2008

*Missa Brevis*, a work for chamber choir, soloists, and chamber ensemble score and analysis

Joshua Adam Bornfield

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Missa Brevis

a Work for Chamber Choir, Soloists, and Chamber Ensemble

Score and Analysis

by

Joshua Adam Bornfield

Thesis

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Missa Brevis: a Work for Chamber Choir, Soloists, and Chamber Ensemble

Score and Analysis

by

Joshua Adam Bornfield

APPROVED

Dr. Anthony Iannaccone_________________________Date___________

Director

Dr. C. Nelson Amos ____________________________Date___________

Committee Member

Dr. David Pierce ______________________________Date___________

Committee Member

Dr. David Woike ______________________________Date___________

Head, Department of Music and Dance

Dr. Deb Delaski-Smith __________________________Date___________

Dean, Graduate School
ABSTRACT

The *Missa Brevis* displayed and discussed herein is composed for chamber choir, vocal soloists, and a chamber ensemble of nine instrumental performers. This setting of several sections of the Catholic Mass explores a narrative interpretation of that text, using a programmatic compositional approach, through which all parameters of music were systematically planned. The thesis is in two parts. Part One is an analysis of the composition, both in full and movement by movement, with regard to structure, harmonic contour, melodic design, timbral choices, and the compositional process required for its creation. Part Two is the complete original score of the work.
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PREFACE

The Missa Brevis discussed herein was composed between December 2006 and May 2007. It was scored for student instrumentalists and an advanced university-level chamber choir with soprano and tenor soloists of the same caliber. It is in a traditional four-movement structure consisting of settings of the Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus/Benedictus, and Agnus Dei texts and has a duration of approximately 16 minutes. The Lux Choir of Ann Arbor, Michigan, and instrumental musicians from Eastern Michigan University and the Ann Arbor community premiered it on Friday, 2 November, 2007, in Pease Auditorium, Eastern Michigan University.

In general, I have composed music based on the character of the person who has asked me for the music, or with a certain performer in mind. This work was no exception, and for several weeks I proceeded to write a Missa Brevis conditioned by the character and strengths of the conductor who requested the work. In the first phase of composition, a dramatic narrative was applied to the text. The tone of each movement and a large-scale structural outline were interpolated from that narrative. After a few weeks’ work on the project, I found myself without my usual compositional resource, because the conductor who asked me for this work was unable to gather the forces necessary to perform such a work. Thus, this work was ultimately composed without specific performers in mind, although I retained and brought to completion my conception of the work as originally envisioned with a specific conductor.

Each movement of the mass has an underlying programmatic element or dramatic narrative. In the Kyrie, a character searches for a meaning in a tragic
event; my father had died several months before I began this piece; my ardent desire to compose this work stemmed from a need to settle my emotions surrounding his death. The *Gloria* shows the character praising God for his own life, thanking Him for the life of the one he has lost. As the character changes his praise to a meditative blessing in the *Sanctus*, the Lord responds with a benediction in that character’s own voice; this *Benedictus* is the moment of redemption and exhilarating fulfillment. As the character embraces the pain of his experience, he gains the power to find peace in all those emotions and experiences in the *Agnus Dei*. The original Latin text, along with an English translation, is given at the beginning of each chapter.
CHAPTER 1
OVERALL STRUCTURE

In setting the Missa Brevis text, the compositional process began with a large-scale structural outline of the work’s primary tonal areas. The approach resembled Schenkerian analysis in reverse: the overall structure was conceived first; then came the greater motion of each movement, based generally on a primary motive generated through a combination of research and improvisation. Next came the foreground composition section by section, creating goal sonorities and orchestrational ideas before manipulating any of motivic materials. The structural plan for this Missa Brevis is as follows:

Fig. 1: Missa Brevis large-scale structural diagram

The lower staff of this graph shows the most fundamental structural conception and an important philosophical idea, that the ursatz of the whole piece is a simple tonal progression. The work has a strong basis in tonality though its languages alternate between pan-tonality, modal scales, the acoustic scale, octatonic pitch collections, and at times a functionally-free harmonic system of tonal saturation, the exhaustive use of a large pitch collection (generally nine or more pitch-classes) over a short period of time to provide harmonic relief with an
harmonically directional small pitch-class set. The pan-tonal directional line at the top of the upper staff represents the next level of organization, an ascending chromatic line from B-natural to E-natural that comes from the thirds and fifths of each of the fundamental harmonies of either a whole movement or a large section of one. Next come the tones of the top staff connected by dotted beams. There are moments of the piece in which I established a theoretical congruence linking certain sections of the whole piece: an A-flat tonal center in the Christe eleison is linked to the A-flat tonal center in the Benedictus and, enharmonically, the G-sharp of the final cadence (E major’s mi); the F-natural sonorities link the Agnus Dei section of the Gloria to the Agnus Dei movement; B-natural in the Sanctus becomes C-flat in the Benedictus. The slurs show a movement’s harmonic progression from start to finish.
CHAPTER 2

KYRIE

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Lord have mercy.
Christ have mercy.
Lord have mercy.

The mass begins with an ethereal passage of winds and piano using notes from the E-natural natural-minor scale. While there is great deal of severe dissonance in stark colors as the harmonic language and vertical columns of sound expand, the goal of this passage is to guide the ear to a tonal center without centering the sound or giving it any body. When E-natural is established as the work’s point of departure, it is only loosely stable. An imagined character is ready to face the emotions, but this provides him no solace. The choir asks for mercy, and the strings punctuate the singers’ calls, but nothing grounds the harmony, and no melody is proposed which might focus the sound. The choir’s sound is only the act of breathing, a pan-diatonic chord that expands, contracts, and expands again:

Fig. 2: Kyrie expanding chord motive (reduction, mm. 12-25)
The winds and piano add a pang of color, but it is only color, not responsorial (m. 18). The repetitive motion, expansion of color (especially in the strings at m. 31), and dynamic contour of this agonizing section create a reality for the imagined character’s pain, a truth for it, a consolation of presence and acknowledgement. There is no representation of any secure triadic harmony for nearly 90 seconds in the piece, almost a tenth its total length. Even then, the insecure triad inversion appears with a seventh added: complete, but still unstable (m. 35), and then it is further destabilized almost immediately by a dramatic modulation to an unrelated key (A-flat major, m. 43).

The Christe section has a much more stable harmonic contour; its colors are brighter and more embodied. It represents the response of a community to an individual’s need, the presence of other members of a faith. It is an immediate consolation, and certainly helps in a time of need, but it exists outside of the imagined character, a supplicant and mourner. Its function is to remind the supplicant that he is not alone in his suffering and repentance and that both of those actions have meaning and goals in themselves beyond his momentary pain. As he embraces the help, he comes to understand that it is no replacement for experiencing those emotions and living through them, which, after some consideration (mm. 55-70), he allows himself to do (mm. 70-97), in a fulfilled and expanded version of the first choral material of the movement.

The melodic material of this movement is severely limited. Almost all the motion in every voice is stepwise, with a strong emphasis placed on a whole-step voice-exchange between the outer voices. This creates both melodic and harmonic stasis that would imply a feeling of brooding. The feelings may change,
but their content is essentially the same; it is not that dissonance evolves into further dissonance that is important, but that the outer voices make it so apparent, as though there were no other option. As the choir moves into the *Christe* section there is a bit more disjunct motion in all the voices, as the basses finally take on a role of harmonic support instead of simply adding another layer of sound, and the upper voices call out for help to Christ. The expanding-chord motive returns, and the choir’s cries for help become more pronounced and dissonant, eventually introducing an octatonic melodic fragment in the soprano voice that will become a central element in the *Gloria* (m. 66, b. 2-m. 68, b. 2). The final section of the *Kyrie* unites the two prior sections in a more urgent setting of extreme dissonance (though the music is tonally rooted strongly in E-flat minor) and frenzied color exchanges. Once the first wail passes, the strings and the choir take turns adding energy in rhythmic development (mm. 76-84). A few bars of episodic free counterpoint (mm. 85-89) bring the ensemble to a feverishly loud deceptive cadence (*iv* taking the place of *VI*). The harmonic progression of the final phrase is the most complicated passage of the piece, as each chord relates to a B-flat minor but none clearly centers the tonality. Only the directional bass line provides stability, though that center is short-lived; its harmonic purpose is simply to chromatically guide the listener to the A-major *Gloria*. 
Fig. 3: Implied functional harmony, final three bars of *Kyrie*

The harmonic purpose of these three measures is to raise tension to an inestimable pitch without completely tonally saturating the listener, to represent a chaos that can be resolved only by faith in a divine power. The outer voices cadence to an A-natural (the second movement’s tonic) through an octatonic pattern that will mimic the *Gloria*’s primary motive.
CHAPTER 3

GLORIA

Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus Te. Benedictum Te.
Adoramus Te. Glorificamus Te.
Gratias agimus Tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.
Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.
Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe.
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris,
Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram.
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis.
Quoniam Tu solus sanctus. Tu solus Dominus.
Tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe.
Cum Sancto Spiritu in Gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

Glory to God in the highest.
And peace on earth to men of good will.
We praise you. We bless you.
We worship you. We glorify you.
Thanks we give to you because of your great glory.
Lord God, King of heaven,
God the Father almighty.
Lord the only Son, Jesus Christ.
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
Who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Who takes away the sins of the world, receive our supplication.
Who sits at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.
For You alone are holy. You alone are Lord.
You alone are most high, Jesus Christ.
With the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Gloria is a text of outstanding praise and a call for peace. Its energy is high and the words themselves are mellifluous. In this movement, the character thanks the Lord for His blessings and extols His virtues as he searches for a way to cope with his loss. In this respect, the emphatic rhythmic emphasis of the near-constant uneven meter serves to create an ecstatic escape from the doldrums of
emotional pain and frustration. The movement develops into a long passage of a more even-tempered meter (mm.121-173), and when the 5/8 returns, its character sobers and becomes more direct through longer phrases and a sense of unity in the orchestration; the choir and instrumental ensemble unite for a single, purposeful statement on the finality of the Lord’s love and righteousness.

The *Gloria*’s opening chord and following arpeggio serve to refresh the energy put forward at the end of the *Kyrie* and to provide the listener with the first true tonal center, but the primary motive appears in the soprano voice in bars 8-10:

Fig. 4: *Gloria* primary motive

![Gloria primary motive](image)

I chose to use this motive because of the incredible level of harmonic freedom it afforded me while retaining an unmistakably diatonic character in all circumstances. Its basis is the ancient chant line of the Catholic *Doxologia Magna* service, which is constructed entirely from rotating scale patterns in the thirds of the Dorian mode:

Fig. 5: *Gloria* chant line

![Gloria chant line](image)

The chant is the most important feature of this setting of the *Gloria* text. It is directly quoted twice (piano, mm. 129-202, and clarinet/viola, mm. 232-235), and its contour governs nearly every aspect of both the surface filigree and the large-scale design.
Most of the melodic construction in this movement is a combination of the primary motive and manipulations upon it, using a portion of the octatonic series (0-1-3-4 collections). That pitch-class collection lends itself well to extended sections of acoustic scale-like sections and Phrygian cadences resolving to a major chord, which appear often in this movement (mm. 6, 24, 82-85, 115, 157, 184, 228, 232, 235) to create a sense of duality in the lines: antiquity among contemporary, music that is neither old nor new, but both together. An old source is used in an old way, but using a new language, and so becomes a new music. The listener hears both, but because the materials are so approachable, so familiar, the notion of novelty is left behind. Another instance of an old pitch pattern gaining new meaning in a contemporary context occurs at bar 36: Dunstable-influenced harmony and voice-leading lies within a long octatonic chorale set to the pax hominibus text.

Since that portion of the text deals with man and not God, the secondary motive (a rising third followed by a descending second) is introduced directly after the choir states its call for peace.
Fig. 6: *Gloria* secondary motive

![Secondary Motive Diagram]

Its use is limited to a short passage, after which it is not heard again until the central section of the *Gloria*, in which the text does not speak to God directly but about him concerning the divinity of Jesus. The instrumental introduction and slight development of that motive serve the listener as time to reflect upon peace, and serve the work itself as a chance to build momentum and enter a new key area.

An extensive soprano solo in the second section reflects the largest expansion of melodic construction based on the primary motive. Most of the movement is crafted of relatively short, nearly Debussian melodic fragments, but the arioso among the lauds allows the lines to blossom into floridity that adds more than a touch of Monteverdi to the movement as a whole, specifically at the *adoramus Te* (m. 70). These phrases are extremely long to paint the text as Monteverdi, Purcell, Buxtehude, or Bach would have, to give credence to the praise on which the entire *Doxologia Magna* is based before discussing Christ’s divinity.

The second motive takes over as the soloists take the *Domine Deus* section. Through the *Rex coelestis* (mm. 121-128), it is the only theme that is manipulated. The next phrase of the text introduces the principle of omnipotence, which, by definition, implies praise, so the primary theme re-enters in the flute’s filigree above the soloists (m. 129). The interaction of these two
motives continues in counterpoint through the rest of this section, often with the second motive’s first interval replaced with a fourth or the second inverted to provide a different direction to the melodic lines. The soloists ask of the Lord “suscipe deprecationem nostram,” to take away their sin. This prayer is on a singular basis, so the choir continues to ask for mercy. In the call for absolution, the ensemble is marked with a good deal of filigree in the higher-range instruments, reflecting the singularity of the prayer. A large crescendo through the Qui sedes phrases (mm. 165-173) marks the end of the second motive in melodic front matter in this movement.

A shift in the mood of the text occurs with the word quoniam. While the discussion of Christ’s divinity continues after this point, the speaker resumes his praise to the Lord instead of speaking about him. This section is thematically unified with the gratias music since it is an extension of the same thanks: the indirect object clause of a complete sentence, so to speak. The only new material in these final sections occurs in the passage in which the choir states Christ’s name directly (mm.193-198), a single prolonged chordal statement by the entire ensemble. Even then the bass and tenor sing (and their corresponding doubled strings play) a C-natural and G-sharp respectively, enharmonically binding it to the Christe eleison statement in the first movement, the Benedictus in its entirety, and the final cadence of the Agnus Dei. This moment is amelodic to create a sense of eternity about that name, to evoke the idea that the love of God is not a rite of passage, not something to which one comes in life, but a state being that exists without time. The intent to suggest a sense of the eternal extends
to the object of God’s love, i.e., that the object of God’s love has always had it, and always will.

It is notable that at the climax of the movement the only moving line is an acoustic scale in the piano that rises through three and a half octaves. The melodic fragments that have implied this scale throughout the rest of the movement come to fruition here. When the *Gloria* line returns atop the *Amen* (mm. 217-218), its completeness is no longer in question; the whole vocabulary of the melodic fragments is complete, the puzzle is assembled. Now these phrases are a smaller part of an understood whole.

The harmonic contour of this movement is a structural expansion of the primary motive. Each section and sub-section had a specific harmonic area in relation to the outer sections depending on its function within my interpretation of the text. The framing exclamatory sections revolve around A-major; the songs of praise (sections two and four) hold G-major as their primary key; and the discussion of divinity with the prayer for redemption are based in F-major. The subsections also held very specific goals to create a trajectory that would mimic either the falling third or the rising third portion of the primary motive, sometimes overlapping their structural function with the larger design. It is worthy of note that the internal harmonic motion establishes structural ties with major portions of other movements (see Fig. 1): the *Agnus Dei* section of the *Gloria* text uses F-natural as its tonal center; the smaller sub-section motion of a falling third returns as the primary harmonic motion of the *Benedictus*. 
Fig. 7: *Gloria* harmonic structural design

The lowest line of the Schenkerian graph (Fig. 7) shows the central key areas; the topmost line gives transition centers; the inner dotted beams represent key areas of the dramatic flow of each half of the piece; and the subordinate lower dotted slurs show transitions from a text of praise to a text of repose and vice-versa.

The relationship of F-natural to C-sharp/D-flat in the central section was of paramount importance. Its natural occurrence within the structural sketch provided a simple $I-iv-I$ harmonic context as the unifying foreground motion of nearly the entire movement. It was the manipulation of the major scale to encompass the $iv$ harmony that generated the idea to use the modes of the acoustic scale (WWWHWHW); with a key center of G-natural, the scale’s second mode yielded A-major and d-minor without alteration.
The only tonal modification was the adjustment of B-natural to B-flat for Phrygian cadences. The reprise of the *Gloria* line with the *amen* text modifies the cadential harmony to incorporate the B-flat acoustic scale for starkly expressive dissonance; since a $iv$ harmony was the basis for most of the foreground motion, it was natural to use a lowered-$ii$ in substitution as a reference to the $I-iv-I$ relationship as it would apply to a tonicized $IV$ (D major), and the two acoustic scales’ tones overlapped in a very convenient way:

Figure 9 shows these scales in their respective modes with each using A as its tonal center to illustrate that in this mode, they have in common scale degrees 1, 4, 5, and 7. Each of these scales has the power to imply the A minor pentatonic scale. Since the third scale degree does not match, however, neither can fully express either the Ionian or the natural minor mode on its own. It follows, then, that the two bars of A-minor (mm. 218-219) serve as the most natural resolution of the previous phrase while functioning as a structural dissonance, but not an harmonic one. There is a final use of the primary motive in this last section as well: B-flat in measure 221 leads to C in 222, and the B-flat
in the bass in 226-227 leads to A-natural in 228. The movement ends with a raucous and loud A-major affirmation.

The *Gloria*’s rhythmic cadence and tempi were easy choices: a simple dramatic reading of the text in Latin was enough to find its assonance, which clearly pointed to a meter with a strong triple-feel, but the music needed to be more imperative than just an exclamation of praise. An uneven meter was not only logical for the sections of fast material, it was also intuitive for the emotional tone that this movement required.

The movement is in part form, loosely related to a Rondo in the Baroque style – A-B-A’-B’-A”-coda (based on A). All the fast music occurs at the same tempo, but the slower sections differ from each other slightly, depending on the nature of their expression and their point in the general pacing of the movement. *Pax hominibus*, for instance, is just slightly slower than its preceding section despite the text’s less-than-direct relation to the material immediately before it, because a drastic shift in time would have stalled the energy in that section of music. The melodic material comes from the developmental section of the *Kyrie*. The moment mentioned previously in which the soprano generates the primary motive for the *Gloria* also uses a neighbor tone; though the scalar motion of those four ascending notes is a natural extension of the motive, its character differs distinctly, as this collection does not fall in any standard modal series without alteration. The instrumental passage in measures 44 to 53 is the source for the *Domine Deus* material. Their motivic material is not perfectly related, but since neither of these moments’ texts are in the second person, their tempo shifts and their textural lightness tend to link them as individual parts.
CHAPTER 4

SANCTUS/BENEDICTUS

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanclus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria Tua.
Osanna in excelsis Deo.
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Osanna in excelsis Deo.

Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of Your glory.
Hosanna to God on high.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna to God on high.

The true focal point of the third movement is its timbral shift between the two large sections. The Sanctus features a strongly grounded, rich, dense string sound with a diffuse bowed vibraphone to create a nocturnal soundscape. A strong, firmly rooted sound keeps this section humble even with the brightness of the flute’s detail work, especially at the end of the pleni sunt coeli (mm. 16-17).

The depth and resonance of the chalmeau register in the clarinet is a special sound as it supports the entire ensemble in the same passage and its repeat (mm. 21-24). It was essential to me that this section feel terrestrial; I imagined a wide valley beneath a night sky filled with the aurora borealis softly glowing. In this way the benedictus could truly fly, a dawn after the warm enveloping darkness, a music of air after one of earth. The shimmer of the modal melody at the start of the next section shows the dawn aspect of this music; the ceaseless motion of its prolonged filigree is the stirring of the subconscious in a new comprehension of beauty and love. The soloist’s lyric line is thereby not only the principal front
material, but also the stabilizing element among the organized chaos of this large-scale rhythmic counterpoint.

These blessings, the Sanctus and Benedictus texts, are set to reflect the singularity of this imagined character’s psychological journey. He joined a community in the Kyrie, and with the help of his friends he embraced the love of God first with exuberance and then with a reverent respect through the Gloria. The concept behind this setting of the Sanctus is the following programmatic idea, a philosophical quandary suggested earlier in the Gloria text: if God is all things then his pain is God’s also, which must make it not just acceptable, but completely appropriate and even necessary to feel in its full manifestation. The harmonically centered but qualitatively indecisive sound that pervades this movement stems from this respectful confusion and acceptance. Once he reaches the conclusion to feel, the proverbial heavens open and take that pain away, revealing the love of God in too many layers to experience simultaneously. As each scrim is thrown back his understanding grows. He expects to see the plan fully with each distinct level, but he never quite gets to the whole picture. By the end of the movement he has seen so much that he finds his peace in acceptance.

Extensive pan-diatonicism throughout the sub-movement creates a feel of velvety omniscience. The tonal center is always clear, but its mode shifts with every bar. The dynamic shifts of the inner phrases are the listener’s only guide to which mode should dominate the mood and which set of notes are expressive dissonance. The strong feeling of being rooted in a secure area is enough. The pedal shift at bar 13 takes the listener only as far as the sub-dominant, which continually shifts modes as well; a modified plagal cadence returns the harmony
to its original B-minor area (m. 17), and the full choir responds to the tenor soloist by re-entering E-minor (m. 21). Instead of repeating the plagal idea, the choir settles in D-major before a cadential phrase that marks the end of this section, a short chorale that uses harmonies in descending thirds based mostly in A-major.

The low strings wedge outward from the tonic in the final phrase to create a very unstable $i^9$ harmony inverted so the stack sounds much more like a $v^{13}$ in second inversion (m. 30, b. 3). The only grounding in this harmonic voicing comes from the expected voice exchange between the contrabass and flute. Both voices are chromaticized in the resolution that begins the Benedictus so that the harmony created is a direct modulation from B-minor to A-flat-major. This resolution makes use of the expected D-sharp of a B-major harmony that falls in the pattern of modal mixture used throughout the Sanctus and establishes a new tonic on a note that was already expected as a color-tone (G-sharp) while also providing the new third (a fresh and welcome C-natural) as the most prominent tone by orchestral range.

The tenor and the choir retain their relationship from the Sanctus for the second sub-movement. The harmonic traits between the two parts are fundamentally similar, if more developed in the Benedictus, due to its place in the dramatic narration of the larger work. The ensemble still has faster-moving but subordinate sub-phrases to the tenor’s lyrical melody. Melodically, the tenor’s dramatic major ninth at pleni sunt coeli (m. 13) becomes the framing interval for the mood-establishing instrumental melody at the start of the Benedictus, the
only moment in the whole work where a single line is represented in three instruments.

Fig. 10: Motivic interval relationships, *Sanctus/Benedictus*

![Musical notation diagram]

Pan-diatonicism pervades this large section as well, though the modal mixture is markedly absent; the love of God is certainty, unquestionable by man even in his confusion. The perfect-interval-relationships that established the mood of the *Sanctus* and structured the initial instrumental statement of the *Benedictus* become the primary harmonic content as the piece progresses further and further from the tonic:
The choir responds with an initial repeat of the material from the first half of the section, but elaborates in D-flat Lydian (m. 57) for a moment before cadencing past G-flat to C-flat major on a pan-diatonic IV chord that implies F-flat Lydian (m. 60). The harmony expands in the next phrase, using a non-resolving modal seventh chord in C-flat major. The final chord here functions only in passing (combined vii\(^7\) and V\(^7\)/V/vi\(^\circ\)), but its stark dissonance substantially raises the tension as the penultimate phrase commences. This moment is marked by its action: complete sets of counterpoint are present in the voices (doubled by strings), the piano and vibraphone are linked with another pair of voices (though the piano also doubles some of the choral parts), and the winds have a two-voice obligato that is independent of the rest of the motion elsewhere. All told, there are roughly eight lines moving at any point in three super-voices of rhythmic counterpoint in measures 68–71. The harmony is, if rampantly pan-diatonic, conventional with the exception of the cadence; C-flat-major should have a traditional evaded cadence to A-flat-minor, but a Piccardy third turns this resolution into another popular music/jazz reference. This cadential structure gives C-flat-major a measure of equality to A-flat-major in this section, harmonically unifying both halves of the movement and providing a motivic reference to the internal harmonic shifts within the Gloria with a
harmonic stepwise descent of a minor third as appears between the opening of
the second movement and the *pax hominibus*; both sections extol the Lord’s
greatness and have been treated similarly.
CHAPTER 5

AGNUS DEI

*Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.*
*Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.*
*Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.*

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, give us peace.

The *Agnus Dei* is a stylized re-writing of the *Kyrie*. Structurally, it is an emotional fulfillment of that earlier material. The *Kyrie*’s disembodied opening passage is delayed so that the choir can enter immediately with its expanding chord motive, and the aesthetic instrumental sonority-building that began the piece resumes as a response to the voices, phrase by phrase. The musical reorganization represents the imagined character’s acceptance of his pain and renewed ability to move forward. Through the course of the piece, the protagonist recognizes that his initial pain was a reflection of his need to see the loved one that he lost; it is that need that makes him human and helps him to remember that pain and love are indelibly linked, that care and trust are required for both emotions.

Harmonically, the *Agnus Dei* functions nearly identically to the first movement, though the harmonic language is a bit more centered from the start in F-minor. Preserving the key center from the end of the *Benedictus* to the start of this movement makes it possible to hear the *Agnus Dei* as a natural extension of the former movement’s intent. The Lord blesses the people; the people then ask his final grace. The harmonic motion is the least complex of all the movements,
as this portion of the piece deals with acceptance. Internally, each section deals exclusively with one diatonic mode at any given time in a slow harmonic rhythm, with the exception of mm. 48-63 in which I used the acoustic scale for the same dramatic effect as its corresponding moment in the Gloria. This is the one distinct key change at the most dramatic section of the movement (mm. 48) that takes the ensemble from a relatively stable mode of F-minor to an E-minor pitch-class collection, though the tonal centers shift between C- and E-natural. The only moment that uses a higher degree of dissonance than one might find in the standard romantic repertoire is the final cadence, which owes a large debt to the cadential structures of Benjamin Britten, specifically his War Requiem. The combination of two modes followed by a polytonal chord (mm. 97-106) creates a harmonic omnipresence, an unknowable but satisfying divinity to end the work.

Since this movement’s harmonic and melodic content is a recomposition of the Kyrie’s materials, its structure bears a striking resemblance to the first movement as well. The introductory materials from the Kyrie no longer serve their earlier function, though they remain in the Agnus Dei as pacing devices, still developing over the course of the movement, but now fading into the larger textures. The sectional divisions are as follows:
Very little new material exists in the *Agnus Dei*. Even when the music develops what was given in the *Kyrie*, that material is based on smaller sections from other movements. The transitional material in mm. 44-47, for instance, is a diminution of the crescendo into the *quoniam* section of the *Gloria*; the final cadence of the piece is from the *Agnus Dei* section of the same movement. Since so much of this music is directly from the first movement, melodic development is minimal so that the textural parallels will be clearly heard. What little strictly melodic material there is exists for energy and counterpoint. In the sections where the choir is developing chords, a melody comes through in the overlapping of new parts. This loose touch of *klangfarben* is a welcome repose from the highly structured melodic material that defines the *Sanctus/Benedictus*. A similar melodic development happens when the choir is losing voices in ascent (mm. 39-47): the fragments each voice sings dovetail each other to form a single longing cry. The statement spans two octaves and a major sixth as it changes voices.

**Fig. 12: Sectional parallels between *Kyrie* and *Agnus Dei***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Kyrie</em> material</th>
<th>K. section</th>
<th><em>Agnus Dei</em> material</th>
<th>A.D. section</th>
<th>K. material used in A.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mm. 1-11 (introduction)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>mm. 1-17 (call/response)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A+B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 12-34 (1st “solitude”)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>mm. 18-35 (“1st reflection”)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 35-54 (1st plea)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>mm. 36-47 (“realization”)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>B’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 55-69 (2nd “solitude”)</td>
<td>B’</td>
<td>mm. 48-63 (“progress”)</td>
<td>B’</td>
<td>A+C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 70-84 (2nd plea)</td>
<td>C’</td>
<td>mm. 64-78 (“2nd reflection”)</td>
<td>B”</td>
<td>B”+C’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 85-97 (“experience”)</td>
<td>B”</td>
<td>mm. 79-106 (“acceptance”)</td>
<td>A’</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The orchestral sound of this movement was conceived entirely for its resonance. The goal was to produce a sound that was full and pure but also gentle. Each instrument lies safely in its most comfortable range. The euphonous blend of simple sounds gives the whole movement a coda-like feel. The music here is a bit more free of form; sections that do not rely on highly energetic passagework in the ensemble assume a more improvisatory character. The chord-building moments in the beginning that flank the choir's chord expansion, the melodic development in the piano mm. 10-15, the vocal soloists’ melodic interest through bar 35, high dissonant chords at the piano mm. 35-43, the ‘cello’s melodic fragment in an orchestral moment of repose (mm. 68-69): all these things add an element of individuality to an otherwise unified statement. A hint of solo character adds interest to a music that is about simplicity. Once the final line of the mass text begins, however (m. 70), the individuality of each voice falls aside and the ensemble functions communally using its warmest tones in the call for peace. The cadence material comes from the choral-accompanied duet within the second movement (“Domine Deus. Rex coelestis...” Gloria, mm. 150-158). The harmonic structure is very similar, as are the orchestral colors and tempo, but unlike the Agnus Dei section of the Gloria, there is no singular detail in the upper register instruments. That first statement of the call for mercy functions for the individual, though it is voiced in the plural. When the ensemble calls for peace at the end, it does so as a societal unit. The purpose of the mass within the church liturgy, after all, is not just a confirmation of faith, nor solely a call for the absolution of sin, but a prayer for peace through that faith and the community that fosters it.
CHAPTER 6
PERSPECTIVE AND GROWTH

This *Missa Brevis* was the most ambitious project I have assumed as a composer. Its composition required the use of an accompanimental ensemble to a chamber choir; while that ensemble has a vast palate of timbral qualities, the chosen text had such a fantastic dramatic content that the limits to the chamber group’s color possibilities were present in nearly every section. There were very few sections in which precisely the chosen instruments could deliver a specific sound: the first homophonic section of the *Kyrie* (mm. 35-54); the small interlude after the *pax hominibus* in the *Gloria* (mm. 44-57); the central duet in the same movement (mm. 121-158); and the introduction of the *Agnus Dei* (mm. 1-29). This work served well not only as a representation of creative potential but also as a philosophical introduction to the orchestra at large. A wealth of sound possibilities created an unexpected desire for yet more colorful orchestration. Writing for a larger ensemble provided the chance to think about fully using an ensemble to pace a work successfully, to create musical variation without substantially changing an harmonic or melodic structure. The slowed harmonic rhythms required in a piece for a larger ensemble thereby caused a change in my perception of the dramatic flow of time. Writing this *Missa Brevis* changed the way I heard music externally and focused my inner ear.
Missa Brevis

for Chamber Choir
and Chamber Ensemble

Joshua A. Bornfield
Instrumentation

Soprano solo
Tenor solo
Four-part choir (divisi in S, T, B)

Flute
Clarinet in B♭

One percussionist:
  Vibraphone
  Bass Drum
  Medium & large Tom-Toms
  Small pair Bongo drums
  Small, medium and large wood blocks
  Crotales (low set preferred, but scored for high set)
  Triangle
  Medium suspended cymbal

Two violins
Viola
Violoncello
Contrabass

Score sounds as written except for octave transposing instruments, which sound in their traditional ranges
Adagio sostenuto (\( \dot{q} = \text{ca. 60} \))

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poco rit.  a tempo accel.  Andante solemno (\( \approx \) ca. 90)

A

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Fl.} & \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{mf} \\
pp
\end{array} \\
\text{Cl.} & \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{mf} \\
pp
\end{array} \\
\text{Vib.} & \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{mf} \\
pp
\end{array} \\
\text{Pno.} & \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{mf} \\
pp
\end{array} \\
\text{S.} & \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{mf} \\
pp
\end{array} \\
\text{A.} & \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{p} \\
\text{Ky}
\end{array} \\
\text{T.} & \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{p} \\
\text{Ky}
\end{array} \\
\text{B.} & \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{p} \\
\text{Ky}
\end{array}
\end{align*} \]

poco rit.  a tempo accel.  Andante solemno (\( \approx \) ca. 90)

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Vln. I} & \quad \begin{array}{c}
pizz.
\end{array} \\
\text{Vln. II} & \quad \begin{array}{c}
pizz. \\
PP
\end{array} \\
\text{Vla.} & \quad \begin{array}{c}
pizz. \\
PP
\end{array} \\
\text{Ve.} & \quad \begin{array}{c}
pizz. \\
PP
\end{array} \\
\text{Cb.} & \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{PP}
\end{array}
\end{align*} \]
Lento (\textit{\textgreek{q}} \approx \text{ca.} 55)

\begin{align*}
\text{Fl.} & : \\
\text{Cl.} & : \\
\text{Vib.} & : \\
\text{Pno.} & : \\
\text{S.} & : \quad \text{e - lei - son} \quad \text{e - lei - son} \\
\text{A.} & : \quad \text{e - lei - son} \quad \text{e - lei - son} \\
\text{T.} & : \quad \text{e - lei - son} \quad \text{e - lei - son} \\
\text{B.} & : \quad \text{e - lei - son} \quad \text{e - lei - son} \\
\text{Vln. I} & : \\
\text{Vln. II} & : \\
\text{Vla.} & : \\
\text{Vc.} & : \\
\text{Cb.} & : 
\end{align*}
accel. . . . . . . . molto accel. . . . . . . . Allegro giusto (=ca. 132)

Fl.

Cl.

Vib.

Pno.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

Kyrie eleison

Kyrie eleison

Kyrie eleison

Kyrie eleison

accel. . . . . . . . molto accel. . . . . . . . Allegro giusto (=ca. 132)

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

arco

attacca
Gloria

Allegro giusto (\( \frac{3}{2} \approx \text{ca. } 132 \))

\( \frac{3}{2} \) throughout

Flute

Clarinet in Bb

Percussion

Piano

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass

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B

Meno mosso (\textit{\textasciitilde}ca. 112)

\textbf{35}

\textbf{40}

\textbf{B}

\textbf{Fl.}

\textbf{Cl.}

\textbf{Crot.}

Brass mallets

\textbf{Pno.}

\textbf{S.}

\textbf{A.}

\textbf{T.}

\textbf{B.}

\textbf{Vln. I}

\textbf{Vln. II}

\textbf{Vla.}

\textbf{Vc.}

\textbf{Cb.}
Tempo primo (\(\approx\) ca. 132)
Snare sticks
(strike edge of cymbal laterally)
Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

S. solo

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.
F

Meno mosso (♩= ca. 100)

125

Cl.

Pno.

S. solo

T. solo

Do

mp

De-us,

Rex coele-
tis,

Brass Mallets

Fl.

Cl.

Crot.

Pno.

S. solo

T. solo

De-us

Pa-
ter

om-

ni

De-us

Pa-
ter

om-

ni
rit.

\textbf{G}\textsuperscript{a} tempo (\(\approx\) ca. 100)

\begin{align*}
\text{Fl.} & \quad \text{Cl.} \\
\text{Crot.} & \quad \text{Pno.} \\
\text{S. solo} & \quad \text{T. solo} \\
\text{S.} & \quad \text{A.} \\
\text{T.} & \quad \text{B.} \\
\text{Vln. I} & \quad \text{Vln. II} \\
\text{Vla.} & \quad \text{Vc.} \\
\text{Cb.} & \quad
\end{align*}

\textit{te.} \quad \text{Do - mi-ne De-us,} \quad \text{Fi-li-us}

\textit{te.} \quad \text{Do - mi-ne De-us,} \quad \text{Fi-li-us}

\textit{te.} \quad \text{Do - mi-ne De-us,} \quad \text{Fi-li-us}

\textit{te.} \quad \text{Do - mi-ne De-us,} \quad \text{Fi-li-us}

\textit{te.} \quad \text{Do - mi-ne De-us,} \quad \text{Fi-li-us}

\textit{te.} \quad \text{Do - mi-ne De-us,} \quad \text{Fi-li-us}

\textit{te.} \quad \text{Do - mi-ne De-us,} \quad \text{Fi-li-us}

\textit{te.} \quad \text{Do - mi-ne De-us,} \quad \text{Fi-li-us}
stringendo \( \downarrow \text{= ca. 120 rall.}\) \( \uparrow \text{= ca. 100}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Fl.} & & \downarrow \text{= ca. 120 rall.} & & \text{mp} \\
\text{Cl.} & & \text{mp} \\
\text{Perc.} & & \text{mp} \\
\text{Pno.} & & \text{mp} \\
\text{S.} & & \text{Qui se-des ad dex-te-ram Pat-ris, mi-se-re-re no-bis, mi-se-re-re,} \\
\text{A.} & & \text{Qui se-des ad dex-te-ram Pat-ris, mi-se-re-re no-bis, mi-se-} \\
\text{T.} & & \text{Qui se-des ad dex-te-ram Pat-ris, mi-se-re-re no-bis,} \\
\text{B.} & & \text{Qui se-des ad dex-te-ram Pat-ris, mi-se-re-re no-bis, mi-se-} \\
\text{Vln. I} & & \text{stringendo senza sord.} \downarrow \text{= ca. 120 rall.} & & \text{mp} \\
\text{Vln. II} & & \text{mp} \\
\text{Vla.} & & \text{mp} \\
\text{Ve.} & & \text{mp} \\
\text{Cb.} & & \text{mp} \\
\end{align*}
\]
Vln. II

Vln. I

Perc.

Pno.

Cb.
Tu so - lus al - ti - si - mus,
Tu so - lus al - ti - si - mus,
Tu so - lus al - ti - si - mus,
Sanctus/Benedictus

Adagio espressivo \( \approx \text{ca. 69} \)

Flute

Clarinet in B♭

Vibraphone

Piano

Tenor solo

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass

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Be - ne - dic - tus

Be - ne - dic - tus,
Agnus Dei

Andante senza moto $\downarrow$ ca. 90

Flute

Clarinet in Bb

Percussion

Piano

Soprano solo

Tenor solo

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass

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Poco allegro \( \approx \) ca. 120

accel.

C

\begin{align*}
\text{Fl.} & : \quad & \text{Cl.} & : \\
\text{Crot.} & : \\
\text{Pno.} & : \\
\text{S. solo} & : \\
\text{T. solo} & : \\
\text{S.} & : \\
\text{A.} & : \\
\text{T.} & : \\
\text{B.} & : \\
\text{Vln. I} & : \\
\text{Vln. II} & : \\
\text{Vla.} & : \\
\text{Vc.} & : \\
\text{Cb.} & : \\
\end{align*}
Adagio sostenuto (\( \cdot = \) ca. 60)

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.