

A STUDY OF SELECTED CLARINET MUSIC OF BRIAN ISRAEL

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It is the goal of this document to bring to the attention of the public the compositions of Brian Israel, an American Jewish composer who died of leukemia in 1986 at the age of 35. This document contains a biography of the composer, information on where to obtain the scores, texts to the poems of Kenneth Patchen, as well as a study of three, selected clarinet works, which trace his compositional development.

The *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*, a neo-classical work, is representative of his early style, using classical forms with non-traditional harmonies. It is comprised of three movements, Allegro assai, Andante, and Vivace. The chamber work *Lovesongs, Lions, and Lullabyes*, for soprano, clarinet, and piano, is a progressive work that experiments with text painting, chord splitting, mode mixture, and an increasing harmonic language, and is inspired by the poetry of Kenneth Patchen, a World War II poet. There are four movements to this work: "O, sleeping falls the maiden snow," "O when I take my love out walking," "The lions of fire," and "I have lighted the candles Mary." The *Concerto for Clarinet and Wind Ensemble* is a textless, programmatic work that uses chromatic fragments and displaced octaves to represent the timeline known as the Final Solution.

This work contains three movements that have been titled, Crystal Night, Coronach, and Liberation, that further direct the program. Each work is described in structure, harmonic texture, harmonic language, and interpretation.

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INTRODUCTION AND BIOGRAPHY

It is the purpose of this study to bring to the attention of the musical world the compositional output of Brian Israel. This document will study the melodic characteristics as well as the compositional techniques used in his clarinet works. The works to be examined are *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*, *Lovesongs*, *Lions*, and *Lullabyes*, and *Concerto for Clarinet and Wind Ensemble*. A fourth work, *Trois Grotesques*, includes clarinet in its instrumentation, however it was originally scored for soprano saxophone and therefore has been omitted from this study.

Brian William Israel's music is mostly unpublished. Unlike the works written for solo brass and brass ensembles that are published by Tritone Press and Ethos Publications, the numerous works for larger wind ensembles, orchestra, voice, and clarinet remain available only through Cornell University, where Israel received both his master's and doctoral degrees. His *Clarinet Sonata*, *Lovesongs*, *Lions*, and *Lullabyes* for clarinet, soprano, and piano, and his *Concerto for Clarinet and Wind Ensemble* have been selected for this document as representative of his short, yet prolific, composing career.

Israel was born on February 5, 1951, to a New York Jewish family. His father, Joseph Israel, in his self-published book *My Life Happenings*, relates the depth of his son's musical curiosity.¹ In 1962, Israel was already an accomplished pianist at the age of eleven, having had only one year of piano lessons from Alice Shapiro, a piano teacher

at the Juilliard School of Music. He was admitted to the Juilliard Pre-College Division on a piano scholarship and studied with Peter Schickly. A talented pianist, Israel was also an accomplished horn player, he sang in the boys' chorus of the Metropolitan Opera, and wrote his first opera at the age of 7.² His musical endeavors were always supported by his family.³

Israel grew up with his parents in New York City in a closely knit Jewish area of the Bronx. Several families of Holocaust victims lived in the community and, although the Israels had no direct ties to any of those victims, they lived and "...understood the real fear and horror of the Holocaust."⁴ Because of this understanding, Israel's parents gave him a Christian middle name to protect him in case of anti-Semitic uprisings. (Their reasoning was that Israel could drop his last name, and replace it with William, his Christian middle name.)⁵ This Jewish heritage would later surface in his music with his many references to the Holocaust.

Although Israel was Jewish by birth, he never went through the ceremonies that would identify him as a practicing religious Jew. His first significant formal religious affiliation began in 1981 when he became the organist at Calvary Episcopal Church located in Syracuse, NY. Having had little experience playing the organ, Israel took the position in order better to understand the instrument for which he had received a commission from Ithaca College Music Honorary. At Cornell University he met

¹ Joseph Israel, *My Life Happenings*, self-published. This is a collection of stories from J. Israel's life. He shares three stories about his son and his musical achievements, including his enrollment in Juilliard.

² "Brian Israel dies; composer teacher," *New York Times*, 6 May 1986. He had his first composition performed, *Sonata for Cello*, in 1965, at the age of 14.

³ Joseph Israel wrote several accounts of Brian and his musical pursuits in *My Life Happenings*. These stories are always presented with admiration and pride.

⁴ Christine Day, personnel interview with the author, May 21, 2003.

Christine Day, a freshman voice student and a member of the Calvary Episcopal Church choir. After three years of "friendly associations," Israel proposed to Day, and they were married in 1978. Day was later ordained an Episcopal priest.⁶ Although active in the Calvary community, Israel's deepest religious beliefs remained unknown even to his wife. She is uncertain if Israel ever came to embrace the doctrines of the Episcopal Church, and states that his belief was "one whose faith is known to You alone."⁷ He ended his musical affiliation with Calvary Church on July 4, 1985 with a solo recital.

Earlier in his life, Israel attended Lehman College in Bronx, NY and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Music, cum laude, in 1971. He then enrolled at Cornell University, to begin his master's degree, where he was a teaching assistant in marching and symphonic band. During his second year, he accompanied other students and was a teaching assistant to professors of composition, Robert Palmer and Burrill Phillips. During the last years of his residency, Israel was assigned to accompany the Chamber Singers. His composition, *Symphony No. 1 for Concert Band*, paired with an analytical document, *Canti di Prigionia by Luigi Dallapiccola: Materials of a Musical Language*, completed the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts degree in composition in 1974. The following year, Israel completed the requirements for the doctoral degree. His dissertation topics included *Form, Texture, and Process in the Symphonies for Wind Ensembles by Alan Hovhannes* and his *Symphony No. 2 for Orchestra*.

After receiving the D.M.A., he accepted a position at Syracuse University as assistant professor of music theory, history, and composition. He was promoted to the

⁵ Joseph Israel, *My Life Happenings*, self-published.

⁶ Christine Day, personnel interview with the author, October 30, 2002

⁷ *Book of Common Prayer*, The Seabury Press, 1979, p 391.

rank of associate professor of music in 1980, and four years later was appointed professor of music. In 1980, Israel was diagnosed with leukemia. It was at this time that he turned to Episcopal priest, George Dirghali, to be his confidant.⁸ With the encouragement of his wife and Father Dirgahli, Israel threw his energies into composing. He wrote four works in that year, all of which were premiered in 1981. With his cancer in remission, Israel continued to compose and received many honors and awards. Among those are second prize in the 1982 Ithaca College Chorus Competition for his composition *My Son John*. He captured first prize with his composition *Psalm 117* in the 1983 Chautaugua Chamber Singers Competition, and again won first prize with his composition, *Sonatinetta for Mandolin and Guitar*, in the 1984 Plucked String Competition. Israel's cancer returned in an acute phase in 1985. He continued to accept commissions throughout his final illness, and his premieres, according to his widow, "kept on till the end."⁹ His *Sixth Symphony* premiered four days before his untimely death on May 8, 1986.¹⁰ His works go largely unnoticed by the performing world.

⁸ James Shults, correspondence interview with the author, March 7, 2002.

⁹ Christine Day, personal interview with the author, October 7, 2002.

¹⁰ "Brian Israel dies; composer teacher," *New York Times*, 6 May 1986.

SONATA FOR CLARINET AND PIANO

Brian Israel's *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*, written in 1969, is a three movement work in neo-classical style. The first movement, *Allegro assai*, is in sonata-allegro form. The second, *Andante*, is an ABA song form, and the third, *Vivace*, is in sonata-rondo form. The first movement is light and cheerful in a circus-style march. The second movement is more dramatic in character, while the *Vivace* is a bright and energetic layering of parts between the clarinet and piano. The light quality of the music, along with clever chord progressions intermixed with non-traditional harmonies easily holds the attention of the audience.

The key of the first movement is D major. The movement begins with a trumpet-like fanfare based on quartal harmonies C-F-B^b, which is repeated in measures 5 and 6. In measures 7-10, the pattern is expanded to C-F-B^b, E^b-A^b-D^b. (Example 1) The fanfare motif is used throughout the movement to mark the entrance of new themes as well as to establish the return of previous themes.

Example 1 *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*, mvt. 1, mm 1-4, 7-10¹¹

The image displays two excerpts of a musical score for the first movement of Brian Israel's Sonata for Clarinet and Piano. The left excerpt covers measures 1 through 4, and the right excerpt covers measures 7 through 10. Both excerpts are written for a clarinet (treble clef) and piano (bass clef). The music is in 3/4 time and D major. The first excerpt shows a fanfare motif in the clarinet part, starting with a quarter rest in measure 1, followed by a quarter note C4 in measure 2, and a quarter note F4 in measure 3. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand. The second excerpt shows the expansion of the fanfare motif, with the clarinet playing a sequence of notes: C4, F4, Bb4, Eb5, Ab5, and Db5. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and single notes.

¹¹ All examples for the Sonata are written for clarinet in B^b.

The motivic introduction played by the clarinet in measures three and four serves as the germ that creates the first theme. After this statement, the piano plays a descending D^b major scale ending on another quartal statement on F in measure 11 that moves to A in measure 13, becoming an A7 chord in measure 14. The A major chord functions as the dominant of D major with the C-natural foreshadowing the humor found in other non-chord tones that follow later in the piece. The first theme, stated by the clarinet in measure 15, is in two eight-bar phrases supported in the piano by a V-I pattern in the bass. In measure 31, there is an ornamented return of the theme in D major. The transitional material begins in measure 47 leading to measure 61, the second key area of the movement. This, as is traditional in a classical form, is in A major and introduces the second theme, which is stated first in the piano and later by the clarinet in measure 69. The clarinet and the piano alternate phrases, with the transitional phrase to the development played by the clarinet. Measure 93 marks the beginning of the development section with the second theme stated first, preceded by the trumpet fanfare from the beginning. (Example 2) The development of the first theme begins in measure 128. This later becomes infused with elements from the second theme beginning in bar 128.

Example 2 *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*, mvt.1, mm 93-99



A retransition begins in measure 144 with an A major scale returning to D major for the first theme in measure 146, marking the recapitulation. The thematic material is ornamented in the recapitulation with four statements being presented by the clarinet followed by transitional material in A major. The second theme, again presented in the piano, returns in D major in measure 195. The movement ends as it began with a final statement of the fanfare followed by a unison articulated scale passage.

The second movement is in ABA form with the clarinet playing the entire melodic line. The theme begins in E minor but soon modulates to A major, through the use of tertian relationships, by measure 18, and is repeated in measure 21 with a few harmonic variations. In measure 37, the theme is stated a third time but in F minor. The B section begins in measure 62 with the introduction of a second theme in G minor. (Example 3)

Example 3 *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, mvt. 2, mm 62-72*

Throughout this section Israel introduces enharmonic tones more frequently. At the climax of the movement in measure 80, Israel employs both the use of enharmonic notes and the technique of chord splitting. Chord splitting is a technique that places major and minor triads concurrently, allowing both sonorities to be heard.¹² (Example 4)

Example 4 Split C major chord

¹² Stefan Kostka, *Materials and Techniques of Twentieth-Century Music*, second edition, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990, p. 3.

By measure 90 he writes the enharmonic triads $D^bF^bA^b$ and $C^\#EG^\#$ together. One chord is held by the piano while the other is found in the clarinet. This again is a process that is common to his compositional style. It is interesting to note that Brahms also used enharmonic transpositions in his clarinet sonatas. For example in *Sonata in E^b, Opus 120 No. 1*, he uses enharmonic transposition in the middle section of the second movement by placing the clarinet in D^b while the piano is in B. Israel concludes the movement with a return to the A section in E minor in measure 94. The theme is stated once with a short extension to the phrase leading to the final cadence in E major.

The final movement, *Vivace*, is in sonata-rondo form, ABA, C, ABA. The opening rondo theme is an energetically articulated passage in the clarinet with open fifths in the piano outlining the key of F major. The A section consists of two statements of the rondo theme. The B statement begins in measure 25 in the piano with full sounding chords and rhythmical passagework. The clarinet accompanies the piano, adding ornamental, rhythmic passagework throughout. The rondo theme recurs in measure 85, completing the exposition section. This statement is more active, adding split chords with more complicated rhythmic patterns. (Example 5)

Example 5 Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, mvt 3, mm 85-88

The image shows a musical score for measures 85-88 of the Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, movement 3. The score is written for Clarinet (top staff) and Piano (bottom staff). Measure 85 is highlighted with a box labeled 'E'. The piano part begins with a dynamic marking 'p' and a hairpin crescendo leading to another 'p' marking. The clarinet part features various ornaments and rhythmic patterns. The time signature is 3/4.

The piano plays the second statement of the rondo theme beginning in measure 108. Ten measures later the piece modulates to C major for the C section. This section again contains open fifths in the piano with the clarinet introducing a more languid melody. The development section concludes with the return of the rondo theme in the piano in measure 186, followed by the restatement of the B section in the clarinet beginning in measure 187. The B section now acts as counterpoint to the A section throughout the remainder of the movement, and function as the climax. The final statement of the rondo theme begins in measure 235, completing the work with humorous interjections of color tones in both parts on the last statement. (Example 6)

Example 6 *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*, mvt.3 mm 235-241

The image displays a musical score for measures 235 through 241. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system (measures 235-237) features a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat major) and a common time signature. The melody in the treble clef begins with a half rest in measure 235, followed by quarter notes in measures 236 and 237. The bass clef staff provides accompaniment with chords and single notes. The second system (measures 238-241) features a treble clef staff with a key signature of C major and a common time signature. The melody in the treble clef is mostly rests, with a final note in measure 241. The bass clef staff contains dense chordal textures, including a prominent 'FF' (fortissimo) dynamic marking in measure 238. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of measure 241.

LOVESONGS, LIONS, AND LULLABYES

Lovesongs, Lions, and Lullabies for clarinet, soprano, and piano was commissioned by Trio Dolce in 1979 and is a setting of the poetry of Kenneth Patchen. Patchen, a World War II veteran born in Niles, Ohio in 1911, was a loud voice of disillusionment in American literature.¹³ His texts became platforms for uncertainty and discontent.

Israel set four of Patchen's poems; "O sleeping falls the maiden snow," "O When I take my love out walking," "The lions of fire," and "I have lighted the candles, Mary." (Appendix A) Three of the texts are set in song form with traditional melody and accompaniment, and one is through composed. However, throughout the work both the clarinet and the voice share the responsibility of painting the text, with the clarinet used as a contrapuntal voice and the piano playing an accompanying role.

Of the four poems, Israel chooses to represent only three in his title with two of the songs representing the "Lovesongs," both making use of tonal, if non-functional, harmonies. The third song, "Lions," is more violent in nature and contains examples of graphic text for which Patchen was noted. The lions represent people who are looking to hold others accountable for their wrongdoings. This song, unlike the others composed in ABA song-form, is through-composed. The last song employs the lullaby text referred to in the title. This text has two distinct tones to the writing. The first one begins softly, with the second changing the entire message of the piece from one of hope to one of

¹³ Henry Miller, "Patchen: Man of Anger and Light." [September 1943; cited August 2, 2004] Available from <www.tc.umn.edu/~hreh0001/pal.html>.

warning. At this point, Israel chooses to respell the word “lullaby” as “lullabye.” He chooses to say goodbye to the world as a safe and wonderful place for one that is dangerous and full of despair.

The first song is lyrical and conservative in its harmonic language, using chord splitting, or mode mixture. This is demonstrated in the opening clarinet solo with the clarinet outlining the tonal of G major. This masks the overall key of the piece and serves to create a mood of uncertainty. In measure 20, Israel introduces the piano on a chord that can be viewed as either a I^{13} , or as a polytonal chord. The entire piece can be viewed as a conservative polytonal work centered on the keys of D and $F^\#$ major, eventually establishing $F^\#$. (Example 7)

Example 7 *Lovesongs, Lions, and Lullabyes*, mvt .1, mm 1-26¹⁴

Another harmonic device used by the composer is quintal sonorities. This is a chord that is stacked on the bass note in fifths, for example C-G-D-A. The first use of this is found

¹⁴ The clarinet is written in concert pitch for the entirety of this work.

in measure 23 with a quintal chord on E. This is found throughout the piece and is a favorite technique of Israel's. With all of these elements working in the piece the one that has the most impact is a technique borrowed from Wagner.

Wagner used a method of slowly altering a chord, note by note, until a new key is achieved. This allowed him to modulate between very distant keys without abrupt disturbances in the texture. He also used enharmonic notation to represent different selections in the text. If the text is negative, then the flat note of an enharmonic pair would be used. If the mood is uplifting or hopeful, then the sharp equivalent would be used. This is a completely visual phenomenon, but for Wagner, it became an important part of his *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or total art work. By using the enharmonic tones in this way, Wagner instilled in every aspect of his music the idea of light and darkness.¹⁵ With this idea Wagner makes the "will," a Schopenhauerian philosophy, manifest itself according to *his* will. When taken in the framework of Schopenhauer, Wagner is then exercising his control over the will.¹⁶ This is illustrated in all Wagner's works but can be seen clearly in the "Liebestod" in the third act of *Tristan und Isolde*.

Israel uses F[#] major to highlight positive or uplifting text. "The snow is falling on the city" and "[his] love is warm and safe in his arms," are situations that Patchen finds favorable. At measure 55, Israel alters the notation to G^b major perhaps to represent the change in text to a darker mood. In the G^b passage, Patchen refers to the cruelty of the

¹⁵ Timothy L. Jackson, "Schubert as 'John the Baptist to Wagner-Jesus': Large scale Enharmonicism in Bruckner and his Models," *Bruckner-Jahrbuch* vol. 1991/92/93, hrsg. Von Othmar Wessely (1995): 61-108.

¹⁶ Artur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) was a German philosopher. His philosophies were studied by people such as Wagner and Hitler as well as by Thomas Mann. He wrote on the concepts of the "will" and man's attempt to control it as well as the ways that man became absolved from his sins.

world in which he lives, and he questions his own ability to protect his love from worldly troubles.

Israel uses both techniques, polytonal writing and split chords, to complicate the harmony in measure 60, which moves through a string of minor seventh chords in the treble clef of the piano, for the return in F[#] major. (Example 8) This return is obtained through the use of a three-voice canon starting at measure 69. The canon is an example of how the composer manipulates the texture to text paint, by allowing the voices of the canon to create not only harmonic tension but rhythmic tension as well. Israel composes music using stacked quintal chords to the text, “Oh sleeping falls the maiden snow upon the bitter place of our shelterlessness.” He again changes the texture by producing harmonies that are tonal within themselves, but are at the interval of a minor second when played concurrently.

Example 8 *Lovesongs, Lions, and Lullabies*, mvt 1, mm 60-68

The image shows a handwritten musical score for measures 60 through 68. The score is written in 4/4 time and features a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes complex chords and a three-voice canon starting at measure 69. Dynamics range from *ff* to *p*.

Measure 60: *ff*, *4p*, *4p*. Lyrics: "God! what can I do to".
Measure 61: *f*.
Measure 62: *4p*.
Measure 63: *4p*.
Measure 64: *p*. Lyrics: "guard her then".
Measure 65: *p*.
Measure 66: *p*.
Measure 67: *dim.*.
Measure 68: *p*.

Text painting, for this writer, is the main focus of these songs and can be illustrated throughout each piece. An example in this song can be found on the word “bitter” and “shelterlessness.” Israel passes through the progression B-D-F[#]-A to finally resolve on the simultaneous sounding of both B^b/A[#] and D^b/C[#]. This results in the chords B^b-D^b-F and F-A[#]-C[#] on the word “shelterlessness” in measure 82. This is the first time that the enharmonic notes appear concurrently. (Example 9) While this writer cannot verify Israel's in depth knowledge of the composer Richard Wagner it is assumed that he had studied his scores as a graduate student.

Example 8 *Lovesongs, Lions and Lullabyes*, mvt 1, mm 80-82

The image shows a musical score for three systems. The first system is a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are "our shelterless-ness". Measure 80 contains the notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 81 contains the notes C5, B4, A4. Measure 82 contains the notes G4, F#4, E4. The second system is a piano accompaniment line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp. It features a melodic line that mirrors the vocal line. The third system is a bass line in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp. It features a bass line with chords and notes that support the vocal line.

The second movement, entitled “O when I take my love out,” starts with a piano ostinato in D^b, that oscillates from I to ii, which establishes the Dorian mode at the entrance of the text. The entire song is dominated by an ostinato in 6/8 that groups the eighth-notes in sets of five in a cross-rhythm. (Example 10)

Example 10 *Lovesongs, Lions and Lullabies*, mvt 2, mm 1-8



This is consistent throughout most of the piece and changes only twice: once in measures 17-18 where he moves from 7/8 to 9/8, and the other in measure 30 where he moves to a standard 6/8. In both instances Israel is setting a text. The harmony combined with the cross-rhythm and the text creates a surreal effect that causes some unease as the piece progresses.

The text itself is confusing and sounds like the ramblings of someone who is living at the edge of reality. The thoughts of the character are scattered from love to confusion. Measures 17-18 represent the confusion experienced by the character and is the first section that interrupts the cross-rhythm, on the text, “the ever-known, the ever-new like her they seem.” Israel chooses to set these words to a multi-meter rhythm without interference from either instrument. The word “moment” is colored by a minor second, in the cross-rhythm, which emphasizes the tension on the text, “only this little moment is real.” (Example 11)

Example 11 *Lovesongs, Lions, and Lullabyes*, mvt 2, mm 22-25

The image shows a handwritten musical score for three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, the middle is the right piano part, and the bottom is the left piano part. The score is divided into two measures, 22 and 23. Measure 22 is in 5/8 time, and measure 23 is in 6/8 time. The lyrics are 'lit-tle mom-ent is real Here at the'. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'cresc.' and 'cresc. -'.

The next phrase contains both the highest and lowest notes of the setting, which are both found in the tessitura of the soprano part. The text reads, “Here at the edge of the world and the throne/The rest’s a lie which shadows scheme.” This again is using text painting to not only show the “edge of the world” but also to show a loss of awareness by the character.

The second point of disturbance for the ostinato is measure 30. Here the composer uses a traditional pulse for the text, “Now gentle flowers are awash on the sleeping hill/And as I bend to kiss her opened lips, O then do the wonders and the sparklings seem.” The character, losing touch with reality, must find redemption for the sins that he has committed. Again, according to Schopenhauer, this can only happen through the unconditional love of a woman, and is another concept can be found in all of Wagner’s music dramas. Israel uses this philosophy to illustrate Patchen’s text and how the character finds sanity within his troubled life. The movement is completed with the return of the ostinato pattern that is repeated in diminuendo to the end, almost as if it

continues. Israel uses the ostinato with the chords to show that this vignette of life continues outside the realm of our viewing.

The third song of the piece has a very different outlook from the previous ones. Here the setting of the text becomes more important than the underlying harmony. It is the darkest of the four movements set to a text that shows Patchen's distaste for war and the material ways of the world. This text possibly achieves a deeper meaning for Israel who comes to it from his Jewish heritage. Here the agendas for both Patchen and Israel unite in a common tone against the wrongdoings of past aggressors. For this writer, the lions are representative of justice, and in this poem, justice seeks satisfaction. Musically, Israel sets this poem to a bass line that is interrupted by rests and overlaid with fast running sixteenth-notes in both the piano and the clarinet parts, which can be seen in measures 1-8. The interruptions in the eighth-note patterns and the sporadic sixteenth-note runs help to keep the piece unbalanced. The soprano line, which enters on the second half of beat one in measure 9, is written in the high tessitura with several octave leaps throughout the movement, adding to the drama of the piece.

Unlike the first song in which flat keys were used to portray negative ideas and sharp ones to show positive ones, Israel uses B minor to support the harsh, brittle text of this third poem. In measure 9, with the opening text, "The lions of fire shall have their hunting in this black land," Israel combines the use of flats and sharps into the key, possibly to represent the countries that united against the Germans. The black land would then represent the lands where war had taken place. The notes, D^b in the soprano and G^b in the clarinet, that appear in measure 12, are the enharmonic spelling of the opening interval, which spans a fifth in the vocal line. This interval foreshadows the use

of parallel fifths between the two solo lines used to begin the first two phrases. Both F[#] and G^b are used in the same line to show that, in this instance, both sounds are associated equally with negative text.

Patchen's symbolism in this poem is dramatically captured by Israel. The lions represent Allied Forces and the steaming valleys represent the bombs and fire that resulted from the fighting. In measure 33 the return of the interrupted ostinato begins where the text lists the reasons for the lions attack. These reasons are greed, waging war on others, and "pious murder." This wording, for Israel, could be a direct link to the Holocaust. In David Goldhagen's book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, he postulates that the German people truly felt that they were doing what was best for their country.¹⁷ This same phrase is highlighted by another downward passage that underscores the misconception of the word "pious." For Patchen, it could mean that, in war, every murder was considered justified.

The reasons for the lions' wrath continue in measure 56 on the text, "Because you have turned your faces from God /Because you have spread your filth everywhere." Here Israel moves the soprano to c^{#1} to further emphasize the more grievous errors of, "turning your faces from God." It is at this point in the piece that Israel begins to interpret this poem as more than just a statement of discontent. The composer uses the long succession of parallel, open fifths repeatedly to musically highlight that he is dealing with a very primitive emotion. Israel finds a poet who voices his concerns for the lack of religious faith. He stresses this point by having the soprano sustain a c² for seven beats on the

¹⁷ David Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, (New York: Alfred A Knoves) 1996

word “everywhere,” while the clarinet holds an f, again sounding an open fifth. Measure 67 acts as a general pause, allowing the soprano to enter alone on a b^{b1} for the text, “O the lions of fire wait,” punctuated by an upward leap of an octave. The last line, “And their terrible eyes are watching you,” Israel uses a minor second, e^b down to d, to drive his idea of impeding justice, as well as to serve as a warning to the future that they, the Germans, will be watched.

The final song begins with a cyclic return of the opening solo clarinet line, which leads to the first of two lullabies. The lullaby is introduced by the clarinet with a type of exclamatory call in measure 12, followed by another ostinato pattern that oscillates between a G major chord and an interval of a major second. (Example 12)

Example 12 Lovesongs, Lions, and Lullabies, mvt 4, mm 1-26

The image displays a musical score for Example 12, consisting of two systems of staves. The first system covers measures 1 through 14, with a tempo marking of quarter note = 76. A section labeled 'A' is marked in measure 12. The second system covers measures 15 through 26, with a tempo marking of quarter note = 126. The score includes a clarinet line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a prominent ostinato pattern in the right hand, oscillating between a G major chord and an interval of a major second. The clarinet line includes various melodic phrases and rests.

The pattern, on the surface, represents a rocking cradle gently swaying between counts one and three, or it could represent a ticking clock that is referred to in the text. This rocking pattern is played by either the piano or the clarinet throughout the entire movement and is a key element in establishing the tranquil ending to this piece.

When the clarinet plays the rocking motif in measure 28, a stress is placed on the first note of the grouping, sounding like a sigh. The clarinet reiterates the sighs in measure 40 and 41, and one last time in measures 45 and 46, painting the image of a child in a rocking cradle.

Also prevalent, is the use of an upward leap of a major seventh or greater, which is introduced as early as the clarinet calls. The first leap in the vocal part highlights the text, "I have lighted," with the leap on "lighted," and again on the name "Mary." At this point in the poem, Patchen could still be discussing a young, modern family, however the use of the name Mary, along with the use of an apple as the fruit that is compared to the clocks places the religious imagery of Mary and the baby Jesus into the minds of the listeners. This is verified by the last line of the poem, which states, "For His is the kingdom in the hearts of men," and also the idea that the time is drawing near for something to happen. This event is not revealed until the end of the poem.

The rocking of the cradle is suddenly brought out into the foreground when it is taken over by the clarinet in measure 62. The loud rocking motion is accompanied by the text, "Into the bitter world, O terrible huntsman," and only recedes when Mary says, "Hush, hush you will wake Him." An interval of a ninth highlights the next line of text as the listener becomes aware that Mary also understands the plight of her child, and yet again, an apple is taken in the father's fist. From this point on in the poem, Patchen is

talking not only about his views on World War II and how he sees the oppression of war in the scenery around him, but also about his apprehension of bringing a baby into this world, only to be killed in battle. Therefore, it is Israel who adds a new dimension to Patchen's writings.

There are several possible layers of interpretation of this text. The first is the religious imagery that Patchen uses throughout the poem. The second is a religious idea, but one that is buried deeper into the language Patchen uses. The first reference is, "O, terrible Huntsman..." This could refer to the biblical story of King Herod looking for the baby Jesus and deciding to kill all the newborn male babies in an effort to keep this child from his kingdom. Another religious inference is in the line, "The taste of salty tears is on her mouth when I kiss her." Each mother knew the fate of her child as King Herod took them. This same phrase can be interpreted as Mary crying at the foot of her Son's crucifixion.

The second layer of understanding is through Patchen's own experiences. Most of Patchen's poetry was written after World War II. The "Huntsman" in this case refers to the enemies that he fought against while enlisted in the American army. The snow assumes a new meaning when looked at from this perspective. In the first line, "The snow is a weary face at the window," can be interpreted as the physical representation of Patchen's feelings upon returning to his Ohio steel town. The second line, "The cold, swollen face of war leans in the window," describes how Patchen must have seen his home after the effects of the war. The last reference is, "The world has gone mad tonight." Here the world going mad is self-explanatory.

The more interesting level is the one that Israel places on the text. For him the line, “O, terrible Huntsman,” surely refers to Hitler while the “Hush, hush...” lines can take on two meanings. One of which indicates how the women victims of the Holocaust would try to keep their children from crying out to prevent discovery. It could also have taken on a more sarcastic character in that the world ignored the Holocaust as long as it was not discussed frequently. Another line is, “They are blowing out the candles, Mary.” The candles represent the children, or the light of the future. Blowing the candles out is a very strong use of imagery showing that children were being killed in the Holocaust. The last line of the poem, “For His is the kingdom in the hearts of men,” could be a direct statement to the faith of the Jewish people.

Israel’s music supports these ideas with the rocking found in the piano throughout the piece. (Example 12) This motion has an unsettling effect that leaves the listener with a quiet unease. The opening clarinet calls match in interval to the music placed with the text, “There are apples, Bright as red clocks on the mantel.” The apple, which is our first biblical reference, refers to the forbidden fruit found on the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. The clarinet solos at the beginning and the end of the movement also support this idea. The opening solo, because of its placement before the clarinet calls, sounds as if it is searching for something to arrive whereas the last solo sounds more hopeful because of the arrival of the “...kingdom in the hearts of men.” (Example 12 and 13)

Example 13 *Lovesongs, Lions, and Lullabyes*, mvt 4, mm 118-126

Musical score for measures 118-126. The score is written for three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate treble clef staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is 2/4. Measures 118-123 show a vocal line with a melodic line and a piano accompaniment. Measures 124-126 show a piano accompaniment with a repeating motif in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand.

The most intriguing section of the song is the ending. After all the drama of the work, the quiet ending is left to be interpreted in two ways. Some will see it as a glass half empty or a world without hope. Still others will see it as a glass half full or as a hope that is still coming. Measure 124 introduces a motif that repeats until the end of the piece, getting gradually softer with each repetition. The repeated intervals are a downward motion of a major second usually followed immediately by an upward interval of a minor seventh with the piano following with a G major chord. (Example 14)

Example 14 *Lovesongs, Lions, and Lullabyes*, mvt 4, mm 142-147

Musical score for measures 142-147. The score is written for three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate treble clef staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is 2/4. Measures 142-147 show a vocal line with a melodic line and a piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment features a repeating motif in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand. The motif consists of a downward motion of a major second followed by an upward interval of a minor seventh. The piano accompaniment is marked *ppp*.

The motif is hopeful with its upward motion but the interval suggests that things are still unsettled and maybe this child could be enough to fix all the implied sins touched on by text of this work. The doubts are further represented in measure 136 when Israel leaves out the upward interval and eventually ends the movement without it.

CONCERTO FOR CLARINET AND WIND ENSEMBLE

The *Concerto for Clarinet and Wind Ensemble*, written in 1985, is a programmatic instrumental work inspired by the Holocaust, the Final Solution. The discussion of this piece will incorporate several historical events that were used as a programmatic model for the *Concerto*.

Each movement has been given a title: Crystal Night, Coronach, and Liberation. Crystal Night refers to the night of November 9-10, 1938, that saw German Jewish businesses throughout Germany destroyed by other German citizens. Windows were broken and merchandise was taken and destroyed. The shards of broken glass, reflecting in the moonlight looked like crystals, thereby giving the night the name, *Kristallnacht*.¹⁸

The entire work is based on chromatic patterns and displaced octaves. The first movement, written in ABA form, represents the chaos of *Kristallnacht*. Marked *feroce*, the opening section is characterized by the alternation of bongos and solo clarinet playing chromatic scales and sequences written in the altissimo register. With the entire movement based on these and other chromatic patterns, often the pitch patterns are found in octave displacement, creating angular melodic shaped lines. These angles could easily symbolize broken shards of glass.

A waltz chromatic motif is introduced in measure 31, in the midst of articulated chromatic scales from all areas of the ensemble. The waltz motif is the germ that eventually becomes the full waltz in measure 116. A free section, marked *senza misura*,

¹⁸ Jewish Virtual Library, a division of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, {January 2004; cited August 2, 2004} Available at www.us-israel.org/jsource/Holocaust/kristallnacht.html.

presto possibile, disrupts the meter. Each free event lasts two seconds, starting with the full ensemble, then timpani, followed by tam-tam, that leads to conducted time at measure 79. The effect is one of chaos changing to order. This order is achieved through the waltz motif that recurs in measure 82. This is interrupted, in measure 85, by the clarinet sustaining a c^3 for four measures followed by a grouping of four quarter notes divided over the meter signature of 3/4.

The waltz, beginning in measure 116, acts as the B section of this movement. The solo clarinet alternates between a new lyrical motif and a rhythmic ostinato containing both descending and ascending octave leaps. As this large section proceeds, the lyric motif becomes more angular. By measure 159 the lyrical waltz theme is finally introduced. This theme is also derived from chromatic scale passages. As the waltz progresses it becomes riddled with articulated chromatic passages by the accompanying clarinets and saxophones. This entire waltz section is in ABA form, with the final return beginning in measure 319, but only after a disintegration of the waltz, beginning after the general pause in measure 242.

The recurrence of A is interesting because of the stage direction given to the soloist approaching the return of the lyric waltz theme in measure 400. The soloist is instructed to “turn [and] play with back to audience.” This could represent the world ignoring the situation in Germany, choosing to believe the stories of the inhumane treatment of the Jewish people as mere propaganda. This section continues until the return of the chaotic chromatic scales, in measure 483, that were introduced in the beginning of the movement. The scales are written in the chalumeau register of the clarinet, and the soloist once again is instructed to face the audience. The second stage

direction implies the world's acknowledgement of the Holocaust. This section leads directly to a cadenza based on the opening chromatic passage at a *pianississimo* volume. Not only does this volume and register combination create a sort of rumbling, but the tempo is marked "faster than possible." The following stage direction is added to the cadenza: "during the repetition, get softer and softer, 'beyond the range of audibility.' Drop notes along the way, if necessary. By the end of the repeat, the only sounds should be pure breath and instrumental key clicks (perhaps even only the latter.)"

The second movement, *Coronach*, is an Irish term meaning song for the dead or wailing cry; a "wailing wall" of sound. This movement is also based on chromatic cells written in a traditional ABA form. The form of the movement is sectionalized by the heartbeat introduced in the opening measure of the movement. This first section is completed by measure 61, which finds whole-notes replacing the heartbeat. The whole-notes remain until the return of the heartbeat motif at measure 140, signaling the return of the A section.

Israel incorporates a slow glissando in the clarinet in measure 12, later imitated by other instruments in the ensemble. These "wailing" glissandi are always half steps, and are the most prevalent melodic characteristic of the movement. He overlays these glissandi with outbursts of rapid technique representing the sudden realization of anger, fear, and pain.

Another compositional device employed by Israel is the use of textural density. Throughout the movement, he gradually increases textural density until he creates clusters of sound. This is clearly illustrated in the piano part in measure 142 when he designates "forearm chromatic clusters." In measure 164, these clusters are imitated by

the ensemble with instructions to “improvise wildly in upper octaves, squeaks, moans, etc.” found in the solo clarinet, alto and tenor saxophones, and piano. This continues until measure 174, when only the heartbeat remains. This movement ends with a truncated return of A in measure 178 with the solo clarinet playing the wailing sounds over the heartbeat until only a “flat-line” remains.

The third movement, Liberation, takes on a rhythmic, dance-like character and is written in sonata-allegro form with a coda. It is common to see meter changes from 3/4 to 5/8 to 9/8 then to 4/4, in addition to 7/8 to 11/8. In an interview with Israel’s widow, Christine Day, she states that this shofar-like tune that is the dance theme was probably something Israel heard as a boy.¹⁹ In a second interview with William Nichols, he confirms that the tune was written by Jacques Press, a friend of Israel’s father.²⁰

After a short introduction, Israel introduces the dance theme in the solo clarinet, which is taken over by the trumpets, in measure 27. This section extending from measure 27-64 is presented by the full ensemble. When the clarinet returns in measure 66, it is alone. Again Israel uses a layering technique to introduce slowly the rest of the clarinets. Throughout this section (measure 65-121) the clarinets alternate playing the dance motif and an eighth-note pattern slowly winding higher in tessitura until the ensemble is brought in at measure 122. This entrance marks the end of the first large section of the movement.

The development section begins in measure 135 with piano and clarinet alone. This section finds both running eighth-notes and the dance motif together but in a much

¹⁹ Christine Day, Personal interview with author, beginning October 7, 2002.

²⁰ William Nichols, correspondence interview with author, beginning August 13 and ending August 31 2002.

calmer state because of Israel's use of the chalumeau register of the clarinet. This section is also colored by an occasional tam-tam hit that is allowed to ring. In the transition to the recapitulation, the rhythmic energy is shifted from the ensemble to the solo clarinet. Again, Israel begins in the chalumeau register of the clarinet slowly ascending until finally the dance motif is recalled in measure 205, signaling the return.

The coda begins in measure 219 with timpani glissandi. The glissandi are written for "any size timpani; continuous pedal glissandi. Pitches are only approximate/relative." Over these glissandi, the clarinet continues to play the dance theme in the altissimo register. The effect is one of hysteria.

The final statement of the dance theme is in measure 242, stated in the trumpets and trombones with the full ensemble joining in measure 246. This entire section has a pulsing eighth-note pattern played by the percussion. This percussion writing sounds like a ticking bomb waiting to detonate. This "ticking" ends at a sustained *fortissimo* chord that leads straight to the cadenza, marking the completion of the piece. The cadenza itself is made up of arpeggios that finally break free from the chromatic hold that has been on this entire piece; however, at the end, Israel writes two options for the performer. The first option, written in the part, ends on an altissimo b^3 , triple *forte*. The second option has the performer ascend from altissimo b^3 to c^3 ending on e^4 , possibly to represent the battered psyche of the Holocaust survivors.

CONCLUSION

The *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*, composed in 1969, is the earliest of the three works cited in this document. It is a neo-classical work with traditional forms and tonal structure, using a technique called chord splitting to allow both major and minor sounds to be present concurrently. This technique pervades his tonal compositional style.

The chamber work, *Lovesongs, Lions, and Lullabies*, was written in 1979. The work displays his fascination with text painting. It is also where he makes a direct musical reference to his Jewish heritage. Compositional techniques such as chord splitting, enharmonic variations, modal scales, and an increasingly expanding harmonic language characterize the piece.

The *Concerto for Clarinet and Wind Ensemble*, composed while in his last bout with leukemia in 1984, is a programmatic work. Each movement portrays, in sound, events of the Holocaust, employing chromatic scales and fragments with octave displacements, agitated rhythm, and theatrical indications to paint this textless program. Religious and political views are also portrayed throughout this work. Israel, a non-practicing Jew, used his music to explore his heritage.

In the works studied in this document there is a conscious effort to set text, idea, and philosophy. The quality and depth of the works should be reason for bringing his pieces to the attention of the listening public. The *Sonata* is a simple, charming work of youth and is followed by the settings of an anti-war poet. The *Concerto* deals with the

same magnitude of social issues as Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*, and Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*.

It is hoped that through this document the value of Brian Israel's music can be fully appreciated by the musical community through performance and publication. Presently these works are only available through the library at Cornell University. It would also be beneficial for commercial recordings of these pieces to become available. This writer in conjunction with Nicholls State University has applied for a grant from the Aaron Copland Foundation to fund a recording of selected works of Brian Israel.

The list of pieces to be examined numbers more than 100. This writer has found that Christine Day is very approachable about the performance and publication of her late husband's work. The works that have yet to be published could be transcribed and edited, through the use of manuscript software.

Other research must be done in the areas of religious symbolism that Israel used in many of his pieces, including *Psalm 117*, *Song of Moses*, *Piano Quartet* (based upon *Amazing Grace*), and *Symphony #6*, that employs text from the Bible and poetry from Langston Hughes.

APPENDIX: TEXTS OF KENNETH PATCHEN

APPENDIX: TEXTS OF KENNETH PATCHEN

Lovesongs, Lions and Lullabyes by Brian Israel; poetry by Kenneth Patchen

Movement 1 “O sleeping falls the maiden snow”

O sleeping falls the maiden snow
Upon the cold branches of the city
And oh! My love is warm and safe in my arms
Nearer, nearer comes the hell-breath of these times
O God! What can I do to guard her then
O sleeping falls the maiden snow
Upon the bitter place of our shelterlessness
But oh! For this moment she who I love
Lies safely in my arms

Movement 2 “O when I take my love out walking”

O when I take my love out walking
In the soft frosted stillness of this summer moon
Then are the mysteries all around us
O what can I say!
The ever-known, the ever-new like her they seem
O lully, lullay only this little moment is real
Here at the edge of the world and the throne.
The rest’s a lie which shadows scheme
Now gentle flowers are awash on the sleeping hill
And as I bend to kiss her opened lips
O then do the wonders and sparklings seem
A shabby tinsel show for my dear queen

Movement 3 “Lions of fire”

The lions of fire
Shall have their hunting in this black land
Their teeth shall tear at your soft throats
Their claws kill
O the lions of fire shall awake
And the valleys steam with their fury
Because you are sick with the dirt of your money
Because you are pigs rooting in the swill of your war
Because you are mean and sly and full of the pus of
your pious murder
Because you have turned your faces from God
Because you have spread your filth everywhere
O the lions of fire
Wait in the crawling shadows of your world
And their terrible eyes are watching you

Movement 4 “I have lighted the candles, Mary”

I have lighted the candles, Mary
How softly breathes your little Son
My wife has spread the table
With our best cloth
There are apples,
Bright as red clocks, upon the mantel
The snow is a weary face at the window
How sweetly does He sleep
“Into this bitter world,
O terrible huntsman!” I say and she takes my hand
“Hush, hush
You will wake Him.”
The taste of tears is on her mouth when I kiss her.
I take an apple
And hold it tightly in my fist;
The cold swollen face of war in the window.
They are blowing out the candles, Mary
The world is a thing gone mad tonight.
O hold Him tenderly, dear Mother,
For His is the kingdom in the hearts of men

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