PRAYERS OF ADORATION, CONFESSION, THANKSGIVING AND SUPPLICATION:

A COMPOSITION FOR SOPRANO AND CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

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This paper examines the relationship between text and music in *Prayers of Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication* — a four-movement composition, fourteen minutes in length, for soprano, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, trombone, violin, double bass, and percussion. The text of the composition is taken from the *Psalms* and *The Book of Common Prayer*. The names and themes of the movements follow an ancient pattern for prayer identified by the acronym, A.C.T.S. Compositional considerations are contrasted to those of Igor Stravinsky and Steve Reich, with special emphasis on the use of musical structures, motives, and text-painting to highlight the meaning of religious texts.
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PART I

ANALYSIS
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

According to Calvin Brown, “music and poetry have been referred to as sister arts. We might add that the sisters were brought up together and were inseparable in youth, but as they have matured they have developed their own private concerns. . . .”¹ These two arts exist to express the inner thoughts and feelings of the human writer, whether that writer be a poet or composer. Therefore, their common goal is communication — the communication of meaning. The composer who wishes to set a poem to music needs to utilize both of these arts to communicate something that only music and language can convey together. This undertaking presents the challenge of balancing the power of each art. If the objective of the composer is to join these two arts together, then he or she must decide whether to allow the poetry to serve the music or the music to serve the poetry.

Composers throughout the centuries wrestled with this task. At the beginning of the twentieth century, this task became even more difficult since the basic rules of order had become blurred. Sabra Statham, in her essay, “A Personal Rite: Christianity and Hellenism in Igor Stravinsky’s Oedipus Rex,” described this predicament.

As the Romantics had challenged and stretched the bounds of form, harmony, and rhythm — concepts and rules that had been developing for hundreds of years — it seemed to many that all reason and order had been lost. Many composers saw the problems as threefold: the elevation of the artist to the status of creator, the breakdown of traditional harmonic function, and the increased lyricism that often grew out of the desire to impose literary meaning upon music . . . . Rather than carry on this tradition, many composers looked for a new order.²

It was this search for order that drove many composers to search for and rediscover what French philosopher, Jacques Maritain, described as the “purity of art.” Statham described how Igor


Stravinsky, influenced by the writings of Maritain, developed a new philosophy of art that was grounded in rules and order and formed by a search for truth that would unify “religion, art and logic.”3 In the 1920s, Stravinsky returned to the faith of his childhood, Russian Orthodox Christianity. This faith was an essential component in his composition of five works suitable for liturgical use and many others that either use religious texts or subject matter, or are simply dedicated to the glory of God.

Some fifty years later, in the 1970s, Steve Reich went through a similar rediscovery of faith. As he was searching for new ways to express himself musically, his quest evolved into a spiritual journey. He found contentment in studying the religion of his youth, Judaism. It was the study of Hebrew and the Torah that sparked his desire to write Tehillim. Both Reich and Stravinsky were moved to set religious poetry to music as a means of renewing or refining their artistic styles. Both chose to treat the text as the master — the driving source for their music — in order to communicate meaning within the work.

3 Ibid., p. 231.
CHAPTER 2
TEXT AND MUSIC

As previously stated, the relationship between text and music is a delicate balance of power. Many critics evaluate the success or failure of a composer’s endeavor to set poetry to music based on whether the result enhances the meaning of the text or obscures it. Joseph Coroniti thoroughly explores the vast array of books and articles published on the subject in his book, *Poetry as Text in Twentieth-Century Vocal Music: From Stravinsky to Reich*. He supports Ezra Pound’s definition of the perfect song,

> The perfect song occurs when the poetic rhythm is in itself interesting, and when the musician augments, illuminates it, without breaking away from, or at least without going too far from, the dominant cadences and accents of the words, when the ligatures illustrate the verbal qualities, and when the little descants and prolongations fall in with the main movements of the poem.

As clear as this definition may be, it is not complete. Coroniti continues by asking, “but beyond the notion that the presence of a text precludes the absolute meaning of music, how, really, can poetry assimilate music? Perhaps poetry's firmest grip on music is the influence it has on the composer's structural decisions.”

Steve Reich concurs. In his liner notes for *The Desert Music*, he writes, “To the composer, the text may be a kind of a goad, as the Williams poems were to me. *The Desert Music* grew out of the text; I picked out passages by Williams, organized them into a shape, and then the music started coming. So the words were the motor or the driving force . . .”

But words can be more than a driving force or a structural construct for the music. In some settings, the composer may actually attempt to imitate musically an object or idea

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6Steve Reich, Liner notes from *The Desert Music*, Steve Reich and Musicians with chorus and members of the Brooklyn Philharmonic, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas, Nonesuch, 9 79101-1 F, 1985 (Compact Disc).
described in the text. Stravinsky himself was inspired by “a vision of Elijah’s chariot climbing the Heavens” when he was writing the *allegro* of Psalm 150 in the *Symphony of Psalms*. He admitted, “never before had I written anything quite so literal as the triplets for horns and piano to suggest the horses and chariot. The final hymn of praise must be thought of as issuing from the skies, and agitation is followed by ‘the calm of praise,’ but such statements embarrass me.”

Now, the text of Psalm 150 did not actually portray Elijah’s chariot ride; therefore, this would not be a literal imitation of the text. However, it was clear that Stravinsky had a visual image in mind while he was writing. Then why was he embarrassed to admit it? Perhaps he shared the views of Brown who defined the “literal” method of setting poetic text to music as “allowing the music to fasten on and exploit any word of the text for which musical analogies can possibly be found.” Brown supported several music critics of the eighteenth century who disapproved of the type of literal imitation found in Handel’s *Messiah*.

However, Brown also defended the type of imitation found in the works of J.S. Bach that he calls a “dramatic” setting.

A dramatic setting, on the other hand, pays little attention to the imitation of single words or ideas. It considers them in context and aims at suggesting or reinforcing the dramatic elements of the total situation. . . . Anyone who peruses Schweitzer’s classifications of Bach’s motives will find that literally descriptive ones are subordinate to motives of joy, grief, felicity, terror, peace, and other feelings which cannot be so literally imitated.

It was this kind of large scale expression that Stravinsky used to convey his vision of the hymn of praise “issuing from the skies” in the *Symphony of Psalms*. Stravinsky should not have been embarrassed at all to be held in the company of J.S. Bach. After all, Stravinsky admired Bach. At the age of eighty, he reflected, “I was born out of time in the sense that by temperament and

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7 Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Dialogues and a Diary* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963), p.78.

8 Brown, p. 53.

9 Ibid., p. 64.
talent I would have been more suited for the life of a small Bach, living in anonymity and composing regularly for an established service and for God.”

Although Stravinsky rarely used literal imitation, he did often admit to creating a connection between a melodic or harmonic idea because of his desire to express an emotion inherent in the text. He stated that the “first movement, ‘Hear my prayer, O Lord,’ was composed in a state of religious and musical ebullience. The sequences of two minor thirds joined by a major third, the root idea of the whole work, are derived from the trumpet-harp motive at the beginning of the allegro in Psalm 150.” Stravinsky’s religion and music were often intertwined. Therefore, his music must express something of the text it is representing. In the section of Dialogues subtitled “Personal,” he explained “I regard my talents as God-given, and I have always prayed to Him for strength to use them.” At the conclusion of his Poetics of Music, he wrote, “Music comes to reveal itself as a form of communion with our fellow man — and with the Supreme Being.”

I take this concept one step further. My reason for writing music is to enhance this communion. The subject and object of my musical endeavors should be worthy of this communion. If communion is what we were created to enjoy, it is not surprising that composers continue to write music to facilitate that communion.

Steve Reich, well known for his tape manipulation of spoken text in It’s Gonna Rain (1965) and Come Out (1966), found himself initially challenged when he decided to write a piece of music using a sacred text. In his liner notes for the recording of Tehillim by ECM, he wrote “Up to that moment, I had limited myself to set in music individual words independently, in a way, of their meaning, but now I had to confront myself with texts in which meaning was

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10 Stravinsky and Craft, Dialogues, p. 23.
11 Ibid., p. 77.
12 Ibid., p. 28.
fundamental, and for this kind of operation I did not have any method . . . . For the first time, the
music had to serve the purpose of the meaning of the words.”

What had changed for Reich was
that he had rediscovered his Jewish heritage, and that experience inspired him to write a piece
with a sacred text.

In 1975, he began attending adult education classes at the Lincoln Square Synagogue in
New York City where he studied the practice of Hebrew cantillation. Cantillation is a “form of
heightened reading that stands between reading proper and singing,” and its rules of
accentuation offered Reich a pattern of rhythm and meter to govern his melodies and phrases.
Reich found these structures to be useful, although he did not try to imitate their Jewish sound.
He thought it was “far more fruitful and certainly more substantial to try and understand the
structure of Hebrew cantillation and apply that to the pitches and timbres one has grown up with
so as to hopefully create something new.”

Reich chose the book of Psalms specifically because the cantillation for these texts had
been lost in Western synagogues leaving him “free to compose a setting for them without the
constrictions of a living oral tradition over 2,000 years old to either imitate or ignore.” The
Psalms offered Reich a variety of rhythmic possibilities on the small scale and vivid imagery
to govern the large scale of the work. Reich allowed himself to use tasteful, literal settings of
the text.

K. Robert Schwarz points out that “with a literalness worthy of Handel's Messiah, Reich
takes the Hebrew word ‘ee-kaysh’ (perverse) and clothes it in a clashing tritone (C sharp-G) —
the once-forbidden ‘devil in music.’” Reich, himself, discloses some word-painting, as well. “In

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14 Steve Reich, Liner Notes from Tehillim, Steve Reich and Musicians, conducted by George Manahan, ECM 1215, 1981 (LP); 827411, 2000 (Compact Disc).
17 Ibid., p. 118.
the second text, ‘Sur may-rah va-ah-say-tov’ (‘Turn from evil and do good’) is set with a descending melodic line on ‘Sur may-rah’ (‘Turn from evil’), and a strongly rising line for ‘va-ah-say-tov’ (‘and do good’), ending in a crystal clear A-flat major triad on the word ‘tov’ (‘good’).”\(^{19}\) Whereas Schwarz associates this “literal” approach with Handel, the majority of Reich’s word-painting is done more in the “dramatic” manner of J. S. Bach. Here, in *Tehillim*, he uses the mood of the text to determine the direction of the melody. In another section, he uses the text to generate the melodic and harmonic material. In the first movement, he introduces the text “‘Ain oh-mer va-ain da-vah-rim, Beh-li nish-mah ko-lam’ (‘Without speech, and without words, nevertheless their voice is heard’)” with only four pitch classes— G, A, D, and E. He explains that these four pitches can be interpreted as displaying several different keys, “D-minor, C-major, G-major, or D-major (among others), depending on their rhythm and the chords harmonizing them.” By using any two of the four pitches, these keys are implied, but not overtly defined. This imprecision is designed to illustrate the meaning of the text. He states, “their basic ambiguity suggests that when we hear a voice without speech and words we are not only hearing music but also music of the most open sort that is consonant with many harmonic interpretations.”\(^{20}\) He is making every effort to remain true to the text both in accentuation and semantics. What results is a beautiful expression of the text interwoven with music that is melodically and harmonically unified.

When I began to write *Prayers*, I had to answer for myself how to balance the words and the music. After reading the writings of Brown and Coroniti and studying the scores of Stravinsky and Reich, I decided to craft the music around the text for three reasons. First, I wanted to be sure that the text could be clearly understood. Second, I hoped to use the text as a means of generating the rhythmic and melodic motives of the piece. Finally, I wished to heighten the meaning of the text through literal and dramatic word-painting.

\(^{19}\) Reich, *Writings on Music*, p.104.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.
The first challenge was deciding which specific text to use, which language to set, and which translation of the Bible would work the best. Throughout the last several years, I had often heard of a pattern of prayer defined by the acronym A.C.T.S. (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication). The unknown author\textsuperscript{21} of the pattern suggested that Christians should begin prayer by focussing on the adoration of God, then submit confessions to God followed by an offering of thanksgiving for what God had done, and end with supplication or a request for the things they needed. These four approaches to prayer inspired me to discover numerous texts in the book of Psalms from which to choose in order to reflect these attitudes.

When deciding what language to use, I made a different choice from that of Stravinsky or Reich. I selected my native language, English. Stravinsky originally decided to set his \textit{Symphony of Psalms} in Slavonic, the language of the Russian Orthodox Church. Later, however, he switched to Latin because he considered it to be the “universal” language of the western church. Furthermore, he thought that Latin was special and gave him a great advantage since it was “a medium not dead, but turned to stone and so monumentalized as to have become immune from all risk of vulgarization.”\textsuperscript{22} Reich’s choice of Hebrew in \textit{Tehillim} was connected to the religious and cultural rediscovery he had experienced. My choice reflected a desire to make my composition a personal expression targeted at my immediate audience, Americans living in this postmodern culture.

Therefore, it was crucial to find the translation or paraphrase that communicated to me most clearly. I was particularly interested in \textit{THE MESSAGE (MSG)} paraphrase because of the

\textsuperscript{21} Some attribute this prayer pattern to what is commonly called the Lord’s Prayer that is found in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-4 \cite{St. George's Anglican Church: www.stgeorgesanglican.ottawa.cyberus.ca/newsletter/prayer.html]. Others find the elements of ACTS in the prayers of Daniel (Daniel 9:4-19) and Solomon (1 Kings 8:22-53) \cite{Spectrum, The Journal of the Association of Adventist Forums: www.spectrummagazine.org/library/ss2001/010601roennfeldt.html]. It is a formula recommended by many churches and organizations including Anglicans, Presbyterians, Bible churches, Seventh Day Adventists, Methodists, the Navigators, and others. The earliest use that I have found recommending this prayer pattern is in the late sixteenth-century biblical plays in Poland \cite{Jolanta Szpilewska, “Prayer Acts in Late Sixteenth-Century Biblical Plays in Poland” (written for Central European University, Budapest), Faculty of Arts, The University of Groningen (RUG), http://odur.let.rug.nl/~sitm/szpilewska.htm; Accessed June 8, 2004].

editor’s stated goal “to convert the tone, the rhythm, the events, the ideas, into the way we actually think and speak.” In some instances, however, I preferred the New International Version (NIV), as this was the translation that I grew up reading. In two of the movements, I added text from the Episcopalian Book of Common Prayer (BOCP). I chose these texts for those specific moments where I wanted to cast a more serious and corporate, less personal emotion in the work.

After much research and contemplation, I decided to use the following texts: for Adoration, Psalm 100:1-4 (NIV); for Confession, Psalm 32:3-6 (MSG) with a confessional prayer interjected between verse 5 and 6 (BOCP); for Thanksgiving, Psalm 116:1-5 (MSG), 116:12 (NIV), 118:28-29 (NIV); and for Supplication, Psalm 69:1-2 (NIV), 69:16 (MSG), with two lines of the Agnus Dei. There were a few places where I edited several words to suit the rhythmical considerations of the melodic line that I had already developed for the motives of the previous text.

Adoration:
Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.
Worship the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs.
Know that the LORD is God. It is He who made us, and we are His.
We are His people, the sheep of His pasture.
Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise.
Give thanks to Him and praise His name.

27 THE MESSAGE, p. 211.
29 Ibid., p. 545.
30 Ibid., p. 519.
31 THE MESSAGE, p. 126.
32 The Book of Common Prayer, p. 337.
Confession
When I kept my sin inside, my bones turned to powder,
my words became daylong groans.
The pressure never let up; all the juices of my life dried up.
Then I let it all out. I said, “I’ll make a clean account of my failures to God.”
   Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against thee in thought, word
   and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left
   undone. We have not loved thee with our whole heart, we have not loved our
   neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For
   the sake of thy Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us, that
   we may delight in Thy will, and walk in Thy ways to the glory of Thy name,
   Amen.
Suddenly, the pressure was gone, my guilt dissolved, my sin disappeared.

Thanksgiving
I thank God because he listened to me, listened as I begged for mercy.
He listened so intently as I laid out my case before Him.
Death stared me in the face, hell was hard on my heels.
Up against a wall, I did not know which way to turn.
Then I cried out, “O God! Save my life!”
God is gracious.
When I was in need, when I was helpless,
at the end of my rope, He saved me.
How can I repay the LORD for all His goodness to me?
You are my God, and I will give you thanks;
You are my God, I will exalt you!
Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, His love endures forever!

Supplication
Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.
I sink in the miry clay, where there is no place to stand.
I’ve come into deep waters, and the floods overflow me.
But I pray to you, O LORD, because you love me.
Let me see your mercy.
   Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.
   Lamb of God . . . grant us Thy peace!
Besides textual and philosophical considerations, the music of Igor Stravinsky and Steve Reich also heavily influenced my writing of Prayers in many ways. First and foremost, I borrowed the instrumentation of Prayers directly from Stravinsky’s L’Histoire du Soldat. This was a very practical choice for several reasons. It provided an audible example of what this combination of instruments might sound like in their various ranges. It also facilitated the working relationship with student performers. Since they knew and appreciated L’Histoire, they were less apprehensive of what I might produce and were, thus, more comfortable at the first rehearsal.

Stravinsky’s instrumentation, was like a miniature orchestra, with winds, strings and brass, in pairs, and a single percussionist. I needed to make two changes to the notation used by Stravinsky. First, since the solo literature for percussion had developed, almost in its entirety, since the premiere of L’Histoire in 1918, it was necessary to rework Stravinsky’s notation and the arrangement of percussion instruments. Second, the double bass player with whom I was working requested that I write his part in solo tuning, which resulted in a transposed part in the score. In addition, I made another, more significant, alteration to L’Histoire’s instrumentation. Instead of using a narrator to convey the text, I chose to write for a single soprano for the same reason that I chose to use the English language: it was a more appropriate outlet for my own voice.

In addition to borrowing his instrumentation from L’Histoire du Soldat, I allowed Stravinsky to influence my work in other ways. I had listened to his music over and over again for many years, and to those experiences I could attribute the following. Stravinsky used a repeated ascending pattern in the Prelude and both Interludes of his work Agon (see figure 1).
As I listened to this piece, I knew that *Adoration* would begin with a similar *ostinato*. However, this *ostinato* is used in a manner more akin to Reich than Stravinsky by setting up a layering effect and letting it spin out as a process, restricted only by allowing the soprano part to be heard clearly (see figure 2).

The next influence came from Stravinsky’s *Petrushka*. As I was working on one section of *Confession*, I came to a part where I wanted a clear, repeated trumpet line using a rhythm that deviated from the rest of the ensemble. In the opening scene of *Petrushka* at m. 25, while the rest of the orchestra parts continued to read in 3/4 time, Stravinsky scored a time change to 7/8 for only the flute and oboe parts (see figure 3).

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This was exactly the type of rhythmic dissonance that I was looking for, so, I borrowed this idea from Stravinsky and incorporated it into the trumpet and vocal lines of Confession. (see figure 4).

Perhaps the best way to summarize Stravinsky’s influence upon my work is to quote from Eric Walter White’s book, Stravinsky. As he describes the music of L'Histoire du Soldat, he writes,

the greater part of the musical material is diatonic and recognisably based on major or minor modes; but occasionally one of the parts gets squeezed into chromatic shape . . . [A]n ambiguous use of both major and minor thirds is frequently found, particularly in the violin part, [the basic theme of the 'Little Concert'] and this sometimes gives the

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effect of a ‘melodic’ minor scale with the leading note in both its normal and flattened position.”**35

In the same manner, each movement of Prayers begins in a major, minor or otherwise modal scale. Specifically, in Supplication, both the normal fourth (B-flat) of the scale and the raised eleventh (B-natural) over the bass (F) are used. Also, both the major and minor thirds (A-natural and A-flat) occur in quick progression (see figure 5).

![Figure 5. mm. 259-260 of Supplication.](image-url)

I agree with Stravinsky when he said, “I have no use for theoretic freedom. Let me have something finite, definite — matter that can lend itself to my operation only insofar as it is commensurate with my possibilities. And, such matter presents itself to me together with its limitations.”**36

In addition to Igor Stravinsky’s strong influence, I must also acknowledge the many influences of Steve Reich. As mentioned above, in the first movement of Tehillim, Reich used only four pitches — G, A, D, and E — to set the text of “Ain oh-mer va-ain da-vah-rim, Beh-lish-mah ko-lam.” By limiting himself to these four pitches, he allowed the harmonic interpretation of this section of music to remain fluid. I decided to experiment with these four pitches throughout the third movement of Prayers, Thanksgiving (see figure 6).

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36 Stravinsky, Poetics, p. 64.
In the first nine measures, these pitches are used exclusively in different orders. At the entry of the vocal part, they are transposed to C, D, G, and A. For the rest of the work, I continued to focus on these pitches, their transpositions, and the interval cells generated by them.

Another aspect of *Tehillim* that affected the third movement was the supremacy of the text’s rhythm over its meter. In the *Notes by the Composer* contained in the score of *Tehillim*, Reich highlighted this concept. “There is no fixed meter or metric pattern in *Tehillim* as there is in my earlier music. The rhythm of the music here comes directly from the rhythm of the Hebrew text and is consequently inflexible, constantly changing meters.”37 With this in mind, I also endeavored to keep the meter submissive to the flow of the rhythm of the text. The meter of the piece constantly changed until the ending statement of the text, “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, His love endures forever.” This particular statement, which is rhythmically very steady when spoken in the English language, was used as a refrain throughout the Psalms. Therefore, even here, the textual rhythm determined the regular meter of this section.

One more key influence of Reich must be mentioned. As previously noted, Reich derived his melodic material from the natural rhythm of the spoken text. Moreover, since Reich crafted the harmonic language of *Tehillim* around the pitches of the melodies, his harmonies were also derived from the rhythm of the text. In a personal interview with K. Robert Schwarz, Reich revealed to Schwarz that *Tehillim* was originally created as a melodic piece. Schwarz said,

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“Though Tehillim was conceived initially as a melodic work, with the harmonic skeleton not germinal but rather a later addition, the several interrelated harmonic cycles of Tehillim are a prime contributor to the overall structural plan of the composition.”

Upon analysis, it is apparent that Reich does indeed cycle through harmonic structures by following the movement of the melodies. The ambiguity of the chords — primarily triadic but with added tones — lends to the flexible nature of his harmonic structure. Schwarz’s description of Reich’s technique is inspirational in its practicality. “Reich gains the latitude for eventual modulation, merely placing new bass pitches beneath the original chordal cycle and removing those notes from the middle and upper registers which interfere with the revised modulatory plan.” I employ this technique as a strategy in the creation of my own modulatory plans, specifically in the last movement of Prayers, Supplication. In the next section, I will discuss these specific techniques in greater length and explain more clearly how these influences bear fruit in my composition.

39 Ibid.
Prayers is a dramatic work. The passion expressed in the Psalms texts demands a dramatic setting. The form of each movement and, thus, the work as a whole evolve out of this passion. This composition is not shaped by a predetermined mold borrowed from the past. Rather, it is the result of a process that shaped it through many different stages. It begins with an ancient pattern of prayer — Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication — that gives the piece its four-movement shape.

The connotative implications of these four words set the tone for the tempo and ethos of each movement and the contrasts between them. It was originally apparent to me that Adoration and Thanksgiving would need music that was energetic, affirming and outwardly focused. On the other hand, Confession and Supplication suggested a more subdued, uncertain and introspective mood. The natural flow of these four movements had an inherent variety already built in.

I speak of variety in an ambiguous sense, because there is a natural temptation to choose a fast tempo for music that is designed to praise God and a slow tempo for texts that depict sadness. Consequently, the issue of tempo is an immediate concern because it determines so many aspects of the music. I share this concern with Stravinsky who describes it so well in his Dialogues.

I was much concerned, in setting the Psalm verses, with problems of tempo. To me, the relation of tempo and meaning is a primary question of musical order, and until I am certain that I have found the right tempo, I cannot compose. Superficially, the texts suggested a variety of speeds, but this variety was without shape. At first, and until I understood that God must not be praised in fast, forte music, no matter how often the text specifies ‘loud,’ I thought of the final hymn in a too-rapid pulsation.\textsuperscript{40}

In this quote, Stravinsky is recounting the process of imagining the music that is the initial step in the creation of new work. Imagining music, as Larry Austin and Thomas Clark explain in their book, \textit{Learning to Compose}, “involves a working strategy, a modeling process. . . . Three

\textsuperscript{40} Stravinsky and Craft, \textit{Dialogues}, p.77.
interactive spheres of creative modeling are involved in this process of conception: temporal modeling, spatial modeling and narrative modeling. . . [A]n effective modeling process must balance all three spheres . . .

Stravinsky began with the temporal modeling process by searching for the right tempo. At the same time, he was deciding on aspects of the piece that could be considered as spatial and narrative characteristics. That is, simultaneously, he was determining that he would score *Symphony of Psalms* for orchestra and chorus and was choosing the texts that would bring momentum to the work.

In a similar manner, I imagined the form for each movement of *Prayers*. I utilized the narrative modeling process first because it was the strongest, most influential force. Since the text unfolds in a linear fashion with its own sense of development and conclusion, the music must follow this path. Because the instrumentation is consistent for all movements, I chose a distinct selection of colors for each one. At the same time, each movement’s construction included either an *ostinato* pattern or a chord progression. As I imagined these patterns and progressions, I began to “hear” a unique sound quality for each movement. Therefore, I set some rules for pitch selection in order to achieve the sound I had imagined. These constructs also had intrinsic rhythmic qualities to them. It was these rhythmic qualities that eventually determined the tempo of each movement. Once these initial decisions were made, each movement inhabited a unique environment in which the details could flourish.

*Confession*

The second movement, *Confession*, was the first movement that I began to write. The beginning *ostinato* in the double bass was designed to express the tension of the text, “When I kept my sin inside, my bones turned to powder.” Actually, in this movement, my original tonal

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plan changed as the piece developed. Initially, I had intended to use a tone row for this movement; but as the pitches began to unfold, I was content with the first several pitches of the row yet dissatisfied with the rest. Eventually, I became aware that I was using a mode, which, after some research, I discovered was the Arabian mode, Hijaz. This mode was often used in the Klezmer music of the Jewish people. The unique quality of this mode was its quantity of half-steps. In the pattern of A, B-flat, C-sharp, D, E, F, G-sharp, four of the scale steps are semitones, and two are augmented seconds (as in the so-called “Harmonic Minor” scale). Once I connected the Hijaz mode with this movement in my mind, it provided a suitable harmonic framework in which to explore the tension of this text.

I used more than pitch material in the opening ostinato, however, to convey the tension of the text. I also imagined a line that limped along, slightly irregular. To this end, I created a steady eighth-note pattern that was anticipated by an occasional grace note or prolonged by an intermittent, tied thirty-second note (see figure 7).

Figure 7. Opening ostinato of Confession.

This awkward rhythm, coupled with the lamenting sound of the bassoon line and the moaning sound produced by the rubbed bass drum, properly prepared the way for the opening line of the text.

In the text of Psalm 32:3-6, the author expressed an increasing level of anxiety, “the pressure never let up; all the juices of my life dried up.” To embellish this emotion, I added sweeping gestures in the clarinet part and circular patterns in the violin and bassoon parts. These devices were designed to emulate the habits of the restless who walk in circles or repeat an action over and over. Eventually, these patterns settled into an ostinato-like repetition, fading
into the background texture and allowing the trumpet and vocal parts to take the foreground. The septuplet rhythm alone was the component that made the trumpet and vocal lines stand out (see figure 4). Ultimately, the background and foreground parts slowed down and faded away. This section ended with the hollow sound of the violin and double bass playing on open strings in the interval of a fourth, representing the sorrow of a “life dried up.”

From this brief example, the method by which the form of the entire work would emerge should become apparent. In his treatise, *Music as a Gradual Process*, Steve Reich explains how “content suggests form.” The small scale form of the first twenty-four measures of *Confession* is a gradually rising line with a small decline at the end. This macro shape is made up of small flurries of textures and rhythms that congeal through the continuity of the narrative force.

In the next section of *Confession*, the spatial modeling process becomes more prominent as the form is driven by a progression of texture. The initial motive for the text, “Then I let it all out,” is imitated in every instrument but the double bass, which results in a cascade of descending lines. My intent is to create the effect of a grand sigh (see figure 8).

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Figure 8. mm. 115-118 of *Confession*.

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Reich, *Writings on Music*, p.34.
The texture is full and busy at the beginning of the passage, but it calms down into a steady chorale-like progression that eventually thins out to a woodwind duet that accompanies the spoken text. I rely upon a combination of spatial and temporal metaphors to provide what Austin and Clark call “trajectory” or “the shape of change through time,” giving the impression that time has slowed to set a more reverent tone for the spoken prayer.⁴⁴

After the prayer, I lighten the mood by effecting a timbral change — reintroducing the brass, directing the lines upward, and changing the meter to 6/8. The goal is to create an atmosphere of relief in order to enhance the meaning of the text to come, “Suddenly, the pressure was gone. My guilt dissolved, my sin disappeared.” The dance-like violin line is meant to convey the feeling of a renewed spirit.

The text of Confession requires a diverse and flexible form. The passions expressed cover a wide range from anxiety to meditation to relief. Through my choice of pitch material, rhythmic patterns, textural progression and timbral selection, I am able to accommodate the emotional demands of the text.

Adoration

The text of Adoration is not as disparate as that of Confession. Psalm 100 has a consistent theme throughout, “Worship the Lord with gladness.” As a result, the form of Adoration is more homogenous. Words such as “shout,” “joy,” gladness,” and “praise” indicate to me that their setting should be exciting and exhilarating. The layered ostinato that is presented at the onset of this movement accomplishes this goal. The pattern is made up of two identical four-note ascending groups that share the center pitch of G (see figure 9).

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The pattern C, E, F, G has the same intervalic structure as G, B, C, D, and these pitches strongly suggest the scale of C-major. Repeated use of this ostinato creates a sense of motion, and combined with the traditional brightness of the major scale, the opening section communicates a sense of bubbling excitement. I combine this ostinato with the skipping rhythm of the vocal line that is imitated by the bassoon and trombone. These two complementary motives combine to create a solid beginning statement (see figure 10).

Figure 10. mm. 7-13 of Adoration.

The momentum of the first section, mm. 1-30, is carried into the second, mm. 31-61, by the shear force of temporal persistence. This motion aids the continuity between sections even though the texture thins out, the timbres change, and the overall dynamic is significantly reduced. The tone of the text here is similar to the first and contributes to a successful transition. Even though this new section is more subdued, the energy is still present beneath the surface. I select the tambourine as the primary percussion instrument to augment the festive spirit of the text and the lilting descant in the violin and clarinet parts to express the text, “Come before Him with joyful song.” This section begins a subtle transformation as the text declares the reason for
our adoration, “It is He who made us and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture.” The second part of this line is repeated three times in order to draw attention to its importance (see mm. 50-61). During this repetition, a musical progression begins that will target a recapitulation of the beginning material. The goal of this trajectory is to transform the music from a quiet, thin-textured statement to a louder, more majestic ending.

The three segments of this movement are balanced in proportion. This was not part of a pre-compositional plan; it is the result of the content suggesting the form. Each section is between twenty-nine and thirty-one measures long. This equity reflects the solid substance of the text, and the strength of this first movement provides an effective dramatic foundation for the rest of the music to come.

**Thanksgiving**

As previously mentioned, continuity is the outcome of a strong narrative modeling process that can be the result of either the natural unfolding of a text or a musical gesture, or the experimentation of a set of pitch classes. It is the spatial modeling process, according to Austin and Clark, that considers the “piece of music as an object with measurable dimensions in a network of spatial characteristics.” Consequently, through a combination of the narrative and spatial modeling processes, the form of the third movement, Thanksgiving, emerges.

This movement began with four pitches — G, A, D and E — and the intervalic relationship between them. It was not so much the abstract qualities of these pitches or intervals that I imagined, but the open sound of perfect fourths and fifths. In my own experience, I associate this sound with a grateful spirit.

Even though these pitches never evolve into an exact ostinato, the limitations of only four pitches produce a static background for the calm statement that opens the movement, “I thank God, because He listened to me.” This proclamation need not be dramatic, but steady and

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confident. The choice of instrumentation — the woodwinds and brass — intends to convey this confidence. As the text moves to a storytelling mode, the background part reduces to a dull, quiet repetition. This action restrains the pitch environment while the vocal part is transposed to create the most dissonant section of the entire work. In mm. 191 and following, the percussion part comes to the foreground in order to rhythmically enhance the telling of the story. By laying the foundation of repetition, I can comfortably wander away from the strict environment that I have created thus far, knowing that this foundation will connect my meanderings to the rest of the movement. This dissonance paints the scenery of the story being told. _THE MESSAGE_ 

paraphrase, “Death stared me in the face, hell was hard on my heels. Up against a wall I did not know which way to turn,” accurately portrays this moment. This experience is common to all mankind and elicits a predictable response from the writer: “O God! Save my life!”

Between the cause and effect of these two statements, it felt necessary to allow some time to pass. Most of us need time before the helpless nature of our situation is able to overcome our natural human pride. Therefore, I develop the original four pitches and intervals into a contemplative melodic line. When the clarinet plays these notes in its mid range, the effect it produces is very somber. After the Psalmist’s cry for help in the text, this same melody is repeated in a short canon at the fifth, scored for the strings accompanied by the brass. Again, this passage is designed to allow the listener time to reflect and hopefully creates a sense of suspense. Will God answer? The next line of text reveals the depth of the Psalmist’s relationship to his God. His response comes not because God has already acted, but because the Psalmist remembers the character of God as it has been revealed in his past: “God is gracious.” This is the reason for our thankfulness.

With such a dramatic narrative force, it seems almost inappropriate to be concerned with either temporal or spatial models. Yet, they are present in their leanness. There are only a few spatial characteristics. In the temporal domain, time passes — quietly, reverently — the writer is
speechless. Hence, the composition’s texture is thin and the timeline is frequently interrupted by silence.

The moment that follows is similar to the spoken prayer in *Confession*. Therefore, I have orchestrated it in a similar fashion with a clarinet and bassoon duet. I use the simple hi-hat click as an indication that the momentum is about to build — but not yet. When the voice does return, it is with the text, “You are my God and I will give You thanks.” The Psalmist is now speaking directly to God; he is no longer telling a story. Because of this upward focus, I have arranged throughout the rest of the movement — for almost every instrument — the four structural pitches in ascending fourths. The momentum increases as each new instrument is reintroduced, but the pace remains steady and never builds the kind of excitement that was appropriate for *Adoration*. The calmness from the beginning of this movement returns, but now, to quote Stravinsky, it is the “calm of praise.”46 This moment stretches for as long as it can to suggest the concept of the word “forever.”

**Supplication**

Austin and Clark describe an assimilation process that takes place when the materials of a piece begin to meld together. “It is learning about our composition in progress.”47 At some point in the process of composing, all of the elements become evident, and the piece begins to take on a life of its own. The initial idea for the fourth and final movement, *Supplication*, begins with a chord and a melody. It is as if the first three movements have reserved this type of construction for the end. Both *Adoration* and *Thanksgiving* have segments in which the contrapuntal lines align frequently to create functional harmonic progressions. However, in *Supplication*, this method becomes central, rather than the result of a contrapuntal device.

46 Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Dialogues*, p. 78.
47 Austin and Clark, p. 22.
The germinal chord for *Supplication* is an F-major triad with an added raised eleventh (B-natural). Against the major triadic background, this structure produces several delicious dissonances out of which the movement seems to grow. The melodic line utilizes the same pitch content for the first section, mm. 254-271, but each phrase is harmonized in a slightly different manner. This type of repetition is inspired by an element in the poetic style of the Psalm writer that Wildred Watson, called “synonymous parallelism.” It is a common feature of Hebrew poetry in which an idea is repeated using different words. For example, take the opening three phrases of *Supplication*: “Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck; I sink in the miry clay, where there is no place to stand; and I’ve come into deep waters, and the floods overflow me.” All three statements speak of imminent peril and draw acute visual images of a drowning or sinking experience. Consequently, setting the same pitch material in the melodic line and harmonizing it with slightly different chords seems the perfect way to musically illustrate this poetic device.

As this idea begins to develop, the benefit of using the added tone of the raised eleventh becomes apparent. It allows for a whole-tone progression of four pitches in a row reminiscent of the musical language of the Impressionists. Used in an ascending pattern, as in mm. 260-261, it is intended to express the supplicant petitioning a Higher Power. As such, the character of this melodic material, which aptly fits the repetition of the text, is not one of anxious urgency, but of long-suffering. Used in a descending pattern, as in the bass line of mm. 263-266, the whole steps portray the sinking aspect of the text (see figure 11).

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This is a perfect example of the type of literal word-painting within the context of a “dramatic” setting that Brown endorses in Bach’s work.

Another benefit of this added tone is that it abruptly conflicts with a traditional chord progression by clashing with the commonly used IV chord. This more easily provides a way to manipulate the chords in a nontraditional manner and create an altered tonal environment. This is similar to what Eric Walter White notices in Stravinsky’s *L’Histoire du Soldat* and describes as “diatonic . . . but occasionally . . . squeezed into chromatic shape.”

At the end of m. 271, the cadence securely rests on a C-minor chord with an added F-sharp. By continuing the G in the violin part, after the release of the rest of the notes, a sense of G-major is imposed on the next section. This transposes the structure up two semitones in relation to the beginning of the composition — with an F-major chord. This subtle ascent enhances the mood of the text. The supplicant is now begging for help and is expectantly waiting for it. The melodic material remains the same, even with the new tonic. The Psalm writer tries another tactic and reminds God that He loves us. The quiet, thin texture of this section aptly

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White, p. 233.
matches the whisper of his prayer and a solitary clarinet echo repeats the sentiment. The temporal pace is slow, but steady. The violin part descends on each downbeat back towards a restatement of the F-major chord. By sinking back to this original starting point, the desperate position of the supplicant is musically illustrated (see figure 12).

![Figure 12. mm. 273-281 of Supplication.](image)

By reminding God of His love, the Psalm writer is, in turn, encouraged by this reminder. He remembers God’s mercy as well, and this gives him hope. Here, I have anglicized the Hebrew device of parallelism and resorted to exact repetition of the line “let me see Your mercy.” The melodic material is also repeated while the underlying chords move in a continual ascending motion. In m. 281, the request begins timidly, but by the third and final repetition, the vocal line should be sung boldly. This section uses the force of trajectory in a very compelling way. The chord progression of the first iteration of the text, “let me see Your mercy,” moves from the F-major chord to a G-major chord. The ascent has begun again. Then, the progression continues with the second iteration of the text. This time the harmonic motion is more aggressive. The bass line moves upward in whole steps and the upper parts follow to form the chords A-minor, B-major, C-sharp-major and E-flat-major. The bass continues its upward motion with a whole step, and the third progression begins on another F-major chord. It then ascends through G-major, A-minor and, for the first time, B-flat-major to arrive at the climax at m. 297, a C-major chord. Even as these chords are often vertically aligned, the voices move independently creating an abundance of passing tones and suspensions. These added dissonances augment the striving and struggling aspect of the text.
At the climax of this movement, I choose to make a transition to a text that calls God by His most hopeful name. The deepest quagmire in which the supplicant is caught is the helpless condition of his own sinful nature. By calling on the “Lamb of God” he is recalling that the sacrifice for “the sins of the world” has already been paid, thus claiming the hope of redemption. Sabra Statham demonstrates that this predicament is a common theme in the philosophy of Stravinsky’s mentor and influential friend, Jacques Maritain. She quotes Wallace Fowlie,

Those artists so steadfastly admired and studied by Maritain — poets like Baudelaire and Rimbaud; novelists like Léon Bloy and Mauriac; the dramatist Cocteau; the composers Satie and Stravinsky — seemed to have for the philosopher one theme, one approach in common: the incomprehensibleness of sin.⁵⁰

I hope to be in this good company of artists who struggle with this notion. The ending of Supplication does not present the bright cheery ending that so many hymns of the modern church seem compelled to offer. Textually, I choose to end this work with a plea for peace. The final chord still retains the conflicting dissonance of the raised eleventh, representing harmonically man’s continual struggle against sin and its consequences in this world.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

The “sister arts”\(^{51}\) of music and poetry will continue to struggle against each other for prominence. Future composers will continue to be challenged with finding ways to communicate the meaning of text through music. As the eighteenth century produced Bach’s and Handel’s methods and techniques, so the twentieth century found representative methods in the works of Igor Stravinsky and Steve Reich.

What makes the work of these two composers so influential is the combination of their creative talents with their ability to express meaning. Even as Stravinsky is known for saying that music is not capable of expressing meaning, he creates works that infuse the meaning of the text into the music. Almost a century after Maritain’s writings, the issues he wrote about are still present and in need of reform. Some still seek those who can unify “religion, art and logic.”\(^{52}\) Such a synthesis enhances the message of a text and yields a product that communicates “with our fellow man — and with the Supreme Being.”\(^{53}\) I feel that this type of art plays a necessary role in the continual development of our musical evolution.

Today, the assortment of musical styles available to us is broader than ever before. Regardless of style, there is one method for developing form that can satisfy the aforementioned need for logic. Form modeling offers three interactive spheres for crafting music out of imagination. Narrative modeling, one of those spheres, encompasses the “plot or eventfulness of a piece.”\(^{54}\) Text can provide continuity to plot — and, therefore, to music. Hence, form modeling reconciles the two sister arts, music and poetry.

\(^{51}\) Brown, p. 44
\(^{52}\) Statham, p. 231.
\(^{53}\) Stravinsky, Poetics, p. 142.
\(^{54}\) Austin and Clark, p. 20.
In *Prayers of Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication*, I have sought to employ this modeling process in order to achieve the “synthesis of form” necessary for effective communication. In addition, I have used practical instrumentation and musical language. It is hoped that *Prayers* may receive many performances so that this communication can be meaningful shared in each performance of *Prayers of Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication*.

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55 Ibid., p. 27.
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Prayers of . . .

Adoration
Confession
Thanksgiving
Supplication

by
Deborah J. Monroe

2004
Instrumentation:

Soprano
B♭ Clarinet
Bassoon
Trumpet
Trombone
(with F attachment)
Violin
Double Bass
(solo tuning)
Percussion:
triangle
2 suspended cymbals
tambourine
1 small snare drum
2 large snare drums
hi-hat
bass drum
Notes on the harmonic language of
Confession

(# of semitones between notes)

section 1, ms. 1-24 section 2, ms. 25-51 section 3, ms. 52-78

Confession is built on an altered major scale pattern. Steps 2 and 6 are lowered by a
1/2 step, or 1 semitone. This results in the spelling of the A scale above. This same
scale pattern is transposed to start on B in section 2 and C in section 3. There are only a
few accidentals or variations in these sections, so the players can assume that in section 1,
all B's are flat, all C's are sharp etc. All accidentals will be clearly marked. This may make
reading horizontal intervals a bit awkward at first, but the composer desires to remain
consistent throughout with the enharmonic spellings that appear in this note.

for the transposed instruments, the scales read like this:

Percussion Key

bass drum hi-hat large snare drum medium snare drum small snare drum
Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

"Adoration" by Deborah Monroe
2004

Deborah Monroe
2004

Bb Clarinet
Bassoon
C Trumpet
Trombone
Percussion
Voice
Violin
Double Bass

\( \text{transposed score} \)

\( \text{Deborah Monroe} \)

\( \text{2004} \)
Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.
* if thumb roll is not possible, just hit once.
Know that the LORD is God.
It is He who made us, and we are His;
we are His people, the sheep of His pasture.
We are His people, the sheep of His pasture.
sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanks-giving and his courts with praise;
thanks to Him and praise His name. Give thanks, and praise His name!
Bb Clarinet

Bassoon

C Trumpet

Trombone

Percussion

Voice

Violin

Double Bass

\[ \text{When I kept my sin inside, my bones turned to powder,} \]
my words became day -

long groans.

the 3 ms. pattern evolves
The pressure, the pressure, the pressure, never, never let up;
Stagger breathing with trio

"I'll make a clean account of my failures to God."

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against thee in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by
what we have left undone. We have not loved thee with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.

For the sake of thy Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in thy will, and walk in thy ways, to the glory of thy Name. Amen.
Sud- den- ly, the pres- sure was gone.

My
Thanksgiving

I thank God because He listened to me, listened as I begged for
Death stared me in the face, hell was hard on my heels.

mercy. He listened so intently as I laid out my case before Him.

Voice

Death stared me in the face, hell was hard on my heels.

mercy. He listened so intently as I laid out my case before Him.

Voice

Death stared me in the face, hell was hard on my heels.

mercy. He listened so intently as I laid out my case before Him.
Up against a wall I did not know which way to turn;

then I cried out: O GOD! Save my life!
I was in need, when I was helpless, at the end of my rope, He saved me. How can I repay the LORD for all His gracious, saving power.

GOD is gracious. When
You are my God, and I will give You thanks; You are my God, I will ex-alt You! You are my God, and I will
give You thanks; 
You are my God, 
I will exalt You!

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; 
His love endures forever.

231

237
Supplication

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{Bb Clarinet} \\
\text{Bassoon} \\
\text{C Trumpet} \\
\text{Trombone} \\
\text{Percussion} \\
\text{Voice} \\
\text{Violin} \\
\text{Double Bass} *
\end{array} \]

\[ \frac{\text{waters have come up to my neck.}}{\text{I sink in the miry clay,}} \]

\[ \frac{\text{Save me, O God, for the}}{\text{}} \]

\[ \text{b.d.}: \text{soft mallet \& brush} \]
But I pray to you, O LORD because you love me.

where there is no place to stand. I've come into deep waters; and the floods overflow me.
Let me see, let me see,

let me see your mercy.
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins.

mer-cy.

let me see your mer-cy.
of the world, have mercy upon us.

Lamb of God, grant us Thy peace!