bell

### Gustav Holst

Gustavus Theodore von Holst (eventually shortened to “Gustav Holst”) was born in Cheltenham, England, on 21 September 1874. His father was a professional pianist, and music was central to the nature of the household. Although as a youth Gustav learned the piano, organ, violin, and eventually the trombone, neuritis in his hands and a weak constitution meant that he could not practice for the long hours required to achieve virtuosic mastery. His mother’s death in 1882 and subsequent “benign neglect” by his stepmother did nothing to help the situation.<sup>13</sup> In addition to his instrumental studies he had also been interested in composition from a young age, producing one of his first “early horrors” – a woodwind piece based on the poem *Horatius at the Bridge* – at the age of 12 or 13.<sup>14</sup> His skill improved over the next few years as he continued to compose and perform, and in 1893 he submitted a two-act opera, *Lansdown Castle*, as part of his

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>13</sup> Jon C. Mitchell, *A Comprehensive Biography of Composer Gustav Holst, With Correspondence and Diary Excerpts: Including His American Years* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Imogen Holst, *Gustav Holst: A Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 1.

application to study composition at the Royal College of Music. Holst gained admission, but was not awarded a scholarship until 1895.

During his studies he met Emily Isobel Harrison, to whom he became engaged after a short courtship. In 1898 Holst decided against returning to school and instead took a position as a trombonist and *répétiteur* with the Carl Rosa Opera Company in order to begin his life as professional musician. He and Isobel married in 1901, and he earned additional money by playing with the Scottish Orchestra and trying to sell his compositions. It was a challenging period as his time and energy were spent touring and performing rather than composing, so he eventually decided to give up professional trombone playing in order to accept the post of music teacher at James Allen's Girls' School (1904). This proved to be a seminal decision as he continued teaching for the rest of his life – partly because he enjoyed it, and partly because it afforded much more time for composition. He was appointed Musical Director of St. Paul's Girls' School in 1905, and Musical Director at Morley College in 1907, holding all three positions simultaneously until 1920.

Holst's compositional style matured and he produced a wide variety of works during the early 1900s, including his most famous piece, *The Planets*, in 1916. The successful public premiere of the full suite in late 1920, along with the premiere of *The Hymn of Jesus* earlier that year, marked the point in his career where he began to experience true international fame. Orchestras in Chicago and New York competed for the privilege of giving the first American performance of *The Planets*, and it was played in Berlin in 1922. *The Hymn of Jesus* was extremely popular in Britain, with Holst himself stating that “The first edition is exhausted, the Phil. is repeating it on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, the R.C.M. and Oxford are doing it this summer, and most other

people in the autumn!”<sup>15</sup> In 1923, Holst was invited to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor to lecture and conduct at a music festival. During this trip he was offered a professorship at that University as well as directorship of the Eastman School of Music. Although tempted, he declined both offers. His busy schedule led to exhaustion, and in 1924 he vacated most of his positions in order to rest and focus on composing.

The remainder of his life proceeded in much the same way as the period from 1905 – 1924: Holst returned to St. Paul’s Girls’ School in 1925, continued to compose, and visited America again in 1929 and 1932. Although recognized as an accomplished musician and composer (and, increasingly, as a conductor), none of his later endeavors brought the same measure of success and renown as *The Planets*. This did not seem to cause Holst any consternation; his dislike of fame (and its accompanying intrusions and interviews) was well-known. He was in ill health during the final two years of his life – suffering particularly from a duodenal ulcer. Although a surgery to remove the ulcer on 23 May 1934 was successful, Holst’s body was not strong enough to fully recover, and he died from heart failure on Friday the 25<sup>th</sup>.

### Holst’s Sanskrit Works

Holst’s fascination with the stories of ancient India began in 1899, shortly after the start of his career as a professional musician. According to Michael Short, “His interest in the subject began when the [Carl Rosa Opera Company] was at Scarborough...a friend lent him one of Friedrich Max Müller’s books (probably one of the volumes of *The Sacred Books of the East*) which captured his interest and prompted his curiosity to know more about the subject.”<sup>16</sup> He began studying Sanskrit in the same year, taking lessons from Mabel Bode at the London School

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<sup>15</sup> Imogen Holst, *Gustav Holst: A Biography*, 81.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Short, *Gustav Holst: The Man and His Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 37.



of Oriental Languages with the goal of being able to produce his own translations. Imogen Holst, the composer's daughter, states that "The mysticism of the 'Rig Veda,' the drama of the 'Ramayana,' and the philosophy of the 'Bhagavad Gita' appealed to him very strongly. Here, he felt, was a rational religion, and the search for wisdom now became even more important than the search for beauty...He was never converted to any religion, whether Hindu or otherwise, but much of the philosophy of the 'Bhagavad Gita' became a part of himself."<sup>17</sup> Holst was likely more open to these beliefs than an average Englishman due to his exposure (through his step-mother) at a young age to the tenets of Theosophy, a religio-philosophical approach to life heavily influenced by Pre-Vedic Brahmanism and Buddhism.<sup>18</sup>

Between 1903 and 1912 he completed several works based on epic Sanskrit literature, most notably a symphonic poem (*Indra*), two operas (*Sita* and *Savitri*), solo songs (*Hymns from the Rig Veda*), the *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda*, and a large choral-orchestral work titled *The Cloud Messenger*. Interestingly, Raymond Head posits that one of Holst's goals in choosing these writings was to "discover a more personal style, free of Wagnerian overtones and more truly representative of English culture."<sup>19</sup> Head believes that Holst's "unconscious aim...[was] to produce a genuine synthesis of words and music that would have a distinctively English character."<sup>20</sup>

### Origin of the Text

The *Rgveda* is traditionally divided into ten books, with numbers for each book and hymn

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<sup>17</sup> Imogen Holst, *Gustav Holst: a Biography*, 21-22.

<sup>18</sup> Merwin-Marie Snell, "Modern Theosophy and Its Relation to Hinduism and Buddhism. I," *The Biblical World* 5, no. 3 (1895): 202, [www.jstor.org/stable/3135389](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3135389); Imogen Holst, *Gustav Holst: A Biography*, 21.

<sup>19</sup> Head, "Holst and India (II)," 27.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

expressed as Roman numerals. Table 2, adapted from Head’s article “Holst in India (II),” shows the Vedic origin of Holst’s texts for the entire *Choral Hymns* series.<sup>21</sup>

**Table 2: Textual Origins of Holst’s Libretti**

First Group (chorus and orchestra)	
Battle Hymn	Book I, Hymn C
To the Unknown God	Book X, Hymn CXXI
Funeral Hymn	Book X, Hymns XIV and XVIII
Second Group (female chorus and orchestra)	
To Varuna	Book VII, Hymn LXXXVIII
To Agni	Book X, Hymn XCVII
Funeral Chant	Book X, Hymn CLIV
Third Group (female chorus and harp)	
Hymn to the Dawn	Book III, Hymn LXI
Hymn to the Waters	Book VIII, Hymn XLIX
Hymn to Vena	Book X, Hymn CXXIII
Hymn of the Travellers	Book I, Hymn XLII
Fourth Group (male chorus, strings, brass, and percussion)	
Hymn to Agni	Unknown <sup>22</sup>
Hymn to Soma	Book IX, Hymn CXII
Hymn to Manas	Book X, Hymn LVIII
Hymn to Indra	Book II, XII

By the time Holst began writing the *Choral Hymns* in 1907 he had been immersed in the study of Sanskrit for several years. According to Imogen,

<sup>21</sup> Head, “Holst in India (II),” 29-36. Curiously, Head did not link “Battle Hymn” or “Hymn to the Waters” to their original sources; this connection was made by the author. Moreover, Head inadvertently states that both the “Hymn to Vena” and the “Hymn of the Travellers” are derived from Book I, Hymn LXII. This is certainly a typographical error, and in Table 2 I have provided the correct Vedic origin for the “Hymn to Vena.”

<sup>22</sup> Likely derived from multiple Hymns

He wanted to try to set some of the Sanskrit hymns to music, but he found that the words of the English versions were stilted and unnatural. At first he would collect all the translations he could find, and would mix them up together, altering a word or simplifying a phrase wherever he felt the need. But it was an unsatisfactory method.<sup>23</sup>

The problems with this system eventually led to his decision to study Sanskrit, but he never progressed beyond the basics. Raymond Head reports that an inspection of the textbook Holst used shows an “...absence of pencil marks after lesson 19 [that makes] it clear that Holst did not go beyond this point; not enough knowledge to be able seriously to approach the problems of translation, but enough to look up words in a dictionary and decipher rudimentary grammar [sic].”<sup>24</sup> Imogen corroborates this sentiment: “In spite of working hard at Sanskrit, Gustav was never able to read it with anything approaching facility. Each word had to be looked up in the dictionary, and each sentence had to be compared with a crib.”<sup>25</sup>

In addition to Holst’s lack of fluency with Sanskrit, the length of the original *Rgvedic* texts made word-for-word settings impractical. In the end, Holst settled on a process referred to by Head as *distillation*, described by Edwin Evans (a music critic contemporary to Holst) thus: “His method has been first to study the original so closely as to be completely saturated with it, then to throw it aside and reproduce its meaning in the clearest possible terms.”<sup>26</sup> Table 3 shows a comparison of Holst’s “distillation” with an English translation of its *Rgvedic* original. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation have been preserved in both instances.

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<sup>23</sup> Imogen Holst, *Gustav Holst: A Biography*, 22.

<sup>24</sup> Head, “Holst and India (II),” 28.

<sup>25</sup> Imogen Holst, *Gustav Holst: a Biography*, 22.

<sup>26</sup> Head, “Holst and India (II),” 28; Edwin Evans, “Modern British Composers. VI.-Gustav Holst (Continued),” *The Musical Times* 60, no. 921 (1919): 590, doi:10.2307/3701578.

**Table 3: Comparison of Holst’s “Distilled” Text to a Translation of the Original**

<i>Rgveda: Book X, Hymn CXXI</i> <sup>27</sup>	Holst: “To the Unknown God” <sup>28</sup>
1. In the beginning rose Hiranyagarbha, born Only Lord of all created beings. He fixed and holdeth up this earth and heaven. What God shall we adore with our oblation?	He, the Primal one, Begetter of the universe, Begotten in mystery, Lord of created things, Lord of heav’n and earth.
2. Giver of vital breath, of power and vigour, he whose commandments all the Gods acknowledge: The Lord of death, whose shade is life immortal. What God shall we adore with our oblation?	Who is He? How shall we name Him when we offer sacrifice?
3. Who by his grandeur hath become Sole Ruler of all the moving world that breathes and slumbers; He who is Lord of men and Lord of cattle. What God shall we adore with our oblation?	He, thro’ whom are the Primeval waters which were before aught else. From their depths arose Fire, the source of Life.
4. His, through his might, are these snow-covered mountains, and men call sea and Rasa his possession: His arms are these, his are these heavenly regions. What God shall we adore with our oblation?	Who is he? How shall we name Him when we offer sacrifice?
5. By him the heavens are strong and earth is steadfast, by him light’s realm and sky-vault are supported: By him the regions in mid-air were measured. What God shall we adore with our oblation?	He, upholder of earth and sea, Of snow-clad heights, Encompassing the wide regions of air, Ruling the sky and realms of light.
6. To him, supported by his help, two armies embattled look while trembling in their spirit, When over them the risen Sun is shining. What God shall we adore with our oblation?	He whose word is eternal Giver of breath and life and power. Sole ruler of the universe, Dwelling alone in His grandeur: To whom the gods bow.
7. What time the mighty waters came, containing the universal germ, producing Agni, Thence sprang the Gods’ one spirit into being. What God shall we adore with our oblation?	Lord of Death, Whose path is life immortal!
8. He in his might surveyed the floods containing productive force and generating Worship. He is the God of gods, and none beside him. What God shall we adore with our oblation?	Who is He? How shall we name Him when we offer sacrifice?
9. Ne’er may he harm us who is earth’s Begetter, nor he whose laws are sure, the heavens’ Creator, He who brought forth the great and lucid waters. What God shall we adore with our oblation?	Thou alone can’st fathom Thy mystery; There is none beside Thee.
10. Prajapati! thou only comprehendest all these created things, and none beside thee. Grant us our hearts’ desire when we invoke thee: may we have store of riches in possession.	

<sup>27</sup> Ralph T.H. Griffith, *The Hymns of the Rigveda*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. II (Benares: E.J. Lazarus, 1896-97), 566.

<sup>28</sup> Gustav Holst, *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda, Op. 26: First Group* (London: Stainer and Bell, 1911).

Holst's English copy of the *Rgveda* was a two-volume compendium by Ralph T.H. Griffith, published in 1896 and 1897.<sup>29</sup> While the Griffith edition is based on an earlier series by Friedrich Max Müller that includes both the original Sanskrit and accompanying English translations, Griffith's books only provide his English interpretation.<sup>30</sup> It is unclear whether Holst simply read the Griffith translations and then produced his own distillation or if he also consulted additional English or Sanskrit sources. Head posits that it is likely Holst consulted other sources, which might have included A.A. Macdonnel's *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, J. Muir's *On the Interpretation of the Veda*, and Müller's six-volume *Rig-Veda-Sanhita, the Sacred Hymns of the Brahmins*.<sup>31</sup>

Although Holst does not attribute the English words to any other person (and on the title page of the *Second Group* he specifically claims authorship of the translation), there are enough similarities to Griffith's adaptation to show that he was often influenced by it.<sup>32</sup> An example of this can be found in the text for "Battle Hymn," the first hymn of the *First Group*. In verse five Griffith translates an expression referring to the *Maruts* (Indra's attendant storm-clouds) as "comrades," and Holst uses the same word in his text.<sup>33</sup> However, a comparison with two different English translations shows that there are a variety of ways to render the passage. Horace Hayman Wilson, who translated the text earlier than Griffith, uses the word "co-dwellers," while Jamison and Brereton, whose translation was published in 2014, opt for the word "nest-mates."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Head, "Holst and India (II)," 27; Ralph T.H. Griffith, *The Hymns of the Rigveda*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vols. I and II (Benares: E.J. Lazarus, 1896-97).

<sup>30</sup> Griffith, *The Hymns of the Rigveda*, vol. I, ix.

<sup>31</sup> Head, "Holst and India (II)," 28.

<sup>32</sup> Gustav Holst, *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda, Op. 26: Second Group* (London: Stainer & Bell, 1912).

<sup>33</sup> Griffith, *The Hymns of the Rigveda*, vol. I, 128.

<sup>34</sup> H.H. Wilson, *Rig-Veda Sanhita: A Collection of Ancient Hindu Hymns, Constituting the First Ashtaka, or Book, of the Rig-Veda; the Oldest Authority for the Religious and Social Institutions of the Hindus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London:

The fact that Holst used the specific word “comrade” instead of a multitude of other options points to his reliance on Griffith’s interpretation. Head also elucidates an example in “Funeral Hymn,” the final hymn of the *First Group*:

Holst took notice of some of Griffith's annotations, which not only gave him more detailed information about the gods in the text, but sometimes provided him with a format. For example, at 'O Woman Thou whose eyes with tears are dim' (X. 18,8) Griffith's note refers to these words as spoken by the husband or brother of the deceased; hence Holst gives these words to the tenors and basses in the first instance. Because, according to Griffith, stanza 9 could only be used if the deceased was a man of the princely or military order, Holst omits these lines completely.<sup>35</sup>

Despite Holst’s reliance on Griffith for word choice, he opted *not* to adhere to his metrical patterns, which were often based on the original Sanskrit.<sup>36</sup> A brief survey of the aforementioned passage from “To the Unknown God” conspicuously illustrates this point (Table 4):

**Table 4: Syllabic Comparison**

<i>Rgveda: Book X, Hymn CXXI</i> <sup>37</sup>		Holst: “To the Unknown God” <sup>38</sup>	
In the beginning rose Hiranyagarbha,	(11)	He, the Primal one,	(5)
born Only Lord of all created beings.	(11)	Begetter of the universe,	(8)
He fixed and holdeth up this earth and heaven.	(11)	Begotten in mystery,	(7)
What God shall we adore with our oblation?	(11)	Lord of created things,	(6)
		Lord of heav’n and earth.	(5)

### Musical Style

The question of musical style in the *Choral Hymns* is complicated by the fact that they

Trübner, 1866), 256; Stephanie W. Jamison and Joel P. Brereton, trans., *The Rigveda: the Earliest Religious Poetry of India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014): 1:238.

<sup>35</sup> Head, “Holst and India (II),” 35.

<sup>36</sup> Griffith, *The Hymns of the Rigveda*, vol. I, xiv-xv.

<sup>37</sup> Griffith, *The Hymns of the Rigveda*, vol. II, 566.

<sup>38</sup> Holst, *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda, Op. 26: First Group*.

intersect two vastly different cultures and musical languages. It is natural to wonder how much Holst, who was born and raised in the heart of England, knew of or was influenced by Indian music. Moreover, in the twentieth century it was popular to downplay any and all Indian influences on his compositions.<sup>39</sup> Modern scholarship has begun to re-evaluate this relationship, but decades of entrenched opinion have proved difficult to dislodge. Throughout the chapter “From India to the Planet Mars: Gustav Holst,” Nalini Ghuman makes cogent arguments – with which I heartily agree – that Holst not only studied (and almost certainly heard) Indian music, but that he also *consciously* incorporated elements thereof in the *Choral Hymns*.<sup>40</sup> She asserts that scholars in the latter part of the twentieth century were merely parroting a view espoused by Holst’s contemporaries – a view that ultimately stemmed from a fear of acknowledging the influence of the Indian colonial state on English culture. Ghuman presents the following quote from ethnomusicologist Martin Clayton as a basis for her argument:

The biographical treatment of Holst’s life and the bald denials that he could have...been influenced by Indian *music*...comes across as an attempt to avoid at all costs acknowledging an obvious possibility, namely that one of England’s finest composers was significantly influenced by Indian music...[This] is an example of th[e] failure to come to terms with the effects of colonialism on English culture.<sup>41</sup>

The following aspects of “To the Unknown God,” the second hymn of the *First Group*, clarify and support this conclusion:

- 1) Use of an Indian scale, the *namanarayani* (beginning in m. 7)
  - Note that Head, quoting Rubbra, mislabels this as *rag gauri*. Ghuman’s identification of the scale as *namanarayani*, the fiftieth Karnatic *melakarta*,

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<sup>39</sup> See Edmund Rubbra, *Gustav Holst: Collected Essays*, ed. Stephen Lloyd (London: Triad Press, 1974), 37-38 and Short, *Gustav Holst*, 41.

<sup>40</sup> Ghuman, *Resonances of the Raj*, 130-137 and 151-153.

<sup>41</sup> Martin Clayton, “Musical Renaissance and its Margins in England and India, 1874–1914,” in *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s–1940s: Portrayal of the East*, ed. Martin Clayton and Bennett Zon (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 78 and 93, quoted in Ghuman, *Resonances of the Raj*, 151.

matches my independent analysis.<sup>42</sup>

- This scale, used in its descending form, is translated by Holst to the Western tempered system through the use of the following notes: E – D – C – B – A<sup>#</sup> – G<sup>#</sup> – F – E. Note the augmented second between G<sup>#</sup> and F, which is often used in Western music to suggest an “exotic” or “Eastern” sound.

2) Imitation of recitation/chant through the following idioms:

- *Parlante* style
- Repetition on the tonic (E)
- A limited pitch range (seconds and thirds, above or below the tonic)
- “Unison” singing (in octaves)

3) Sensitivity to proper accentuation and vocal cadence through the use of varied rhythmic patterns and ties.<sup>43</sup>

In contrast, the other songs from the *First Group*, “Battle Hymn” and “Funeral Hymn,” do not readily appear to have been constructed with Indian musical elements in mind (with the possible exception of a propensity for modal inflection). Although Rubbra maintains that “the very insistence on the A-natural and B-natural [in “Battle Hymn”] makes it much closer in feeling to the Rag ‘Sind Kanada’ [than to the melodic form of the C minor scale],” he provides no analysis or evidence to support his conclusion.<sup>44</sup> To me, the melodic/harmonic structure, expanded vocal range, and orchestration of both hymns give them a character that is much more Western than “To the Unknown God.” When considering the compositional timeline these differences becomes less surprising; “To the Unknown God,” the last movement to be

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<sup>42</sup> Head, “Holst and India (II),” 36; Ghuman, *Resonances of the Raj*, 131.

<sup>43</sup> Ghuman, *Resonances of the Raj*, 130-31.

<sup>44</sup> Rubbra, *Gustav Holst*, 37. Given that Rubbra does “not wish to assume that there is any conscious use of the Hindu scales” [ibid.] and his mis-identification of *namanarayani* in “To the Unknown God,” it is my opinion that he should not be considered an authoritative figure on this topic.



completed, was originally written as a separate work, suggesting that Holst incorporated more “authentic” elements as he went along.<sup>45</sup>

The “Indian-ness” or “English-ness” of Holst’s style is further obfuscated by the fact that, while he did include Indian musical features on occasion, he did not use them *all* of the time or even in each of the individual hymns. Besides the equivocation of “composer’s intuition” there does not appear to be a specific reason as to why he chose to use these elements in certain hymns and not others. He never attempted to produce a perfect facsimile of Indian music, but neither was his output strictly English in character. Ultimately the best explanation seems to be that Indian music joined with (and, to an extent, *shaped*) Holst’s personal style to create a unique musical *mélange* that imbues the *Choral Hymns* with a distinctive atmosphere while keeping them (mostly) rooted in sound-world of Western art music.

#### Performance Considerations

When considering the *First Group* for performance there is little to worry about from a logistical/technical perspective. While the vocal lines will likely require attention due to their chromaticism, the orchestral parts are not very challenging. Amateur groups could render a successful presentation, and collegiate or professional ensembles are liable to find them quite easy. Required forces are reasonable, and the English text makes the piece accessible to members of the chorus and the audience in English-speaking countries. At a duration of 20 minutes the *First Group* could be performed on the first half of a concert (either alone or with an overture) as an interesting foil to *The Planets* – particularly since women’s voices are needed for “Neptune.”

From a cultural perspective, however, there are complicated matters to consider – notably

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<sup>45</sup> Head, “Holst and India (II),” 36.

the concept of appropriation. While there are a multitude of definitions, I feel that James O. Young's theory of *content appropriation* best fits Holst's work. Young explains that "when this sort of appropriation occurs, an artist has made significant reuse of an idea first expressed in the work of an artist from another culture. A musician who sings the songs of another culture has engaged in content appropriation, as has the writer who retells stories produced by a culture other than his own."<sup>46</sup> Whether one is concerned by or indifferent to the idea of appropriation, the fact remains that by almost all modern definitions Holst engaged in such an act. Because of this – and certainly because he appropriated a *religious* text – the topic must at least be considered, and, in all likelihood, accounted for in some manner. The following are suggestions that a conductor or organization could utilize during community outreach or a pre-concert lecture to engage musicians and the public in an informative dialogue:

- 1) Explain the political and artistic context of the time – particularly the fact that India was a British colony. Interest in all things Indian was "in the air," so an English composer choosing to utilize Vedic texts is not as unusual as it might appear at first glance.<sup>47</sup>
- 2) "Exoticism" was certainly not a new concept; artists had been borrowing ideas or settings from other countries for centuries. Examples are myriad and include many of Shakespeare's plays such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Mendelssohn's "Scottish" Symphony, Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*, and Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. At the time this was not viewed in a questionable light as it is today.
- 3) While there is a legitimate argument to be made about problems of stereotyping and unflattering characterizations of foreign material in many "exotic" works (not to mention a less-than-subtle celebration of imperialism), it appears that Holst was diligently trying to avoid any such misuse. Numerous accounts attest to his meticulousness in crafting a text in line with the spirit and intent of the original, and he was judicious in his use of authentic musical elements so as not to stoop to the level of cheap imitation. Ghuman states that "Holst's music reveals a different level

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<sup>46</sup> James O. Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 6.

<sup>47</sup> See Ghuman's *Resonances of the Raj*, Head's *Holst and India* series, or Christopher M. Scheer, "Fin-de-Siècle Britain: Imperialism and Wagner in the Music of Gustav Holst" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2007) for additional information.

of engagement with Indian culture than that of romanticism and its modernist offshoots.”<sup>48</sup>

- 4) One could also tackle the subject head-on as some opera companies have done for works such as *Mikado* or *Butterfly*. This could include acknowledgement of the appropriation and “program notes that explain the thoughts and historical context behind a composer’s choices, as well as how representation of race...and audience response have evolved;” inviting a member of the culture to discuss the historical, religious, and social contexts; carefully avoiding negative stereotyping in promotional materials, program notes, etc.; or engaging in a broader discussion on the merits and problems associated with art from bygone eras.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ghuman, *Resonances of the Raj*, 116.

<sup>49</sup> “Opera’s Old-Fashioned Race Problem,” *The Atlantic*, accessed December 29, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/07/its-time-to-stop-using-exoticism-as-an-excuse-for-operas-racism/374900>.

## CHAPTER 3

### LILI BOULANGER'S *VIEILLE PRIÈRE BOUDDHIQUE*

#### Music in Buddhism

Music is regarded much differently in Buddhism than in the other religions examined in this study – primarily due to theological differences. Whereas Christians and Vedic practitioners venerate immortal Deities and their interaction with mankind, Buddhist teachings vary as to the nature or existence of a God (or Gods). Rather than trying to answer deep cosmological questions, the historical Buddha taught how to ease suffering in life by achieving a state of *Nirvana* in which one has overcome a desire for the impermanent things of the world. Ian W. Mabbett summarizes how this doctrine affects a Buddhist perception of music:

The Buddha...urged upon his followers a life of poverty and simplicity. Those who could do so were expected to forsake family life and become mendicants...In the old forest tradition claiming to preserve the original Buddhist ways, the focus of religious activity is meditation in utter quietness and solitude...After all, reality is not to be found among the impermanent things of life in the world. There is no room here for gorgeous displays, for *magnificentia* in the mediaeval Christian sense, for the dedication of devoutly nurtured artistic talents to the glorification of the divine.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the Buddha denounced the use of vocal melody in religious practice on the grounds that it can obfuscate text and distract from the message by becoming a novelty in and of itself.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of this proscription, the seventh of the Ten Precepts of Buddhism is a pledge by novices and monks to “abstain from dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, and seeing performances.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mabbett, “Buddhism and Music,” 9-10.

<sup>2</sup> Cuilan Liu, “Reciting, Chanting, and Singing: The Codification of Vocal Music in Buddhist Canon Law,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 46, no. 4 (Sept. 2018): 741-44, doi:<http://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2126/10.1007/s10781-018-9360-8>.

<sup>3</sup> Mahinda Deegalle, “Preacher as a Poet: Poetic Preaching as a Monastic Strategy in Constituting Buddhist Communities in Modern Sri Lanka and Thailand,” in *Constituting Communities: Theravada Buddhism and the Religious Cultures of South and Southeast Asia*, ed. John Clifford Holt, Jacob N. Kinnard, and Jonathan S. Walters

**Table 5: Schools of Buddhism**

Name	Description
Nikaya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The most conservative schools, with a focus on the earliest sources of the Buddha’s teachings.</li><li>• Earnest adherence to the seventh precept; limited-pitch chanting and percussion instruments allowed.</li><li>• Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia.</li></ul>
Mahayana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shares core doctrines with Nikaya, but accepts concepts and writings that came after the Buddha and his first disciples. Emphasizes different practices for enlightenment.</li><li>• Flexible interpretation of the seventh precept; florid chant allowed and instruments used more frequently than in Nikaya schools.</li><li>• China, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan.</li></ul>
Vajrayana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A subset of Mahayana that focuses on visualizations, gestures, liturgy, and yoga as a part of ritual meditation.</li><li>• Flexible interpretation of the seventh precept; florid and “tone contour” chant allowed, and wind/percussion instruments used; mystery plays utilize “musical resources.”<sup>4</sup></li><li>• Tibet, Nepal, and Mongolia.</li></ul>

Despite these theological underpinnings, the use of chant, instruments, and even some types of music were adopted by many “schools” over time, and they remain a quintessential part of the religion to this day.<sup>5</sup> Sean Williams explains that this is because “Buddhism has spread through many Asian cultures and has been altered and adapted according to local custom; as a result, its diversity is one of its hallmarks...[its] syncretic nature allows its practitioners considerable freedom to adapt and adopt local practices, depending on how important the voice is to the spiritual communication or the maintenance of the community.”<sup>6</sup> Although there are dozens (if not hundreds) of unique sects, scholars generally categorize each within one of three overarching traditions: Nikaya, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, each of which has a different

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(Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 167n1; note that this precept does not usually apply to laypeople.

<sup>4</sup> Williams, “Buddhism and Music,” 180; Mabbett, “Buddhism and Music,” 17.

<sup>5</sup> Paul D. Greene and Li Wei, “Introduction: Mindfulness and Change in Buddhist Musical Traditions,” *Asian Music* 35, no. 2 (2004): 1, [www.jstor.org/stable/4098443](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4098443).

<sup>6</sup> Sean Williams, “Buddhism and Music,” in *Sacred Sound: Experiencing Music in World Religions*, ed. Guy L. Beck (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 169 and 186.

perspective on the use of chant, instruments, or musical performance. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to cover all of the intricacies of their doctrines and practices, Table 5 provides a short descriptive summary.

As the text of *Vieille Prière Bouddhique* is drawn from a Theravadin source (a division of Nikaya), the remainder of this discussion focuses specifically on this school's approach to music.

### Music in Theravada Buddhism

Although this tradition adheres to a narrow interpretation of the seventh precept, it is incorrect to characterize it as inherently non-musical. Anne Sheeran, paraphrasing Ter Ellingson, states, "Although many scholars have interpreted certain restrictions as evidence that music was negatively valued in the Theravada tradition, in fact the reverse is true: music was understood to be so powerful a means of affection perception and cognition that forms were developed to harness and control that power."<sup>7</sup> Chant, instrumental musical offerings by lay people, and the use of instruments in temple processions are all facets of sacred sound within Theravada Buddhism.

As a whole, Theravadin music can be divided and examined in terms of that which is vocal and that which is instrumental. Regarding the former, Cuilan Liu cogently observes that Buddhist canon law differentiates three ways in which the human voice can be used: in recitation, chanting, and singing. Though singing is prohibited, "reciting and chanting, on the other hand, are basic ways to utter texts in Buddhist practice...The assumption is that it is appropriate for ordained Buddhists to hear all permitted chanting and reciting."<sup>8</sup> Williams

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<sup>7</sup> Anne Sheeran, "Sri Lanka," in *South Asia: the Indian Subcontinent*, volume 5 of *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Online*, ed. Alison Arnold (Garland Publishing, 2000), 991, [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Creference\\_article%7C1000227618](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Creference_article%7C1000227618).

<sup>8</sup> Liu, "Reciting, Chanting, and Singing," 740.

explains that “Theravada Buddhism relies primarily on the non-musical chanting of scriptures in the Pali language, which few lay people understand, and Theravada Buddhist chanting does not follow a melody. Instead, because the words are considered of paramount importance, this type of chant is sung in a monotone.”<sup>9</sup>

The use of chant in a seemingly-non-musical religion can be traced back to the earliest disseminations of the Buddha’s teachings. Paul D. Greene states:

Available historical and literary evidence suggests that during the first three centuries of Buddhism, the entirety of the Buddha's teaching – the Dhamma – was composed, learned, and propagated orally throughout Asia in the form of memorized and regularly rehearsed sound. The oral nature of this literature is evident in the fact that the historic Buddha Siddhartha Gautama chose to deliver his sermons and teachings in the vernacular language of Pali, rather than in Sanskrit, the language of elite religious writing of the time. There is evidence that already during the Buddha's lifetime his teachings came to be memorized and chanted: Mark Allon (1997:2) cites passages in Pali texts which recount monks hearing *dharmas* from the Buddha and reciting them, "line by line" ...i.e., retaining not only content but also stylistic features of alliteration, assonance, poetic and prosaic rhythm, and possibly other, more "musical" features as well.<sup>10</sup>

This practice of memorization-through-chant was borrowed from the Vedic tradition with which the Buddha and his disciples would have been familiar. However, in interpreting this for their own purposes they vigorously strove to avoid chant that was “musical” in a conventional sense, and that distinction has remained intact throughout the centuries. In his analysis of modern Burmese chant, Greene could “find no pattern to the rhythm of the chant rendering the *padas* [lines] that could be described as regularly musically metrical in any sense,” and he explained that “Burmese *paritta* chant practitioners insist that the rhythm of their chant is the rhythm of the Pali words, as spoken by the Buddha and his disciples.”<sup>11</sup> In addition to rhythmic elements, the

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<sup>9</sup> Williams, “Buddhism and Music,” 177.

<sup>10</sup> Paul D. Greene "The Dhamma as Sonic Praxis: Paritta Chant in Burmese Theravada Buddhism," *Asian Music* 35, no. 2 (2004): 46, [www.jstor.org/stable/4098445](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4098445).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

acts of reciting, chanting, and singing are distinguished by melodic contour (if any) and prolonged intonation. Williams states that “Theravada chanting...is generally conservative and limited to a few basic notes that resemble in principle the Vedic cantillation from which it was primarily derived,” while Liu quotes the seventh-century record of the monk Yijing which reports that “Buddhist monks adopted a ‘slightly prolonged intonation’...while uttering eulogies to praise the Buddha in a performance that he had described as chanting.”<sup>12</sup>

Despite innumerable exegetical pages devoted to this subject, the fact remains that there is no clear-cut answer as to *precisely* what constitutes chant or singing (and, to a lesser extent, recitation) in this tradition. Liu mentions that “the differences between reciting, chanting, and singing are apparently so subtle that even the redactors of Buddhist canon law are unspecific about which verb to use for these activities.”<sup>13</sup> However, at a basic level the three acts can be summarized as follows:

*Recitation*: the use of a normal speaking voice

*Chant*: limited melodic contour, pitch range, and/or prolongation; arrhythmic; intended to convey religious thought in a memorable or worshipful manner

*Singing*: extended contour, pitches, or prolongation; rhythmic; secular in nature and intended for entertainment

In terms of instrumental music, the Theravada school follows Francesca Tarocco’s assertion that “the use of ritual percussion is characteristic of many monastically liturgical traditions; the use of other instruments is less frequent.”<sup>14</sup> Bells are often used as a call to prayer, and drums are

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<sup>12</sup> Williams, “Buddhism and Music,” 173; Liu, “Reciting, Chanting, and Singing,” 728.

<sup>13</sup> Liu, “Reciting, Chanting, and Singing,” 730.

<sup>14</sup> Oxford Music Online, s.v. “Buddhist Music,” by Francesca Tarocco, accessed December 29, 2019, <https://libproxy.library.unt.edu:5982/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000004254?rskey=iTAk2p>



played before the beginning of some chants, such as the Three Refuges.<sup>15</sup> In Sri Lanka, lay instrumental ensembles called *hevisi*, which consist of two drums and a *horanava* (a conical-bore, quadruple-reed oboe) make an “offering of sounds at Buddhist temples (*sabda puja*), usually three times a day...On important occasions or in more affluent temples the *taḷam* ‘hand cymbals’ and the conch shell are commonly added.”<sup>16</sup> These *hevisi* ensembles also lead temple processions “that include a number of other music, dance, and acrobatic components.”<sup>17</sup>

### *Vieille Prière Bouddhique*

**Table 6: Composition Information for *Vieille Prière Bouddhique***

Dates of Composition:	1914 – 1917
First Performance (Piano Version):	9 June 1921; Nadia Boulanger (piano), Gabriel Paulet (tenor solo), Conservatoire student choir; conducted by Henri Büsser
First Performance (Orchestral Version):	17 January 1923; Nadia Boulanger (organ), David Devriès (tenor solo), chorus and orchestra of the Paris Opera; conducted by Henri Büsser
Duration:	Approximately 8 minutes
Movements:	1
Instrumentation:	2 Flutes, 2 Oboes, English Horn, 2 Clarinets, Bass Clarinet, 2 Bassoons, Sarrusophone, <sup>18</sup> 4 Horns, 3 Trumpets, 4 Trombones, Tuba, Percussion (Timpani, Cymbals, Bass Drum, Celesta, 2 Harps), Tenor Solo, <sup>19</sup> SATB Chorus, Strings
Language:	French
Publisher:	Durand

### Lili Boulanger

Marie-Juliette Olga Boulanger, known as “Lili,” was born in Paris, France, on 21 August

<sup>15</sup> Williams, “Buddhism and Music,” 173.

<sup>16</sup> Sheeran, “Sri Lanka,” 993-94.

<sup>17</sup> “Horanava,” Grinnell College Musical Instrument Collection, accessed December 29, 2019, <https://omeka1.grinnell.edu/MusicalInstruments/items/show/319>.

<sup>18</sup> The sarrusophone part is almost certainly CC contrabass as the key signature matches that of the flutes.

<sup>19</sup> The score indicates that this may be sung by 6 tenors if needed.

1893 to a musical family that had been active in Parisian artistic life since at least 1797.<sup>20</sup> Her father, Ernest, won the *Prix de Rome* in 1835 during his studies at the Paris Conservatoire (which both of his parents also attended), and her mother, Raïssa Mychetsky, was one of his pupils in voice. Due to the family's prominence and connections they were acquainted with many of the most influential artists of the day, including (among many others) Saint-Saëns, Gounod, Fauré, Dupré, and Ravel.

Lili nearly succumbed to bronchial pneumonia at two years of age, and “for the rest of her life she was almost constantly ill, with either passing infections or outbreaks of the chronic condition of intestinal tuberculosis [Crohn’s disease] which led to her death in 1918.”<sup>21</sup> Her precarious health exerted a great influence on both her capabilities and decisions, and, as Anya Holland-Barry argues, even the posthumous narrative of her life and career.<sup>22</sup> Despite all of this, Lili showed a natural affinity for music and would participate whenever possible. As a youth she studied the piano, violin, cello, and harp, and she occasionally accompanied Nadia to classes at the Conservatoire. In addition to occasional tutelage by her sister, Lili began private study of harmony and counterpoint with Georges Caussade in 1909, and she enrolled in Paul Vidal’s composition course at the Conservatoire in 1912. Her goal, as stated by Rosenstiel, was to “win the *Prix de Rome* as her father had done in 1835, and to bring back to the family the prize that had just eluded her sister Nadia in 1908.”<sup>23</sup> Rosenstiel posits that part of Lili’s fervor in this regard was a desire to make something of her life in the face of an uncertain future due to her

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<sup>20</sup> Rosenstiel, *Life and Works*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> Oxford Music Online, s.v. “Lili Boulanger,” by Annegret Fauser and Robert Orledge, accessed December 29, 2019, <https://libproxy.library.unt.edu:5982/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000003704?rskey=7eN19W>.

<sup>22</sup> Anya B. Holland-Barry, “Lili Boulanger (1893–1918) and World War I France: Mobilizing Motherhood and the Good Suffering” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012), 3-5.

<sup>23</sup> Rosenstiel, *Life and Works*, 46.

fragile constitution.<sup>24</sup> After failing to complete the final round of the competition in 1912 due to illness, Lili continued her studies (and even completed some extra-curricular compositions) before re-entering in 1913. On July 5<sup>th</sup> she was awarded the First Grand Prize for her cantata *Faust et Hélène*, receiving 31 out of 36 votes. “The reasons for proposing Mlle Boulanger as the candidate for the First Grand Prize were, ‘Intelligence of subject. Correctness of declamation. Sensitivity and warmth. Poetic feeling. Intelligent and colorful orchestration.’” Her work was labeled “a remarkable cantata.”<sup>25</sup>

After her triumph, Lili was lavished with attention in the media and in the sight of the Parisian public. Her prize-winning cantata was given its premiere, she signed a contract with the Ricordi publishing company, and in early 1914 she journeyed to Rome for the required stay in the Villa Medici. Although her residency was cut short when the outbreak of World War I prevented a return to the Villa after a summer holiday in France, Lili’s time at the institution proved to be fruitful; in just a few months she had completed two short piano pieces and worked on both the lengthy song-cycle *Clairières Dans le Ciel* and *Vieille Prière Bouddhique*.<sup>26</sup> Lili’s energy in 1915 was almost entirely devoted to the war effort. As her health precluded the lengthy bouts of physical labor required of nurses, she and her sister opted to provide support through psychological means. With the blessing of Conservatoire faculty they created *La Gazette des classes du Conservatoire*, a publication that was distributed to former students who had been mobilized.

Lili returned again to the Villa Medici in 1916, and her second visit proved just as

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Institut de France, Académie des Beaux-Arts, *Procès Verbal, 1913-1914* (Paris: July 5, 1913), 65, quoted in Rosenstiel, *Life and Works*, 78.

<sup>26</sup> Rosenstiel, *Life and Works*, 103.

profitable as the first. She completed two psalm settings (24 and 129), began work on another (130, *Du Fond de L'abîme*), and met with Maurice Maeterlinck during her travels to discuss adaptation of *La Princesse Maleine* into an opera.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately her stay was again cut short – this time by health considerations. After an illness that lasted several weeks the decision was made that it was in her best interest to return to France for treatment. The remainder of her life was a race against the inevitable. A spring visit to the seaside resort of Arcachon in 1917 (where she finished *Vieille Prière Bouddhique*) did nothing to improve her health, nor did an appendectomy that summer. She worked sporadically during the last months of her life – primarily on *La princesse*, which remained unfinished at her death. Her final composition, *Pie Jesu*, was mostly dictated to Nadia as Lili was too weak to write.<sup>28</sup> Lili eventually succumbed to her illness on 15 March 1918, and her remains were interred in the Montmartre cemetery.

#### Origin of the Text

As stated by Cara Suzanne Tasher, “this prayer is a loose translation of an insight meditation on universal love called *Karaniya Metta Sutta* or Loving Kindness Meditation.”<sup>29</sup> Her explanation corroborates and expands upon that of Rosenstiel, who corresponded with the Venerable Kosgoda Sobhita in 1972 and received the following commentary: “[it is] a sort of Buddhist meditation on ‘Universal love.’ ... This text is learnt by heart by the ‘SAMANERAS’ [*sic*] novices when they receive the first ordination ‘PABBAJJA’ [*sic*] in the Theravada Buddhist countries... It is meant for everybody in a general sense.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-131.

<sup>29</sup> Tasher, “A Conductor’s Guide,” 47.

<sup>30</sup> Rosenstiel, *Life and Works*, 197.

The *Metta Sutta* is one of many *suttas* (discourses by the Buddha) in the *Sutta Nipata* collection, which is in turn a part of the *Sutta Pitaka* – one of three volumes of the *Tripitaka* (“three baskets”) that form the core Buddhist scriptures. The *Sutta Pitaka* (“basket of discourses”), *Vinaya Pitaka* (“basket of disciplinary texts”), and the *Abhidharma Pitaka* (“basket of higher dharma” – essentially commentary/analysis) originated from the Buddha himself and were passed down orally for several hundred years before being written down in the first century CE.<sup>31</sup> The Theravada version of the *Tripitaka* is often referred to as the “Pali Canon” as this was the language of its first written record.

Bhikkhu Bodhi, an ordained Theravada monk, explains that the *Metta Sutta* “is [an] extremely popular *sutta* in the Theravada Buddhist world. You might say that it is almost the ‘signature piece’ ...[during] any ceremonial occasion, if there’s time to recite only one *sutta*, then this is the *sutta* that will be selected.”<sup>32</sup> The word *metta* means “loving kindness,” and it is considered the first of four qualities or virtues possessed by an ideal follower of the Buddha’s teachings. The others are compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity (impartiality towards other living beings – having no particular favorites or biases).<sup>33</sup> Bodhi’s analysis reveals a four-part form to the *Metta Sutta* discourse, which begins by explicating the prerequisite moral qualities needed for loving kindness. This is followed by “thematic meditation” on the subject, which leads to a discussion on ways to develop and intensify the feeling toward all living beings. The

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<sup>31</sup> World History: A Comprehensive Reference Set, s.v. “Tripitaka,” by John Walsh, ed. Facts on File, accessed December 29, 2019, <https://libproxy.library.unt.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/fofworld/tripitaka/0?institutionId=4982>.

<sup>32</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, “Metta Sutta – Loving-Kindness (Part 2),” lecture from “Sutta-Nipata,” Bodhi Monastery, 2005, online audio, 0:35, accessed January 5, 2020, <https://bodhimonastery.org/sutta-nipata.html>.

<sup>33</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, “Metta Sutta – Loving-Kindness (Part 1),” lecture from “Sutta-Nipata,” Bodhi Monastery, 2005, online audio, 2:22, accessed January 5, 2020, <https://bodhimonastery.org/sutta-nipata.html>.

final section states the benefit of the practice as part of the ultimate goal of liberation from rebirth.<sup>34</sup>

According to Nadia Boulanger, the text was given to Lili by Suzanne Karpelès, a family acquaintance who spent many years in Asia researching ancient languages.<sup>35</sup> She is also credited in the score as the author of the French translation.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, Nadia’s account provided no information on the editing process, and there does not appear to be any known documentation that would shed additional light on the subject.<sup>37</sup> Because of this it is impossible to tell whether it was her, Lili, or another person who shortened it into the form used in *Vieille Prière Bouddhique*. As shown in Table 7, a comparison of the text to the *Metta Sutta* reveals some intriguing issues – not the least of which is the fact that the lyrics bear surprisingly little resemblance to their source material.

**Table 7: Comparison of Lili’s Text to a Translation of the Original**

<i>Karaniya Metta Sutta</i> <sup>38</sup>	<i>Vieille Prière Bouddhique</i> <sup>39</sup>
This is what should be done by one skilled in the good, having made the breakthrough to that peaceful state: he should be able, upright, and very upright, amenable to advice and gentle, without arrogance.	Let all things that breathe, without enemies, without obstacles, transcending sadness and achieving happiness be able to move freely along the path that is destined for them.
[He should be] content and easily supported, of few duties and a frugal way of living; of peaceful faculties and judicious, courteous, without greed when among families.	Let all creatures and everywhere, all spirits and all living things, without enemies, without obstacles, transcending sadness

<sup>34</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Suttanipata: An Ancient Collection of the Buddha’s Discourses, Together With its Commentaries* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2017), 107.

<sup>35</sup> Rosenstiel, *Life and Works*, 34.

<sup>36</sup> Lili Boulanger and S. Karpelès, *Vieille Prière Bouddhique: Prière Quotidienne Pour Tout L’univers Pour Ténor, Chœurs Et Orchestre* (Paris: A. Durand, 1921); refer to pages 163-164 of Tasher’s study for an IPA pronunciation guide and a comparison of the French and English versions.

<sup>37</sup> “Wir wissen nicht, inwieweit Lili Boulanger den Text bearbeitet hat.” (Stièvenard-Salomon, “Zwischen Fortschritt und Tradition,” 53).

<sup>38</sup> Bodhi, *The Suttanipata*, 179-180.

<sup>39</sup> Tasher, “A Conductor’s Guide,” 164.

<i>Karaniya Metta Sutta</i> <sup>38</sup>	<i>Vieille Prière Bouddhique</i> <sup>39</sup>
	and achieving happiness be able to move freely along the path that is destined for them.
He should not do anything, however slight, because of which other wise people might criticize him. May all beings be happy and secure; may they be inwardly happy!	Let all women, Let all men, Aryans and non-Aryans, All gods and all humans, and those who have fallen... without enemies, without obstacles, transcending sadness and achieving happiness be able to move freely along the path that is destined for them.
Whatever living beings there are whether frail or firm, without omission, those that are long or those that are large, middling, short, fine or gross;	In the East and the West, in the North and the South, that all beings that exist... Without enemies, without obstacles, transcending sadness and achieve happiness be able to move freely along the path that is destined for them.
whether they are seen or unseen, whether they dwell far or near, whether they have come to be or will come to be, may all beings be inwardly happy!	
No one should deceive another, nor despise anyone anywhere. Because of anger and thoughts of aversion No one should wish suffering for another.	
Just as a mother would protect her son, her only son, with her own life, so one should develop toward all beings a state of mind without boundaries.	
And toward the whole world one should develop loving-kindness, a state of mind without boundaries – above, below, and across – unconfined, without enmity, without adversaries.	
Whether standing, walking, sitting, or lying down, as long as one is not drowsy, one should resolve on this mindfulness: they call this a divine dwelling here.	
Not taking up any views, possessing good behavior, endowed with vision, having removed greed for sensual pleasures, one never again comes back to the bed of a womb.	

While some alterations and redactions are to be expected when adapting text for use in a musical setting (particularly when translation is involved), it is my opinion that the modifications made in this case are extreme enough that they change the intent and message of the original. A few examples include:

- 1) Although Lili's explanatory subtitle, "*prière quotidienne pour tout l'univers*" (daily prayer for the whole universe) indicates an understanding of the generality of the *Metta Sutta*, she mis-identifies it as a prayer when it is in fact a pedagogical discourse. While some argue that it functioned as a prayer *to her*, this does not change the fact that the *Metta Sutta* was not conceived as a petition to a divine being.<sup>40</sup>
- 2) There are words in Lili's version that are completely absent in the original – most notably the references to Aryan/non-Aryan and East/West (Occident/Orient). These particular words, which in modern times could be considered racially-charged, immediately undermine the universality of the message. The Buddha specifically avoided mention of any race or geographical location, instead referencing general characteristics such as large/short, frail/firm, or near/far.<sup>41</sup>
- 3) Overall, the text of Lili's version misses the entire point of the *Metta Sutta* discourse. Rather than focus on the virtues or *practice* of loving-kindness it is simply a wistful hope that all things will "transcend sadness, achieve happiness, and move freely along the path that is destined for them."

It is unfortunate that there is no documentation regarding the editing process; we are left to wonder if Lili simply – perhaps naïvely – set the words given to her by Karpelès, trusting in the latter's experience and authority, or if the choice of lines was her own. A clearer understanding of this situation would make it much easier to understand the intent of the final version and why it is so dramatically different than the *Metta Sutta* itself.

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<sup>40</sup> Potter, *Nadia and Lili Boulanger*, 88; Annegret Fauser, "Lili Boulanger's 'La Princesse Maleine': A Composer and Her Heroine as Literary Icons," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 122, no. 1 (1997): 75, [www.jstor.org/stable/766554](http://www.jstor.org/stable/766554).

<sup>41</sup> While it is beyond the scope of this study to examine this topic in further detail, the author is intrigued by the ramifications of these added words. There is likely a parallel between them and the attitudes of cultural superiority, imperialism, and "othering" found in many contemporary works of art. See the chapter on Holst's *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda* in this study or chapter 4 in Annegret Fauser, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World's Fair* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005).



## Musical Style

As with Holst's *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda*, it is fair to wonder how much a European composer such as Lili knew of or cared about authentic Buddhist music. While she utilized "Eastern" techniques such as pentatonicism and modality that had been markers of the exotic in French opera since the mid-1800s, these were still subordinate inflections within the common-practice harmonic language rather than a genuine starting point. All other aspects of the work – particularly its instrumentation, harmony, and singing style – are unmistakably drawn from the sound-world of early twentieth-century France.

Although the musical idiom is far removed from Theravada Buddhism, taken on its own Lili's setting is striking and quite atmospheric; it is obvious that she strove to craft her music as a consummate match for the text. Allusions to the Eastern/religious nature of the work are found in the repetitive melody that emphasizes G-natural as a reciting tone, frequent use of open fifths, a recurring D-flat that gives the work a Phrygian feel, transparent orchestration that often evokes a sense of ethereal stasis, and limited use of counterpoint. The extended flute solo between verses two and three is likely intended to "[evoke] a generic musical East Asia in its timbre and its sinuous arabesque shapes,"<sup>42</sup> and Stièvenard-Salomon posits that the four stanzas reference the fact that the number four is "symbolic in Buddhist doctrine" (for example, the Four Noble Truths or the Four Divine Abodes).<sup>43</sup>

For detailed analyses of the work the reader is encouraged to consult pages 102-104 of Potter's monograph, pages 51-56 of Tasher's study, and Stièvenard-Salomon's article.

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<sup>42</sup> Potter, *Nadia and Lili Boulanger*, 104.

<sup>43</sup> "Die Anordnung der vier Strophen erscheint gleich einer Konkretisierung in vier Stufen (vier entspricht einer symbolischen Zahl in der buddhistischen Lehre)." (Stièvenard-Salomon, "Zwischen Fortschritt und Tradition," 53).

## Performance Considerations

The orchestral and vocal parts in *Vieille Prière Bouddhique* are not particularly complicated. Tasher states that it could be performed by “advanced high school choirs and entry-level college choirs,” and I am confident that orchestras of the same caliber could deliver an admirable rendition.<sup>44</sup> Tuning would likely be the most challenging aspect for less-experienced players – particularly within the wind section or between the winds and the chorus. The required instrumentation is not too large, although it is somewhat unusual due to the need for a tenor soloist, two harps, and a sarrusophone (which could be covered by contrabassoon). Fortunately, the provision that the tenor solo can be assigned to a small group provides an alternative if a suitable vocalist is unavailable. Its performing forces are similar to those of Debussy’s *Nocturnes* (which utilizes female voices in the third movement), and this pairing could provide an engaging half on a traditional orchestral program.

However, again echoing Holst’s *Choral Hymns*, the issue of cultural appropriation must be considered. *Vieille Prière Bouddhique* could be subjectively labeled “worse” in this regard because the meaning and intent of the original text appears to have been completely disregarded. Moreover, one must question the acceptability of a dramatic setting for full orchestra inspired by a religious tradition that emphasizes simplicity and views music as a “sensual luxury” for its ordained members.<sup>45</sup>

It is my opinion that the most effective way to address this problem is through an open discussion explaining the cultural context in which the work was written and acknowledging both its merits and problematic aspects. For example, despite alterations to the text there is no

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<sup>44</sup> Tasher, “A Conductor’s Guide,” 55-56.

<sup>45</sup> Williams, “Buddhism and Music,” 173.

hint of condescension or parody in the setting. And although we now look upon the use of materials from other cultures through a different lens, “exotic” musical and dramatic works had entertained Parisian audiences for decades before Lili composed *Vieille Prière Bouddhique*. By all indications her music is a genuine and respectful artistic response, within her own *milieu*, to words that provoked inspiration during a time of both personal and national uncertainty.

## CHAPTER 4

### ROBERT CUNDICK'S *THE REDEEMER*

From Gregorian chant to choral-orchestral masses to spirituals, music has often played an import and conspicuous role in Christian worship. This also holds true for the denomination known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, often referred to colloquially as the “Mormon” church (and hereafter referred to as “the Church”). Founded in upstate New York in 1830, one of its earliest canonized scriptures includes an admonition given to Joseph Smith to “make a selection of sacred hymns, as it shall be given thee, which is pleasing unto me, to be had in my church. For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.”<sup>1</sup>

With this decree as a guide, Latter-day Saints have embraced music – particularly vocal music – as a fundamental part of worship for nearly two hundred years. This has manifested in several ways, the most visible being congregational singing during worship services, emphasis on singing hymns or children’s songs in the home, and the world-renowned Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square (formerly the Mormon Tabernacle Choir).

#### A Brief History of Music in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Emma Smith, wife of the Prophet Joseph Smith, was tasked with fulfilling the mandate to make a selection of sacred hymns. This effort took several years, and the first compilation, which only included text, was published in 1835. It also relied heavily on pre-existing lyrics and melodies; only thirty-nine of the ninety texts were written by Church members,<sup>2</sup> and William

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<sup>1</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed., *Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013; first published 1835 by F.G. Williams & Co. (Kirtland)), 25:11-12. Section 25 is dated July 1830 – three months after the official formation of the Church.

<sup>2</sup> Michael F. Moody, “Latter-day Saint Hymnbooks, Then and Now,” *Ensign of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, September 1985, 2.

Wilkes states that “The data imply there was no original music created in early Mormonism...for thirty years or more, all hymn music was borrowed and adapted. Most of the hymn tunes used were presumably those common in the neighboring sects of the day and, therefore, well known to converts.”<sup>3</sup>

Vocal music – particularly hymns – continued to serve an important role in the faith throughout its history. In 1836 Joseph Smith established a singing school in Kirtland, Ohio, which most likely emphasized reading printed music and singing in parts – a practice still in use today.<sup>4</sup> The hymn *A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief* was sung in Carthage jail just hours before a mob killed Joseph and his brother Hyrum in 1844, and hymns were sung for morale and motivation by pioneers during their trek from the Midwest to Utah. Music remained an important facet of society after their arrival in the Salt Lake valley in July 1847. The Tabernacle Choir, currently the most publicly visible aspect of music in the Church, traces its origin to a modestly-sized vocal ensemble that sang for a Church conference in August of the same year. In 1861, with the approval of Brigham Young, a Scottish convert-immigrant named David Calder “organized two classes of two hundred members each, and commenced giving vocal instruction in his school room, using the Curwen tonic sol-fa method; which was the first introduction of the system in America.”<sup>5</sup> The first substantial hymnbook to include music and text, *The Psalmody*, was published in 1889, and in 1920 a General Music Committee was organized and began the process of merging this book with other popular collections of the time.<sup>6</sup> In 1929 the Tabernacle

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<sup>3</sup> William Leroy Wilkes, Jr., “Borrowed Music in Mormon Hymnals” (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1957), 22.

<sup>4</sup> Emily Spencer, “Why Mormons Sing in Parts (Or Don’t),” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 48, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 46.

<sup>5</sup> Edward W. Tullidge, “Music in Utah,” *Tullidge’s Quarterly Magazine* 1 (1880-81): 222.

<sup>6</sup> Moody, “Latter-day Saint Hymnbooks, 3-4.

Choir began a weekly radio program called *Music and the Spoken Word*. This production has been broadcast continuously since its inception and has evolved to incorporate a variety of entertainment mediums, including television and internet streaming. The official hymnbook has also undergone a number of changes over the years, with large-scale revisions coming in 1948 and 1985. On 18 June 2018, the Church announced on its website the beginning of another major revision that will be published in the next few years.

### Music in Church Worship

As of the publication date of this study there are two official collections of music authorized and published by the Church in various languages: *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (hereafter referred to as the “hymnbook”), and *Children’s Songbook of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (referred to as the “songbook”).<sup>7</sup> Additionally, a detailed handbook of instruction provides guidance for leaders on the appropriate use of music in worship services.<sup>8</sup> As stated in the preface to the 1985 hymnbook, the purpose of music in Church meetings is to “invite the Spirit of the Lord, create a feeling of reverence, unify us as members, and provide a way for us to offer praises to the Lord.”<sup>9</sup> Because music is used to “set the mood,” congregational singing or other performances are discrete activities within a weekly worship service; music is never used as part of an ordinance or liturgy. Latter-day Saints are also counseled to utilize music in their homes and personal lives. The hymnbook is “for the home as

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<sup>7</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed., *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1985); The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed., *Children’s Songbook of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed., *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), 113-118.

<sup>9</sup> Church of Jesus Christ, *Hymns*, ix.

well as for the meetinghouse,” and hymns are believed to have the power to “inspire love and unity among family members” and to “help us withstand the temptations of the adversary.”<sup>10</sup>

While the preface to the 1985 hymnbook provides a succinct, high-level explanation of the roles of music in the church, David Wheelwright outlines specific uses by asserting that hymns are “an educative force...that [aids] the group in finding insights, direction, courage, comfort, or common resolves [sic] to overcome group problems. Hymnody thus operates as a spiritual reinforcement, a religious dynamic, an agent for religious morale building.”<sup>11</sup> He takes this one step further by showing that hymnody can be a part of the solution to diverse challenges such as missionary work, temple building and worship activities, group educational activities, and social activities – many of which manifest in uncommon ways due to the unique theology and culture of the Church.<sup>12</sup> Although his document was published in 1943, I feel that Wheelwright’s cogent analysis still offers valuable insight.

Text and music for the hymnbook and songbook are drawn from a variety of sources and include both LDS and non-LDS composers and poets. As there are well over 600 musical numbers between the two books a survey of all authors and composers is beyond the scope of this study; however, some notable persons include:

- Early Church writers such as William W. Phelps, Parley P. Pratt, and Eliza R. Snow
- Musicians associated with the Tabernacle Choir, including: Robert Cundick, Alexander Schreiner, and Evan Stephens
- Other Church musicians such as Robert P. Manookin, Michael F. Moody, and Leroy J. Robertson

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., x.

<sup>11</sup> David Sterling Wheelwright, “The Role of Hymnody in the Development of the Latter-day Saint Movement” (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 1943), 4.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 22-66.

- Famous English-language poets such as Rudyard Kipling, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Alfred, Lord Tennyson
- Celebrated composers, including: Johann Sebastian Bach, George Frideric Handel, Franz Joseph Haydn, Jakob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Franz Peter Schubert, Johan Julius Christian (Jean) Sibelius, and Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

There are a variety of acceptable subjects for texts, including (but not limited to): praise of Deity, thanksgiving, supplication, the Lord’s Supper (sacrament), Easter, Christmas, the Restoration (a doctrine unique to the Church), missionary work, keeping commandments, service, and comfort. Church policy gives some leeway as to the exact nature of the words, explaining only that “texts should be doctrinally correct” and that “music and musical texts are to be sacred, dignified, and otherwise suitable for [church meetings].”<sup>13</sup> Religious music drawn from sources other than the hymnbook or songbook is used on occasion, provided it conforms to Church doctrine and meets the requirement that “music in Church meetings should not draw attention to itself or be for demonstration. This music is for worship, not performance.”<sup>14</sup> The handbook also states that “music in Church meetings should usually be sung in the language of the congregation.”<sup>15</sup> Because of this, many sacred compositions well-known to other Christian denominations – particularly those in Latin – are almost never performed in Church meetings.

The most common musical expression in weekly worship services (known as sacrament meetings) is congregational part-singing of hymns with organ or piano accompaniment. Figure 1 shows a sample agenda for a sacrament meeting and notation for a typical hymn.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Church of Jesus Christ, *Handbook 2*, 115-116.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Church of Jesus Christ, *Hymns*, 194.



**Figure 1: Sacrament Meeting Agenda and Hymn #194**

1. Welcome and Introduction
2. Congregational Singing (Opening)
3. Opening Prayer
4. Business and Announcements
5. Congregational Singing (Sacrament)
6. Blessing and Passing of the Sacrament
7. Speaker(s)
8. Congregational Singing (Intermediate) *or* Special Musical Number (Ensemble or Solo)
9. Speaker(s)
10. Congregational Singing (Closing)
11. Closing Prayer

## There Is a Green Hill Far Away

194

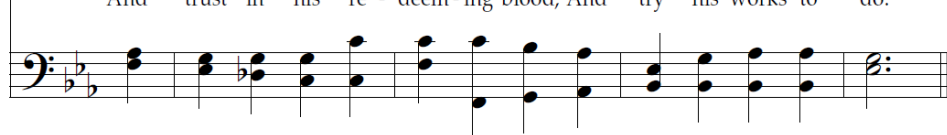
*Reverently* ♩ = 72–84



1. There is a green hill far a - way, With - out a cit - y wall,  
 2. We may not know, we can - not tell, What pains he had to bear,  
 3. There was no oth - er good e - nough To pay the price of sin.  
 4. Oh, dear - ly, dear - ly has he loved! And we must love him too,



Where the dear Lord was cru - ci - fied, Who died to save us all.  
 But we be - lieve it was for us He hung and suf - fered there.  
 He on - ly could un - lock the gate Of heav'n and let us in.  
 And trust in his re - deem - ing blood, And try his works to do.



*Text:* Cecil Frances Alexander, 1818–1895  
*Music:* John H. Gower, 1855–1922

John 19:16–20  
 Hebrews 13:12

Each instance of congregational singing includes only one composition, which is usually a hymn (although pieces from the songbook are used on occasion). Hymns or songs are most often sung

exactly as notated in the hymnbook or songbook; arrangements are used sparingly – typically only for an intermediate singing interlude, a special musical number, or during a celebration such as Christmas or Easter.

While part-singing is considered the norm, it is not required. “Although part singing (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) has a strong tradition in the Church, the goal in congregational singing is that all participate, no matter what their vocal ability may be. Because many members sing the melody regardless of their vocal range, the hymns are in keys that accommodate both unison and part singing. Some hymns—and parts of hymns—are specifically written for unison singing.”<sup>17</sup>

*The Redeemer*

**Table 8: Compositional Information for *The Redeemer***

Dates of Composition:	September 1977 – January 1978
First Performance:	24 March 1978; BYU Philharmonic Orchestra, Oratorio Choir, and A Capella Choir; conducted by Ralph Woodward
Duration:	Approximately 80 minutes
Movements:	19
Instrumentation:	2 Flutes, 2 Oboes, 2 Clarinets (1dBCl.), 2 Bassoons, 4 Horns, 3 Trumpets, 3 Trombones, Tuba, Percussion (Timpani, Chimes, Glockenspiel, Bass Drum, Suspended Cymbal, Tam-tam, Triangle, Celesta, Harp), Vocal Soloists, <sup>18</sup> SATB Chorus, Strings
Language:	English
Publisher:	Jackman Music

Robert Cundick

Robert Cundick was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, on 26 November 1926. His musical talent was noticed early in life, and by age 12 he was serving as the organist for his congregation

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<sup>17</sup> Church of Jesus Christ, *Hymns*, 380.

<sup>18</sup> See “Performance Considerations” section

of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>19</sup> In high school he was accepted as the only scholarship student of Tabernacle organist Alexander Schreiner, but he also played in bands and orchestras and earned money for his postsecondary education by working as a jazz band pianist.<sup>20</sup> After serving in the Merchant Marines during World War II, Cundick enrolled as a music major at the University of Utah, ultimately studying with Leroy J. Robertson and completing a Ph.D. in music composition in 1955. Although his Ph.D. was in composition, his colleague John Longhurst would later say that “he viewed himself as an organist who wrote music, rather than as a composer who played the organ.”<sup>21</sup>

He joined the faculty of Brigham Young University (BYU) in 1957 as a teacher of theory, counterpoint, and orchestration, and in 1962 he moved with his family to London, England at the request of Church President David O. McKay in order to serve a two-year assignment as organist at the recently-constructed Hyde Park Chapel. Cundick’s own words indicate that he flourished in the position: “This stimulating experience filled the void in my professional credentials, which had previously been limited to the state of Utah. It was most encouraging to find that I could ‘hold my own’ in a musical culture of highest excellence. I appeared in concert at St. Paul’s Cathedral and King’s College, Cambridge, in addition to my daily recitals at Hyde Park Chapel and a BBC broadcast.”<sup>22</sup>

He returned to BYU’s music department in 1964, but shortly thereafter was called to a

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<sup>19</sup> “Robert Cundick Autobiography,” FairMormon, accessed January 5, 2020, <https://www.fairmormon.org/testimonies/scholars/robert-cundick>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> John Longhurst, “Robert Cundick: Salt Lake Mormon Tabernacle Choir Organist,” *American Organist*, January 2018, 38.

<sup>22</sup> “Robert Cundick Autobiography,” accessed January 5, 2020.

position as a Tabernacle organist.<sup>23</sup> During his 27 years in this post he accompanied the Tabernacle Choir, led fundraising efforts for and oversaw the installation of organs in several prominent Church venues, composed *The Redeemer*, hymns, and numerous other works, and organized the still-active Temple Square Concert Series.<sup>24</sup>

Although he is well-known in the LDS community for his religious music (most notably *The Redeemer*), he composed in various genres throughout his life. His output also includes solo keyboard works, instrumental sonatas with piano accompaniment, a piece for musical theater, a concerto for organ and string orchestra, and an overture for full orchestra. Shortly after Cundick passed away on 7 January 2016, musicologist and past-member of the Church’s General Music Committee Roger Miller stated that “Bob Cundick was certainly one of the most important and influential Latter-day Saint musicians of his generation, and perhaps the entire history of [The Church].”<sup>25</sup>

#### Origin of the Text

Ralph Woodward, a colleague of Cundick’s from BYU, first approached the composer with a list of scriptural passages and asked if he would be willing to write a piece based on them. His goal was “to create a work of genuine stature that would have meaning not only to the Latter-day Saints, but to Christians of every religious persuasion.”<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, *The Redeemer*

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<sup>23</sup> To be “given a calling” is to be asked by a leader to fulfill a church assignment. In most cases callings comprise volunteer efforts in local congregations, but Cundick’s assignment was also an occupation. This calling would have originated from the highest ranks of church leadership.

<sup>24</sup> Catherine Reese Newton, “Organist and composer Robert M. Cundick, one of ‘most important and influential Latter-day Saint musicians,’ dies,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, January 11, 2016, <https://archive.sltrib.com/article.php?id=3391205&itype=CMSID>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ralph Woodward, liner notes to *The Redeemer: A Sacred Service of Music*, by Robert Cundick (composer), Ronald Staheli (conductor), Brigham Young University Singers, Concert Choir, and Philharmonic Orchestra, Tantara TCD-029603HS, 1996, CD.

differs from most well-known Christian oratorios in that its narrative is not exclusively drawn from Biblical events (nor does it interpolate secular meditations as does Britten's *War Requiem*). Material not derived from the King James version of the Bible is selected from other books accepted as scripture by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, namely the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.<sup>27</sup>

The most important of these volumes is the Book of Mormon, which "Latter-day Saints accept as an authentic religious history of ancient America."<sup>28</sup> It is similar to the Bible in that its authors are viewed as prophets, but while biblical stories are centered in the Holy Land, the Book of Mormon tells of Semitic peoples who migrated to the Americas before the time of Christ. Their society kept the Law of Moses, but also looked forward to the coming of a Messiah as prophesied in the Old Testament (particularly Isaiah) and by their own religious leaders.<sup>29</sup>

The book was written by many ancient prophets by the spirit of prophecy and revelation. Their words, written on gold plates, were quoted and abridged by a prophet-historian named Mormon....

The crowning event recorded in the Book of Mormon is the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ among the Nephites [one of the groups that migrated from Jerusalem] soon after His resurrection. It puts forth the doctrines of the gospel, outlines the plan of salvation, and tells men what they must do to gain peace in this life and eternal salvation in the life to come.

After Mormon completed his writings, he delivered the account to his son Moroni, who added a few words of his own and hid up the plates in the Hill Cumorah. On September 21, 1823, the same Moroni, then a glorified, resurrected being, appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith and instructed him relative to the ancient record and its destined translation into the English language.

In due course the plates were delivered to Joseph Smith, who translated them by the gift and power of God. The record is now published in many languages as a new and

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<sup>27</sup> The King James Bible is the standard English edition used by the Church.

<sup>28</sup> Slaughter, "The Role of Music in the Mormon Church," 26.

<sup>29</sup> Joseph Smith, Jr., trans., *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013; first published 1830 by E.B. Grandin (Palmyra)), Alma 25:15.

additional witness that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God and that all who will come unto Him and obey the laws and ordinances of His gospel may be saved.<sup>30</sup>

Like the Bible, the Book of Mormon is divided into smaller books, usually titled by

author:

- |            |                       |             |            |
|------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------|
| 1. 1 Nephi | 6. Omni               | 10. Helaman | 15. Moroni |
| 2. 2 Nephi | 7. Words of<br>Mormon | 11. 3 Nephi |            |
| 3. Jacob   | 8. Mosiah             | 12. 4 Nephi |            |
| 4. Enos    | 9. Alma               | 13. Mormon  |            |
| 5. Jarom   |                       | 14. Ether   |            |

With few exceptions the narrative flows in chronological order, beginning around 600 B.C. with 1 Nephi and ending in approximately 400 A.D. with the writings of Moroni.

The Church's official description of the Doctrine and Covenants states, "The Doctrine and Covenants is a book of scripture containing revelations from the Lord [Jesus Christ] to the Prophet Joseph Smith and to a few other latter-day prophets. It is unique in scripture because it is not a translation of ancient documents...In the Doctrine and Covenants we learn doctrines concerning the eternal nature of families, the degrees of glory awaiting men and women after this life, and the organization of Christ's Church on earth today. We also read about the covenants God makes with those who are willing to keep His commandments."<sup>1</sup>

The book is divided into 138 sections and contains two Official Declarations (policy changes regarded as doctrinally significant). Dates range from 1823 to 1978, although only three sections and the two Official Declarations were written after the death of Joseph Smith in 1844. Since the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is considered to be a restoration of Christ's original church rather than an offshoot of Catholicism or Protestantism, its founding was in many

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<sup>30</sup> Smith, *The Book of Mormon*, vii.

<sup>1</sup> "Gospel Topics: Doctrine and Covenants," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed January 5, 2020, <https://www.lds.org/topics/doctrine-and-covenants?lang=eng>.

ways like building a new religion from the ground up. Because of this, many sections in the Doctrine and Covenants contain substantive theological concepts along with relatively mundane organizational instructions. Woodward drew on the doctrinal side of this dichotomy, carefully adapting verses with connections to Jesus Christ – even from sections otherwise heavy on logistical information.<sup>2</sup>

The final volume incorporated in *The Redeemer* is the *Pearl of Great Price*, styled as “a selection from the revelations, translations, and narrations of Joseph Smith, first prophet, seer, and revelator to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day saints.”<sup>3</sup> It is in essence a catch-all book for historical and sacred writings that do not have a natural home in either the Book or Mormon or the Doctrine and Covenants. It includes the following chapters:

1. Selections from the Book of Moses
2. The Book of Abraham
3. Joseph Smith – Matthew
4. Joseph Smith – History
5. Articles of Faith

The Book of Moses and Joseph Smith – Matthew come from Joseph Smith’s translation of the King James Version of the Bible, although in this case the word “translation” is used in a very broad sense, incorporating direct translation from ancient language along with clarification, revision, and correction.<sup>4</sup> The singular instance of text in *The Redeemer* that originates from the Pearl of Great Price comes from the first chapter of Joseph Smith – Matthew, a lengthy excerpt

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<sup>2</sup> See *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 20.

<sup>3</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed., *The Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013; first published 1851 by F.D. Richards (Liverpool)), i. Capitalization and punctuation normalized.

<sup>4</sup> See Robert J. Matthews, “Joseph Smith’s Inspired Translation of the Bible,” *Ensign of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, December, 1972.

of Smith’s translation of Matthew chapters 23 and 24 from the King James Version.

**Table 9: Scriptural Origins of the Libretto<sup>5</sup>**

PART I – THE PROPHECY				
1.	“Behold, the Lord Hath Commanded”	Helaman 14:9, 13 and 2 Nephi 2:26, 28		
2.	“Behold! He Shall Be Born of Mary”	Alma 7:10		
3.	“My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord”	Luke 1:46-55		
4.	“Because He Dwelleth in the Flesh”	Mosiah 15:2-3		
5.	“How Beautiful Upon the Mountains”	Mosiah 15:18, 28-30		
6.	“I Saw the Heavens Open”	1 Nephi 11:21, 24, 26, 27, 31-33		
PART II – THE SACRIFICE				
7.	“Behold, I am Jesus Christ”	D&C 18:23, 24, 34, 47 and 3 Nephi 27:13, 14, 20		
8.	“And in That Day He Shall Suffer Death”	Helaman 14:20-23, 25		
9.	“If a Man Die, Shall He Live Again?”	Job 14:14, 19:23-27		
10.	“The Almighty God Gave His Only Begotten Son”	D&C 20:21-25		
11.	“And the Multitude Heard a Voice”	3 Nephi 11:3, 7, 11, 14		
PART III – THE PROMISE				
12.	“And What Is It We Shall Hope For?”	Moroni 7:41, 48		
13.	“Wherefore Do the Things Which I Have Told You”	2 Nephi 31:17, 20, 21		
14.	“Behold, This Is the Way”	2 Nephi 31:21 <sup>6</sup>		
15.	“For as the Light of the Morning”	Joseph Smith – Matthew 1:26, 35, 37		
16.	“Fear Not, For Ye Are Mine”	D&C 50:41-45		
17.	“He is the Root and the Offspring of David”	Revelations 22:16, 17, 20		
Total Number of Movements Per Text				
Old Testament	New Testament	Book of Mormon	Doctrine and Covenants	Pearl of Great Price
1	2	11	3	1

<sup>5</sup> Program notes, *The Redeemer: A Sacred Service of Music*, concert by Robert Cundick (composer), Ralph Woodward (conductor), BYU Oratorio Choir, A Capella Choir, and Philharmonic Orchestra, Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, March 24, 1978, <https://archive.org/details/musicprograms197778brig/page/n343>.

<sup>6</sup> This is listed in the program as 1 Nephi 31:21, but I have corrected it in the table as it is obviously a typographical error; 1 Nephi only has 22 chapters, whereas 2 Nephi has 33.



The Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and *Pearl of Great Price* are collectively known as the *standard works* – volumes of scripture officially accepted by the Church. It is important to note that the additional books do not replace the Bible in Latter-day Saint religious practice, but are considered a co-equal companion scriptures. Because of this, Woodward freely mixed passages from Latter-day Saint sources with the Bible. Moreover, as these texts were originally published in English, Woodward did not need to do any translation to construct the libretto.<sup>7</sup>

The concert program from the premiere outlines the scriptural origin of each section; taking that as a starting point, I created Table 9 to summarize and clearly show the use of scripture in each movement. For an in-depth discussion on each movement, the reader is advised to consult pages 94-133 of Bentley’s dissertation.

### Musical Style

Although labeled “a service of sacred music,” Cundick’s musical idiom is much more complicated than that found in weekly Latter-day Saint meetings. Similarities include the use of choir, a marked preference for syllabic singing, and the prevalence of tonal harmony. Other musical elements such as rhythm, meter, chromaticism, and tessitura are more complex than those used in the hymnbook or songbook, although they are still benign by most twentieth-century standards. Though there are instances of fugal and contrapuntal writing – as well as mixed meters – they are infrequent.

Another noticeable difference between *The Redeemer* and regular Church worship music lies in an expansion of performing forces: instrumental accompaniment is provided by full

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<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, Woodward is not credited anywhere in the score as the librettist; instead, the phrase “text from the Holy Scriptures” is used.

orchestra rather than organ and/or piano, and vocal soloists are added. These distinctions bring the work closer to the realm of oratorio, especially given the direction in the handbook that “instruments with a prominent or less worshipful sound, such as most brass and percussion, are not appropriate for sacrament meeting.”<sup>8</sup>

When reviewing a recording of the work published in 1996, Deseret News columnist Jerry Johnston commented on the nature of the music:

Perhaps composer Robert Cundick was chosen to serve as Mormon Tabernacle organist because his temperament and talent fit so well with the choir.

Perhaps Cundick grew into his role.

Whichever came first, however, the qualities associated with the choir - dignity, reverence, understatement, sweetness - have become the virtues of Cundick's ambitious work for choir and orchestra, "The Redeemer."...

As with other modern composers, Cundick stubbornly refuses to be predictable throughout. No melody leads where a listener may wish to direct it, no chord in the choruses comes out regal and robust. The music is in constant motion, never plodding, yet never really launching into flights of melody....

The handling of emotion is impressive. Sentimentality is forbidden. Careful reflection and awe is permitted....

Listeners who demand driving power in their choral numbers and flights of passion in their arias may feel somewhat tethered by Cundick's intellectual style. As a composer, he prefers majestic decorum to ecstasy and disquieting, amelodic phrases to tunes people could hum home from church.<sup>9</sup>

### Performance Considerations

Although *The Redeemer* shares many characteristics with traditional oratorios, Cundick's performance instructions clearly show that the subtitle “a service of sacred music” is not simply an explanation of the work's content:

This work is intended to be performed from its beginning to end without interruption. The *Invocation* should be unannounced and should be given immediately after the *Prelude*. In a like manner, the *Benediction* should be given after the final chorus followed

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<sup>8</sup> Church of Jesus Christ, *Handbook 2*, 115.

<sup>9</sup> Jerry Johnston, “Redeemer, in any Grouping, is a Sweet Piece of Music,” *Deseret News*, April 7, 1996, <https://www.deseret.com/1996/4/7/19235161/redeemer-in-any-grouping-is-a-sweet-piece-of-music>.

by the *Postlude*. No distraction of any sort, such as tuning or applause, should be allowed to break the spiritual continuity of this sacred musical service.<sup>10</sup>

Due to the inclusion of unscripted prayer and an insistence on delaying applause, the work can best be described as a hybrid of liturgy and concert performance. However, in an ironic twist, it does *not* meet requirements for performance during traditional Latter-Day Saint worship services. The performing forces are too large, it is too long, and the unvarying nature of a libretto is at odds with the tradition of congregational singing, prepared talks, and short musical numbers. Moreover, some live performances have been given with the soloists in costume, which completely distances the work from practice appropriate to traditional worship. From a Latter-Day Saint perspective this is a work for the concert hall despite the aforementioned devotional aspects. As the Church does not adhere to a liturgical calendar (other than the celebration of Easter and Christmas), honor saints, or participate in feast days, there is no “right” time or place to perform *The Redeemer* as long as the reverent atmosphere requested by the composer is maintained.<sup>11</sup>

Like Holst’s *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda*, the instrumental parts demand only an intermediate level of skill. However, because the vocal lines are somewhat complex (due to unusual chromatic inflections and the “amelodic phrases” referred to by Johnston) and large forces are required, it is my opinion that performances are best suited to collegiate and professional ensembles. At the very least an amateur group would need considerable resources and access to superior vocalists.

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Cundick, *The Redeemer: A Service of Sacred Music* (Orem: Jackman Music Corporation, 1991). It is my opinion that the use of the word “unannounced” in reference to the *Invocation* does not mean “suddenly” or “by surprise,” but rather it is an indication that the *Invocation* should be given without comment beforehand.

<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, like other Christ-centered oratorios its message relates well to the Easter and Christmas seasons.

**Table 10: Vocal Soloist Combinations in *The Redeemer***

Performance	Combinations
Brigham Young University – Live Performance (Premiere) – 1978 <sup>12</sup>	Jesus (also listed as “The Savior”) – bass-baritone Mary – soprano Angel – soprano Soprano First Prophet – baritone Second Prophet – baritone Third Prophet – baritone Total: 7 (4 male, 3 female)
Brigham Young University – Audio Recording – 1996 <sup>13</sup>	The Savior – baritone Mary – soprano Angel – soprano Angel – soprano Prophet – baritone Prophet – baritone Total: 6 (3 male, 3 female)
Tabernacle Choir – Live Performance (Video Recording) – 2008 <sup>14</sup>	The Savior – baritone Mary – soprano Angel – soprano Angel – soprano Angel – mezzo-soprano Prophet – baritone Prophet – baritone Total: 7 (3 male, 4 female)
BYU-Idaho – Live Performance (Video Recording) – 2016 <sup>15</sup>	The Savior – baritone Mary – soprano; doubles as an Angel Angel – soprano Prophet – baritone; doubles as God, the Father Prophet – baritone Total: 5 (3 male, 2 female)

Regarding voice types for the vocal solos: there is some leeway in this as Cundick does not provide extensive instructions in the score. Solo lines are universally indicated in the

<sup>12</sup> Program notes, “The Redeemer: A Sacred Service of Music.”

<sup>13</sup> Woodward, liner notes to *The Redeemer*.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Cundick, *The Redeemer: A Sacred Service of Music*, concert by Mack Wilberg (conductor), The Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and Orchestra at Temple Square, Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Tabernacle, March 2008, YouTube video, <https://youtu.be/TFqvwJntzgs>.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Cundick, *The Redeemer: A Sacred Service of Music*, concert by Eda Ashby (conductor), BYU-Idaho Choirs & Orchestra, Rexburg: BYU-Idaho Center, March 19, 2016, online video, [https://video.byui.edu/media/Sacred+Music+%22The+Redeemer%22+Winter+2016/0\\_seqxbx21](https://video.byui.edu/media/Sacred+Music+%22The+Redeemer%22+Winter+2016/0_seqxbx21).

instrumentation at the left of the staff by the word “solo,” regardless of who is singing (with only one exception). Moreover, text to delineate individual roles is only printed above the first measure of that particular character’s entrance in a movement, and the roles themselves are a mix of common and proper nouns, including: prophet, soprano, angel, Jesus Christ, mezzo-soprano, and God, the Father. Unfortunately, research of actual performance practice does not fully clarify the issue; as shown in Table 10, it is possible to use different numbers and combinations of singers:

Note that the role of God, the Father is uncredited three of the four productions, but it still requires a singer. In the performance by the Tabernacle Choir the part was performed by an off-stage male voice, and in the performance by BYU-Idaho it was designated to one of the soloists (who did not stand or receive a spotlight). Although there is no indication in the score that the singer should be off-stage, I feel that it is a reasonable practice when feasible as the dramatic effect mirrors the text from which it is derived. The words are copied without alteration from 3 Nephi 11:7 – the chapter that begins the “crowning event” of the Saviors ministry in the Americas. In the scriptural account a crowd of people hear the voice of God, the Father as he introduces his Beloved Son. The resurrected Savior then descends from heaven and begins teaching and ministering to the people just as he did in Jerusalem.

Due to the unspecific nature of Cundick’s directions it is not unreasonable to let matters of fact, availability, and cost dictate the combination and number of singers used in a performance of *The Redeemer*. It is my opinion that the role of Jesus Christ (and possibly Mary) should be sung by a performer who is not assigned another part, but having the other singers cover multiple roles if necessary does not appear to present any problems.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Performance of works other than the “usual warhorses” is an important consideration for many orchestras at this time. Diversification of repertoire provides opportunities to expose audiences and performers to unfamiliar music of artistic merit, increase cultural exchange and understanding, and pique the interest of patrons who might otherwise not attend. However, it is not sufficient for a conductor to simply program a piece in order to fill a diversity quota – especially when the composition is based on text that is considered sacred. S/he must understand its background, intent, and significance to connect with the meaning of the words, make informed programming decisions, and approach the work in a way that is appropriate and respectful to the religious source material. This study was designed to facilitate such understanding by providing salient information on the religious/cultural background and musical aspects of three choral-orchestral compositions that might be of interest to conductors seeking to expand their ensemble’s repertoire.

It is the author’s hope that this inquiry will not only lead to more performances of these pieces, but that it will also encourage consideration of other under-performed works that could be of value based on their cultural and artistic characteristics. As there are a vast number of compositions in this vein, the possibility for additional research is nearly endless.

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