SONGS OF PRAISE

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

By

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*Songs of Praise* is a setting of four passages from the Psalms for soprano and chamber orchestra. The text is taken from Psalms 96, 114, 55, and 116 of the New American Standard Version, with each psalm scored as a separate movement. The duration of the work is approximately seventeen and one-half minutes. The instrumentation includes soprano, oboe, strings, and a percussion section of four players incorporating fourteen different instruments.

The musical language employed is largely tonal, consisting generally of shifting tonal emphases achieved by exploiting the pitch relationships of traditional tonality. The movements are contrasting in character, according to the text, but generally of the same style. The vocal line predominates throughout spanning two octaves and a minor third from an A below middle C to a high C above the treble clef.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Music</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stylistic features</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic and formal analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SONGS OF PRAISE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Formal Analysis</td>
<td>xx</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Use of Perfect Fourths, Major Seconds, and Their Inversions</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Freely Changing Meters</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Improvisational, Non-metered Instrumental Parts</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Use of Melisma in Text Painting</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Narrow Melodic Range, Lying in the Lower Part of the Vocal Range</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Chord Types: Major-minor Foundation with Emphasized Perfect Fourths and Fifths</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Chord Types: Bright, Major Harmonies</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Chord Types: Minor, Diminished Harmonies</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Text Speaks of Distress; Accompaniment is Dissonant, Confused</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Cluster Trills</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Meters Changing According to Speech Rhythms</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Common Rhythms Suggesting Natural Speech Rhythms</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Flowing, Forward Moving Accompaniment</td>
<td>xvi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Static, Pulsating Accompaniment</td>
<td>xvi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Passive Accompaniment</td>
<td>xvii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Percussion Highlighting Another Voice</td>
<td>xviii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Percussion Punctuating the Text</td>
<td>xviii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Percussion Heightening the Drama</td>
<td>xviii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Recurring Melodic Material in First Movement</td>
<td>xxii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Comparison of Opening Material with Its Return in Last Section</td>
<td>xxii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Trills from Middle Section of Smaller Three-part Form in Third Movement</td>
<td>xxiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Common Thematic Material Shared between Sections A and A'</td>
<td>xxiv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

_Songs of Praise_ is a setting of four passages from the Psalms for soprano and chamber orchestra. The text is taken from Psalms 96, 114, 55, and 116 of the New American Standard Version, with each chapter scored as a separate movement. The duration of the work is approximately seventeen and one-half minutes. The instrumentation includes soprano, oboe, strings, and a percussion section of four players incorporating wind chimes, small triangle, finger cymbals, crotales, small crash cymbals, suspended cymbal, gong, glockenspiel, chimes, xylophone, vibes, marimba, tambourine, and tom-toms.

The Text

The Psalms have played a significant role throughout the history of western music, in concert as well as liturgical works. These poems of men's struggles with life and expressions of faith in God have proven useful to artists of every generation. The four psalms used here were chosen for their clarity and for the unified topic within each one, that is, each is a complete and cohesive statement. Equally important in their selection is the manner in which they support and contrast one another. Their subject content is summarized:
I. Psalm 96 - Joyful praise

II. Psalm 114 - Reverent fear of God

III. Psalm 55 - Petitioning God for help in time of trouble

IV. Psalm 116 - Reaffirmation of faith in God; Joyful praise

The complete text is shown on p. 4.

The New American Standard Version was chosen because of its modern language, the intent of the piece being to communicate the message of the text. Therefore, the musical setting of these psalms is straightforward, attempting to portray and enhance the text with the same clarity as the poetry itself.

The Music

Stylistic Features

The musical language employed in Songs of Praise is largely tonal, consisting generally of shifting tonal emphases achieved by exploiting the pitch relationships of traditional tonality. The harmonic and melodic materials frequently incorporate perfect fourths, major seconds, and their inversions as basic structural elements (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1--Use of perfect fourths, major seconds, and their inversions.
Traditional meters are employed, though they change freely and frequently as the syllabic, declamatory setting of the text largely determines the musical phrasing (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2—Freely changing meters

One exception to this metered, tonal style is an extended non-metered section in the third movement in which the background provided by the strings is both atonal and improvisational (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3—Improvisational, non-metered instrumental parts

There are two basic types of melodic material used in the piece, broadly defined by the following characteristics: The first, constituting the majority of the piece, generally encompasses a wide range, combines a variety of steps and
leaps, and most notably, makes frequent use of the perfect fourth as mentioned above. Melismas of any length are infrequent owing to the syllabic setting of the text, and are usually a result of text painting when they do appear (Fig. 4).

\[ \text{Fig. 4} -- \text{Use of melisma in text painting} \]

The second category has a narrower range, usually intervals of a third or smaller, and lies in the lower part of the vocal range (Fig. 5).

\[ \text{Fig. 5} -- \text{Narrow melodic range, lying in the lower part of the vocal range.} \]

This type of structure is often the setting for particularly intense or agitated phrases of the text.

There is a great variety of harmonic elements at work in the piece. Some, such as stacked perfect fourths or extended tertian harmonies such as eleventh or thirteenth
chords, are easily identified and labeled while others, sometimes the result of converging melodic lines, seem little more than an unsystematic collection of intervals. The most frequently used chord types are those based on traditional major-minor harmonies, sometimes with added tones, often arranged to highlight the intervals of a perfect fourth and fifth (Fig. 6).

There were no formulas used for determining any of the harmonies other than those involved in traditional major-minor relationships. The progressions and juxtapositions of harmonic groupings were arrived at entirely by ear, and no significant patterns emerged as a result of detailed analysis subsequent to the completion of the work. Traditional root movement, parallelism, and random harmonic progression are intermixed throughout the piece.

The first and last movements are joyful expressions of praise and are therefore dominated by bright, major harmonies (Fig. 7).
The second movement, an expression of reverence for the Lord's awesomeness, has a mystical quality partly achieved through embellished minor harmonies (Fig. 8).

The third movement, with its lengthy, un-metered improvisational section, stands in stark contrast to the others. The soloist's pitches are completely unrelated to anything in the string parts. Also, the guidelines for improvisation vary so greatly from part to part that the result leaves the singer calling out from the midst of dissonant confusion, which is exactly what the psalmist is doing at that point in the text (Fig. 9).
Fig. 9--Text speaks of distress; accompaniment is dissonant, confused.

The improvisational parts actually appear twice, separated by a passage of clusters and other chords with minor seconds as the primary interval, maintaining the tension of the section as a whole (Fig. 10).

Fig. 10--Cluster trills

The atonality continues through the next metered section, finally resolving to tonality at the end of the movement.

As stated above, the syllabic setting of the text largely determines the rhythms and phrasing of the vocal line. The meters change freely according to the dictates of the speech rhythms (Fig. 11).
For the most part, the natural speech rhythms are accomplished without the rhythmic complexities of constantly changing sub-basic durations, such as seven eighth-notes in the space of a half-note triplet. The rhythms are generally common to their meters, making the reading and performing a relatively simple task. Even in the non-metered sections of the third movement, the vocal line is still notated with common, simple rhythms that suggest the desired pattern of freely spoken accents and inflections (Fig. 12).

Fig. 12--Common rhythms suggesting natural speech rhythms.

The rhythms of the orchestra as a whole generally perform one of three functions: Either they imitate the flowing
energy of the vocal line, adding to its forward motion (Fig. 13); they drive ahead with pulsating, sometimes pounding reiterated patterns (Fig. 14); or they provide a relatively placid background, usually at a low dynamic level, often to allow the soloist to bring out a significant or poignant line in the text (Fig. 15).

Fig. 13--Flowing, forward moving accompaniment

Fig. 14--Static, pulsating accompaniment
Fig. 15—Passive accompaniment

The vocal line is predominant throughout the work, with the instrumental parts mostly providing a dramatic background. The oboe is used both as a decorative voice sometimes doubling other parts, and more visibly soloistic in dialogue with the soprano. String parts are divided traditionally and provide the foundation of the accompaniment using a variety of textures and employing traditional playing techniques and effects such as pizzicato, tremolo, and harmonics. The percussion section largely highlights or delineates elements in other voices, punctuates particular points in the text or in the musical phrasing, and heightens the drama at crucial points in the musical and textual development (Fig. 16, 17, 18).
The first movement employs a significantly greater number of percussion instruments than the other movements (see p. 3). This is due simply to the fact that the greater variety of timbres more effectively expresses the character of this particular psalm, and serves as an example of how the text and the vocal line generally determine the orchestration.
Thematic and Formal Analysis

The formal characteristics of Songs of Praise vary from movement to movement. The most common feature is the broad section whose parameters are distinguishable by distinct changes in text, musical character, meter, tempo, or any combination of these (see Table I). A large portion of the work is through-composed although there are incidents of recurring motivic material.

The first movement is divided into two main sections most noticeably contrasting in their orchestration and tempos. The accompaniment in the A section is dominated by percussion instruments and is sung freely, quasi recitative, giving the effect of a prologue or introduction. The B section assumes a steady tempo, incorporates the full orchestra, and is effectively the main body of the movement. The contrasting lengths of these two sections--A, 24 measures; B, 61 measures--strengthens the effect of prologue preceding the main body of the movement. There is one instance of recognizable recurring material in this movement. The basic material of measures 28-31 reappears with a different text in measures 57-60 creating some feeling of a sectional return (Fig. 19).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Movement I</th>
<th>Movement II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A (mm. 1-24)</td>
<td>A (mm. 1-15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B (mm. 25-85)</td>
<td>B (mm. 51-65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A' (mm. 16-50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempos</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rubato (J=58)</td>
<td>Adagio (J=60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Adagio (J=60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allegro (J=144)</td>
<td>Allegro (J=120)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Excerpts</td>
<td>&quot;Sing to the Lord, all the earth.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Tremble, O earth, before the Lord.&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;He will judge the world in righteous-ness.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B - Joyful; continuous forward motion; concludes quietly but with tension as the Judgment is anticipated.</td>
<td>B - Tense; vigorous vocal line, pulsating accompaniment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestration</td>
<td>A - Almost entirely percussion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B - Full orchestra.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal Range</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

XX
TABLE I—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement III</th>
<th>Movement IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intro.</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(mm. 1-13)</td>
<td>(mm. 14-62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a (mm. 1-8)</td>
<td>b (mm. 8-13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>a (mm. 13-18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td><strong>A'</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(mm. 1-31)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(mm. 73-81)</td>
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<td>(mm. 32-72)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(mm. 82-122)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| **Intro.**   | A           |
| Allegro      | **B**      |
| (J = 132)   | (mixed tempos) |
| **A**        | **B**      |
| Moderate (J = 72), Adagio (J = 60) | Larghetto con moto (J = 60-66) |
| **A'**       | **C**      |
| **Allegro**  | **Tempo I** |
| (J = 132)   |            |

"Give ear to my prayer, O God."
"My heart is in anguish within me."
"O that I had wings...I would fly away and be at rest."

"Gracious is the Lord...Our God is compassionate."
"I shall lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord."
"Praise the Lord."

Anxious, tense, confused.
Lamenting, mournfully lyrical.

A, A'—Quietly reflective.
B, C—Exuberant.

Full orchestra with prominent oboe solo and very little percussion.

Full orchestra.
A clear three-part form is used in the second movement. The contrasts in tempo, dynamics, and overall character are so great as to be easily recognizable. Likewise, the return of the opening material in the last section is immediately obvious. Although the texts are different, the basic melodic and harmonic materials of the first and last sections are the same (Fig. 20).
Another factor contributing to the distinctive difference between the three parts is the vocal range of the respective sections, the A sections having a lower tessitura and relatively narrow range.

The sectional divisions in the third movement are most clearly indicated in the meter changes. Actually, the first large section is completely non-metered providing obvious contrast to the regular meter in the second section. The short instrumental introduction which precedes section A foreshadows the regular meter of the B section. The non-metered, or A section is divided thematically into a smaller three-part form apparent in both the melodic material and the accompanying string parts which change from improvisational lines in the first and last sections, to precisely notated trills in the middle section (Fig. 21).

![Fig. 21--Trills from middle section of smaller three-part form in third movement.](image)

The second large section, or the B section is through-composed and incorporates a brief return to the non-metered style (rehearsal letters C-D), although no thematic material is repeated.

xxiii
The form of the final movement is again outlined through obvious changes in tempo and overall character. The slow tempo and gentle disposition of the A and A' sections contrast clearly with the fast-paced exuberance of sections B and C. Common thematic material is shared between the A and A' sections giving a sense of sectional repeat, although A' is so brief (nine measures) that it is difficult to consider it a major section (Fig. 22).

Fig. 22--Common thematic material shared between sections A and A'.

B and C are also identical in tempo and character, and share some thematic material.
SONGS of PRAISE

Four Psalms for Soprano and Chamber Orchestra

by

RANDALL BARDIN
INSTRUMENTATION

Soprano
Oboe
Strings
Percussion - wind chimes
  small triangle
  finger cymbals
  crotales
  small crash cymbals
  suspended cymbal
  gong
  glockenspiel
  chimes
  xylophone
  vibes
  marimba
  tambourine
  tom-toms

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

Beamed Accelerando and Ritardando

Accel. or Rit. occurs within the specific duration enclosed in the brackets above the beams.

Improvisational Events

Improvise in a manner similar to the example given in the box, continuing for the length of the extender.

Variable Speed Trill

Larger waves indicate slower trill.

Cues in Non-metered Sections

White arrows indicate main beats, black arrows indicate subdivisions. Circled numbers are for rehearsal purposes.
DISTRIBUTION OF PERCUSSION PARTS

Movement I

Player 1  wind chimes, small triangle, marimba, tom-tom
Player 2  small crash cymbals, suspended cymbals
Player 3  glockenspiel, finger cymbal, xylophone
Player 4  tambourine, vibes, chimes

Movement II

Player 1  marimba
Player 2  tom-tom, glockenspiel, gong
Player 3  xylophone
Player 4  vibes

Movement III

Player 1  tacet
Player 2  chimes, glockenspiel
Player 3  tacet
Player 4  finger cymbals, vibes

Movement IV

Player 1  tacet
Player 2  small triangle, suspended cymbal
Player 3  tacet
Player 4  crotales, tambourine
I. Psalm 96

Sing to the Lord a new song; Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation. Tell of His glory among the nations, For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the people are idols, But the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before Him, Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; Let the sea roar and all it contains; Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy Before the Lord, for He is coming; For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness.

II. Psalm 114

When Israel went forth from Egypt, Judah became His sanctuary, Israel His dominion.


Tremble, O earth, before the Lord, Before the God of Jacob, Who turned the rock into a pool of water, The flint into a fountain of water.

III. Psalm 55

Give ear to my prayer, 0 God; Give heed to me and answer me; I am restless in my complaint and I must moan, Because of the voice of the enemy, Because of the pressure of the wicked; For they bring down trouble upon me, And in anger they bear a grudge against me.

My heart is in anguish within me, And the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling come upon me; And horror has overwhelmed me. O that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. I would wander far away, From the stormy wind and tempest. I shall call upon God, and the Lord will save me. He will hear my voice. He will redeem my soul in peace.

Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken. Men of bloodshed and deceit will not live out their days. I will trust in Thee.

IV. Psalm 116

I love the Lord, because He hears My voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, I shall call upon Him as long as I live.

Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Our God is compassionate. Thou hast rescued my eyes from tears; And my feet from stumbling.

What shall I render to the Lord For all His blessings upon me: I shall lift up the cup of salvation, And call upon the name of the Lord. I shall pay my vows to the Lord, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people. Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His godly ones. O Lord, I am Thy servant, I am Thy servant. To Thee I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, And call upon the name of the Lord. I shall pay my vows to the Lord, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people, In the courts of the Lord's house, In the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord!
I. Psalm 96

Sing, sing, sing to the Lord.
new song;  
Sing to the Lord, all the earth.

Sing to the Lord, bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of
Allegro \( (J = 144) \)

Tell of His glory among the nations. For great is the
Lord, and greatly to be praised; He is to be
But the Lord made the heavens.
Splendor and majesty are before Him.
Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.
Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice.
-joice; Let the sea roar, and all it contains.
Then all the trees of the forest will sing for
Joy Before the Lord,
For He is coming,
He is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world.
in righteousness.
II. Psalm 114

Lento ($\text{d}=60$)

Xyl.
Vibes
Mallet
Tom

pizz.

Note: The image contains sheet music notation for a composition, including specific instructions and instruments.
when Israel went forth from
Egypt, Judah became His sanctuary.
Israel, his dominion.
The sea looked and fled; the
Jordan turned back. The mountains skipped like rams, the
hills like lambs.
flee? What ails you, O Jordan that you turn back?
What ails you, O mountains, that you skip like agitate
rams? o hills, like lambs?
Tempo I (r=60)

Tremble, 0 earth, before the
Lord, before the God of Jacob.
Misterioso

who turned the rock into a pool of water, Who
...turned the fist into a fountain of water...
III. Psalm 55

Allegro (\textit{d.} = 132-144)
Rubato (ca. $d\approx 60$)

Give ear to my prayer, O God.
Give heed to me and answer me;
I am restless in my complaint, restless, restless.
and I must mean.

deliberately
voice of the enemy,
Because of the pressure of the wicked;
For they bring down trouble upon me,
        And in anger they
bear a grudge against me.
(ca. \( \text{d}=60 \))

My heart is in anguish.
with in me, And the terrors of death
have fallen upon me.  fear and trembling
come up on me; And horror has over-whelmed
that I had wings like a
dove! I would fly away and
be at rest. I would wonder
far away, From the stormy wind
and tempest.
I shall
call upon God, And the Lord will save me.
Men. 

He will redeem my
Cast your burden upon the Lord; He will sustain you;
He will never allow the
righteous to be shaken. Men of bloodshed and deceit will not
live out their days.
I will trust in Thee.
IV. Psalm 116

Larghetto con moto (1:40-66)

Rubato, cheerfully
love the Lord, because He hears my voice and my supplications. Because He has in-
—dined His ear to me,  I shall call up-on Hım as long as I live.
Gracious is the Lord, and
righteous; Our God is compassionate. Thou hast
rescued my eyes from tears,
Trot! If fins, ______

and my feet from stumbling.
What shall I render to the
Lord, for all His blessings upon me?
I shall lift up the cup of sal-va-
tion, And call upon the name of the
Lord, the name of the Lord.
pay my vows to the Lord,
O may it be in the presence of all His
people.
Lord is the death of His godly ones.
Rit. \[ m_p \quad \text{Tempo II (} \frac{d}{d^2} \text{)} \]

Tempo II \[ \frac{d}{d^2} \text{)\]

Rit. \[ m_p \quad \text{Tempo II (} \frac{d}{d^2} \text{)} \]

\[ \text{pp} \quad \text{pizz.} \]

\[ \text{pp} \quad \text{pizz.} \]

\[ \text{pp} \quad \text{pizz.} \]

\[ \text{pp} \quad \text{pizz.} \]
I am Thy servant, I am Thy servant,
sacrifice of thanksgiving, and call up...
On the name of the Lord, the
name of the Lord. I shall pay my
vows to the Lord," Oh may it be in the
presence of all His people,
In the all His people,
courts of the Lord's house,
In the midst of you, 0 Je-
Praise the Lord!