

THE CHORAL WORKS OF ROBERT WARD: A VIEW OF HIS COMPOSITIONAL  
APPROACH TO TEXT SETTINGS AND HIS USE OF  
SYMBOLS AND ALLUSIONS.

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Robert Eugene Ward's impressive body of work encompasses almost every genre of music. He has composed symphonies, operas, large orchestral pieces, chamber works, solo instrumental pieces, extended choral works, short choral pieces, ceremonial works, a ballet, theatre pieces, and even jazz and swing band pieces. Ward's name is recognized in most musical circles but usually only for his opera *The Crucible*, a work for which he earned a Pulitzer Prize in 1962. In fact, a survey of all the dissertations, articles, interviews, and books written about Robert Ward shows that the vast majority of these studies focus on his most famous opera. His choral works, though they comprise some of Ward's most expressive work, have received little attention.

Ward's works show a deliberate use of symbols and allusions. While this use is far from an innovative concept in composition, Ward distinguishes himself with a consistent and purposeful application of these devices establishing an unmistakable interweaving of text, composition, and context. This study examines several of Ward's short choral compositions as they relate to the composer's use of symbols and allusions. Comparisons are made to Ward's use of these devices in his operatic works as a means of determining the consistency of their use throughout his vocal works. Chapter 1 looks at the composer's background, influence, and experience as to their impact on his approach to composition. Chapter 2 lays the groundwork for the discussion of symbols and allusions in music by establishing their basis and function in literary arts in general. The final chapter explores Ward's use of symbols and allusions in four of his choral works.

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Finally, It must be stated that while any value contained in this study is a result of the efforts of many individuals, the responsibility for any errors or inaccuracies are entirely borne by the author. All musical examples taken from Robert Ward compositions are used by permission of Highgate Press/Vireo Press, a division of ECS Publishing, Boston, MA.

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## INTRODUCTION

Robert Eugene Ward's impressive body of work encompasses almost every genre of music. He has composed symphonies, operas, large orchestral pieces, chamber works, solo instrumental pieces, extended choral works, short choral pieces, ceremonial works, a ballet, theatre pieces and even jazz and swing band pieces. With a multi-faceted career that has spanned more than sixty years, beginning in 1934, Ward has been influenced by such noted musical figures as Lukas Foss, Norman Dello Joio, Leonard Bernstein, Paul Hindemith and Aaron Copland, and worked in the areas of performance (conducting), academia, publishing, and administration. He has been the recipient of numerous grants and fellowships, the New York Critics Citation Award, and the 1962 Pulitzer Prize for his opera *The Crucible*. Ward has also been recognized with three honorary doctorates, the first from the Peabody Conservatory in 1975, the second from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 1992, and the third from Duke University in 1993. This abbreviated list of Robert Ward's accomplishments shows his significance as an American composer.

Ward's name is recognized in most musical circles but usually only for his opera *The Crucible*. In fact, a survey of all the dissertations, articles, interviews, and books written about Robert Ward shows that the vast majority of these studies focus on his most famous opera. His choral works, though they comprise some of Ward's most expressive work, have received little attention. As an example of this neglect, Nick Strimple's *Choral Music in the Twentieth Century* (the most extensive and comprehensive text currently available on the subject) makes no mention of even a single piece by Robert Ward. This author sees substantial merit in these heretofore neglected works that justify bringing them to wider attention among choral musicians.

Ward's works show a deliberate use of symbols and allusions. While this use is far from an innovative concept in composition, Ward distinguishes himself with a consistent and purposeful application of these devices establishing an unmistakable interweaving of text, composition, and context. Interspersed throughout his choral works are musical references to common images that, even when the listener cannot always identify the origins of these memories, evoke strong intellectual and emotional responses. Ward sees the use of allusions as an essential part of his musical compositions.

Often such moments inspire eclecticism, the use of which can quickly draw on the listener's previous musical experience and result in immediate identification. Critics often jump on such moments and berate the composer as unoriginal when, in fact, he or she is just employing one of the oldest and most effective devices in the craft of composing....<sup>1</sup>

The importance of allusions as a compositional device in Ward's compositions is further illuminated when one studies the composer's meticulous search for the appropriate text for his vocal works. He favors texts rich with dramatic and descriptive language capable of inspiring expressive musical treatment. In many cases, when a text containing the appropriate imagery is not readily available, Ward writes or compiles the text himself, thereby producing deeply expressive and memorable compositions for the participant.<sup>2</sup>

This study looks at several of Ward's short choral compositions as they relate to the composer's use of symbols and allusions. Comparisons are made to Ward's use of these devices in his operatic works as a means of determining the consistency of their use throughout his vocal works. The pieces selected for this study span the years 1957 to 1992 and, as such, provide insight into the composer's methodical working style. Ward's consistent use of symbols and

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Ward, May 2006 interview with author.

<sup>2</sup> The term "participant" is a term used by the author throughout this study to denote anyone who interacts with the music, after its composition. Since a musical score is not only read but also heard, the term may refer to the listener as well as the performer.

allusions over this thirty-five year span shows a consistent approach to text setting rather than an occasional application. Although not all allusions found in Ward's pieces are consciously employed, all occur as a result of the composer's musical language developed over many years of study and practice.<sup>3</sup> The use of symbols and allusions and their effect on the participant in Robert Ward's choral pieces, whether employed consciously or unconsciously, is the primary focus of this study.

A brief biography of Robert Ward's life helps to establish some of the influences on his approach to composition. His philosophical view of life, gleaned both from his autobiography and his conversations with Charles Woliver in 1985, Robert Kolt in 2001, and this author in 2006, sheds light on his choice of text for his choral works as well as the final musical setting of these texts.<sup>4</sup> It is not the author's intent to make claims of the absoluteness of allusions or symbols cited in this study, but rather that they exist in the eyes of this author. To the extent that Robert Ward agrees or disagrees with the author's claims pertaining to the symbols and allusions cited in this study, the composer's comments serve only to demonstrate his conscious or unconscious use of these devices.

While a detailed harmonic analysis of each piece is not undertaken in this study, a discussion of the structural and stylistic make-up of each piece is given in chapter 3. Also, writing techniques unique to a particular work, when found, are discussed within the framework of the detailed study of that specific piece in chapter 3. For example, Ward's use of jazz harmonies in one piece, the Christmas anthem, "That Wondrous Night of Christmas Eve," is

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<sup>3</sup> Allan Pasco states "Only the reader can establish the connection that allows allusion to take place." *Allusions: A Literary Graft*, 18.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Patrick Woliver. "Robert Ward's *The Crucible*: A Critical Commentary." DMA Diss., The University of Cincinnati, 1986. Robert Paul Kolt. "Robert Ward's *The Crucible*: Creating An American Musical Accent." Ph.D. Diss., Florida State University, 2005.

discussed with the intent of showing the composer's typical approach to writing in his choral works.

Finally, conclusions are drawn concerning the use and effectiveness of allusions in Ward's choral compositions. These conclusions are based strictly on the evidence found within the music. All other points for or against the importance of the musical allusions in the scores, function only as related material. The study also suggests areas for further research. Some of these concern the analysis of other Ward choral pieces as a means of discovering the composer's use of symbols and allusions beyond the works discussed here, a comparative study of Ward's use of these devices to their use in the works of other composers of the same compositional period, and a more detailed study of the jazz elements in Ward's compositions.

## CHAPTER 1

### ROBERT WARD – THE MAN BECOMES THE COMPOSER

#### 1.1 Biographical Sketch

##### 1.1.1 Formative Years and Childhood Influences

Robert Ward was born on September 17, 1917, in Cleveland, Ohio. The youngest of five children, Robert Ward sang soprano at church and school until his voice changed. His time at the Miles Park Presbyterian Church played a critical part in the formulation of his religious and philosophical beliefs.

My background was as a boy soprano from the age of five on, and I sang in everything at school and church until my voice changed at about 15.<sup>5</sup>

A far greater and more consistent influence on me was the Miles Park Presbyterian Church, which I attended regularly until I left for college.... The atmosphere of our church was liberal and humanitarian.... Rev. Peter Macauley, the minister, was a very un-sanctimonious, down-to-earth man.... Only in high school, when I began to be skeptical about much of the mythology, which had grown up around Christianity, did my ties to the church begin to change.<sup>6</sup>

Enrolling in John Elliot's harmony classes helped Ward discover and refine his approach to harmonizing and crafting fluid, expressive melodies.<sup>7</sup>

When I was studying harmony in high school, it was by the Alchin-Jones textbooks [Applied Harmony by Carolyn Alchin and Vincent Jones] and my teacher at high school graduated from NYU where he had studied with Vincent Jones.... That book didn't begin with chords and vertical structures, but with the task of creating accompaniments for melodies. We were required to use the chords and at the same time we had to become sensitive to the importance of the

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Ward, 2006 *Interview with the author*.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Ward, *All The Things I've Been: An Autobiography* (Boston: ECS Publishing, 2003), 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 4

accompanying piano or voice, whatever texture that was needed. Well, that is one of the things that you find in good choral music.<sup>8</sup>

As I became immersed in the work of writing the assigned exercises, my own melodies and accompaniments occurred to me.<sup>9</sup>

This aptitude was no doubt aided by Ward's exposure to some of the most popular music of the time. At the local movie house Ward heard stage shows with Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, the Dorseys, and Glenn Miller. At home on the radio, he heard the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Metropolitan Opera. He also experienced live orchestra and opera. By Christmas of 1933, Ward was sure that he wanted to be a composer of serious music. He requested and received Rimsky-Korsakov's *Orchestration*, Percy Goetchiuss' two volumes on musical forms, and the Alchin-Jones *Harmony II* books. These books served as his personal study guides and, after consulting with John Elliot and Vincent Jones, Elliot's mentor at New York University, Ward was convinced that Eastman School of Music was the place for his collegiate studies. His dedication to becoming a composer is seen in his devotion to his personal musical studies during these early years. The early musical influences in his life had an enduring impact on his compositional style.

### 1.1.2 Musical Training

Robert Ward's compositional style is a product of his musical training at two prominent music institutions in America. He attended the Eastman School of Music on a half scholarship where he enrolled as a composition major, studying theory with Dr. Allen Irvine McHose, music history with Warren Fox, and composition with Bernard Rogers, Howard Hanson, and Edward Royce. His two years of harmony classes in high school placed him well ahead of the class so

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Ward, 2006 *Interview with author*.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Ward, *Autobiography*, 4.



that Mr. Rogers allowed him to do extra work in composition instead of the regular assignments. Ward became familiar with the major works of the choral literature while singing in the chorus at Eastman, and his knowledge, understanding, and appreciation for the choral works of the great masters were to have a profound influence on his own choral compositions. Ward's time at Eastman was fruitful not only because of his formal studies but also because life away from home gave him the opportunity to refine his personal philosophical views. From his early days at Eastman he began to question his beliefs about life.

The question of good and evil troubled me. I tried to imagine a world that was all "good" but everything seemed to disappear into a vastness without any poles. ... One night, as I was crossing a bridge over the Genesee River, I had a kind of epiphany. It seemed to me there was no proof, one way or the other, of the certainties that were preached. One simply had to have faith in whatever one believed. And since I had no intention of making a career out of evil, I must make one out of whatever I saw as good. These thoughts somehow settled my religious questioning, and only many years later have I more clearly defined and extended my belief.<sup>10</sup>

Ward's early formulation of a philosophy of life, while not completely defined until much later, influenced his compositions throughout his life.

Soon after beginning his studies at Eastman, he secured a job at the Sibley Music Library, the third largest music library in America, with a remarkable collection of both scores and recordings. This job afforded him the opportunity to study the works of the masters and to formulate ideas that were to shape his personal "musical language." His work there helped him expand his knowledge of music literature beyond vocal music.

My background until then had been mostly vocal music. I didn't know the Beethoven sonatas, or even Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* – not to mention the great orchestral works. Now, all this was available to me and I spent hours listening to the works with scores in hand.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Ward, *Autobiography*, 8.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 9.

Another event that profoundly influenced Ward's choral compositions was his study of English literature, first with Wayne Marjorum and then with Charles Riker. His studies of Milton's *Paradise Lost* with Marjorum and the important books of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with Mr. Riker stimulated his intellect and further sparked his interest in great literature, so much so, that Ward completed a minor in English at Eastman. This appreciation for great literature is seen in Ward's preference for choosing weighty, meaningful texts for his vocal compositions.

In his final two years at Eastman, Robert Ward studied Advanced Composition with Howard Hanson. While he learned much more of the discipline of composing, Ward felt he needed to be taught a more structured approach.

Actually I didn't feel that Hanson was the greatest composition teacher. He was very fluent on the keyboard, and could improvise easily, so that if you brought in your piece and had a problem with it, he could, in a sense, improvise you out of the problem. In the process, it wasn't possible to learn what had really been wrong and what needed to be done. I had to wait until I got to Julliard before I found that kind of help.<sup>12</sup>

Almost immediately after graduating from Eastman in June of 1939, Robert Ward moved to New York to attend the Julliard School of Music. Julliard provided him the opportunity to study with some of the finest teachers, and also to establish relationships with other composers who influenced his approach to composition. One such influence was Aaron Copland, whom Ward had met earlier while still a student at Eastman. Copland, along with Claire Reis and Minna Lederman, headed the League of Composers and its magazine *Modern Music*. They invited Ward to be a reviewer for the magazine, a job that allowed him to discuss with composers their new works. During these interviews, Ward was able to learn some of the new innovations in composition that found their way into his own works. At Julliard, his teachers were Frederick Jacobi for composition, and Albert Stoessel and Edgar Schenkman for

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<sup>12</sup> Robert Ward, *Autobiography* 10, 11.

conducting. Among his classmates in composition were Norman Dello Joio, George Leinsinger, and Dai-Keong Lee.

In the summer of 1941 Ward attended Tanglewood, studying composition with Aaron Copland. The latter encouraged Ward to study the sketchbooks of Beethoven and to sketch away from the piano. Ward credits his work that summer and Copland's ability as a teacher with providing much of the insight into his understanding of the art of composition.

As a teacher, Aaron was remarkable in his ability to zero in on a student's central weakness. Almost immediately he made me aware of the handicap which working at the piano was for me.<sup>13</sup>

Ward credits his studies and the musical environment at Julliard and Tanglewood with the influence on his early compositional output. From his student days to the end of World War II, he produced about forty compositions, eleven of which he later withdrew. Although most of those early works are small-scale songs and pieces for piano or chamber ensembles, his First Symphony, a composition that won the Juilliard Publication Award in 1942, was completed in 1941. Around the same time, while serving on the faculty of Queens College, Robert Ward wrote several reviews and articles for the magazine *Modern Music*. His reviews for the magazine expanded his reputation into the professional arena.

### 1.1.3 Military Experience

Ward's academic life and exposure as a composer was interrupted with his service in World War II, but instead of halting his growth as a composer, the war provided him the opportunity to become familiar with other musical styles which figure prominently into his later compositions. In January of 1942, he was called up for service in the United States Army. He attended the Army Music School at Fort Myer and was then assigned the military occupational

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Ward, *Autobiography*, 17.

specialty of band director. While stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas, Ward wrote a major part of the score to the musical revue "The Life of Riley." He was then assigned to the 7th Infantry and sent to the Pacific. For the 7th Infantry Band he wrote a march, and for its dance band he wrote several jazz compositions. His exposure to jazz during these years influenced almost all of his compositions that followed. While fulfilling his military service, despite the relatively few moments of leisure, Ward managed to compose two orchestral works, *Adagio and Allegro*, first performed in New York in 1944, and *Jubilation: An Overture*, written mostly on Okinawa, Japan, in 1945, and premiered at Carnegie Hall by the National Orchestral Association the following spring. Of his years in the military, Ward says:

You know, some people don't look on their years spent in the army as being very productive but, as a matter of fact, it added a whole new chapter to my creative life.<sup>14</sup>

Ward's compositions are a synthesis of sixteenth and eighteenth-century counterpoint and harmony, the twelve-tone system as exemplified by Schoenberg, and the elements of jazz gleaned from his work in the army band.

During his military service Ward met Mary Raymond Benedict, a Red Cross recreation worker. They married on June 19, 1944, and had five children. He was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious service in the Aleutian Islands. Ward emerged from his military service a more competent and disciplined composer. Following his discharge from military service at the end of the war, he returned to Julliard to earn a postgraduate certificate in 1946.

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Ward, 2006 *Interview with the author*.

#### 1.1.4 Teaching Experience

Robert Ward's life as an educator kept him abreast of innovations in composition, allowed him the opportunity to apply these new techniques to his own works, and helped him establish professional relationships that lasted his entire career. Prior to entering the service, and while still a student at Julliard, he served on the faculty of Queens College in New York. Upon his graduation from Julliard, Robert Ward joined the theory faculty there, serving also as Assistant to the President from 1952 to 1956. He served as an associate professor of Music at Columbia University from 1946 to 1948. In 1952, Ward accepted a position as Director of the Third Street Music School Settlement from 1952 to 1955, an organization on the Lower East Side of New York that provided musical instruction to the children of poor immigrants. In 1967, Ward accepted a position as President of the North Carolina School of the Arts; and in 1978, he joined the faculty at Duke University as a visiting professor and remained there as Mary Duke Biddle Professor of Music from 1979 to 1987. The sum total of Ward's teaching experience was his own synthesis of the essential elements of Western Art Music, which he outlined in his 2003 autobiography.

What I sought was a global theory [that] could explain Western music of all periods and styles, taking into account all the basic musical elements. The question I posed was, "What criteria must be satisfied to hold listeners' attention from the first to the final note of a work?"<sup>15</sup>

Ward's use of symbols and allusions may very well be an answer, at least in part, to his own question of how to hold the listeners' attention.

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Ward, *Autobiography*, 118 – 119.

### 1.1.5 Compositions

Robert Ward's significance as a composer is made evident by the number of commissions he has received throughout his career. Kenneth Kreitner's *Robert Ward: Bio-Bibliography* lists some 158 compositions by Robert Ward.<sup>16</sup> These span all genres of music and are mostly commissions. His earliest extant compositions date from 1934 and his first opera, *He Who Gets Slapped*, written with librettist Bernard Stambler, was a critical success, creating the environment for future opera commissions. The New York City Opera, Broadcast Music Inc., the New York Philharmonic, the Friends of Dumbarton Oaks, and the Juilliard Musical Foundation have, in large measure, been responsible for commissioning a major portion of Ward's distinguished body of works. While Ward's works represent almost every genre of music, his reputation is largely based on the extraordinary success of his opera *The Crucible* in 1961. After the success of *The Crucible*, Ward received several commissions for ceremonial works, such as *Hymn and Celebration* in 1962, *Music for a Celebration* in 1963, *Festive Ode* in 1966, *Fiesta Processional* in 1966, and *Music for a Great Occasion* in 1970. During those years he also wrote the cantata, *Sweet Freedom's Song*, in 1965; the Fifth Symphony in 1976; a Piano Concerto in 1968, commissioned by the Powder River Foundation for the soloist Marjorie Mitchell; a Saxophone Concerto in 1984; and four more operas: *The Lady from Colorado* in 1964, *Claudia Leqare* in 1977, *Abelard and Heloise* in 1981, and *Minutes 'till Midnight* in 1982. Ward also wrote chamber music, such as the *First String Quartet* in 1966 and the *Raleigh Divertimento* in 1985.

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<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Kreitner, *Robert Ward: Bio-Bibliography*, Appendix 2.

### 1.1.6 Reputation and Influence

His many awards and commissions evidence Robert Ward's reputation and influence. His *Symphony No. 2* was introduced by The National Symphony, under Hans Kindler, in Washington, D. C., on January 25, 1948, and following this performance, several American orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy, programmed this symphony. Following Hans Kindler's death in 1949, his widow established the Kindler Foundation to commission works by American-born composers. Robert Ward had the honor of receiving the first commission by the foundation, which resulted in his *Arioso and Tarantelle* for cello and piano.<sup>17</sup> Ward chronicles a few of the events that have brought him recognition throughout his professional life.

At intervals during a composer's career certain works bring him or her to a new plateau of recognition and public acceptance. My *First Symphony* marked the crossing from student to professional status. *Jubilation*, in its two versions, was performed widely by groups at all levels, from Symphony orchestras to high school bands. The commissions, which were then forthcoming, and *He Who Gets Slapped* led to *The Crucible*, which received the Pulitzer Prize and the New York Critics Circle citation in 1962. Though the cash award for the Pulitzer Prize was only \$500.00 at that time, the prestige and publicity value then, as now, is incalculable. Thereafter your name becomes Pulitzer Prize Winner so and so.<sup>18</sup>

His 1962 Pulitzer Prize winning opera, *The Crucible*, stands as only one of his many accomplishments as a composer. He has been the recipient of three Guggenheim Fellowships, the first coming in 1950 and then renewed in 1952, with the third coming in 1966. Among his peers, Ward is distinguished as one of the few composers of his era to have composed operas, symphonies, other large-scale orchestral works, solo pieces, chamber music, ballet, and choral works. He is a staunch advocate for new music by American composers; serving on the committee of The League of Composers and

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Ward, *Autobiography*, 43.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 53.

nurturing young composers in his capacity as educator and editor for Galaxy Music Corporation. His reputation and influence have been firmly established and continue to grow.

#### 1.1.7 Reflection of Social and Political Issues in Ward's Works

Robert Ward's compositional style can be clearly seen as a product of his musical training experiences, and the socio-political influences on his work are as much a contributing factor. Ward's reflection on these social and political issues, in his autobiography, provides some clarity as to their influence on his choice of text for his choral works. The Great Depression of 1929 was one such event that had a lasting impact on the way Robert Ward came to view life. His political views were shaped by his exposure to many of the existing philosophical ideologies.

...There was still the Depression, and there were a group of us who were very aware of what was going on. We were all of draft age, and we knew that if war started, we were going to be in it. Beyond that, it was the first year when we were really becoming fully alert to the implications of the events that dominated the news. ...It was then that I began to read Marx, the Red Dean of Canterbury, and Bertram Russell, who was very influential at the time.

The intense political battles generated by the depression and the beginnings of World War II were reflected in all the arts. Refugees from the Fascist regimes in Europe were bringing a clearer picture of the horrors developing in Germany, Italy, Austria, and Poland. Pressures to get the U.S. involved were mounting on every side.

When the waves of refugees from Nazi regimes flooded New York, and the full impact of Hitler's atrocities became known, . . . those who, like myself, had been conscientious objectors on political and humanitarian grounds ceased our objections to the war effort.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Robert Ward, *Autobiography*, 13-15.



Clearly, these political and philosophical issues found a response in Ward's compositions and choice of text. Andrew Stiller's statement that Ward's "operas, as well as many of his shorter vocal works, show a concern for social and political issues" is seen in the latter's conscientious choice of libretti for his operas and texts for his vocal works.<sup>20</sup> Robert Ward believes, like Arthur Miller, that writers and artists in American theatre have a responsibility to society as the guardians of its conscience. This view is explicitly expressed in Miller's play *The Crucible*. In the play Miller takes "a public stand against authoritarian inquisitions and mass hysteria."<sup>21</sup> This moral stance parallels Robert Ward's philosophy of a writer's responsibility and explains his deep desire to set Miller's play as an opera.

In fact, Ward was drawn to the subject of the "Salem witch hunt" because Arthur Miller's play was a clear statement against McCarthyism in the 1950's.<sup>22</sup> The dramatic elements in the play were compelling to Ward, but the political statement was an even more enticing element.

Ward's choral pieces show a similar preference for texts that appeal to his sense of moral responsibility to society. And yet, Ward never compromises the ideal of making art the primary focus in his choral works as Robert Kolt points out in his dissertation.

Ward, in every aspect of his composition, seeks to express the philosophy of American Idealism, which has become part of his being during his multi-faceted career. This desire has never descended to the level of a sophist's teaching tool or (worse yet) a soapbox from which to espouse personal opinions. In his operas, he conceived each as primarily a work of art, with social or political commentary usually kept subtly in the background as matter for reflection and contemplation.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Andrew Stiller, "Robert Eugene Ward." *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Second Edition. Ed. Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001.

<sup>21</sup> Charles Patrick Woliver, *The Crucible: A Critical Commentary*, 20.

<sup>22</sup> From 1950 to 1954 Senator Joseph R. McCarthy led a campaign in the United States against Communists in visible positions within American society. He developed a style of verbal condemnation of those he accused, "the principal elements [of which] were recklessness in accusation, carelessness in accuracy of statement, and abuse of those who criticized him." (Earl Latham, "The Meaning of McCarthyism" *Twentieth Century Interpretations of the Crucible*, ed. John H. Ferres (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), p. 24.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Kolt, *Personal Interview with Robert Ward*, 43.

Owing, no doubt, to his “Presbyterian upbringing” and his exposure to the writings of the contemporary socialist writers, Robert Ward views life through very serious eyes. He gravitates to subjects that are weighty and of significant social importance, yet he maintains an optimistic view of American life.

Often I have been questioned about the meaning of my abstract works. To many critics they have seemed very American and optimistic. Both observations are true I think, not as a result of conscious effort on my part but rather the result of growing up surrounded but the boundless advantages of American musical life and the rich environment of my home and our great country. Fate has been enormously kind to me and I am deeply grateful. I believe that each artist’s work is the conscious or unconscious revelation of his or her innermost beliefs and being.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Ward, *Autobiography*, 125.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ROLE OF SYMBOLS AND ALLUSIONS IN LITERATURE AND MUSIC

#### 2.1 Writers' Use of Symbols and Allusion

##### 2.1.1 Symbolism Defined

In order to properly interpret the significance of symbols and allusions in the works of Robert Ward, it is necessary to understand the study of these devices in literature and music. Semiotics, a term derived from the Greek *semeîon*, meaning “sign,” and coined by US-American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, can be defined simply as the study of signs. The term *sémiologie*, from which the term “semiotics” is derived, is defined as the “science, which studies the life of signs within the framework of social life.” Founded by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), these signs can include the meaning of common visual signs that one encounters in everyday life, like the meaning of a stop sign, but are more concerned with those that are less obvious, like the meaning of the color red. The various disciplines in the broad study of semiotics have had their recognized experts responsible for the advancement of expertise in their specific areas of study. Some of the more notable semiotic theorists are Roland Barthes (1915 –1980), Algirdas Greimas (1917-1992), Umberto Eco (1932), and Julia Kristeva (1941). Daniel Chandler, in his *Semiotics for Beginners* explains:

Semiotics is often employed in the analysis of texts (although it is far more than just a mode of textual analysis). Here it should perhaps be noted that a 'text' can exist in any medium and may be verbal, non-verbal, or both, despite the logocentric bias of this distinction. The term *text* usually refers to a message, which has been recorded in some way (e.g. writing, audio- and video-recording) so that it is physically independent of its sender or receiver. A text is an assemblage of signs (such as words, images, sounds and/or gestures) constructed

(and interpreted) with reference to the conventions associated with a genre and in a particular medium of communication.<sup>25</sup>

Semiotics, then, concerns the study of signs such as words, sounds, or even body language.

Semiotics, as it applies to literature, is concerned with signs as they show meaning in the literary arts. The use of symbolism in literature is the application of semiotics. Webster's dictionary defines symbolism as "the representation by symbols; system of symbols; in art and literature, tendency to represent emotions by means of symbols, and to invest ordinary objects with imaginative meanings." All literary works rely on the use of symbols as a means of eliciting strong emotional feelings from readers by the use of simple everyday objects. A rose, for instance, carries symbolic meanings so that when it is mentioned connects the reader to some deeper meaning. Nathaniel Hawthorne in his novel *The Scarlet Letter* uses a rose in several instances to connect the reader to different meanings. At the very outset of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne explicitly states his design that the symbol of the "rose" should serve as a significant symbolic element in his 'Romance.'<sup>26</sup>

Finding it so directly on the threshold of our narrative, which is now about to issue from that inauspicious portal, we could hardly do otherwise than pluck one of its flowers and present it to the reader. It may serve, let us hope, to symbolize some sweet moral blossom, that may be found along the track, or relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow.<sup>27</sup>

Michiko Kumada offers one interpretation of Hawthorne's use of the rose as a symbol in *The Scarlet Letter*.

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<sup>25</sup> Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics for Beginners*, < <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem01.html>>.

<sup>26</sup> The literary classification for Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is a 'Romance,' C. H. Holman in his *Handbook of Literature* states: "Romance is now frequently used as a term to designate a kind of fiction that differs from the novel in being more freely the product of the author's imagination than the product of an effort to represent the actual world with verisimilitude." Hawthorne, however, had a different definition for the term 'romance.' In his introduction to *The Scarlet Letter (Custom House)*, he gives his lengthy definition.

<sup>27</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorn, *The Scarlet Letter*, 46.

It should be noted that the rose expresses “some sweet moral blossom,” which may show the essence of the romance. The symbolism of the sweet rose supposes the two aspects of virginity and sexuality in women and at the same time assists in searching for women who breathe in the romance, which will unveil them as women written by Hawthorne. However, there are ugly weeds growing on the other side of the rose bush. The author of the romance writes that “...such unsightly vegetation, which evidently found something congenial in the soil that had so early borne the black flower of civilized society, a prison.”<sup>28</sup> It must be constantly kept in mind that the opposition between “some sweet moral blossom” and “the dark flower of civilized society,” namely, the rose and the graceless weeds, which symbolize something important in the volume.<sup>29</sup>

Kumada’s interpretation of Hawthorne’s use of the “rose” represents one view of the symbol and does not preclude other interpretations. Her own cultural background as well as her understanding of Hawthorne’s use of language guides her interpretation. Symbols are imbued with no singular meaning. Readers bring with them their own backgrounds that function as a guide to their interpretation of a given text. Additionally, writers frequently use symbols with the intention of projecting several meanings to the reader. This ambiguity of meaning serves to create a more complex and therefore enduring text since each reading brings with it the possibility of a new interpretation.<sup>30</sup>

The use of “water,” as a literary symbol, has long been associated with cleansing and purification. When Edna Pontellier goes out into the ocean, at the conclusion of *The Awakening*, Kate Chopin is making a statement about Edna’s decision to seek some “purification” or “rebirth.” Foster explains that a symbol in literature can have several meanings.<sup>31</sup> This is precisely the difference between symbols and allegories. In an allegory, the writer intends for the reader to come away with a single interpretation for each reference.

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<sup>28</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, 45.

<sup>29</sup> Michiko Kumada, *The Scarlet Letter - The Pursuit of “Some Sweet Moral Blossom,”* 70.

<sup>30</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson’s poem “Concord Hymn,” set by Robert Ward, and one of the pieces discussed in chapter 3 of this study, shows similar uses of everyday objects for symbolic purposes.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Foster. *How To Read Literature like a Professor*, 98.

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) is popular among many readers precisely because it's relatively easy to figure out what it all means. Orwell is desperate for us to get *the* point, not *a* point. Revolutions inevitably fail, he tells us, because those who come to power are corrupted by it and reject the values and principles they initially embraced.<sup>32</sup>

A symbol, on the other hand, can have several meanings. The reader is left to interpret the specific meaning, as seen in context. While the number of examples of the use of symbolism in literature is limitless, the few given here will suffice to show their function in literature. In fact, literature, without the use of symbolism, would prove a shallow emotional experience for the reader.<sup>33</sup> When poetry is set to music, the symbols within the poem provide fertile material for a composer's musical realization.

## 2.12 Musical Symbolism

The full exploration of the symbolic capabilities of music, while beyond the scope of this study, is undertaken here, at least in part, as a means of identifying some of Ward's uses of this device in his compositions. His careful selection of poetry, rich in symbolism, provides the basis for the musical settings of his vocal works. Yet, musical symbolism goes far beyond the mere application of musical notation to poems containing symbolically charged language. Symbolism in music adds an additional layer to the intensification of expression.

At its most basic level, music notation is a language of symbols that signifies meaning in sound. The Encyclopedia Britannica recognizes the inherent symbolic capabilities of music.

Music, like the word, also may have symbolic meaning. The basic elements out of which musical symbolism is built are sounds, tones, melodies, harmonies, and the various musical instruments, among which is the human voice. Sound effects can

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> "Religious symbolism and iconography." Encyclopædia Britannica. 2006. Encyclopædia Britannica Premium Service. 24 June 2006. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?tocId=28970>

have a numinous (spiritual) character and may be used to bring about contact with the realm of the holy.<sup>34</sup>

The encyclopedia's recognition of music's ability to signify meaning specifically as it relates to religious matters is in no way meant to suggest a limit to the symbolic capabilities of music.

Tarasti, in *Signs of Music*, shows the broad and complex nature of music, as it relates to semiotics, when he states that it is "extremely difficult to separate implicit from explicit musical meaning."

...Their treatment depends almost entirely on the theory that is chosen as the starting-point. Nevertheless, Western musical practice provides ample evidence of the profoundly semiotic nature of music.<sup>35</sup>

This semiotic nature of music has been recognized and applied by great composers throughout the ages. Johann Sebastian Bach made frequent use of musical symbols and allusions to infuse his compositions with complex and expressive meaning. The knowledgeable listeners in Bach's time recognized these musical references. Steven Bruns states concisely one example of the relationship between the composer's expressive and communicative needs and his use of music as a means of signifying these expressions.

Throughout the evolution of Western art music composers' metaphysical speculations about nature, spirituality, theology, and other factors have given rise to various types of musical symbolism. Musical symbols acquire signification through an established cultural nexus of acquired meanings and associations that are shared and understood by the members of a musical community. A musical event (e.g., Bb-A-C-B pitch motive) stands for an extrinsic object or referent (the German letters, B-A-C-H), which in turn, elicits the symbol or its reified concept (the composer, J. S. Bach).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> "Religious symbolism and iconography." Encyclopædia Britannica. 2006. Encyclopædia Britannica Premium Service. 24 June 2006. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?tocId=28970>.

<sup>35</sup> Eero Tarasti, *Signs of Music: A Guide to Musical Semiotics*, 30.

<sup>36</sup> Steven Bruns, *Musical Symbolism Across Cultures*, 2001 presentation to the Society for Music Theory, <<http://www.societymusictheory.org/index.php?pid=98>>

The extrinsic object referenced in the B-A-C-H motive, therefore, depends on an association established between the composer and the participant that recognizes meaning in the motive. The meaning is somewhat obscure in that only participants with the necessary academic knowledge can share its meaning. Composers who invoke the B-A-C-H motive imply much more than a reference to the famous composer. The motive also signifies that the composer invoking it is part of a *learned* elite—thus elevating the status of the composer invoking the motive, and his work.

Bach's frequent use of numbers as symbolic devices is a well-documented practice. His association of numbers to external images is fairly common to the average listener in his day.<sup>37</sup> While the use of numeric symbols depends on some tangential understanding of the use of numbers in literature, this association proves far less complicated in music. The uses of the number "3," for instance, as representing the "trinity," is so direct that its use is a common one. The topic of the use of numbers as symbols in Ward's music is visited in some detail in chapter 3 with the discussion of *Concord Hymn*. The use of the sharp sign (#) as a signifier of the "Cross" and "Christ," while only effective to someone viewing the score, serves as another effective musical symbol.<sup>38</sup> Motives sometimes function as symbols. One example of this type of musical symbol is found in Bach's Fugue no. 4 in C Sharp minor, from Book I of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Bach knew that this melodic figure elicited a predictable emotional response from his listeners.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Calvin Stapert, *My Only Comfort*, 16, 17.

<sup>38</sup> The sharp sign is comprised of two images of a cross, one right side up and the other upside down. Bach's use of the 'sharp' sign is obvious in its intent to signify some external meaning because his use of the sign comes about as a result of enharmonic writing. Additionally, the German "kreuz" is used for both the sharp sign and the word "cross."

<sup>39</sup> Eero Tarasti, *Signs of Music: A Guide to Musical Semiotics* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2002), 6.





Ex. 1. *Well-Tempered Clavier*, No. 4 in C# Minor, Book I, by J. S. Bach, mm. 1 – 3.

The knowledgeable listener in Bach’s time recognized these four notes as forming the sign of the “Cross,” and by extension, “Christ.”<sup>40</sup>



Ex. 2. *Well-Tempered Clavier*, No. 4 in C# Minor, by J. S. Bach, mm. 1 – 3, with “cross.”

The strength of the reference is still felt in the nineteenth-century when Cesar Franck quotes the same subject in the Prelude to his *Prelude, chorale et fugue*.

### 2.1.3 Allusions Defined

Allusions, like symbols, serve to strengthen the emotional and intellectual experience of the participant. In literature, allusions fall under the broader category of intertextuality.<sup>41</sup>

Intertextuality refers to the relationship between two or more texts that quote or make reference to each other. “Intertextuality is therefore the textual exploitation of another text. It would

<sup>40</sup> Eero Tarasti, *Signs of Music*, 7.

<sup>41</sup> Julia Kristeva coined the term Intertextuality in 1966.

include satire, parody, pastiche, *imitatio, refacimento*, reference, allusion, modeling, borrowing, even plagiarism.”<sup>42</sup> Pasco states that allusion has existed almost since the beginning of communication. “One might even argue that communication is impossible without some sort of allusion.”<sup>43</sup> Allusion, then, can be defined simply as a compositional device in which a writer implies a reference to some idea or object that occurs in a pre-existing text. This device is seen in all genres of literature. As one reads, the words on the page are converted to images. “The reader’s mind searches for ways to fit these significances into a conception, a mental image with history, context, color, depth, direction, weight, and velocity.”<sup>44</sup> Often, when trying to understand, or process the words on the page, the reader will recall a completely different text from his or her past. The image conjured by the previous text is then combined with the image created by the text in hand, the two forming a new, even more powerful, image. “Because successful allusion must suggest something else, it must be recognized before it can add to the effect of the story.”<sup>45</sup> The writer assumes that the reader has knowledge of the prior text being referenced. Without this prior knowledge, the intended effect would certainly be lost.

The effectiveness of symbols and allusions in literature has long been recognized by various literary schools, but, at times, has been met with opposition when the use of these devices contradicts a given school of thought. One case in point is the Russian Formalists’ denial of the importance of external devices such as symbols and allusions.

#### 2.1.4 Effect of Allusions on Reader/Listener

In our time, we have become familiar with the effect of allusions in advertising and radio and television programming. Anyone hearing the voice of Leonard Nimoy narrating science

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<sup>42</sup> Allan Pasco, *Allusion: A Literary Graft*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994, 5.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 7

<sup>44</sup> Allan Pasco, *Allusion: A Literary Graft*, 6

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 7

documentaries knows that the implicit suggestion is that Mr. Spock, the logic guru from the Star Trek series, speaks with the authority of an expert scientist. The listener does not consciously start thinking of a Star Trek episode from the past; instead the mind accepts the authenticity of the voice of the Vulcan crewmember of the Starship *Enterprise*. The experience is rooted in the listener's subconscious. Likewise, the true impact of an allusion on the reader is not that the mind leaps from one image to another as the text is read, but that the images are combined to form a more powerful resultant experience. Ultimately, allusions serve to enrich the reader's experience because of the shared understanding that exists between reader and writer. Without the cooperation of the reader, the writer is unable to link texts by the use of allusions. "This intertextual dialogue deepens and enriches the reading experience, bringing multiple layers of meaning to the text, some of which are not even consciously noticed by the reader."<sup>46</sup>

### 2.1.5 Allusions in Music

Stefan Kostka, in *Materials and Techniques of Twentieth-Century Music*, defined organic music as opposed to inorganic music.

A traditional painting depicts something, and if the painting is a good one, every part of the canvas contributes to the effectiveness of the visual message that the artist is trying to convey. In traditional literature every passage has its purpose – fleshing out a character, setting the mood, developing the plot, and so on. The same is generally true of music in the European tradition: the composition is considered to be greater than the sum of its parts, a work of art in which each passage has a function that is vital to the overall plan of a work. Think of any tonal work that you know well, and imagine what it would be like if its parts – themes, transitions and so forth – were randomly rearranged. It might be interesting to see how it would turn out, but the piece would almost certainly not be as effective as a whole.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Thomas Foster. *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, 34.

<sup>47</sup> Stefan Kostka, *Materials and Techniques of Twentieth-Century Music*. (1999: 152 – 153).

He states further that twentieth-century music occurred as a reaction against the traditional organic process. In other words, Kostka describes twentieth-century music as one which adopts a teleological process; a process that works from a position of design.<sup>48</sup>

Music, like all other artistic endeavors, benefits from the use of symbols and allusions as a means of intensifying the emotional experience of the participant. Unlike poetry, where allusions can be shown only on the level of the text, musical allusions frequently exist on several levels, the melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, and “textural” levels. Additionally, in vocal music, the words themselves retain their original allusive meaning, acting then as a catalyst to influence the composer’s musical setting. The composer’s job then is to quote or allude to a reference that he believes will be recognizable by the participant.

## 2.2 Melodic, Rhythmic, Harmonic, and Textural Allusions

### 2.2.1 Melodic Allusions

The use of melodic allusions is a common everyday occurrence and ranges from the very crude to the sophisticated. One only has to consider the common children’s jeer.



Ex. 3. Simple children’s’ jeer.

The text that normally accompanies this jeer is *nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah*. While simple in its make-up, this melodic fragment is recognized universally as a mocking gesture.

Another melodic figure that contains allusive qualities is the interval of the tri-tone. The historical relationship between the tri-tone progression and the devil or hell (*diabolus in musica*)

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<sup>48</sup> Eero Tarasti, *Signs of Music*, 93.

has inspired its use by composers. Some notable applications of this progression are to be found in Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust*, Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* and Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*. The tri-tone has had a long historical association with extra-musical ideas and the interval of the tri-tone, both as a melodic idea and as a harmonic relationship. The association made by the use of tri-tone has found its way into the music for the cinema, thereby connecting its sound to many listeners not normally exposed to Western art music. The tri-tone relationship is used so consistently with the science fiction genre of films that most filmgoers, familiar with this genre, are quickly able to make the association between the sound of the tri-tone and some sense of the ominous depicted on the screen. The *Star Wars* movies have had more than a small hand in exposing the general public to the tri-tone association. In the 1953 sci-fi movie *It Came from Outer Space*, the theme that accompanies the mostly unseen presence of the extraterrestrial beings, and played by the Theremin, makes prominent use of the tri-tone figure. The very timbre of the electronic instrument used for this melodic idea conveys a host of "other-worldly" symbols and associations. Moreover, the similarity of this theme to the principal theme of "Mars, the Bringer of War" from Gustav Holst's *The Planets*, is unmistakable; *The Planets*, in turn, is the clear and unabashed resource for much of the musical symbolism that permeates *Star Wars*. Ward makes selective use of the above techniques as a means of connecting the participant to a desired mood.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> The tri-tone relationship has served as a harmonic generator by Gerald Finzi, Benjamin Britten, and other composers.

### 2.2.2 Rhythmic Allusions

Rhythmic allusions are rarely employed alone, but are more frequently combined with melodic or harmonic elements. In his first opera, *He Who Gets Slapped*, Robert Ward uses a tango as a succinct description of two of the characters.

In the circus, Consuelo and Bezano are billed as the *Bareback Tango King and Queen* so, at Consuelo's first entrance, the simple device of a tango rhythm in the accompaniment establishes her identity for the listener... Often such moments inspire eclecticism, the use of which can quickly draw on the listener's previous musical experience and result in immediate identification. Critics often jump on such moments and berate the composer as unoriginal, when, in fact, he or she is just employing one of the oldest and most effective devices in the craft of composing for the theatre.<sup>50</sup>

The use of the tango as an allusion to the *Tango King and Queen* highlights the possible complexity of musical allusions—the musical elements rarely appear singly but are typically combined. In *He Who Gets Slapped*, the tango is recognized not only by its rhythmic character but also by its harmonic content. Rhythmic patterns can be used to show historic periods, focus the participant on a specific geographical region, or, as in the case of the dances, aesthetic character or style. Chapter 3 explores in more detail Ward's use of rhythmic patterns for allusive purposes.

### 2.2.3 Harmonic Allusions

Harmonic patterns are more easily recognized and therefore more easily invoked as allusive tools. The harmonic motion I-V-vi-iii-IV-I-IV-V may be one of the most recognizable patterns in music.

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<sup>50</sup> Robert Ward, *Autobiography*, 41.



Ex. 4. Johann Pachelbel ground bass.

This ground bass, used as the basis for the piece known as Johann Pachelbel’s canon, may be the most quoted line in music. This harmonic progression is so familiar it has been used or quoted in even “popular music.”<sup>51</sup> The emotional effect of this pattern may be explained by the fact that its brief cycle of chords provides a sense of completeness and stability. Pachelbel’s use of this progression in his canon certainly creates this sense of stability. When even one cycle of this progression is quoted, the sense of stability, recalled from the canon, is easily established. Other harmonic fragments serve as effective allusive devices in music.

Wagner’s use of the harmonic motion found in the prelude of his opera *Tristan und Isolde* inspired other composers to quote the “Tristan Chord.” Although the so-called “Tristan Chord” has no single meaning, changing function throughout Wagner’s opera, it is still recognizable enough that composers use it as an allusive figure. At the very least, the chord, with its unresolved sonority, can be used to signal a “longing of some sort.”<sup>52</sup>



Ex. 5. Tristan chord—opening measures of Wagner’s opera *Tristan und Isolde*

<sup>51</sup> Some examples of the progression’s use are: the National Anthem of Russia by Alexander Alexandrov, *Can’t Stop Loving You* by Phil Collins, *Everytime* by Britney Spears, *Go West* by The Village People, *Let The Music Heal Your Soul* by The Backstreet Boys/N Sync, and even Burger King commercials.

<sup>52</sup> Erika Reiman, *The ‘Tristan Chord’ as Musical-Historical Metaphor*. University of Toronto Quarterly – vol. 67 number 4, fall 1998.

In fact, while Wagner used this harmonic figure repeatedly in this opera, he was in no way responsible for its origin.<sup>53</sup> His persistent use of this harmonic motion created a musical effect that has become synonymous with a definable emotional feeling. The use of the “Tristan chord,” thereafter, brought with it predictable emotional responses. The Tristan chord is recognized today even outside the realm of Western art music. Its use today in movies still carries the dramatic effect originally established in Wagner’s opera.<sup>54</sup>

#### 2.2.4 Textural Allusions

The discussion of texture in this study is limited to the aural or visual effects caused by the combinations of voices or instruments. While the meaning of texture in music is concerned with much more than the use of instrumentation—involving issues of harmony and voicing; and often associated with such adjectives as thick, thin, light, heavy, etc.—this study focuses only on the use of the combination of voices for allusive ends.

Composers make frequent use of orchestral instrumentation as a means of expressing a line of text. Ward’s use of orchestral and vocal combinations, as allusive devices, is seen in his operatic and choral works. In Act IV of *The Crucible*, for example, he uses the combination of French horns, bassoons, and trombones to accompany John Proctor, the flawed but noble hero. Proctor refuses to sign a false confession, knowing that to do so would sully his name and leave a legacy of disgrace to his three sons, and when he announces, “I am John Proctor,” Ward’s

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<sup>53</sup> Martin Vogel (1962, p. 12) points out the “chord” in earlier works by Guillaume de Machaut, Carlo Gesualdo, Bach, and Mozart.

<sup>54</sup> Claude Debussy quotes the “Tristan chord” in *Golliwog’s Cakewalk*, the last movement of his solo Piano Suite, *Children’s Corner*, (1908); Alban Berg manages to extract the “chord” from his 12 tones in his String Quartet, *Lyric Suite*, (1925-1926); and Peter Schickele, the American composer and humorist, quotes it in his *Last Tango in Bayreuth*.



orchestration projects Proctor's resolve and nobility. Here, the symbol of strength is conveyed almost totally by Ward's instrumental combination.

The musical score is for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in bass clef, 4/4 time, and begins with a forte (f) dynamic and a marcato articulation. The lyrics are: "I am John Proc - tor. I have three sons... If". The piano accompaniment consists of three staves: Cor Anglais (Cor.) in treble clef, Trombone (Tbn) in bass clef, and Piano in bass clef. The piano part includes a marcato articulation and a crescendo hairpin.

Ex. 6. *The Crucible* by Robert Ward, Act IV, rehearsal 43.

The notational complexity of a composition can often serve as an allusion. The appearance of a fugue, or fugal writing, represents one form of textural allusion that is recognized as signifying something deliberate or “worked-out.”<sup>55</sup> Donald Tovey writes that “fugue is not so much a musical form as a musical texture that can be introduced anywhere as a distinctive and recognizable technique, often to produce intensification in musical development.”<sup>56</sup> At the very least, a fugue alludes to or symbolizes something complicated or difficult to achieve.

Although they began to be considered “academic” by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and have been used less frequently since, composers continue to use fugal writing as a means of conveying

<sup>55</sup> The Grove Online Dictionary of Music states that the fugue has served since the 14<sup>th</sup> century both as a genre designation for a piece of music and as the name of a compositional technique to be introduced into a piece of music. Imitative counterpoint in some fashion has been the single unifying factor in the history of fugue. Paul Walker: 'Fugue', *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 11 July 2006), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>

<sup>56</sup> Donald Tovey. *A Companion to the Art of Fugue*, 21

deliberate, conscious, and organized planning.<sup>57</sup> Robert Ward, in his earliest cantata, *Earth Shall Be Fair*, makes use of a fugue as a metaphor for the idea of “Democracy.” He reflects:

At the end of that [cantata] I included a fugue, because a fugue is always representative, to me, [of something democratic].... You get the statement, and the statement is the very basic idea. Then it [the basic idea] is passed on to all the other parts of the chorus... This represents a “great idea” – the idea of Democracy, which goes all the way back to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and reflects the view of some of the philosophers and social thinkers of the time. This idea [of Democracy] took two or three hundred years for it to become basic to the government in this country. So those things definitely go through my mind as I am writing choral works and operas.<sup>58</sup>

Ward’s use of a fugue as a metaphor for “democracy” is a reference to the detailed working-out that is necessary in such a system. His use of fugal writing is employed, when necessary, to demonstrate some detailed design or plan referred to in the text. In *Epitaphs* (movement VI of the Cantata, Sweet Freedom’s Song) Ward employs fugal writing to allude to a difficult concept. This fugal passage is explored in more detail in chapter 3 of this study.

## 2.3 Composer's Context

### 2.3.1 Circumstances of the Occasions for the Compositions

Robert Ward’s selection of commissions is influenced in large part by his own moral compass. Throughout his career he made choices that allowed him to focus on ideas of importance to mankind. The choral pieces selected for this study were chosen because they encompass a significant period of Robert Ward’s compositional life and demonstrate the composer’s determination to devote his time to projects of significant social and artistic importance. These pieces also cover a broad stylistic range, allowing for a comprehensive study of the composer’s working methods. Careful consideration is given to the selection of both

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<sup>57</sup> Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975) wrote whole Cycles of fugues, and Leonard Bernstein wrote a "Cool Fugue" as part of his musical *West Side Story*.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Ward, 2006 *Interview with the author*.

accompanied and unaccompanied pieces in order to study Ward's use of symbols and allusions in instrumental as well as the vocal and choral settings.

While he shows a preference for setting serious and ceremonial texts, not all of Ward's works make use of such texts. *The Lady from Colorado* is one such composition. Commissioned by the Central City Opera Association in Colorado, *The Lady from Colorado* is a Homer Croy story of the West that provided Ward and Bernard Stambler the opportunity to set a rags-to-riches tale, spiced with political satire, into an opera.<sup>59</sup> This commission also demonstrates the high standards Ward held for himself. He was never opposed to rethinking his methods of composing or rewriting major works—not because of poor audience reception or negative critical reviews, but because they didn't meet with his own artistic standards. For example, after the premiere of *The Lady of Colorado*, the *Christian Science Monitor* review concluded that, “Though the influences of Richard Rodgers and Aaron Copland figured importantly, Mr. Ward showed at times his own inventive richness, especially in orchestration and in choral writing.”<sup>60</sup> Following its run, Ward decided that the through-composed opera form he had employed in *The Lady from Colorado* opera had been too heavy for the material. He and Stambler revised the show into an operetta and renamed it *Lady Kate*. His reflection and critique of his work *Let the Word Go Forth*, a work commissioned by David Buttolph, the conductor of The Manhattan School of Music Chorus and the St. Cecilia Society, led the composer to rethink his approach to the setting of his large-scale choral works. He reflects on the premiere thus:

The first performance in May 1965 was well performed by the St. Cecilia Society singers and members of the Manhattan School of Music Orchestra. The audience responded well but I felt that my score had not done justice to the text. Kennedy's ringing memorable phrases inspired me to no comparable melody.... Also the text

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<sup>59</sup> Homer Croy was an author and screenwriter who wrote about life in the Midwest. One of his credits was as a ghostwriter for Will Rogers. Croy wrote a biography of Rogers.

<sup>60</sup> Robert Ward, *Autobiography*, 60.

I had drawn from the President's speech had no poetic structure to shape the music.... But certainly the text for *Sweet Freedom's Song*, my next work, compiled with Mary Ward's help produced no such problems.<sup>61</sup>

## 2.4 Selection of Texts

### 2.4.1 Deliberate Selections and Identification of Text Sources

Bruce Duffie, in his 2000 interview with Robert Ward, asked; "Is finding the right libretto even a harder job than writing the music?" Ward responded,

Yes. It all comes out of the libretto, but when you write the music, you try to write it appropriately. That is the key thing. People don't go back 30 times to *Boheme* to learn about the story anymore!<sup>62</sup>

His search for the proper text is more than an important element that shapes the final musical product; it proves to be the most important factor, for it is through the poetic imagery that Ward is able to apply his individual approach to the composition.

This careful attention to the selection of text for his choral compositions was profoundly influenced by Ward's studies at Eastman Conservatory. Of his study of English literature he recalls:

Well, fortunately, particularly when I was at Eastman, I had two English teachers there who had great influence on what I read. One particularly knew contemporary literature and guided my taste to the great books written at that time. I was also exposed to great poetry.... Through the theatre, I'd come to know Shakespeare's drama, which was poetic drama. So that guided my taste. I guess also, the fact that I was brought up in the Presbyterian Church, caused me to be fairly serious about ethical and moral questions.<sup>63</sup>

Ward's study of and appreciation for great literature is clearly evident in the texts he chooses for his choral settings.

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<sup>61</sup> Robert Ward, *Autobiography*, 60.

<sup>62</sup> Robert Ward, *Conversation Piece*, Interview with Bruce Duffie, Chicago, 2000.

<sup>63</sup> Robert Ward, 2006 *Interview with the author*.

The cantata *Sweet Freedom's Song* was commissioned by Allan Lannom the conductor of the Lexington Choral Society. The text suggested for the cantata dealt with the Boston-Lexington-Concord colonies in the Revolutionary War period. Ward's reaction to the suggested text was "Boy, this is something to get one's teeth in."<sup>64</sup> With the help of his wife Mary, Ward was able to manage the monumental task of choosing the text for the cantata. Of the task of finding an appropriate text he says:

This time I naively thought there must be dozens of epic poems about those great events, which could be tailored to my needs. But very soon I discovered that much had been written but little of it was suitable for a large choral work. At this point it was Mary, a fast and inveterate reader who came to the rescue. We agreed that the text should begin with the dream of the small group of English Separatists who, as exiles in Holland, laid plans to establish, in America, a place "where they might have liberty..." and culminate in the realization of that dream brought about by the Revolutionary War.<sup>65</sup>

The text *Epitaphs* for the penultimate movement of the cantata *Sweet Freedom's Song* is comprised of William Tyler Page's *Epitaph to an Unknown Soldier of the Revolution* set for baritone solo, and James Russell Lowell's lament for the British soldiers who died at Concord. The lament is set for chorus and shows Ward's use of a stark line built on the chromatic elaboration of the pitches A and D as an allusion. The other two of the pieces in this study, *When Christ Rode Into Jerusalem*, and *That Wondrous Night of Christmas Eve* came about as a result of suggestions from the President of Highgate Press.

For Highgate Press, Galaxy's BMI affiliate, Jack Kernochan suggested that I write some anthems for the Christmas and Easter seasons and a short work for high school bands. I liked the challenge of composing within the technical limitations of amateur groups and two choruses. *When Christ Rode Into Jerusalem* for Palm Sunday, *That Wondrous Night of Christmas Eve* and *Prairie Overture* for band were the result.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Robert Ward, *Autobiography*, 60.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Robert Ward, *Autobiography*, 46.

Ward's use of symbols and allusions are easily traced to his choice of texts that contain images that suggest the use of these devices.

## 2.5 Form and Structure of Musical Settings

### 2.5.1 Ward's Compositional Methods

Ward's choral compositions show designs that are clearly influenced by his study of Western Art Music. In a personal interview with Charles Woliver in 1985, Ward discusses his use of traditional formal structures as compositional tools.

I realized early that the command of traditional forms – sonata, rondo, variations, etc. – was not only necessary but also crucial to my development as an operatic composer. In *The Crucible* I have included set pieces that begin as arias. For instance, the speech of Reverend Hale in the first act or John Proctor's final speech in the last [act]. But then they melt into surrounding ensembles and lose their identity as set pieces.<sup>67</sup>

Ward's classical music training is a guiding, structural force for all his compositions. His mastery of form provides the balance for his compositions. Except for *Epitaphs*, which is more operatic in nature than any of the other pieces in this study, the choral works do not make use of a through-composed technique as required in the operas. The sectional architecture of the choral pieces produces balanced pieces and allows for the repetition of melodic material.

In addition to the use of formal structures that shape his compositions, Ward's exceptional aptitude for melodic writing has been one of his most recognized gifts. In his early days of studying composition, he received compliments from his teachers for his expressive melodies. Ward explained that his aptitude for crafting fluent melodies sometimes functioned to balance his inadequacies at the piano.

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<sup>67</sup> Charles Woliver, *Robert Ward's The Crucible: A Critical Commentary*, 67.

My deficiency at the piano was somewhat offset, however, by the natural ease I have always felt in working with melodic line, a facility which was certainly the result of my constant involvement with vocal music.<sup>68</sup>

This aptitude for working with melodies has made Ward's vocal works pleasing for the performers as well as memorable for the listeners. His melodies seem to evolve from the development of fragments. Ward's facility for creating effective melodies is complemented by his harmonies, which seem natural, no doubt influenced by his early studies. These studies emphasized the harmonization of melodies modeled on the Bach chorales. For Ward, the melody always implied an accompanying harmony.

Ward's belief that all compositional devices should service the full expression of the text brings all techniques into play. In *Epitaphs*, the penultimate movement of his cantata *Sweet Freedom's Song*, Ward composes a melodic line that consists of chromatic elaborations of the fifth-related pitches "A" and "D." This results in an effective lament for the setting of the text "They came three thousand miles and died"

37 *pp*

They came three thousand miles and died, they came and died,

Ex. 7. *Epitaphs* by Robert Ward. Mm. 37 – 41, Line showing chromatic elaborations.

Ward's treatment of the text in his choral works is similar to his approach in his operas. Both exhibit an approach that seeks to favor the dramatic elements in the text. In fact, the dramatic nature of the text seems to be the controlling factor in Ward's settings. Beginning with his first opera *He Who Gets Slapped*, Ward, along with Bernard Stambler his librettist, developed a

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<sup>68</sup> Robert Ward, *Autobiography*, 2.

method for the setting of text that results in melodic lines that are very close to how they would be spoken dramatically. Ward describes the process.

First, the lines of the text are arranged on the page with each line separated with triple line spacing. Ward then reads the text aloud several times, in a dramatic but natural fashion, noting the rhythms and stresses of each syllable and notating each rhythm above its syllable of text. He then notates the rise and fall of the pitch of each syllable and finally makes a composite of both rhythms and pitches. The result is a line that is dramatic, artistic, and natural.<sup>69</sup> This approach yields, for Ward, the most dramatic and organic melodic lines. He states that while this method works perfectly for solo lines, it has to be modified somewhat for choral writing, because the melodic and harmonic elements encountered in choral writing function differently at times.

In his 2006 interview with the author, Ward discussed the difference between his uses of the method outlined above for opera versus choral works.

... Sometimes, [when writing choral pieces] it's not dealing with solo voices, but the whole chorus is carrying this [melodic line] out, in which case then I want the accompaniment, whether it be in another instrument or within the voices themselves, to also reflect the quality of the melodic line and what I was trying to express with that.<sup>70</sup>

The choral pieces in this study vary somewhat in their formal structure but Ward shows a tendency for the use of a tri-partite structure. Within this structure he is able to make full use of a minimum number of melodic ideas. Each idea is repeated several times within the work, making it more memorable. The A B A<sup>1</sup> structure, so typical in Ward's pieces, allows for the logical return of the primary theme heard at the beginning of the piece. The Christmas anthem shows Ward's most typical structure for his choral pieces.

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<sup>69</sup> Robert Ward, 2001 interview with the author.

<sup>70</sup> Robert Ward, May 2006 interview with author.



### 2.5.2 Common Musical Threads in Ward's Works

Although Ward's musical training and background is largely rooted in the Western Art music tradition and exhibits a leaning toward that tradition, some elements of his compositional style have led critics to describe his musical dialect as "clearly American." The most clearly "American" element in Ward's operas and choral works is his careful use of elements more frequently associated with jazz. Ward notes in his biography that after his return from serving in WWII the influence of jazz in his work was extremely obvious.

My active involvement in jazz had ended when I returned to civilian life but the rhythm lyricism and muscle of that music had gotten into my blood. Any comparison to my first two symphonies will make this clear immediately.<sup>71</sup>

The common jazz elements in Ward's works involve the use of major seventh chords with motions that make frequent use of parallel fifths. The use of jazz elements however never goes so far as to place the works firmly in the domain of jazz. The harmonic progressions are framed within traditional classical harmonic practice and Ward's use of these jazz elements serve only to infuse his works with a richness that distinguish them from the works of his peers. Similarly, his use of rhythmic elements normally associated with jazz is almost never used in such an overt way as to change them fully to jazz.

Like his operatic works, Ward's choral compositions exhibit a similar American flavor both in their textual material and their musical settings. His choral pieces are typically structured in three sections. With the tripartite structure, Ward seeks to increase the memorability of his pieces by the use of melodic repetitions. Of the pieces chosen for this study only *Epitaphs* departs from this A B A<sup>1</sup>, using an A B C structure instead. Even *Concord Hymn*, which follows Emerson's four strophic verses, receives, in essence, Ward's favored tripartite structure with the

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<sup>71</sup> Robert Ward, *Autobiography*, 31.



Ward, like Wagner, uses themes to depict characters, emotions, and intangible objects. Ward does not, however, use leitmotifs with the same frequency as Wagner. His transfer of motives is more Puccinian in concept.<sup>73</sup>

In *The Crucible*, each main character has a motive that identifies them when they appear on stage. While Ward uses a similar approach to the use of melody in his choral works as in his operas, the number of melodic ideas is naturally fewer due to the limited lines of text in the choral pieces. The use of symbols and allusions in Ward's operas and his choral pieces are used with similar frequency and as such, demonstrate the composer's methodical approach.

Apart from Ward's penchant for interjecting elements of jazz in his choral pieces – a practice that is sometimes seen in his operatic works as well – the operas show a harmonic process that can be described as one of shifting tonality. Lines can easily be analyzed in a given key but never remain there; they shift key centers rapidly and almost constantly. To accommodate the speech characteristics of the vocal lines in his operas, Ward makes use of harmonies implied by the vocal lines, which rarely remain in the same key for any length of time. He rarely uses key signatures in his operas allowing for the easy movement between keys. Ward's vocal pieces, on the other hand, exhibit a much more tonally stable approach and are further clarified by his use of key signatures. Chapter 3 shows in more detail Ward's use of symbols and allusions in the pieces in this study.

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<sup>73</sup> Charles Woliver, *Robert Ward's The Crucible: A Critical Commentary*, 52.

## CHAPTER 3

### DETAILED STUDY OF SELECTED PIECES

#### 3.1 The Evidence of Symbols and Allusions in Ward's Works

Four choral compositions will be used to illustrate Ward's use of symbols and allusion. The pieces in this study reveal examples of melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, and textural allusions, and the figures selected serve only as examples of Ward's use of the devices and are not an attempt to list all symbols and allusions to be found in these works.

#### 3.2 *That Wondrous Night of Christmas Eve*

This piece, sometimes referred to as the Christmas Anthem, shows the typical tri-partite structure commonly found in Ward's choral works. Although the first and third sections of the piece contain different textual material, the same melodic material unifies them. The internal section of the piece serves a developmental role in which several tonal centers are visited.

The opening, or the "A" section, begins with an open fifth (C – G), which will later turn out to be C minor. The third degree of the chord is frequently absent from the cadences; and the degree of the major third is reserved for special treatment, occurring on the important words "song" and "birth." The open fifth is also suggestive of bells and, as the piece continues, there are further musical references to bells; an common metaphor for Christmas. Although the key signature suggests C minor, there are two momentary shifts to C major harmony, always preceded by B<sup>b</sup> harmony, within the first ten measures. The Aeolian mode is clearly recognizable, and the soprano line shows the outlining of C minor with an added B<sup>b</sup>, lending an archaic quality to a C minor piece. The harmonic motions at the cadences in mm. 7 and 11—modal shifts rather than the normative V to I progression—suggest echoes of past practice. Thus, on the text "retold the ancient Yuletide tale," by harmonizing the modal degree of B<sup>b</sup> as a

preparation for the cadence, the formulation of the B $\flat$  - C motion is suggestive of a IV – V in the subdominant region. Throughout this piece the motion of a third plays a prominent role in the allusion to bells. The falling minor third is ever present at cadence points of *That Wondrous Night of Christmas Eve*. Another feature that recalls the past is found with the repeated Phrygian cadences found on the words “falling snow” in mm. 27 and 31.

In the “B” section, which begins in m. 24, the opening melody has been change to the major mode, and the descending minor third (G – E) interval is still present at the end of the phrase even though it is harmonized differently. The repetitions on the text “Alleluia” in mm. 43 – 47 are alternated between 5/4 and 6/4 meters before settling, at m. 48, into the compound duple meter (6/4) on the text “for Christ is born in Bethlehem.” The motion from C minor up to E $^b$  major on this line of text creates a feeling of celebration in this portion of the piece.

In m. 58, the return of the opening melodic material on a new line of text “Soon they moved on,” signals the third and final section of the piece. The setting of this line of text to the original melody provides a structural closing for the piece. At m. 65 the text “Peace on earth” is set to a new melody, first sung by the tenors and then passed to the altos. The simple triple meter (3/4) of the preceding line also serves the text “In the silent night” in m. 72, and sets up a subtle quote of the famous Christmas carol of the same name. In the closing measures we see a return of the reference to bells; the open fifth figure is repeated several times on the text “Christmas Eve.” In mm. 92 and 93 the sopranos are given the chime figure, which serves as the final punctuation for this anthem.

*That Wondrous Night of Christmas Eve* is treated in a restricted manner, never moving very far from its original tonal center. The distance of a third forms the basis for the limits of the

harmonic motion. This narrow harmonic treatment functions to restrict the listener to a limited harmonic language, reminiscent of earlier times.

Ward’s Christmas Anthem serves as an example of his use of symbols and allusions in his choral pieces. While he employs a limited number of melodic ideas, each is carefully chosen for its allusive properties. The text for *That Wondrous Night of Christmas Eve*, compiled by the composer, focuses on one symbol long associated with the yuletide celebration.<sup>74</sup> The opening two measures of the piece—an ascending open fifth (C – G), doubled at the octave—initiate an allusion to bells.

Ex. 9. *That Wondrous Night of Christmas Eve*. Mm. 1 – 3a. Opening bells.

The importance of the Ward’s association of the Christmas season to the sound of bells is demonstrated in his use of this allusion as the predominant idea for this anthem.

When the first line of text “Far down the street the carolers’ song” appears in m. 5, Ward keeps the “open fifth” sonority in the male voices so that the bells are heard throughout the opening phrase.

<sup>74</sup> The complete text for the pieces in this study can be found in Appendix A.

S  
3  
Far down the street the car-ol-er's song—

A

T  
8  
Far down the street the car-ol-er's song

B

Ex. 10. Use of open fifths to represent bells.

The bell figure is again highlighted at m. 6 on the text “Christmas Eve” (example 11) and again on the text “Yuletide tale” (example 12) where they’re paired and passed between voice parts.

S  
5  
broke on the calm of— Christ-mas Eve.

A

T  
8  
broke on the calm of Chris - mas Eve.

B

Ex. 11. *That Wondrous Night of Christmas Eve*. Mm. 5 – 7. First appearance of bell echo.

Ex. 12. *That Wondrous Night of Christmas Eve*. Mm. 11 and 12. Paired bell echoes.

The most apparent references to bells appear at the close of the piece. Ward creates an echo of bells disappearing into the distance by a series of alternating pairs of voices, again in open fifths, on the text “Christmas Eve.”

Ex. 13. *That Wondrous Night of Christmas Eve*. Mm. 89 – 93. Disappearing bell echoes.

The final reference to bells, seen in example 13, mm. 91 and 92, is sung by the sopranos in two parts. The finality of this bell figure is made more complete by the contrary motion of the two



voices from the interval of a major third to an open fifth, thus completing the entire piece's allusions to ancient times.

### 3.3 *When Christ Rode Into Jerusalem*

This piece is considered a companion to *That Wondrous Night of Christmas Eve* in that they were composed specifically to provide anthems for the two most important seasons of the Christian church year. These two pieces share more than just their function as church anthems though; they both share musical gestures that set them in an earlier time. The Easter anthem is similar to the Christmas anthem with its tri-partite structure and thoroughly fashioned by the scenes created in the text. Two exceptionally riveting moments occur when, in m. 35, a soprano soloist sings as the voice of the "multitude" the line "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee," and then again in m. 64, as the voice of Jesus, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer." Ward provides a closed form for this piece not only by a recapitulation of the melodic material from the opening section, but also by closing with the word "Hosanna," used for the opening fanfare.

Set for SATB chorus and Organ, the text for this anthem is Robert Ward's own paraphrase of the biblical account of Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. The organ accompaniment provides contrast throughout the piece, remaining silent at times so as to highlight the lines in the chorus. The choir's entrance at m. 3 features a majestic fanfare in which the word "Hosanna" is set with a diatonic seventh chord (Gm7) that resolves with a motion to "A." The "hosanna" is repeated in m. 7, this time up a third, with two diatonic seventh chords, BbM7 – Gm7, resolving again with a parallel motion to "A." In both resolutions the voice leading is such that parallel 5ths are avoided. The 3<sup>rd</sup> is absent in both resolutions sung by the choir, and appears only in the organ accompaniment. Not until m. 15, on the word "Lord,"

does the choir supply the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the A major chord. The step-wise motion at the cadences in these opening measures, along with the absence of the third of the chord, serves as a powerful allusion to a time in the distant past. With a ten-measure passage of unison singing, set in D minor, and on the text “So sang the multitude,” the piece leaves the introduction and starts the “A” section beginning in m. 23. The unison gives way to a more emphatic passage culminating with the line “with one loud voice they cried” in m. 32. The line “Who is this?” is treated in m. 33 with a diatonic seventh chord (Gm<sup>7</sup>) resolving to A major. The text asks the question a second time and the musical setting makes this repetition more urgent; increasing the dissonance by forming a quartal sonority before resolving back to A major resolution. The step-wise motion is again seen at the cadence in m. 36.

Beginning in m. 38, the “B” section of this anthem, a solo voice emerges from the multitude and provides the answer to the earlier question. The pairing of question and answer in the text is reinforced by the musical setting, using the same melodic material transposed. The connection between the question and the answer is made even more dramatic as the “C” on the final note of the question emerges as the starting pitch of the solo line in the answer. The A<sup>b</sup> tonality of the solo line is changed to the parallel minor, G<sup>#</sup> minor, in m. 45 when the chorus re-enters as the *turba*, the voice of the multitude. The treatment of the cadence changes in mm. 49 – 52 where there is a series of fifth harmonic relationships (C<sup>#</sup>m - F<sup>#</sup> - Bm).

The first statement of the text “Then he went into the temple of God” in m. 52 begins in root position and features a step-wise descent of the bass line from B down to F<sup>#</sup>. Again the motion at the cadence in m. 55 is by step. The repetition of the line of text in m. 56 is transposed up a minor third and the chord is inverted so that the repeat of the descending bass line begins on F and terminates on C<sup>#</sup>. In m. 61 C<sup>#</sup> is reinterpreted as D<sup>b</sup> and provides a way back to the Ab

tonality for the solo “It is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer” in m. 64. The soprano solo is used here as the voice of Jesus. A deliberate return of the step-wise motion at the cadence is seen in mm. 67 – 68 with a G<sup>b</sup> major seventh chord resolving to Ab. On the text “But ye have made it a den of thieves” the composer uses, mainly in the inner voices, a series of augmented seconds to highlight the idea of the thieves. The most dramatic portion of the entire anthem is seen between mm. 79 and 86. The composer utilizes the flatted supertonic (N<sup>6</sup>) and a series of suspensions on the text “but the people all hung on his lips” as a means of capturing the idea of the people hanging on Jesus’ every word. The “B” section ends with an extended passage on the dominant 6/4 (C) as a resolution to F major.

The final section of the piece is a slow, stately passage that repeats the melodic material first seen at m. 23. This time, though, the melody is transposed up a minor third to F. Beginning in m. 109 we see four measures on a tonic six-four chord with the word “hosanna” set to a melismatic line in the tenor voice. The line “hosanna in the highest,” in mm. 119 to 121, is made even more dramatic by the use of the flatted submediant major chord in the first inversion (D<sup>b</sup>) on the penultimate “hosanna.” The final “hosanna” is given clarity by a unison “C” in the chorus.

*When Christ Rode Into Jerusalem* presents several instances of Ward’s use of allusions. The dramatic opening sets the scene for the entrance of “royalty” with the dotted rhythmic figures in the organ accompaniment.

Ex. 14. *When Christ Rode Into Jerusalem*. Mm. 1 – 5 Majestic figure.

Both the organ and the chorus project the image of Christ’s triumphant entry into the city with the double-dotted rhythms. At m. 52 Ward uses the rhythmic figure, seen also in the Christmas anthem, that functions as an allusion to an event in the distant past.<sup>75</sup>

Ex.15. A common 16<sup>th</sup> century rhythmic figure used as a reference to “ancient times”

Ex. 16. *When Christ Rode Into Jerusalem*. Mm. 52 – 55. Four-part rhythmic allusion

<sup>75</sup> The rhythmic figure is reminiscent of the dactyl rhythm found in the 16<sup>th</sup> century French chanson.

In his opera *The Crucible*, the most frequently used figure is Ward's musical signature for "evil."

The image shows a musical score for a scene in *The Crucible*. It consists of two staves: a vocal line for Abigail and a piano accompaniment. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 12/8. The tempo/mood is marked *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *growing gradually more agitated*. The lyrics under the vocal line are: "Un-cle, the com-mon is packed with peo-ple chat-terin' of war-locks and wit-ches. You'd". The piano accompaniment features a prominent rhythmic and melodic figure in the right hand, which is highlighted with a box. This figure consists of a sequence of notes: a dotted quarter note, an eighth note, a dotted quarter note, and an eighth note, with a sharp sign above the second dotted quarter note. The piano part is marked *p* (piano) and also *growing gradually more agitated*.

Ex. 17. *The Crucible*. Rehearsal 2. Orchestral figure for "evil."

Visible in the accompaniment, the figure is made up of various degrees of a second but emphasizes the augmented second. In the "evil" figure, shown in example 17, a descent by a minor second is followed by another descent of an augmented second after which a motion upward of a major second is executed. The degree of the augmented second is placed centrally so as to receive the most emphasis in the line.

On the text "But ye have made it a den of thieves" of his Easter piece *When Christ Rode Into Jerusalem*, Ward invokes a similar figure to his "evil" figure in *The Crucible* as a reference to "thieves." The very placement of the figure, hidden in the inner voices of the four-part texture, makes an allusion to thievery.

69 *f*

S "But ye have made it a den of thieves. Ye have made it a den of thieves."

A "But ye have made it a den of thieves. Ye\_\_have made it a den\_\_of thieves."

T "But ye have made it a den\_\_of thieves. Ye have made it a den of thieves."

B "But ye have made it a den of thieves. Ye\_\_have made it a den\_\_of thieves."

Ex. 18. *When Christ Rode Into Jerusalem*. Mm. 69 – 73. Four-part “den of thieves.”

Here, with the repeated use of the interval of an augmented second, Ward creates a melodic framework for the idea of thievery. Viewed from a perspective of melodies based on Western harmonic principles, this use of the augmented second signifies something that is less than straight or true. The strong allusion to “thieves” created in this passage is effective simply because of the participant’s previous association with the sound of the intervals. Each listener brings a memory of the interval’s use in past pieces and is quickly able to interpret its meaning. Examples 19 and 20 show Ward’s placement of the allusion to “thieves” in the inner voices.

Ye\_\_have made it a den\_\_of thieves."

Ex. 19. *When Christ Rode Into Jerusalem* Mm. 71 -71. Augmented second in alto voice.

den\_\_of thieves.

Ex. 20. *When Christ Rode Into Jerusalem*. M.70. Augmented second in tenor voice.

The figures shown in examples 19 and 20 are not found exclusively in the alto and tenor voices, they are visible in all four parts but are more pronounced in the inner voices. The effectiveness of these figures is felt more than heard and their subtle use adds an element of secrecy, further strengthening the idea of thievery. In his 2006 conversation with the author, Robert Ward reflected on his unconscious use of the augmented second as a signifier of something less than straight or true by saying,

...It is curious, as you speak of this, I remember that I wrote that, but, in one sense, it was almost not conscious with me because by that time, and this is a great belief I have about composing, it comes to the place where it becomes simply a language. That language simply evokes the music and you know when it feels right. You don't theorize about it. Later, I realize that some of these things surprise me. That's what creation is. I think Mozart is maybe the greatest example for this.<sup>76</sup>

The composer's statement is useful in its explanation of the state of mind of the writer at work. It shows that the effectiveness of an allusion depends more on the participant's ability to perceive it rather than the writer's intent to imbed the reference in a given work.<sup>77</sup> Additionally, the writer is as much a reactor to the references as the participant—rarely thinking consciously of a specific reference from the past to use in his composition. Instead, references are a part of the writer's experience, and form the basis for his musical language.

In the Easter anthem, beginning in m. 78, Ward uses a harmonic figure to dramatize the text “the people all hung on his lips.”

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<sup>76</sup> Robert Ward, May 2006 interview with the author.

<sup>77</sup> Many writers on the subject of intertextuality express the belief that allusions depend more on the reader than the writer. This view is expressed in the works of such literary luminaries as Pasco, Bloom, Barthes, and Eco.

but the peo-ple *allarg.* all hung on his lips.

but the peo-ple *allarg.* all hung on his lips.

but the peo-ple all hung on his lips.

but the peo-ple *allarg.* all hung on his lips.

Ex. 21. *When Christ Rode Into Jerusalem*. Mm. 77b – 81b. Hanging on his lips.

The harmonic motion of Gb major (first inversion), Gb major seventh (first inversion), and C major dominant seventh chord (in the 4/2 inversion) forms the basis for this harmonic allusion. The abrupt shift from the Gb major seventh chord to a C major seventh chord (a tri-tone) provides the drama of this passage. Ward further emphasizes this idea of the people “hanging on Jesus’ lips” or “hanging on his every word” by suspending the motion of the bass on a “Bb.” The arrival to the tonic key of F major is delayed for another fourteen measures adding to the suspense.

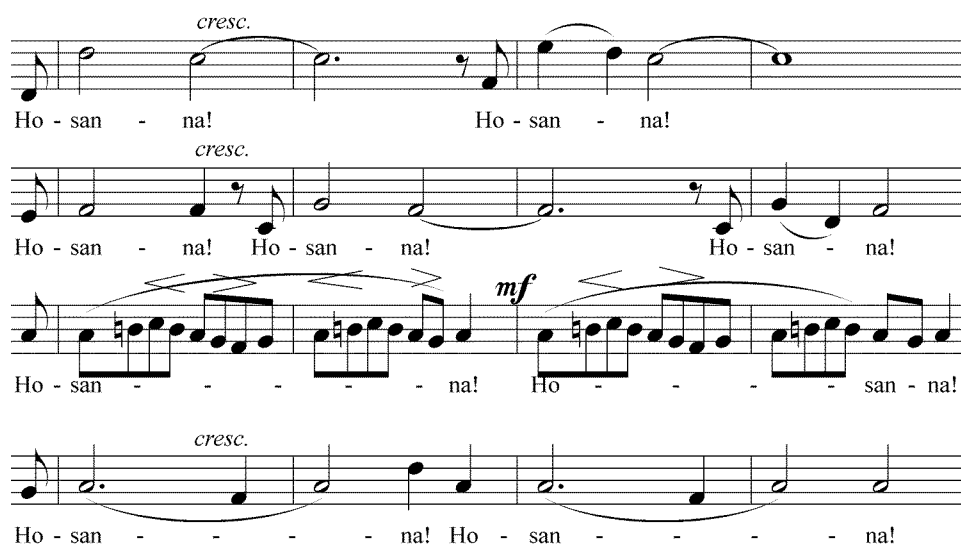
A symbolic musical gesture, also seen in *Concord Hymn*, occurs in the “Hosannas” at mm.106 – 110. Such figures have been common to settings of *Hosanna* for centuries, but the particular placement and isolation of this figure in the tenor part creates a special type of “Augenmusik” (music for the eye) that is striking and unusual for both eye and ear. In this passage Ward reintroduces the effect of a “wave” in the tenor voice.





Ex. 22. *When Christ Rode Into Jerusalem*. Mm. 107-110. Symbolic waving of palm branches in the tenor line.

While all four voices participate in the “wave” gesture, the tenor line shows this figure more overtly than the other three voices.



Ex. 23. *When Christ Rode Into Jerusalem*. Mm. 108 - 111. Four-Part symbol of waving of palm branches.

The waving of palm branches is effectively symbolized with this passage.

### 3.4 Concord Hymn

Ward’s setting of “Concord Hymn” influenced his treatment of several of his later large patriotic works. He established for himself an approach to composition that suited his expression of his belief in the American dream of democracy. In the foreword to *Concord Hymn* Robert Ward described the impact this piece had on his later works.

Though I was unaware of it at the time, my Concord Hymn had in it the kernels of the three large works on patriotic texts, which I was to write over the next twenty-five years. The opening tune is closely akin to the modal English folksongs, which the New England settlers brought to these shores, and the hymn melody, though freer tonally, is very reminiscent of early American prototypes.... Reflecting on the body of American music written to date, (c. 1979) I have come to believe that those feelings and passions generated by the great American dream of democracy have been a source of inspiration of greater depth and variety than any other for our native composers. Despite transient disillusion, the ringing phrases of the founding fathers and the social principles, which motivated them, have continued to be something to sing about, stirring us to nostalgia and summoning us to rededication to their ideals.

Such was the spirit in which I set Emerson's poem, hoping to create music, which would invoke the pathos and grandeur of his noble cadences.<sup>78</sup>

Robert Ward chose Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem "Concord Hymn", as one of the two choruses he set for the Julliard Foundation. The text, with its patriotic and heroic themes, is typical of the type Ward found artistically appealing. The poem's most recognized line "fired the shot heard 'round the world" is inscribed on the base of Daniel Chester French's Minute Man Statue.<sup>79</sup>

In addition to being constructed in three clearly defined sections, *Concord Hymn* features a unifying motive that occupies the first seven measures of the piece. This motive, depicting both the "rude" bridge at Concord and the motion of a flag in the breeze, functions, at times, as the primary melodic material and, at other times, as an accompanimental figure.

The principal melodic line is introduced by the basses in m. 1, and then joined by the tenors at m. 4. As seen later in example 24, the four lines of text feature a metric displacement

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<sup>78</sup> Robert Ward. "Concord Hymn." Boston, Mass.: ECS Publishing, 1979.

<sup>79</sup> The Ralph Waldo Emerson poem, written for the dedication of the Obelisk, a battle monument commemorating the valiant efforts put forth by area citizens on April 19, 1775. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote the poem *Concord Hymn* for the July 4, 1837 ceremony to mark the completion of the Obelisk, or the Concord Monument. The monument was constructed to immortalize the resistance of American Minutemen to British forces on April 19, 1775. The poem's phrase "shot heard round the world" is now recognized for its description of the philosophical importance of the American Revolution. The hymn was sung to the tune "Old Hundreth." (The Library of Congress: American memory. <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/apr19.html>>.)

with the end of each successive phrase arriving one beat later in the measure.<sup>80</sup> A deliberate piece of text painting is seen on the text “shot heard ‘round the world” where the composer uses a series of repeats on five descending pitches to depict the echoing of the shot. At m. 8 the women sing, in three parts, the original motive in augmentation, accompanied by a variant of the same motive in the bass line. By m. 23 the piece has moved to D minor, but with the use of a direct modulation, moves back to B minor in m. 27, ending the “A” section of the piece.

The “B” section, beginning in m. 27, is set in simple triple meter (3/4) with a three-voice texture that utilizes the upper voices at first. At m. 35 the three-voice arrangement continues, this time with the sopranos, altos, and basses. The composer also uses a series of broken chords to emphasize the idea of sleep, expressed in the text “The foe long since in silence slept; Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;” Although this section journeys through several tonal centers, it ends on the dominant of B major (F<sup>#</sup>) in m. 58, in preparation for the final section.

The third, or “C” section of this piece begins with a four-part male voice setting of the text “Spirit that made those children dare to die and leave their children free...” Beginning at m. 80, the closing recalls the principal motive from m. 1. This figure is now sung on an “ah” syllable and passed between each voice part in a symbolic “wave” or salute to the fallen heroes.

The allusive and symbolic elements contained in Emerson’s text provide the groundwork for Ward’s setting. He treats the strophic structure of Emerson’s poem in a dramatically different way—threading figural elements throughout the piece to produce a seamlessly unified work. The first external reference in *Concord Hymn* is present in the very opening of the piece. Emerson’s line “By the rude bridge that arched the flood, their flag to April’s breeze unfurl’d, here once the embattled farmers stood...” provides abundant material for Ward’s melodic

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<sup>80</sup> The first phrase ends on beat 1 of m. 2, the second phrase ends on beat 2 of m. 3, the third phrase on beat 3 of m. 4, and the fourth on beat 1 of m. 5.

symbolism. He shows the *unfurling of the flag in the breeze* not only by the ascending and descending motion of the melodic line but also by the implicit crescendos and diminuendos in each line. Additionally, the visual image of the flag is aided by the metric displacement of the line. Each line of text is treated with a breath pause (‘) before the next arch begins anew. This rise and fall, with its pauses, provides the perfect visual and aural image of the motion of a flag in the breeze.

By the rude bridge that arched the flood, Their flag to April's  
breeze un-furl'd, Here once the embat-tled farm-ers stood, And

Ex. 24. *Concord Hymn*. Mm. 1 – 4. Bass line symbolizing the “unfurling flag.”

Here one can witness the complex nature of symbols and allusions in music. By viewing the notation of this opening line, one is able to see the symbol of the “rude bridge” and the flag in the breeze depicted in the score. Again Ward’s use of “Augenmusik” is evident here, as the images are conjured both aurally and visually.

Also contained within these lines is the figure of the bridge “arching the flood.” The shape of the vocal line provides this unmistakable image.



Fig. 1. *Concord Hymn*. m.1. Graphic representation of the arch of the bridge.

The shape of the first melodic line serves as the image of the arching bridge and, when extended through the next three lines of text, with the metric displacement, provides another visual, and aural, representation of the “unfurling flag;” each repetition representing the motion of the flag in the breeze.



Fig. 2. *Concord Hymn*. Mm. 1-3. Graphic depiction of shape of waving flag in the breeze.

Ward’s treatment of the text “shot heard ‘round the world” creates the effect of ricochets by echoing the phrase “heard ‘round the world.’

Ex. 25. *Concord Hymn*. Mm. 6 -8. Ricochet figure “Heard ‘round the World.”

This *arching* figure is then used in augmentation in the soprano and alto voices as a means of development and emphasis, while the bass line continues the figure in eighth notes.

Musical score for Soprano (S) and Alto (A) voices, measures 8-12. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is marked *p* (piano). The lyrics are: "By the rude bridge that arch'd the flood, Their".

Ex. 26. *Concord Hymn*. Mm. 8 -12. The arch figure augmented in soprano and alto.

The change from compound triple meter (9/8) to simple triple (3/4) in m. 27 sets up an allusion to “sleep” in Emerson’s poem.

The foe long since in silence slept;  
 Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;  
 and time the ruined bridge has swept...

Musical score for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B) voices, starting at measure 26. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is marked *pp* (pianissimo) and *mp* (mezzo-piano). The lyrics are: "The foe long since in silence slept; A -".

31

S like the con - quer-or si - lent sleeps; And time the ru - ined

A like the con - quer-or si - lent sleeps; And time the ru - ined

T like the con - quer-or si - lent sleeps;

B And time the ru - ined

Ex. 27. *Concord Hymn*. Mm. 26 – 36. Three-voice allusion to and symbol of sleep.

Ward conceives this “slumber” as a perfect sleep and symbolizes it with the use of the numeric symbol for perfection, “3.” He makes use of a three-part setting with the upper three voices; the basses are silent for the first eight measures. When the basses join the sopranos and altos in m. 34, the tenors are then silent. This three-voice texture is further strengthened by Ward’s use of triple meter. The idea of a “perfect sleep” is thereby symbolized not only by the 3/4 meter but also by the three-voice texture.<sup>81</sup> Emerson’s description of “foe” sleeping in “perfect” silence, blissfully unaware of the danger surrounding them is masterfully symbolized by Ward’s setting.<sup>82</sup>

Within the three-voice texture, the altos are given a line that rocks back and forth in a gesture that symbolizes a slumber.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with author, 2006.

<sup>82</sup> Under the heading Numerology the *Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* states that number symbology has enjoyed a prominent role in the Judeo-Christian tradition, although its roots – whether primitive and elemental, astrological, Pythagorean, or Platonic – are essentially pagan. Its importance to the literary arts, especially in the Medieval and Renaissance periods, is attributable to the Ptolemaic view of a symmetrical universe structured upon sympathetic correspondences syncretized with the Hebraic view that God created all things “in measure, and number, and weight” (Wisdom 11:21). In Earliest Judaism one encounters primitive forms of numerology – two used to indicate a few, or three used as a sign of totality. Abraham goes three days into the wilderness to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22:4); God calls Samuel three times before Eli realizes that it is the Lord calling (1 Sam. 3:8-9); Elijah covers the dead child of the widow of Sarepta three times with his own body before the Lord restores it to life (1 Kings 17:21). In each instance three is the full measure necessary for the event to be perfected. (555).

Ex. 28. *Concord Hymn*. Mm. 27-34. Trance-like effect shown in the Alto line.

Ward further projects the idea of a trance with the use of a static tenor line in mm. 27 – 34.

Ex. 29. *Concord Hymn*. Mm. 27 – 34. Static tenor line.

The combination of triple meter, three-voice texture, and descriptive vocal lines creates a powerful effect for this section of the piece.

In m. 57, Ward sets the text “Spirit that made those heroes dare to die and leave their children free” for four-part male voices. The male voice setting creates an allusion to a sense of the patriotic and an idea of the military resolve by these heroes who are willing to die for a noble cause. This image of strength is further advanced by Ward’s austere harmonic treatment of the line of text.

Ex. 30. *Concord Hymn*. Mm. 57 – 64. – Heroic statement by male voices

At m. 80, the figure seen in the opening measures is re-introduced. Unlike the mm. 1-4—where the line is given to the basses only—this time the figure is shared by all four voice parts.



80

S *dim.* *mp*  
thee. Ah<sub>3</sub> 3 3

A *dim.* *mp* *p*  
thee. Ah

T *dim.* *mf*  
thee. Ah<sub>3</sub> 3 3 Ah

B *dim.*  
Ah<sub>3</sub> 3 Ah

Ex. 31. *Concord Hymn*. Mm. 80 – 83. Final series of waves.

The symbol of the flags “waving in the breeze” is reinterpreted here as a “wave” or salute to the fallen heroes.

### 3.5 "Epitaphs"

Of the four pieces in this study, “Epitaphs” stands as a singular example, in that, being a through-composed work, it lacks the closed structure of the other pieces. The sixth movement of the Cantata *Sweet Freedom’s Song*, “Epitaphs” is a setting of a compiled text from the writings William Tyler Page and James Russell Lowell. Although constructed in three distinct sections, “Epitaphs,” because of its through-composed structure, resembles Ward’s operatic works more than his typical choral pieces. In this piece, his method of text setting displays two distinct approaches – one for dramatic solo singing and the other for expressive choral work. In no other piece is solo recitative employed.

After a six-measure introduction by the orchestra, a baritone solo sings, in recitative style, the weighty text “Here lies a soldier of the Revolution whose identity is known but to God.” The

absence of a key signature signals the fluid harmonic structure of the piece, again a feature of his Operas. This accompanied recitative occupies the first 35 measures of music ending with the text “And of those he fought, at Concord, it is written.”

Following a stark two-measure interlude on a pedal “D” in the bass, the chorus enters, in imitation, on the text “They came three thousand miles and died, to keep the past upon the throne.” This motive passed in succession from the sopranos, to the altos, the tenors, and finally to the basses, is crafted so that the harsh dissonance of a minor second is heard on the word “died.”

At m. 51 the basses introduce a short fugal passage, with successive entrances by the sopranos, altos, and finally tenors. This difficult vocal passage, lasting only 21 measures, is accompanied by colla parte writing in the orchestra, and moves from the key center of G minor to C minor.

The final text area, “Thus die soldiers,” begins fortissimo on the Neapolitan of C minor (D<sup>b</sup>) and is articulated with short accented notes. The final line of text, “their identity known but to God,” is harmonically ambiguous until the word “God” is reached; the chorus sings a unison “F” on this final word.

Taken from the cantata *Sweet Freedom’s Song*—a mini-drama that resembles in many ways a short opera—“Epitaphs” occurs at a point in the cantata where most of the dramatic points have already been seen. The piece “Epitaphs” is offered as a tribute to the lost lives as Concord. Ward describes the choice of text for this movement of the cantata.

The “Epitaphs” movement couples William Tyler Page’s solemn “Epitaph to an Unknown Soldier of the Revolution” sung by baritone soloist, and James Russell Lowell’s poignant lament for the British who died at Concord’s “rude bridge” intoned by the chorus.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Robert Ward, *Autobiography*, 61.

The text for this piece reveals the solemn tribute to both the Revolutionary soldiers and their British adversaries. The long recitative for baritone solo at mm. 7 – 35 demonstrate Ward's solo operatic writing techniques. The rhythmic and melodic figures in this opening section, with its close connection to speech, recalls Ward's procedure for setting dramatic text, outlined earlier in chapter 2.

The setting of the opening lines of "Epitaphs" establishes, in a dry but dramatic way, the purpose of the piece: a tribute to the fallen soldiers. This recitative shows one of Ward's subtler associations in his dramatic compositions: the use of voice types as a means of alluding to character. He expresses his preference for the sound of the baritone voice over the tenor for significant male roles, explaining that for him, the baritone voice signifies something "nobler" than the tenor voice. This use of the baritone for the nobler parts, while not unique to his writing, is quite deliberate in Ward's eight Operas.

...In a class at the University today, I was asked, "How did I choose the voice for a given role?" I had to admit that I always felt that baritones were somehow nobler than tenors.<sup>84</sup>

In his opera *The Crucible*, for instance, the dramatic role of John Proctor is set for a baritone. Ward's other operas show a similar preference for the baritone voice in roles required to project a sense of the noble. His consistent use of this association creates the link of the baritone voice with strength and nobility. By assigning the most serious lines of text to the baritone, the composer makes this assertion.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Robert Ward in an interview with Bruce Duffie. In both Charles Woliver's and Robert Kolt's dissertations on the opera *The Crucible* Ward discusses his preference for the baritone over the tenor.

<sup>85</sup> Ward's use of the baritone voice may have something to do with the voice range for his "nobler" parts in that these parts usually require the baritone to sing low as well as high notes. For example, in "Epitaphs," the soloist is required to sustain a high "G." John Proctor's role in *The Crucible* requires that an "A flat" be sustained.

In “Epitaphs” the baritone is therefore given the task of “speaking” the lines

Here lies a soldier of the revolution whose identity is known but to God.  
His was an idealism that recognized a Supreme Being, that planted religious  
liberty on our shores, that overthrew despotism, that established a people’s  
government, that wrote a Constitution setting metes and bounds of delegated  
authority, that fixed a standard of value upon men above gold and lifted high the  
torch of civil liberty along the pathway of mankind.

In ourselves his soul exists as part of ours, his mem’ry’s mansion.  
And of those he fought, at Concord, it is written.

The two remaining sections of “Epitaphs” are set for the chorus and demonstrate two additional uses of allusions. In the first of these two sections (mm. 37 - 46), to express the futility expressed in the line “they came three thousand miles and died, to keep the past upon the throne” Ward makes use of a melodic line that depicts a lament. The motion of two consecutive half steps suggests a mournful character and is followed immediately by descending intervals of successively widening distances. The idea of the futility with which the British soldiers traveled this long distance to die is exemplified by the manner in which the melodic line defies a strong tonal center.

37 *pp* *Lontano*

S They came three thousand miles and died, they came and died,

A They came three thousand miles and died, they came

T They came three thousand miles and died,

B They *pp*

42

S and died, To keep the past up - on the throne, to

A and died, To keep the past up - on the throne, to

T and died, To keep the past up - on the throne, to

B came and died, To keep the past up - on the throne, to

*cresc.*

Ex. 32. "Epitaphs." Mm. 37 – 46. Use of line with chromatic elaboration.

The above example functions as an allusion to chaos, and Ward's dissolution of any suggested tonal center serves as an allusion to the futile destruction and loss of lives.

In the final section of this piece Ward invokes fugal writing for the text "Unheard beyond the ocean tide their English mother made her moan." This short passage is effective as a reference to the "difficulty" with which the mother country, England, accepted the futile cause for which her sons gave their lives. As in his cantata *Earth Shall Be Fair*, Ward uses fugal writing here as a metaphor for processing this difficult idea.

52

S

B heard be - yond the o - cean tide their Eng - lish moth - er made her moan, Un -

*mp* <

56

S heard be - yond the o - cean tide their Eng - lish moth - er

B un - heard be - yond the o - cean tide their

59

S made her moan; Un - heard\_ be - yond the\_

A Un - heard be - yond the\_ *mp*

B Eng - lish moth - er made her moan; Un - heard be - yond the

62

S o - cean tide\_ their\_ Eng - lish moth - er made her moan, *cresc.*

A o - cean\_ tide\_ their\_ Eng - lish moth - er made\_ her\_ moan, *cresc.*

T

B o - cean tide their\_ Eng - lish moth - er made her *cresc.*

Ex. 33. Mm. 51b – 64 “Epitaphs” – fugal passage

The vocal lines in example 33 are some of the most challenging in all of Ward’s choral works and this complexity is precisely one of the elements that Ward uses to show the distant moan of the mother (England), a moan so futile, it is goes unheard. The listener’s struggle to grasp this passage is exactly what the composer uses to convey the difficulty with which the “mother” (England) accepted the fate of her sons.

### 3.6 Summary and Implications for Future Research

The evidence of symbols and allusions in Robert Ward's body of works is undeniable. Even a cursory look at his choral works reveals their existence. The examples cited in this study show a methodical use of these devices as a means of connecting the participant to a deeper meaning in the text. Ward's use of symbols and allusions is more easily seen in his vocal works than in his instrumental works because of the more direct relationship of external object and ideas within the text. He acknowledges his conscious use of symbols and allusions in his compositions and describes their use as a natural part of his musical language. The effect of the use of these devices is the intensification, both emotionally and intellectually, of the experience for performers and listeners.

The performer's study of Ward's use of symbols and allusions must necessarily be one that disregards the subliminal nature of these devices. For such a scholar, these devices must all become visible on the conscious level in order that the composer's intentions may be projected to the listener.

A detailed study of Ward's use of symbols and allusions, with some sort of quantitative survey of their occurrence in his oeuvres, is clearly beyond the scope of this study. Such a study would prove beneficial in showing the extent to which this composer relies on, or employs the use of these devices. In addition, while some mention has been made here of the use of these devices in Ward's strictly instrumental compositions, a comprehensive study of the extent to which he uses symbols and allusions in his instrumental works would prove informative, if nothing else.

Finally, there still exists no critical biography of Robert Ward.<sup>86</sup> His autobiography is not currently offered for sale, and a reference copy is available only directly from the composer. In addition, a critical biography could allow for external commentary on the composer's life, his works, and their public reception. Robert Kolt is currently in collaboration with Robert Ward in an attempt to complete a biography of the composer.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> In its broadest sense, criticism is “the study of the meaning and value of art works.” Although the term has come to refer to newspaper journalism that blends audience education with subjective performance critique, academic criticism is ideally a description of, analysis, interpretation and evaluation.

<sup>87</sup> Robert Kolt wrote his 2005 doctoral dissertation on “Robert Ward’s *The Crucible: Creating An American Musical Accent*.” Robert Ward, in a conversation with the author of this study spoke of the impending collaboration with Mr. Kolt.



APPENDIX A  
TEXT FOR SELECTED CHORAL WORKS

*That Wondrous Night of Christmas Eve*

Text by Robert Ward

Far down the street the carolers' song broke on the calm of Christmas Eve.  
Their chant like a far-off heavenly throng retold the ancient Yuletide tale, of shepherds and kings  
on a wondrous night pursuing a star, bearing gifts to hail the birth of a child in a manger born to  
Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem.

Louder and Stronger they sang as they came to my door through the light falling, white falling  
snow.

Oh, tidings of joy filled the house of my heart as their chant with its endless power to renew, the  
old gladness drew to its end.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia for Christ is born in Bethlehem. Alleluia.

Soon they moved on but yet there remained the joy that broke on a calm Christmas Eve.

And then down the street growing fainter was heard:

“Peace on earth, good will toward men,”

in the silent night, in the holy night, on that wondrous night of Christmas Eve.

*When Christ Rode Into Jerusalem*

Text paraphrased from the New Testament by Robert Ward

Hosanna! Hosanna!

Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

So sang the multitude as Christ the Lord rode into Jerusalem.

And when the people of the city saw in one loud voice they cried.

“Who is this?”

And the multitude replied,

“This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.”

Then he went into the temple of God and cast out them that sold and bought.

And he said unto them.

“It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer.

But ye have made it a den of thieves.”

The priests and scribes wished him put to death, but the people all hung on his lips.

For his was the Spirit of God.

All Caesar's legions could not crush the power that walked with Christ that day.  
Nor could the might of scribes and priests prevail. His glory conquered all.  
All mankind sang his praise that day. The very stones could almost shout,

Hosanna! Hosanna!

Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest!

*Concord Hymn*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

By the rude bridge that arched the flood, their flag to April's breeze unfurl'd,  
Here once the embattled farmers stood, and fired the shot, heard 'round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept; Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;  
And time the ruined bridge has swept down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream, we set today a votive stone;  
That memory may their dead redeem when, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit that made those heroes dare to die and leave their children free,  
Bid Time and Nature gently spare the shaft we raise to them and thee.

"Epitaphs"

(From William Tyler Page and James Russell Lowell)

Text compiled by Mary and Robert Ward

Here lies a soldier of the revolution whose identity is known but to God.

His was an idealism that recognized a Supreme Being, that planted religious liberty on our shores, that overthrew despotism, that established a people's government, that wrote a Constitution setting metes and bounds of delegated authority, that fixed a standard of value upon men above gold and lifted high the torch of civil liberty along the pathway of mankind.

In ourselves his soul exists as part of ours, his mem'ry's mansion.

And of those he fought, at Concord, it is written.

They came three thousand miles and died, to keep the past upon the throne.

Unheard beyond the ocean tide their English mother made her moan.

Thus die soldiers,

Their identity known but to God.

APPENDIX B  
LIST OF WARD CHORAL WORKS

*Concord Hymn*; 7.0245; SATB

*Consider Well God's Ways*; VP0017D; SATB, Solo B

*Earth Shall Be Fair*; 7.0020; SATB, SATB & Children's Choir or Solo S, Orchestra

*Fifth Symphony: Canticles of America*; #7.0235; SATB, Solo S, Solo B & Narrator, Orchestra

*Fifth Symphony: Canticles of America: A Psalm of Life*; 7.0237; SATB, Keyboard

*I Hail This Land (from Lady Kate)*; 7.0388; SATB, Band, Piano

*Images of God (Vocal Score)*; VP0017A; Choral Play

*In His Last Days Jesus Came to Jerusalem*; VP0017E; SATB, S Solo, Organ

*Let Us Heed the Voice Within*; VP0017F; SATB, Organ

*Sacred Canticles*; VP0012; SATB, Trumpet, Percussion, Keyboard

*Sweet Freedom's Song*; 7.0039; SATB, Solo S & B, Optional Narrator, Orchestra

*Sweet Freedom's Song: 1. It Was A Great Design*; 7.0104; SATB, Piano *Sweet Freedom's Song:*

*6. Epitaphs*; 7.0103; SATB, Solo B, Piano; *Sweet Freedom's Song: 7. Sweet Freedom's Song;*

7.0102; SATB, Piano

*Sweet Freedom's Song: Ballad of Boston Bay*; 7.0105; SATB, Piano

*That Wondrous Night of Christmas Eve*; 7.0006; SATB

*When Christ Rode Into Jerusalem*; 7.0003; SATB, Solo S, Organ

*With rue my heart is laden*; 7.0343, SATB

*Would You Be Glad*; 7.0106; SATB, Children's Chorus, Organ

APPENDIX C

TRANSCRIPTS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH ROBERT WARD



*Conversation Piece:*

Composer ROBERT WARD

By Bruce Duffie

As a winner of the Pulitzer Prize, composer Robert Ward is a member of a rather exclusive club. Since 1943, the prize for music has been awarded most years, and in opera circles, Ward is one of the best-known of the recipients, having won in 1962 for a work which is often done and has been recorded: *The Crucible*.

There is, however, much more to the life of Robert Ward. His catalogue includes several symphonies and quite a bit of chamber music, some of which is currently available on CD. Besides composing, he's also held teaching and administrative positions, as well as being a music-publisher.

We first met and had an interview in June of 1985, when the Chicago Opera Theater was doing this same work. We stayed in touch by letter and phone, and he has complimented me on this series of *Conversation Pieces* in *The Opera Journal*! So, when he returned to Chicago in February of Y2K for the production by the Northwestern University Opera Theatre, we decided to sit down and chat again. Here is much of what we discussed that afternoon.....

**Bruce Duffie:** Are you getting to the point you would rather people do operas other than *The Crucible*?

**Robert Ward:** Yes, as a matter of fact. I'm happy when they do "The Crucible," but at this point I would like to have the others coming up with some sort of regularity. One would think that after a company had done one opera and had a great success that they would immediately think about other operas by the same composer. But this has been a funny time for that.

**BD:** How so?

**RW:** Well, when my first two operas were written, there weren't many American operas around, so the people did look at them. Then Opera America started its big program of commissioning. That came at the same time when there were so many new opera companies springing up all over the place and they had to do the standard repertoire which were all new operas to their communities.

**BD:** When was this?

**RW:** This would have been 1947 to '48. Up to that time, almost the only place that you could get a new American opera produced was at the Columbia University Opera Workshop. No one else was doing anything. Then the Ford Foundation gave the big grant to the New York City Opera and in two years they did about 14 of the existing operas.

**BD:** That would be about half the repertoire, I guess...

**RW:** That's right. (Both laugh) Then about 10-12 years later, Opera America started its big program of commissioning operas. They wanted to have very contemporary ideas, things on the cutting edge and so forth. They had all sorts of terminology for it.

**BD:** Was it part of the commission to be on the cutting edge, to do something contemporary?

**RW:** Oh yes. The projects that were funded – and they had some rather handsome funding at that time - were those things. They felt that they shouldn't be what they thought was the standard opera. And those commissions were very important to the companies because they needed funding for production and that was part of the whole project. So instead of looking at the repertory that was there, everyone went out to do new operas because they could get money for their budgets, and one of the results was that they didn't pay much attention to the existing works. So, though "The Crucible" kept going through all this, the new operas all got good productions. But once they were produced, people were looking for other works to commission. Three years ago, Opera America turned their policy around and made it specifically to look back at the repertoire. This is because very few of the operas that they had commissioned during that 15-year period had ever gotten second performances, and they were disturbed by that. So they changed the policy to encourage a re-examination of the repertoire that was there.

**BD:** So the companies go back to successes.

**RW:** That's right. I think the situation will gradually change particularly now they've had to call a moratorium on that program because funding has been so hard to get.

**BD:** But in the general history of opera, there are only a few that have made it into the standard repertoire. Most operas are done once or twice and then disappear.

**RW:** That's right. That's right. The shelves in the library are littered with works and not all of them are by unknown composers. It's not a new thing in the history of opera, by any means.

**BD:** So now you're trying, as best you can, to get some of your other works produced?

**RW:** Yes. I've been sending around a booklet I made up which has the synopsis of all the other 6 operas and 2 CDs of excerpts from performances which I've had which are good ones, and all the information in the hopes that this will interest people. I think it will. I knew what the situation was, so I checked this out with some opera directors before embarking on it. When I spoke to director of New York City Opera, he said, "This will be wonderful." and he pointed to a closet. "That closet is piled to the ceiling with scores and tapes which I've received, and I just can't find the time to take 2 or 3 hours to listen to these works and make any kind of decision." So he was very happy with my idea. We'll see...

**BD:** Tell me a bit about these other 6 operas, are they all full-length, or are some one-act works?

**RW:** The last one I did was a one-acter, called "Roman Fever." The others are full length. They were commissioned as full-length operas. "Roman Fever," the last one, came out of a sort of interesting circumstance. When "The Crucible" was done here fifteen years ago by the Chicago Opera Theatre, the director was Roger Brunyate who is head of the opera department at Peabody Conservatory. We were sitting around after rehearsal and he told me that he was trying to encourage all of his composer and librettist friends to write scenes, short operas, full length operas, that had predominantly female casts because in the conservatories and the universities, they've got all the good well-trained young women they can use, but the standard repertoire has predominantly male casts with a few women. I thought that was a very sprightly idea and when I

got back, I just happened to pick up this volume of short stories of Edith Wharton. There was one called "Roman Fever" which is a little 11-page story, but it hit me immediately. As it's written, it's a story about two 40-year-old widows who had known each other some 20 years ago in Rome, and at the time the one was engaged and her fiancé was there. Then they had come back, married, and had daughters who were about 20. This all took place in the 1920s, so these were young flappers. You read about them in the story, but they really aren't on stage. Well, immediately he said, "Boy, we're going to put them on stage. That'd be fun." So we added them to the cast and then I insisted that we had to have a male voice to break it up along the way somewhere. So we made a typical Italian waiter who sings an aria right in the middle of it. So that's been done, as a matter of fact, quite a bit. It's good for schools.

**BD:** What is the performing time?

**RW:** Just an hour. But, you know, the big opera companies are not enthusiastic about one-acters because they have twice the work for the one audience and they usually have to hire different casts and so forth. But this is something that conservatories can do very well.

**BD:** Are you pleased with this, or would you rather they be done by a professional opera company?

**RW:** Well, in the case of all of the operas except for our first one, which in fact, it was done by Columbia University workshop (which drew on singers from all over New York), all of them have been commissioned by professional opera companies.

**BD:** Does that change the shape of the line or the ideas when you get a professional company commissioning the work?

**RW:** Well, actually, not much. It's the story itself, which controls the kind of music you write. In the case of "The Crucible" for New York City Opera, I knew most of the cast we were going to be using for it, so I knew those voices. But in many of the others, I didn't know the singers in advance. I would write a role for a good baritone or for a comprimario or whatever.

**BD:** Now this brings up an interesting question. From the eyes and the ears of the composer, what is it that makes a good baritone or a good comprimario?

**RW:** Well, I think one has to qualify it by saying "good for a role." In fact, in a class that I did at the University today, I was asked, "How did I choose the voice for a given role?" I had to admit that I always felt that baritones were somehow more noble than tenors. And furthermore, often the tenor will be a little guy and the soprano is towering over him, so that colors it somewhat. But actually, it is the nature of the role, which you're looking for. In "The Crucible," Judge Danforth has to be a kind of cold, nasty guy, so you don't look for a beautiful voice. You look for a person with a strong voice who's a fine actor. On the other hand, Mary Warren has to have a very flexible upper register because I've written a lot of coloratura for her. And you want someone that's small and dramatically can be a kind of reed in the wind. She goes any way. She's got kind of no mind of her own. So you look for not only that kind of voice, but that kind of looking-girl. It doesn't always work out that way. In the libretto I describe the kind of character she is and I got to the first rehearsal and saw that the singer was a lush looking young gal. God, she was a little beauty, and I wondered how is she going to look drab. But she was a wonderful actress and they made her up appropriately and so she did fine.

**BD:** Is finding the right libretto even a harder job than writing the music?

**RW:** Yes. It all comes out of the libretto, but when you write the music, you try to write it appropriately. That is the key thing. People don't go back 30 times to *Boheme* to learn about the story anymore!

**BD:** When you're sitting at your desk and you've found a good libretto or excellent libretto, is it daunting to know that you've got to come up to that level with your music?

**RW:** Sure. I remember the first time I saw "The Crucible" as a play. It just wiped me out. It was so moving, so powerful, and I thought many times along the way that this music has to be at least that powerful in its own way, even add to it. It puts you on your metal.

**BD:** The public has deemed that it has been successful.

**RW:** I think so. Yes.

**BD:** Do you think it's been successful?

**RW:** Yes. Curiously enough, it is not been done by the Met or the Lyric or Covent Garden. It would be nice if it were. On the other hand, it is an opera, which is condensed enough and there's so much in it that is more intimate, that it's not as good in the big, big houses.

**BD:** Have you ever thought of using a libretto, which actually incorporates the audience into part of the drama?

**RW:** Well, none of the operas, but another piece that I've written which is called "The Images of God" is actually a Protestant service for the church. It takes one hour. The Chapel Duke University campus is gorgeous, with fine organs and a fine choir. They wanted me to write a

work, and prior to that, my wife and I had made a trip to Israel and we went to one of the cities just north of Jerusalem where there's a modern Catholic church, which has been built. Catholic congregations from all over the world sent them either mosaics or stained glass windows, and we went in there and the first thing that struck me was that whether it was a mosaic or whether it was a stained glass window, if it came from an Asiatic country, God had slanted eyes. He looked Oriental. If it came from Africa and it was a black community, God was black. I thought God made man in his image and obviously, man has made God in his image. So that sort of started me thinking. As the work turned out, there are several sections with readings about God as Moses saw him (the stern, harsh father-figure), God as David saw him (the pal who forgave him), God as Christ saw him (the father/son relationship), and finally God as Noah saw him. We had the voice of God from the top of the Chapel singing "Persist Noah. Persist." It's a piece that I'd love to get combined with "Roman Fever." An opera company that had a chorus could do it. They don't even have to memorize the choruses because they're a choir. They can sing it right out, and they can be the actors. That may happen. I have one potentially coming up on that.

**BD:** If it gets done and gets done well, then perhaps others will pick it up.

**RW:** Yeah. Yeah.

**BD:** But of course, this is the thing that we were talking about earlier. Is it, as though, the voice of God has come to you and said, "Persist?"

**RW:** (laughs) Persist! (Both laugh) Anyhow, that's what I'm going to try to do.

**BD:** Is it safe to assume that there's a spiritual quality about everything you write?



**RW:** Certainly about all the music that has texts, and there's even a progression through those. The first church works I did were much more conventional. They were commissioned by protestant churches and related to what they did. But the last choral thing I did was rather interesting in that I heard from the Institute of Religion in American Culture from Indiana University. They had a sort of festival and conference that they were going to do, and they were commissioning a couple of works for it. They asked me to write one, and I told them we ought to talk about it first. I really was not in the mood to write a cantata based on a bible story. I said if I were to do anything, I'd like to try to get down to what my real religious feelings were at this time in my life, and write a work out of those. I expected they might say it's not exactly what they were looking for, but instead, they said this would be exactly it because they wanted to get people to start thinking about religion. So that work, it's called "Sacred Canticles," and it's definitely a reflection of my religious feelings at this point in my life. They were very happy with that, but it's an amalgam of many religious and philosophic thoughts that I've had in the course of my life. When I said it would not be the sort of standard religious piece, they said, "That's all right. When we've listened to your music, we feel that there is a kind of religious, spiritual quality in it," so that's what they heard apparently.

**BD:** You've been dealing with opera for many years. What is the state of opera these days in America?

**RW:** From the standpoint of repertoire, particularly if we consider not only opera per se, but some of the remarkable musicals which are now available, I think the state of opera in America is good - if we can get the media away from the intense commercialism which is ruining program after program, and back to delivering works of art. It also must involve our whole educational

system because I think the biggest drawback to the developments in the arts in the last 35 years has come since sputnik when the schools got out of the arts and went to the sciences. It was very amusing. At the time that happened, everyone was taking the bands and choruses out of their curriculum and putting them in the after-school hours, but MIT was increasing their faculty in the arts and humanities. They knew what they were doing. And slowly, I think, that situation is getting a little better and I think it's likely to get better if all these politicians live up to their promises. (Both laugh)

**BD:** What advice do you have for the younger composers coming along who want to write either operas or concert works?

**RW:** I'd try to tell them realistically what is involved in writing a successful opera, namely getting a good writer, getting a good libretto, a good story first and then writing the best music they can for it. And also having a kind of self-evaluation with which they're willing to face their abilities honestly, and if they don't have it in them to do it, then forget it.

**BD:** I would think that only comes with experience.

**RW:** Yes, it does, though I've always been amazed how even in works, which are not theatre works, you can hear a sense of drama in some composers, and others you don't. I can think of operas that have been written by people who write fine abstract music, but they don't have that sense of things happening up there on the stage, and the music reflects it. Simple things like the tempo suddenly picking up that Verdi was such a master of. It's not easy to get productions of new works if you're unknown. A student of mine, for instance, is very interested in doing one of

the other Arthur Miller plays and Miller is interested. He's a talented composer, but it isn't easy for him to find an opera company that's willing to take that gamble on a new composer.

**BD:** Exactly. So your advice, then for impresarios is to maybe take risks?

**RW:** They've got to. They've got to. And I think that those risks have to be taken in one of two ways. A company that is doing a subscription series of even 3 but certainly 5 to 6 operas during the course of the year is not going to ruin their future if they do one work, which isn't a great success. They can do it without having any serious adverse consequences for the company. The other way is the Broadway way, which is to develop a show to such a high extent beforehand and then publicize it with 2 pages in the New York Times. That way you can introduce it to the public in a sufficiently large way that it can maybe get the audience there. Once they've got it started, they can do a run. I don't see those 2 worlds coming together very fast. I could wish someone like Hal Prince would decide that he was going to develop a season in New York in which he'd include both operas and Sondheim shows and Rogers and Hammerstein shows.

**BD:** But for that you would need different companies and more forces.

**RW:** That's right.

**BD:** In the end, is it all worth it?

**RW:** (laughs) It's funny that you should ask that because it relates back to a very amusing incident along the way in getting the rights on "The Crucible." At some point, we had to go through Arthur Miller's agent, and like all theatrical agents, they care only about money. So they protect everything for the films and they'll do anything for a film contract because there's always

big money involved. So after Arthur Miller and I had agreed that we wanted to do the work, then it had to go to his agent for contract. We were represented by a theatrically knowledgeable lawyer and they went with his agent and her lawyer and she began to insist that we have four professional companies perform this work every year, it will have to be written and produced in a year and a number of other impossible kind of things. So finally I called Arthur Miller and I said, "Arthur, we want to go ahead with this, but unless someone can get through to your agent, there's just no way." I explained to him what the problems were and then told him, for instance, that at that time, there were 4 professional major companies in the country. There was New York City Opera, the Met, the Lyric, and San Francisco. That was it. And if the Metropolitan did it, the New York City Opera would not do it. At that time, Chicago did nothing in the way of contemporary opera, new opera, and American opera. And San Francisco might be a second possibility, but certainly not every year. And then I pointed out that it would be very unusual, even for a musical to be all written and produced in a year, which he understood very well. So he said, "Look, I'm going to call her and tell her I want this thing negotiated and I want it done." He said, "You go to the next meeting and talk to her." So I went and not only did I answer her questions by explaining what the general situation was, and explain that I had looked up and it had taken Strauss and Puccini about 4 to 5 years to write each of their operas. I was able to give her the data. Then I told her all of these difficulties and she looked at me and she said, "Well, you know, I only have one more question. Why do you do it?" (Both laugh) Afterward I said, "Well, you know, one wants to do it, so you do it. That's it. But let me make you feel a little better about this." And I said, "Tell me. When's the last time you saw Sardou's Tosca?" She said she'd never seen it. I said, "Well, you might be interested to know that Puccini's opera is still probably grossing for its publisher two or three million dollars a year based on that play."

**BD:** You were finally talking her language. (Both laughing)

**RW:** I was talking her language. After that, we got along fine.

**BD:** Well, I hope opera can be made to pay at least a little bit financially, because I know it always pays emotionally.

**RW:** Yeah, and it does pay the other way when the major companies take it on.

*Allusions*

Interview with Robert Ward

May 11, 2006

By Paul Tucker

**Paul Tucker** I did an interview with you, in 2001, when you came to the University of North Texas during our performance of your opera *The Crucible*. In that interview you left me with a tremendous amount of information that steered me in this direction of looking at some of your choral works. I looked at several of these pieces. In fact I have taught several to my choral group, *Paradigm Vocal Ensemble*, and one comment a singer made to me was that they sound like they were written by someone who really knows how the voice works.

**Robert Ward** Well I don't know if I mentioned to you, initially, that my background was as a boy soprano from the age five on and I sang in everything at school and church until my voice changed at about 15, at which time I was fortunate to have 2 years of harmony at the High School that I attended in Cleveland [Ohio]. That got me into composing. I had started out singing soprano as a boy but when my voice changed, I sang baritone or bass and I could do a bit of the tenor part; tenors were usually scarce there so I did some tenor but then I got out of singing altogether, I didn't have anything worth listening to. So I have had a long history involved with singing and there is nothing I love better.

**PT:** Excellent, excellent. I have a couple of specific question that I'd like to ask you and then maybe we could go into some of these pieces, if you don't mind.

**RW:** All right!

**PT:** My first question is, and this is very important to me because I look at your writing and I see that you use symbolism and allusions quite a bit. Could you tell me some specific things in your background that influence the way you write?

**RW:** Well, initially it was the things that I sang in church and in school. In school I was very fortunate. Cleveland had, at that time, about as good a public school music program as there was anywhere in the country. So, from early on, it wasn't just a matter of singing in school; we went to the contest and fared very well there, but when I was in Junior High and High School we did operettas and I sang roles in those, Gilbert and Sullivan and some others. The other thing was, I was always interested in drama. That was sort of stimulated by fact that an older brother of mine, when he graduated from high school, elected not to go to college but went instead to the Cleveland Playhouse where they had a system of apprenticeship then you got on the staff and while he was there, I was in high school at that time, I was able to go to every play they produced. He got me tickets at the end of the run and I began to read plays at that time. So you may have noticed, especially in the Christmas piece and the Palm Sunday piece, that these are almost like operatic scenes. So I sort of came to this from both of those tracks in my background.

**PT:** When you studied, as a composer, was there anything in your training that influenced your writing style. I know you were around at the same time as some of the more memorable American composers and yet I don't think you took their track.

**RW:** No I didn't, and that was one of the fortunate things about the harmony course that I took in high school. Later, when I went to Eastman we concentrated on the Bach Chorales and those were great for learning part writing, but when I was taking harmony in high school, it was by the Alchin-Jones textbooks (Applied Harmony by Carolyn Alchin and Vincent Jones) and my teacher at high school had been a graduate at NYU where he had studied with Vincent Jones and

ultimately I met him. He was the one who advised me to go to Eastman, as a matter of fact. That book didn't start from chords and vertical structures, but making accompaniments for melodies, in which we had to use the chords but you also became sensitive to the importance of the accompanying piano or voice, whatever it was, and the texture that you used. So that is one of the things that you find in good choral music, so I learned from that.

**PT:** I have read, in the foreword to Concord Hymn, where you wrote that you were drawn to the patriotic texts, poetry of the early American poets, and serious texts. I notice that you choose to set, to music, very serious subject matters. Could you tell me anything about your text-choice?

**RW:** Yes, Well fortunately, particularly when I was at Eastman, I had an English teacher there, two of them, who had great influence on what I read. One particularly knew contemporary literature and sort of guided my taste to the great books that were written at that time, and the great poetry and so, through the theatre, I'd come to know Shakespeare and the drama, which was poetic drama. So that sort of guided my taste. I guess, the fact that I was brought up in the Presbyterian Church, I was pretty serious about ethical and moral values at that time and still am. Today I'm troubled by the fact that unfortunately a lot of our churches pay a lot more attention to a lot of the less important things and forget the ethical standards that the religion stands for. So that has been sort of [sic] as I've read more widely, read a lot of philosophy and have concerned myself with the other religions of the world and I've been pretty serious, I guess but all with a kind of sense of humor as well.

**PT:** Ok. Maybe we should just move into a couple of the pieces and talk a little about them. I want to get your actual view. The first one I'll look at, for allusions, is *That Wondrous Night of Christmas Eve*. This is one of my favorites, so I'll look at that first. I won't insult you by asking, "are you aware of this?" because you are so deliberate about chimes, bells and the ringing in this



piece that there is no mistake that you are doing it deliberately. I'll just tell you what I get from it and maybe you can reflect on that for me. I get this picture that it is speaking of a time, not necessarily about Christmas itself, but it is talking about the memory of that time when there was a certain feeling in the air that seems to, because you set the rhythm pum, puh, puh, etc. it sounds almost medieval in a way, with the rhythm, and so it seems to transcend time. Is that close to what you were trying to achieve with this piece?

**RW:** Well, I tell you. Early on, as a matter of fact, it came from a number of sources one of which was, at Eastman, the counterpoint of which we spoke earlier, we started out with Renaissance counterpoint, Palestrina and the composers of that time, so that I became aware of the modes very early and then of course my interest in American folk song, or folksongs generally; many of those were in the modes as well. So perhaps that had something to do with it and it was the picture that I saw of these groups of people, and very often, you know, on our Christmas cards, these people aren't contemporary people, they are usually dressed in old-fashioned garb. So it was sort of having that in mind, these people going out on a snowy night caroling before the house and being invited in and having a drink and a piece of doughnut or something. Then the middle section [of the piece] is the emotional thing, which builds up out of this, and of course it is around Christmas that it uses the Silent Night, which of course everyone knows.

**PT:** Again I think you must know that the listener is going to relate in a specific way, or it would be a waste to do it. Would that be a fair statement?

**RW:** Definitely. You know I've used this device frequently in the operas and sometimes the critics come out and say, "Well he's just eclectic" and blame me for using those. Well the reason that I do it is, very often you don't want to take a lot of measures to invoke a mood or a place,

and then you can do that with something that's very familiar to everyone. I remember in my first opera there is a Bareback Tango King and Queen, who are two of the main characters and the first time the Bareback Queen comes on, I never had to say anything about her being the Bareback Tango Queen, I just had a Tango Rhythm under it, which suggested and gave this feeling immediately so that the audience didn't have to have any long exposition of it at all. I've done this many times in my works. In my fourth opera, it was all about Charleston South Carolina after the Civil War and these people are all suffering and reflecting somehow on the war. We found a wonderful text that was actually the text from a hymn at that time but the music was entirely lost but it evoked music of that time, the minute I read that text. So that's what we did and many people have commented on the fact that this immediately sets the time and the place by using that kind of device.

**PT:** In 2001 you told me that you never got involved with the atonal movement in this country. Could you speak a bit more about your opposition to this movement?

**RW:** *Well, I'll tell you. I actually studied the twelve-tone thing fairly carefully, the works of Schoenberg and Webern, well Webern never meant much to me, it was much too sparse, but Berg meant much more in a lot of ways. In the first place, he didn't let this thing tie him down in anyway. If he felt and heard music, which did a better job than, maybe, did something that made use of the twelve-tone system, well then he did it. But when I studied it, the first thing I rejected was the atonality in the first place. I just didn't hear this way. I'd been brought up always to hear the harmony, which was right for the melody. Now you might vary that later on but eventually the melody always determined the harmony. Then the idea of arbitrarily having a musical idea, which had twelve tones in it, I thought this was ridiculous. If you had a good tune, use it, whether it has six tones or three tones or nine or twelve. So, that I rejected immediately. Then the*

third thing, which I had to reject, was the fact that, if you are being strict about twelve-tone, you make your harmony out of successive tones in the row. Well, sometimes they sound terrible, so that one went out the window. But I'll tell you what I did learn, and curiously enough, this is something that Schoenberg never tumbled to, but later they did use this somewhat. It was quite clear to me that the twelve-tone idea was another form of theme and variation. So then I began to think about those, and all the theme and variations that I knew from the baroque period up to the end of the romantic period, the memorability of that theme depended not only on the pitches, but the rhythm of it. For instance, in the variations, during that period, one thing that was never violated what notes were on the strong beats and what were on the weak beats. That was just as important to the memorability of the theme as the pitches. So it occurred to me that, out of the twelve-tone thing, which did not follow that pattern, in the first place, the theme itself rarely had any definitive rhythm. They could be very free about that. It occurred to me that what happened if you took a melody which was a very familiar one, be it diatonic or a twelve-tone melody, it didn't matter, and you completely changed the rhythm of it to give it a natural rhythm, one that would be memorable, but which violated all of the strong and weak beat of the original theme. I wanted to try this out. I had a composition class at Julliard, at this point. I took a melody, which I was sure they would all know fully and I rewrote it to violate all of the rhythms of the original melody but making a natural one, which I put the pitches into the exact same pitches, which I then dictated to my class. They took it down, it wasn't that difficult and then afterward I said, "tell me, did this melody, in anyway, sound familiar to you as a variant of some other melody." They thought and they thought and said, "it certainly does seem like a variant of something else but we can't figure out what it is." So I said "alright, take up your pencils, I'll play the original." It was the Star Spangled Banner. This was something, which I found very interesting. As a

matter of fact I have employed it always when I've used some thematic material, including some very diatonic material. I was writing a piece for the Louisville orchestra, at that point, my Euphony, and that piece uses this technique of shifting the strong and weak accents on the basic thematic material for the variations. Of course later Boulez and some of the others got into this but they tended to do the same thing as Schoenberg did, which is to get very dogmatic about this and I guess I just don't like to put myself in prison.

**PT:** So when you compare how you write for the opera, you and I talked earlier about putting the text down, leaving space, and speaking the text in a dramatic fashion, and notating how the voice rises and falls. Do you use a similar approach with the choral pieces?

**RW:** Yes. However, sometimes it's not dealing with solo voices, but the whole chorus is carrying this out, in which case then I want the accompaniment, whether it be another instrument or within the voices themselves, to also reflect the quality of the melodic line and what I was trying to express with that.

**PT:** I do see that. Specifically, if we could look at "Concord Hymn," the allusion that is stated right from the beginning of this Emerson text is of the 'rude bridge that arched the flood' and the 'unfurling of the flag.' You absolutely capture this, not with the rhythm, but with the line itself, how you have it go up and down, up and down, you see it unfurling in groups, in phrases so that there are breaths between just like a flag unfurling and at the same time, the inner allusion that you have is of this bridge arching the flood. Is there anything else you can think about that piece, from your memory?

**RW:** No, except I wanted to have that very, you know I spent four years in the army during World War II and I had a big army band and was involved in marches, in the sense of when people were very serious about that march, when it was actually marching into a battlefield.

There was a kind of dark intensity there because those men might be sounding buoyant but in fact, underlying this was the knowledge that they all had that they never knew what would happen, they could be killed or come out of it maimed. So that was one of the things, that, as an underlying thing, I wanted to get in the kind of melody that they had to sing, something that was very simple and in fact almost crude.

**PT:** If we could go to the ‘B’ section of this, and I call it the B section, which is “the foe long since in silence slept:” you put that in that slumber, that lullaby, that 3. I think what I like about your music, and I think the singers do too, is that there are no hidden, what I mean is you don’t hide the meaning, you work it so that everybody can see it. It is not a simple thing. When you look at these pieces they look simple, but they are not simple. The other thing is ‘the shot heard around the world’ and how you echo that.

**RW:** You know, it is curious, as you speak of this, I remember that I did this but you know, in one sense it was almost not conscious with me because by that time, and this is a great belief I have about composing, of which I think Mozart is maybe the greatest example, it comes to the place it becomes simply a language and then when you’re dealing with language, that language simply evokes the music and you know when it feels right, right away, and you don’t theorize about it, later I realize that some of these things that I did kind of surprise me. That’s what creation is.

**PT:** The craft and the inspiration will yield more than just the two. On ‘When Christ Rode into Jerusalem,’ I have just a couple of specific things on this and, again, it may be an unconscious allusion, but when you speak of the thieves, ‘but you have made it a den of thieves,’ when I saw how you treated that reference, using the varying seconds, the first thing that came to my mind was Ali Baba and the forty thieves. You have that figure in the inner parts, everyone

has it, and they share it. It is not very obvious, it is like a thief, and it's hidden inside. Now I know, as a composer, you do this unconsciously, but you must know its there, you must know what you're doing. I don't know if you've ever thought about that reference of the thieves and "Ali Baba."

**RW:** No, I never had that one but of course it's the same story basically.

**PT:** To me that is one of the most, it's hidden but it's a very strong reference.

**RW:** Well the other thing about this is, you know, I wrote that text myself. It's a curious thing that that's the only episode in Jesus' life, which is told about in the bible, which is violent. He never preached that you have to go out and kill people, but this was obviously a moment of rage, when he saw this, it was such a miscarriage of what religion was about that his temper just made him do this. I always thought that some of the things in the bible I don't believe but this one is in absolute character of the man and a great episode.

**PT:** I think, maybe, I would leave you by asking, is there anything else you could think about, on the choral pieces, specifically, that come to mind, maybe in relation to the symbols and allusion that show up, even if they are not deliberately poured into them.

**RW:** Yes, well some of these are very deliberate. For instance, the very ending of my 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony, when I found this wonderful, posthumous text, which Whitman had written, which the effect was that 'we are all traveling on the same ship to the same destination' which sort of defined unity in a way that was marvelous and extended out in time. So the whole ending of that piece is to carry out that thing of becoming more and more unified to the end and then it just disappears into infinity. There are many moments of that kind in, for instance, in the earliest cantata 'Earth Shall Be Fair' in the end of that I did a fugue, because a fugue is always representative, to me, you know, you get the statement, and the statement is the very basic idea

of the text. Then it's caught on to all the other parts of the chorus as it comes along and this is like a great idea, which the idea of Democracy, for instance, which goes all the way back to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and the terms of some of the philosophers and social thinker of the time and it took two or three hundred years for it to become basic to a government, this country. So that those things definitely go through my mind as I am writing choral works and opera, particularly, and the difference between the text that I choose for choral works and for opera is that in the choral works you have to do it all within the music itself, you don't have staging or costumes but you can, sort of, suggest that staging.

**PT:** I know you've taught composition, you've studied, and looked at the works of other composers. How would you place yourself, and this an awkward question, I know you were writing at the same time that Randall Thompson was writing, I know he died in 1984, but I know you were teaching and composing at the same time. How did you view his approach to composition in relation to how you composed?

**RW:** Well, I suspect it was very similar. I lived enough later than he did to observe a lot of influences that did not have that much effect on Randall, like the whole Stravinsky thing. Later I did deal with the twelve-tone thing though I never wrote music that is sort of like that music. I think that would be the main difference. But the one thing that I've always felt about the music that I know of Thompson's is that he was fundamentally approaching the idea of composing exactly the same way I did. He learned it as a language and he learned it very well and very effectively. His craft was first-rate and never greater than in the choral music.

**PT:** One other thing, you do use jazz elements in your compositions.

**RW:** O yes! You know, some people don't look on their years spent in the army as being very productive but, as a matter of fact, it added a whole new chapter to my creative life because at the time I went to Eastman and Julliard, they did not have a jazz program at all. You heard jazz because, for instance, at Eastman we had a wonderful swing band, matter of fact Freddie Fennell, the band man, he was the percussionist, he played the dance drums. We went to the same High School in Cleveland and I knew Freddie from way back and he was always a very lively and good percussionist, whatever field he was in. Well at Julliard and Eastman at that time, you knew about it, I loved it, but you never talked about this, hardly. I had one theory teacher who was very enthusiastic about Gershwin, but this was just not there. So when I got into the army, and the first thing that I had a chance to do, I was at Fort Riley, Kansas, and the Commandant, it was just after the Irvin Berlin great success with this with the army, thought that it would be good if we could have an all soldier show, and this was before they were shipping everyone overseas, and they just needed things to occupy people. So they called in seven of us, three writers and four people who had done some composing, and said, "do you think you could write an 'all soldier' show? It was the craziest question because we all just jumped at it. So we wrote this show, which we, naturally, called "The Life of Riley." We toured around Kansas for a while, that was my first contact with jazz. I always remember, we had a jazz guitarist who was Jack Teagarden, and we became very friendly. So when I did the first arrangement of the piece I'd written for the show, it was a dance band we had playing in the pit, you know, I'd listened to swing all this time, and clearly to me it sounded like it was in 12/8 time, because you never played straight eighth-notes, except when they are marked in the parts, So when I scored the first one I did it in 12/8 time. Well when Eddie saw it he laughed and he laughed because no one in the jazz world would know how to play that. So that was my first



lesson in that, but then I became the leader of the First Regimental, and then Division Band and the Division band, that I had, had a first-rate Swing band in it, and a sort of Guy Lombardo orchestra, and a Goodman sextet, had all of these things, so I wrote for them. By the time I came out, I'd had a really professional experience with jazz for several years. So it influenced my music from that point on.

**PT:** And you add pitches to your chords that are not overtly Jazz but they add a texture that creates a more intense feel to the accompaniment. You talked about this in the beginning about your focus being how to support with the accompaniment. What would you say about those pitches you add, because your voice leading and part writing are incredibly sound?

**RW:** Well, that came out of; you know I harmonized Bach chorales, at Eastman that was what the basic theory course was. You started out with Bach chorales and you harmonized them and you learned good voice-leading and then you of course learned the thing which you forgot because you had to track down parallel fifths and those things like crazy. Well then we all learned Debussy and those composers who no longer followed that, and I don't to this day, I mean my harmony is totally free of those restrictions, but the voice lines have to work as lines.

**PT:** Well I don't know if the biographical data that you have on yourself, if it's possible for me to read it.

**RW:** Well yes, I could send you a copy.

**PT:** I thank you very much for all your help. I will be in touch to let you know how this is going and possibly if I have any more questions.

**RW:** When did you move from North Texas to Kansas?

**PT:** 2004. I took the job here as Associate Director of Choral Activities at The University of Kansas. So I've been here since the fall of 2004.

**RW:** Are your choruses there good?

**PT:** O yes. I'm going to send you some things. But, we are definitely going to do some of your music. Is all of your music is being sold by Hal Leonard right?

**RW:** No, everything now is through ECS in Boston.

You know you mentioned that you didn't think that Randall Thompson had received his fair due, and I would agree with that. But you know one thing, he was not out in the avant-garde, and things that are a part of that seem to get some kind of attention for better or worse. But anyhow, he was not that, he was an excellent craftsman, not an easy man to know. He was kind of a patrician. But in my case, I'm one of those composers, I've done eight operas, I've done seven symphonies, a lot of shorter orchestral pieces, big choral pieces, concerti, and a lot of chamber music, and that's not usual these days. You know you think Carlisle Floyd, well its all opera, or you think of some of the others and its all orchestra. I've sort of been very interested in all the fields and have been commissioned to write for all of them.

**PT:** Well I really do appreciate you taking this time with me. Thank you very much.

**RW:** Surely, Bye, bye.

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