

Messiahs and Pariahs:

Suffering and Social Conscience in the Passion Genre from J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* (1727) to David Lang's *the little match girl passion* (2007)

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Abstract

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The themes of suffering and social conscience permeate the history of the sung passion genre: composers have strived for centuries to depict Christ's suffering and the injustice of his final days. During the past eighty years, the definition of the genre has expanded to include secular protagonists, veiled and not-so-veiled socio-political commentary and increased discussion of suffering and social conscience as socially relevant themes.

This dissertation primarily investigates David Lang's Pulitzer award winning *the little match girl passion*, premiered in 2007. David Lang's setting of Danish author and poet Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Match Girl" interspersed with text from the chorales of Johann Sebastian Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* (1727) has since been performed by several ensembles in the United States and abroad, where it has evoked emotionally visceral reactions from audiences and critics alike.

It also investigates the ways in which composers of the past and present (including Lang) have chosen to address the themes of suffering and social conscience through their settings of the passion, and the potential and effectiveness of the genre in this regard.

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Introduction

In 2007 David Lang's *the little match girl passion* received its world premiere by the Theatre of Voices at Carnegie Hall, conducted by Paul Hillier, to critical acclaim. The National Chamber Choir of Ireland, also conducted by Paul Hillier, premiered the choral version one year later. Inspired by Johann Sebastian Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and Danish author and poet, Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Match Girl Passion" fairytale, *the little match girl passion* combines a modern, secular milieu with the existing tradition of the sung passion genre, a genre that goes back nearly 700 years.

Lang's *the little match girl passion*, despite using Andersen's secular fairytale, has many parallels to the passion narrative: the protagonist is an 'underdog' figure, rejected by high society, unjustly treated and misunderstood by those around her, especially in her moment of apotheosis at the climax of the piece. Lang's inclusion of chorales set to Picander's text draws immediate parallels to Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, even if it does not directly reference Christ or the crucifixion (with the notable exception of a verbatim inclusion in Hebrew of Jesus' last words "Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani").

Lang's passion is scored for four soloists – soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, with another "full chorus version" available, arranged by the composer. The soloists play percussion instruments throughout: brake, drum, sleigh bell, crotales, glockenspiel, bass drum and tubular bells are employed during the 35-minute piece. Musically

the piece is characterized by its sparse textures and instrumentation, played uniquely, by the four soloists. It is also characterized by its repetitive motives, which have been labeled 'totalist', much to the composer's chagrin.

The popularity of the piece soon spiraled past boundaries of genre and came to be viewed, listened to, and appreciated by a larger audience. The piece, as humble and unassuming as its protagonist, Hans Christian Andersen's "Little Match Girl", and all lower-caps title, has since been lauded for its originality, innovation and "raw emotionality."¹ Audiences were entranced by its bittersweet melancholy; critics by its unusual minimalist treatment of musical material from a monument in classical music that had long been revered as few others, the *St. Matthew Passion* by Johann Sebastian Bach.

Lang has stated that he was drawn to the passion genre because it allows for interpolation from texts outside of the narrative. These texts could serve as "guideposts for our own responses to the story," elevating the audience from spectator to participant.² The passion genre thus represents multiple layers of performer, participant and meaning. The passion narrative, that of the inevitable death of Christ, places the audience in the middle of its development and forms a metaphysical commentary on the audience's role in the protagonist's demise. The pathos and guilt associated with murdering the very source of humankind's redemption has significantly shaped much of our history. The format of the

¹ Schenbeck, Lawrence. *The Choral Journal*, February 2010, 76.

² Lang, David. "Program Notes for *the little match girl passion* (for chorus)," 2008. <http://www.davidlangmusic.com/music/little-match-girl-passion-for-chorus>

Protestant passion furthermore encourages and facilitates retrospection and a call-to-action to learn from the events depicted and apply it in daily life. It also provides the opportunity for the listener and performer to walk in the shoes in of the “Other.”³ It could be argued that the format of the passion ideally makes the listener and the performer aware of different viewpoints, in turn increasing their empathy and contextual understanding of the plight of other role players in life. The dramatic narrative of the passion genre, seen in this light, seems particularly adept at expressing biting commentaries and socio-political ideologies directly addressing issues of suffering and social conscience.

“Suffering” according to the Miriam Webster Dictionary is “pain that is caused by injury, illness, loss, etc.” and closely related to “physical, mental or emotional pain.”⁴ “Social conscience” according to the Oxford English Dictionary can be defined as “a sense of responsibility or concern for the problems and injustices of society.”⁵ It is closely related to “social justice”, “justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.”⁶

³ Many prominent musicologists and ethnomusicologists have researched this phenomenon. Dr. Deborah Wong for example argues that performing the music of other cultures or that shows multiple perspectives on the same narrative (as passion music does) “corporeally enacts the cultural memory of other representations.” This concept resonates strongly with the current author on a personal level, as it is in line with his experiences of communal multi-racial choral singing in South Africa’s post-apartheid years, an eye-opening experience that showed the power of music to cross boundaries and make one understand the viewpoint of the “Other.”

⁴ *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “suffering.”

⁵ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “social conscience.”

⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “social justice.”

Once we start searching underneath the surface of the seemingly religious works within the passion genre, another thread appears; a timeline could be woven of coded references, hidden meanings and agonizing cries of composers addressing the issues of suffering and social conscience through their settings of the passion. Secondary themes that often emerge are those of redemption, guilt and pathos. It is the aim of this dissertation to study this phenomenon.

Aim of the Study

It is the aim of this study to investigate David Lang's *the little match girl passion* in the light of the themes of suffering and social conscience. To understand this piece in the context of developments within the passion genre, a hermeneutic investigation along these themes will be conducted regarding settings of the passion from Bach to Lang (1727 to 2007). This dissertation will trace the evolution of the passion genre from its medieval roots into the strand of development within the Lutheran/German passion genre most directly related to Bach's own passion setting (disregarding developments in Italy and France during the same time to some extent), leading up to the passion settings of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It is not a comprehensive study of the development of the entire passion genre, but only of those compositions that perceivably influenced the musical and philosophical contexts of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and David Lang's *the little match girl passion*.

Section One seeks to contextualize the David Lang *the little match girl passion* within the larger development of the passion genre. Chapter One investigates the origins of the passion genre rooted in medieval chant, within various guises in succeeding centuries, and finally the formation and refinement of the Lutheran German passion genre – leading eventually to Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* in 1727.

Chapter Two investigates the context of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* as well as the tradition of the passion genre after his death in 1750. This Chapter will specifically investigate the existence and prominence, or lack thereof, of the passion genre during this time, and will address the influence of Mendelssohn’s so-called “rediscovery of Bach” in the 1840s and the formation of the *Bach Musikgesellschaft* in 1850.

Chapter Three investigates the ways in which composers in the twentieth century have chosen to express their views (and in certain cases, anguish) over issues of suffering and social conscience in their settings of the passion. Six case studies are addressed: Hugo Distler, Frank Martin, Ernst Pepping, Krzysztof Penderecki, Arvo Pärt and Mikis Theodorakis.

Chapter Four investigates the *Passion Project 2000*, a project that was commissioned to specifically investigate and highlight the themes of suffering and social conscience through musical settings of the passion. The composers commissioned were: Tan Dun, Osvaldo Golijov, Sofia Gubaidulina and Ernst Rihm.

Chapter Five investigates one of the pieces featured in the 2014 comPASSION project by popular United States group *Conspirare* – the *Pieta* by Seattle-based

composer John Muehleisen. This chapter further investigates how he chose to adapt Bach's *St. Matthew* and *St. John Passion* as an interesting comparison to David Lang's choices for his *the little match girl passion*. Robert Kyr's *The Passion According to Four Evangelists* (1995) will also be discussed in this chapter. The comPASSION project further illuminates the relevance of the theme of suffering and social conscience within settings of the passion, as evidenced by another *Conspirare* commission, Robert Kyr's *Passion according to the Untold Witness*.

Section Two specifically investigates the David Lang *the little match girl passion* and includes material from a personal interview with the composer during March of 2014. Chapter Six starts by investigating his choral oeuvre and general aesthetic when composing for choirs. It further investigates the background and reception of the work. The acclaim this piece has earned, bordering on rapturous reception in some circles, is significant. Audiences and critics alike seem equally perplexed by the effect and affect of the piece and this chapter will investigate the ways in which both these parties have responded to its unique portrayal of suffering and social conscience. It furthermore investigates the ways in which David Lang adapted the text of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and Anderson's "Little Match Girl" in his *the little match girl passion*. A hermeneutic reading of the text is given for each movement, followed by a brief analysis of Lang's musical devices and adaptation from the musical material of the Bach *St. Matthew Passion* where appropriate.

Guiding Questions:

- i) What topics and themes have influenced composers in their settings of choral passions?
- ii) Is the theme of suffering and social conscience prominent in the passion genre? How have composers chosen to express this in their settings of the passion?
- iii) How is this aligned with Christian reformed theology and pietism in the Bach *St. Matthew Passion*?
- iv) How have composers redefined the passion genre's message, protagonists and philosophy over the course of music history?
- v) How has David Lang chosen to incorporate the Bach *St. Matthew Passion*, and accompanying passion genre tradition, musically and textually in his *the little match girl passion*?
- vi) What is the musical and textual significance of this work within the larger choral passion genre?

What is a passion?

A "Passion" according to the *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* is a "report of the suffering and dying Jesus, as described in the first four books of the New Testament. The passion events form a central part of the salvation gospel, namely that Christ's sacrifice on the cross, as first proclaimed at the Last Supper, fulfills the Messiah's

godly mission for the salvation of all mankind, revealing him as God's Son."⁷ For the purpose of this study only works with the word "Passion" in the title have been discussed, and only those displaying similar socio-political and philosophical content as the David Lang *the little match girl passion* and/or with direct influence on the musical and textual content of the Bach *St. Matthew Passion*. A few notable exceptions are:

- i) Heinrich Schütz's *Die Sieben Letzte Worte am Kreuz* had a significant impact on the German Lutheran passion in form, content and hermeneutic treatment of text, and is included for this reason.
- ii) Graun's *Der Tod Jesu* (1755) was one of the most performed passions of the eighteenth century and the most popular post-J.S. Bach passion setting, forming a vital link between the premieres of Bach's passions and Mendelssohn's "rediscovery" thereof in the nineteenth century.
- iii) Frank Martin's *Golgotha* (1946) followed the same structure as a passion and was the first notable example of deviation from the traditional meaning and intention portrayed in settings of the passion.
- iv) John Muehleisen's *Pieta* (2012) follows the structure and narrative of a passion, with added extrapolations. It provides an interesting case study to examine how modern composers reinterpret Bach's passions.

⁷ Schlager, Karlheinz. "Passion." *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Sachteil 7*. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1997, 1454.

Conclusion

Lang's contribution in this existing tradition has evoked viscerally emotional reactions, from otherwise measured individuals: music critics have bestowed flowery praise on this work for which he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2008. The recognition of this work's impact by audiences and critics alike attest to the power of the passion genre to move its listener, both inside and outside of a Christian construct. Conductor and renowned Bach scholar John Elliot Gardiner agrees: "Bach's Lutheran faith is encapsulated in this extraordinary music [the passion genre]. It carries a universal message of hope that can touch anybody regardless of culture, religious denomination or musical knowledge. It springs from the depths of the human psyche and not from some topical or local creed."⁸

⁸ Gardiner, John Elliot, *Bach: Music in the Castle of Heaven*. New York, NY: Random House, 2013, 15.

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SECTION 1

EVOLUTION OF THE PASSION GENRE

Chapter 1: Evolution of the Passion Genre – From Chant to Bach

1.1 Overview

This chapter will trace the main developments within the passion genre, from its origin in sung form in the fifteenth century to the time of Bach's tenure in Leipzig in the 1720s. Each main developmental genre is highlighted and discussed as well as one or two prominent examples per illustration. The passions chosen to this effect are those that had the most influence on the trajectory that would ultimately influence J.S. Bach in his *St. Matthew Passion* and those that display the developments also visible in his passion settings. This chapter will lastly investigate the period after J.S. Bach's passions and developments and reception of the passion genre during this time.

1.2 Origins

The passion genre has been chanted in a more or less complete guise since the early medieval ages.⁹ The narration was traditionally sung for intelligibility in large spaces with different indications for the Evangelist (*C* or *celetirer* or "in a flowing style") and Jesus (*T* or *tenere* or "in a held back/more reserved style"). By

⁹ The liturgy for Holy Week, included plainchant settings of the four Gospels instead of the normal reading, from at least as early as the fifth century, according to Bukofzer.

the fifteenth century a custom was well established of chanting certain parts of the gospel on specific days within the Holy Week. Matthew Chapters 26 and 27 were chanted for Palm Sunday, Mark Chapters 14 and 15 for Tuesday of Holy Week, Luke Chapters 22 and 23 for the Wednesday of Holy Week and finally John Chapters 18 and 19 for Good Friday. Fifteenth century custom placed the narration in the tenor part, the role of Jesus in the bass and the rest in alto.¹⁰ The *turba* chorus was also introduced during this time to represent the crowd in three or more parts. Their sudden outburst and entrances soon led to the concept of the “Dramatic” or “Liturgical Passions.”¹¹

1.3 The Dramatic Passion

The Dramatic or Liturgical Passions flourished chiefly in the sixteenth century, largely due to the influence of the Reformation in the 1530s and counter-Reformation in ensuing decades. The earliest surviving fragments date back to the year 1400 in the form of a “Latin Passion a 3” composed at Eton College by an anonymous composer.¹² Richard Davy’s *St. Matthew Passion* was also performed during this year. Luther’s emphasis on intelligibility in worship cannot be overestimated in this regard: composers would choose simple settings in order for the congregation to be able to easily discern the text and understand its implied meaning. Intelligibility was typically achieved by using simpler textures and by

¹⁰ Steinitz, Paul. *Bach’s Passions*. New York: Schribner and Sons, 1978, 2.

¹¹ Steinitz, *Ibid*.

¹² Bukofzer, M. *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music*. New York, 1950, 184-5.

avoiding melismatic treatments of the Roman style as well as the rhythmic liveliness characteristic of the English style.¹³ The strong influence of the *musica antica* could still be seen in these compositions, especially where *cantus firmi* were employed, such as in Walther's passions.¹⁴

These passions used entirely Biblical texts with the only exception that of the opening and closing chorus movements. The chorus in these works is used not for narration but to provide the non-narrated text of the gospel. The narration sections were set to "passion tones," set versions of melodies that were associated with passions, compiled in the "Passion Tones" published in 1586. The dramatic passion would frequently start with third person introductions such as "Hear ye the passion according to..." or "This is the gospel according to...".¹⁵ The closing choruses would typically draw a moral, often in the words of a well-known hymn.¹⁶ The Evangelist would speak through single voiced recitatives while the words of all other speakers would be set for two or more voices, with the "Eli, Eli!" section serving as a notable exception set for one single voice.

Notable examples of dramatic passions include those of Walther (1530), Sermissy (1534), Vittoria (1585), Byrd (1607) and Suriano (1619). Walther's 1530 setting uses *cantus firmi* as the basis for the choral sections and other parts of the larger form in a freer style than some of his previous works. Most of the phrases are

¹³ Steinitz, *Bach's Passions*, 3

¹⁴ Steinitz, *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Steinitz, *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Steinitz, *Ibid.*

set to a single chord and all four voice parts sing or intone repeated notes until cadence points are reached. The Evangelist, however, adheres strictly to the prescribed passion tones.

Walther was significantly influenced by Luther's insistence on worshipping in the colloquial language. His 1530 passion employs Luther's recently released 1522 'new translation.' Walther chooses not to set the text "Eli! Eli!" for chorus, but rather augments the words over a long phrase, a decision emulated by Claudin Sermissy in his 1534 passion. While little is known of this passion it becomes clear that Sermissy had access to the same text that was employed in the 1400 anonymous Eton passion.¹⁷

Passions composed later in the sixteenth century exhibited a simplified character, both in form and text. Both Tomas Luis de Vittoria's *St. Matthew Passion* and *St. John Passion* are shorter in length, set in Latin, and only feature sung dialogue by the crowd and disciples with no other individual utterances set to music.¹⁸ The words of the maidens directed at Peter, as well as the witnesses' testimony are represented in this case by the *cantus*.¹⁹ English composer John Byrd uses the same text as Vittoria and displays a simpler, unelaborate character *a la* Vittoria in his *St. John Passion* composed in 1607.²⁰

¹⁷ Adams, H.M. "Passion Music before 1724." *Music & Letters*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Jul, 1926): 260.

¹⁸ Fischer, Kurt von. "Passion." *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 19, London: Macmillan, 2001, 205.

¹⁹ Adams, *Ibid*.

²⁰ Adams, *Ibid*, 261.

A seminal passion composed during the era of the dramatic passions is the *Passio D.N. Jesu Christe* by Francesco Suriano. Suriano chose to use fuller texture and form than Byrd and Vittoria and uses elaborate contrapuntal imitative techniques throughout.²¹ He sets the crowd's words in four parts, Christ's for the first and second cantus, altus and tenor. He uses hermeneutic tone-painting and intelligibility, and provides a translation of Christ's seven last utterances from the cross.²²

It would seem that Suriano's passion setting enjoyed high regard in its day, as evidenced by mention thereof in Proske's celebrated *Musica Divina*.²³ Suriano's more elaborate treatment of the passion narrative and increase in amount of sung parts by the chorus was an important transition to the "Motet Passion." Succeeding composers would however still often opt for the characteristics of the Dramatic Passion. Schütz's *St. Matthew Passion* (1666) was the last passion to be called a "Dramatic Passion."

1.4 The Motet Passion

The style of passion most prevalent in the sixteenth century was that of the Motet Passion. These passions were sung by the chorus throughout (including individual character's roles) and were treated as one continuous composition. The

²¹ Fischer, "Passion", 205.

²² Pictorial devices are used e.g. in descending passages attributed to the text "let Him then come down from that cross."

²³ All four volumes of *Musica Divina*, a source that was well known throughout nineteenth-century Germany, have been made available online through the IMSLP Petrucci Music Library.

passion tones were still often used as *cantus firmi*, which were set in a reserved style to “rid performances of the individual egoistic tendencies and signatures” of the increasingly popular soloists.²⁴

The first composer to opt for the sung-through model within the passion genre was Jacob Obrecht.²⁵ He drew text from all four gospels so as to include all seven of Christ’s last words from the Cross and used passion tones freely (a tendency followed by other composers who might or might not have been aware of Obrecht’s contribution in this regard).²⁶ Another of Obrecht’s decisions to be emulated by successive composers was the start of the composition with the words “Passio Domini Nostri Jesu Christi” (“The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ”) although his chosen ending “qui passus est pro nobis, miserere nobis, Amen” (“that have suffered for us, have mercy on us, Amen.”) received less imitation. The custom of adding a postscript was however followed by several successive composers.²⁷

Regardless of the levels of innovation, the process of evolution within the passion genre was happening quite slowly, with this or that style dominating for almost a century at a time. Despite the urgency and dynamism of the Protestant Reformation, it was only in 1568 that a composer chose to set the passion narrative

²⁴ Adams, “Passion Music”, 263.

²⁵ Smijers, A, *De Mattheus-Passie van Jacob Obrecht*, Tijdschrift der Vereeniging, 24.

²⁶ Smijers, *Ibid.*

²⁷ Twentieth-century research has conclusively proven that this work was written not by Obrecht, in fact, but by Antoine de Longueval. This passion consequently has been referred to as the “Longueval Passion” or even Obrecht’s “Longueval Passion” in some cases.

in the German language. Joachim Burck's *Johannespassion* in many ways signified a break with tradition.²⁸ He discards the passion tones completely and his compositional style reflects the Italian School of Di Lasso *et al* significantly more than the Lower Countries School of Obrecht *et al*.²⁹ Burck reverts to one single gospel depiction, and thus includes only three of Christ's seven last words.³⁰ He also created a succinct and original ending for his passion: "Lord, we believe, increase our faith, Amen."³¹ The motet passion would remain largely popular until the advent of the early baroque, with the last passion definable as such composed by Christoph Demantius in 1631.

1.5 The Oratorio Passion

Passions composed in the early baroque period were largely influenced by the rise of the Italian oratorio, so much so that it would lend its name to this style of passion. The musings of Renaissance intellectuals such as the Florentine Camerata quickly led to significant improvements in the mechanization of instruments, rapidly in the case of stringed instruments and at a slower pace with regard to mechanization of woodwinds.³² This period also saw a marked shift in philosophy regarding music and language. It was a popular thought that natural inflection of language should govern the rhythm and melodic outline of vocal parts in musical

²⁸ Fischer, "Passion", 207.

²⁹ Fischer, *Ibid*.

³⁰ Smallman, Basil. *Background of Passion Music: J.S. Bach and his Predecessors*. New York: Da Capo Press, 27.

³¹ Fischer, *Ibid*.

³² Steinitz, *Bach's Passions*, 4.

compositions and composers quickly moved away from polyphony to the monody and recitative style that was in abundant use in operas of the time.³³ The resultant “Doctrine of the Affections” would similarly have a large impact on passion settings – it was believed that moods, scenes, emotional states and entire classes of people could be represented with specific corresponding melodic shapes, rhythms and instruments. This was expounded upon in the simultaneous development of the cantata in Italy and later in Germany, partly through efforts by J.S. Bach himself.³⁴

It is within this philosophical slipstream that the oratorio passion, the basis for works most familiar to modern audiences, was formed. These compositions were, in effect, a combination of motet passions and dramatic passions as composers would experiment and gradually move further and further away from the use of plainchant.³⁵ As might be expected for this time period, the introduction of instruments played a large role in the shift away from the chanted passions of the Renaissance.³⁶ Passion settings of this time became more structured and architectural, featuring well-defined sections that would oftentimes support and juxtapose its surrounding sections.³⁷ Since instruments no longer had to double elaborate multi-voiced textures in the vocal parts, it allowed in turn for more expressive characterization through instrumental coloring.³⁸

³³ Steinitz, *Bach's Passions*, 4.

³⁴ Braun, Werner, “Passion.” *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Sachteil 7*, London: Barenreiter, 1997, 1474

³⁵ Braun, *Ibid.* 1475

³⁶ Fischer, “Passion”, 208.

³⁷ Steinitz, *Ibid.*

³⁸ Steinitz, *Ibid.*

These passions fully used the new styles of monody and recitative sprouting forth from the Italian oratorios and operas with the establishment of the *basso continuo* section.³⁹ Obligato instruments were slowly introduced and interpolations including *sinfonias* became commonplace.⁴⁰ Similar experimentation is evident in the choice of texts of composers during this time: non-biblical texts frequently interpolate that of the Bible, and comments and moral lessons in the style of Bach are multiple. Some settings similarly use solely familiar and seasonal hymns whereas others include freely composed verses given to the chorus, soloists or to both forces.⁴¹

A strict sense of structure and order pervade in oratorio passions of this time. Thomas Selle's *St. John Passion* of 1643 sets the liturgical sections 'stiffly' and provides each character with their own instrumental group. (This tradition would continue into the latter part of the eighteenth century.)⁴² This practice, also used in Heinrich Schütz's *Die sieben Worte Jesu Christi am Kreuz (Seven Last Words)* of 1645, laid the foundation for Bach's "halo of strings" that accompanies Christ's words in his *St. Matthew* and *St. John Passions*. Selle attributes two bassoons to the Evangelist, two violins and one bassoon to Jesus and cornets and trombone to Pilate, adhering to the Doctrine of the Affections' practice of depicting royalty with brass instrumentation.⁴³

³⁹ Steinitz, *Bach's Passions*, 4.

⁴⁰ Steinitz, *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Braun, "Passion", 1475.

⁴² Steinitz, *Ibid.*

⁴³ Steinitz, *Ibid.*

Heinrich Schütz, the prominent early baroque German composer, married this formal approach to the uses of the Roman/Florentine style of *nuove musiche* and the polychoral Venetian style in his three dramatic passions, the *St. Luke Passion* (1665), *St. John Passion* (1666) and *St. Matthew Passion* (1666). It was however his *Seven Last Words* that proved the most consequential to the development of the passion genre into the Baroque.⁴⁴

The *Seven Last Words* is a stoic piece. Schütz resisted secular influences and regarded anything florid or extroverted as unsuitable for the solemn subject of the crucifixion.⁴⁵ The use of instruments was also prohibited in Dresden during the Lent season, further adding to the sparse texture of the *Seven Last Words*.⁴⁶ Despite this austerity, he managed to vividly portray the pathos and sincerity of the passion events. The Bach and Schütz scholar John Steinitz has claimed that “never has so much been expressed by so few notes and such simple resources.”⁴⁷ Several of Schütz’s practices from this composition would be echoed in subsequent compositions, such as the discarding of passion tones in the recitatives and the use of two-note phrases for the indignant “Is it I?” responses by the disciples when Jesus states that one of them will betray him.⁴⁸

The oratorio passions most similar to Bach’s eventual passion settings are the *St. Matthew Passion* by Johann Sebastiani (1672) and *St. Matthew Passion* by Johann Theile (1673). Both of these compositions are different Bach’s more by

⁴⁴ Adams, “Passion Music”, 261.

⁴⁵ Fischer, “Passion”, 208.

⁴⁶ Fischer, *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Steinitz, *Bach’s Passions*, 6.

⁴⁸ Steinitz, *Ibid.* .

degree than by form. Both composers use a form consisting of recitatives, followed by arias and chorales and use the instrumental introduction or *sinfonia* at the start of their pieces. Sebastiani employs the Italian style consisting of block chords and four-part harmony with note-against-note counterpoint whereas Theile uses the German style (in the style of Schütz) with flowing contrapuntal writing.⁴⁹

Sebastiani's *St. Matthew Passion* starts with seventeen bars of orchestral introduction before the five-part chorus enters, accompanied by 1st and 2nd violins. Recitatives are in arioso form and accompanied by three violas. The strings in general are never more active than the vocal parts, and serve to double or enhance the vocal harmony.⁵⁰ Sebastiani introduces the sustained halo of strings by the 1st and 2nd to accompany Christ's words and removes them to great pictorial effect for the final cry from the cross "why have You deserted me?"⁵¹ Sebastiani gives the part of Christ to the bass, and the parts of the Evangelist and all other characters except for the female roles of the two maids and Pilate's wife.⁵² The "Lord, is it I?" is sung first by soloists and given to full chorus for the final repetition in a very similar way to Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*.⁵³ Another important contribution by Sebastiani is the introduction of chorales into the passion genre.⁵⁴ There are indications for one or more verses of hymns to be sung at thirteen places in the passion, accompanied by the viola section. Some of these are to be sung by soloists and some by the

⁴⁹ Adams, "Passion Music". 261.

⁵⁰ Adams, *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Adams, *Ibid.*

⁵² Adams, *Ibid.*

⁵³ Adams, *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Fischer, "Passion", 1475.

congregation in unison. These five unison congregational hymns are placed in the exact same places that Bach would place his arias.⁵⁵

Theile uses ten bars of instrumental *sinfonia* as introduction followed by ten bars *tutti* of “*Das Leiden und Sterben...*” The passion features instrumental accompaniment of strings, continuo and organ, with the part of Jesus accompanied by the *viola da braccio* and the Evangelist’s part accompanied by the *viola da gamba* in arpeggiated patterns. All other voices are solely accompanied by the continuo. The first four arias for soloist with continuo take the form of hymn verses in simple treatment, followed by *ritornello* for strings and continuo. The fifth aria and concluding chorus in five parts features four verses of the hymn “*Habe Dank, O Gottes Sohn, für dein Leiden...*” marked *tutti*.⁵⁶

Further developments and additions to the passion genre that would influence Bach are the introduction of arias (e.g. Friedrich Funke’s *St. Luke Passion* of 1683), the eradication of congregational chorales, the introduction of a lullaby-like final chorus (e.g. Handel’s *St. John Passion* of 1704) and a more refined interjection technique (e.g. Handel’s *Brockes Passion* c. 1715).⁵⁷ Handel also significantly expanded the role of the chorus as meditative and dramatic vehicle in his *Brockes Passion*.⁵⁸

The last true Oratorio Passion was composed in 1697 by Johann Cristoph Rothe with one notable exception that of Johann Kuhnau’s *St. Mark Passion* of 1721 composed in Leipzig one year before Bach would compose his *St. John Passion*.

⁵⁵ Adams, “Passion Music”, 261.

⁵⁶ Adams, *Ibid.*, 263.

⁵⁷ Steinitz, *Bach’s Passions*, 5.

⁵⁸ Steinitz, *Ibid.*, 5.

Chapter 2: Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and its successors

2.1 Background

In many ways Johann Sebastian Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, BWV 244, can be regarded as site-specific artwork. Not only was the scoring for the *St. Matthew Passion* specific to the positioning of performance forces in the *Thomaskirche* in Leipzig, but the *St. Matthew Passion* furthermore emerged from the very specific performance tradition of Passion Services in Leipzig and out of the philosophical and theological milieu of Lutheran Germany at its apex.

The Passion Service had been sung during Holy Week at Leipzig since the fifteenth century. In its early stages it was in the *choraliter* form (see Chapter 1), with the first concerted performance in Leipzig (Johann Kuhnau's *St. Mark Passion*) as late as 1721. This would imply that Bach's *St. John Passion* (1724) would be only the second concerted passion to ever be performed in Leipzig with the *St. Matthew* following a few years later in 1727.

With the political restructuring of areas within what is currently considered "Germany" after the Thirty Years War (the so-called "Imperial Diet" or in German simply the "*Reichstag*"), the political division consisted of three chambers: the Colleges of Electors, the Princes, Barons and Counts (aristocracy) and finally the Imperial Free Cities (*Freie und Reichsstädte*).⁵⁹ In the Imperial Free Cities, such as Leipzig, there were no court or court orchestras, meaning that city musicians would

⁵⁹ Steinitz, Paul. *Bach's Passions*. New York: Charles Schribner & Sons, 8.

combine with amateur musicians in church orchestras, vastly outnumbering the choirs in most instances.⁶⁰

The earliest Bach catalogue (1754) lists five passions by Bach, corresponding with five annual sets of church cantatas and masses. The only two complete scores in existence are those of the *St. Matthew Passion* and the *St. John Passion*. A score exists for a *St. Luke Passion*, deemed authentic by Bach's biographer Philipp Spitta and the *Bach-Gesellschaft*. Fragments of the *St. Mark Passion* also survive in the Trauer-Ode of 1727.⁶¹ It is also believed that Bach might have set Picander's published passion libretto to music. This would mean that the five passions believed to be composed by Bach are: *St. John Passion* (1723), "*Picander's Passion*" (1725), *St. Matthew Passion* (1729), *St. Mark Passion* (1731) and the undated *St. Luke Passion*.

Both of Bach's passion settings surviving in full form were composed for the Good Friday Vespers at the *Thomaskirche*, although the *St. John Passion* would eventually be performed at last minute's notice in the *Nikolaikirche* instead. The Good Friday Vespers would start with congregational singing of the passion hymn "*Da Jesus an dem Kreuze stund*" followed by the first part of the passion. This would be followed by the hymn "*O Lamm Gottes unschuldig*", another hymn, "*Herr Jesu*

⁶⁰ Steinitz, *Bach's Passions*, 9.

⁶¹ For an interesting comparison of reconstructions of the *St. Mark Passion* see Paula Fourie, *A critical study of five reconstructions of Bach's Markuspassion BWV 247 with particular reference to the parody technique*. M.Mus thesis, University of Pretoria, South Africa, 2010.

Christ, dich zu uns wend” and the sermon.⁶² After the sermon the second part of the passion was performed, followed by the Gallus motet “*Ecco quomodo moritur Justus*” and a sung Collect. The Vespers would conclude with the hymn “*Nun danket alle Gott*” and the Blessing by the minister.⁶³

The positioning of the performing forces for the *St. Matthew Passion* was also specific to the *Thomaskirche*. A large organ was positioned in the gallery with a smaller organ positioned opposite the gallery.⁶⁴ Bach conducted services from a clavier, positioned in the gallery located at the west end of the nave, with singers and instrumentalists positioned at either side looking down upon the congregation seated in the nave facing eastwards.⁶⁵

Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* weaves the many strands of philosophical and theological thought that had a direct result on its musical and textual content. As such it can truly be viewed as the epoch of the traditional Lutheran Passion and a representative of 1730s Leipzig *Zeitgeist*. Martin Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses of 1517 served as catalyst for the Reformation within the Christian faith, a school of thought that would soon see a snowball accumulation of new thought and practice. The original protestations of this movement included criticism of the church, especially because of the selling of indulgences, and general disagreement with the

⁶²

Boyd, Malcolm. *Oxford Composer Companions: J.S. Bach*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. 360-261

⁶³ Boyd, *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ There has been academic dispute over whether Bach used both organs, although Gunther Rost, quoted in Terry, noted that in 1736 both organs were used for the passion performance.

⁶⁵ There have been some suggestions that the evangelist sang from the lectern between the nave and the chancel, but Terry, among others, has considered this an “untenable suggestion.”

doctrines concerning purgatory, particular judgment, Marian devotion, intercession to the saints, many of the sacraments, mandatory clerical celibacy including monasticism and the general central authority of the pope over the church and political Europe.⁶⁶ It was Luther's redesign of the church service however that would have the most consequential effect on music composed by Bach and other Protestant/Lutheran composers.

Luther reconstructed the church service to allow for more active participation by congregation members, emphasizing communal singing and congregation participation, mostly through the singing of hymns.⁶⁷ Singing these hymns proved problematic however due to the issue of accompaniment. Organs during this time were used sparingly and were only used to accompany choirs when singing contrapuntally or for interludes between the movements of the otherwise a cappella mass.⁶⁸ The concept of block harmony was largely unknown for the entire sixteenth century and congregations would sing single melodic lines in hymns in unison with the choir.⁶⁹ The choir would sometimes sing certain verses by themselves in parts, the so-called *figuraliter* in which case the melody would always be in the tenor.⁷⁰ It was only with the publication of Osiander's series of hymn tunes in 1586 that the melody was placed in the top voice part. This change significantly eased congregational singing with the choir supporting these melodies in parts

⁶⁶ Blume, *Protestant Church Music, a History*, London: Gollancz, 1975, 254.

⁶⁷ Marshall, Robert, "Bach and Luther", *The Worlds of Johann Sebastian Bach*, New York: Amadeus Press, 2009, 234.

⁶⁸ Erickson, Raymond. "The Legacies of J.S. Bach", *The Worlds of Johann Sebastian Bach*, New York: Amadeus Press, 2009, 43.

⁶⁹ Adams, H.M. "Passion Music before 1724." *Music & Letters*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Jul, 1926), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 262.

⁷⁰ Adams, *Ibid.*

underneath.⁷¹ The choir's parts were doubled by the organ from 1636, further easing this practice and accomplishing Luther's ideal of effortless congregational singing in the church service.⁷²

The new Pietist movement within Lutheranism emerged from rationalism, a residue of the "Dawn of Enlightenment" of 1600 that greatly emphasized personal responsibility in using reason and knowledge to inform opinion and actions. The "Dawn of Enlightenment" resulted in a loss of trust in the church's authority and subsequent loss of centralized power of the church and focused instead on the role and responsibility at an individual level to maintain a personal relationship with God. The Thirty Years War, a series of wars fought from 1618 to 1634, one of the longest in modern history, further influenced composers to choose texts that focused on escaping from the storms and turmoil of the world to the peace of the "life hereafter."

The time frame during which Pietism enjoyed its highest level of popularity coincides directly with Bach's life. Pietism influenced individual piety and living a good Christian life with emphasis on the sacraments, Bible and the sermon as the principle vehicles for salvation.⁷³ Extreme forms of Pietism developed in several cities in modern-day Germany, with Halle, near Leipzig as a notable example.⁷⁴ Adherents to this extreme form of Pietism believed that ardent pain and ecstasy created overemotional bliss. This, in turn, influenced librettists and poets to

⁷¹ Adams, "Passion Music before 1724", 263

⁷² Marshall, Robert, "Bach and Luther", *The Worlds of Johann Sebastian Bach*, New York: Amadeus Press, 2009, 234.

⁷³ Blume, *Protestant Church Music, a History*, London & New York, 1975, 254

⁷⁴ Blume, *Ibid.*

elaborate on the most gruesome aspects of the passion story, e.g. Brocke's *"Der für die Sunde der Welt gemartete und sterbende Jesus"* set by Bach in his *St. John Passion*.⁷⁵ The antithesis between Lutheran orthodoxy which saw music as an essential part of worship and Pietism that saw music as a simple form of devotion, furthermore characterized and defined much of the Baroque period and of Bach's thinking.⁷⁶ Bach's Passions should be viewed within this context where congregants required a 'moral of the story' or applied message to their daily lives from their worship experience. (Philipp Jakob Spener, for example, who lived in the generation directly preceding Bach, taught the dissemination of the Bible and the deepening of personal piety and practice of "priesthood of all believers."⁷⁷) Daily life in Germany was changed with this new emphasis on spiritual "warmth" that was to be obtained through ethical values and the observance of daily rituals such as catechism, devotions, singing of sacred songs and simple hymns of a mystical and emotional nature.⁷⁸ This practice resulted in the members of the congregation thoroughly knowing and understanding the chorales and hymns and attributing immediate individual-level moral and pietistic personal consequences to their text.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Blume, *Protestant Church Music*, 263.

⁷⁶ Steinitz, *Bach's Passions*, 8.

⁷⁷ Blume, *Ibid.*, 251.

⁷⁸ Steinitz, *Ibid.*, 8

⁷⁹ Blume, *Ibid.*, 252.

2.2 Text

The text for the *St. Matthew Passion* can be divided into two categories: biblical texts and non-biblical texts. The biblical texts, taken from the Gospel of St. Matthew, Chapters 26 and 27, are used for recitatives and the *turba* choruses, whereas the non-biblical texts are used for the arias and ariosos, free choruses, chorales and congregational hymns. The text for the arias and ariosos of the *St. Matthew Passion* was written by the librettist Christian Friedrich Henrici (1700-1764), who used the pseudonym Picander. The chorales and congregational hymns were taken from the traditional hymns of the time period and move in musical or dramatic time as if to “hold on for a moment to ponder over the story,”⁸⁰ bringing the passion narrative into the present time of Bach’s audience while expanding the universal application of the text.

2.3 Chorale melodies

The chorale emerged from several different sources: the German sacred folksong predating the twelfth century, secular folk songs that became sacred songs in the sixteenth century, adaptations of Latin hymns, church songs by both professional and non-professional composers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, secular songs that became sacred songs in the eighteenth century, French psalms and finally, the songs of the Moravian Church originating from the modern-

⁸⁰ Herford, Julius. “The. St. Matthew Passion. Indiana University - unpublished lecture notes, n.d., 13.

day Czech and Slovak regions.⁸¹ Bach used eight different melodies in his *St. Matthew Passion*: one from the fifteenth century, four from the sixteenth century and three from the seventeenth century, outlined below:

1.	Komm ihr Tochter	Nicolaus Decius	Sacred
3.	Herzliebster Jesu	Johann Cruger	Sacred
16.	Ich bin's, ich sollte bußen	Isaac "Welt, ich muss dich lassen..."	Secular love song
21.	Erkenne mich, mein Huter	Hans Leo Hassler	Secular
31.	Was mein Gott will	Attainment	Secular French chanson
35.	O Mensch, beweine...	Matthaus Greitter	Sacred
38.	Mir hat die Welt...	Calvisius/Kallwitz	Sacred
48.	Bin ich gleich von dir...	Johann Schop	Secular
53.	Befiehl du deine Wege...	Hassler (same mel. as 21)	Secular

It is clear that these melodies represent an equal balance of sacred and secular. This could well be a calculated move on Bach's part, bringing the secular world into the church, further emphasizing the Lutheran and Pietist belief that the lessons of the sermon should culminate in action-based work outside of church. In his own way, Bach is using this musical material to relate the audience to their current environment and universalize the message of the passion narrative into their daily lives. It also further emphasizes Bach's sense of inclusivity, as evidenced by combining the two groups of the Daughters of Zion with the larger congregation, as discussed later in this chapter.

⁸¹ Wolfrum, Philip. *The Origin of the German Evangelical Churchsong*, Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1890.

2.4 Scoring

The *St. Matthew Passion* is scored for two choirs, each supported by their own orchestra of strings, flutes, oboes, continuo and organ.⁸² By Bach's instruction each voice part required at least one "concertist" and two "ripienists", meaning that there would be three or four singers on a part (four stated as preferable by Bach), resulting in twelve to sixteen members per choir. The part of Jesus and the part of the Evangelist was also given to members of Choir I, thus Choir I probably numbered eighteen singers. This would bring the total amount of singers to thirty-four.⁸³ A popular thesis by Rifkin, defended by Parrott, has been that a closer examination of surviving parts for singers and of Bach's notations within his own scores, and his correspondence in the *Entwurff* of 1830, suggests that many choirs during this time sang one singer to a part.⁸⁴ Choruses in Bach's music, according to this viewpoint, would thus have consisted of four singers, one to a part.

Each orchestra included continuo instruments consisting of double bass (violone), celli and organ. Each orchestra also required two violas, two or three second violins, two or three first violins, two oboes and two flutes, bringing the orchestra total to a minimum of fifteen each or thirty altogether.⁸⁵ These instrumentalists were either in permanent employ of the *Thomaskirche* or taken

⁸² This is especially interesting in light of Bach's complaints in correspondence about insufficient numbers of performers at the *Thomaskirche*.

⁸³ Rilling, Helmuth. *J.S. Bach St. Matthew Passion – Introduction and Instructions for Study*, Frankfurt: Litolf's Verlag, 7.

⁸⁴ Rifkin, Joshua. "Bach's Chorus: A Preliminary Report," *The Musical Times*, Vol. 123, No. 1677 (Nov., 1982), pp. 751-4.

⁸⁵ Rilling, *Instructions for Study*, 9.

from the *Collegium Music* or *Thomanerschule* students and some were professional players for Leipzig's municipality.

Orchestra 1 mostly doubles Chorus 1 and Orchestra 2 mostly doubles Chorus 2. The writing features a mixture between independent instrumental sections and instrumental support of vocal parts. Often some instruments would support the choir whereas others would be playing independent melodic lines. The alto voice part is often doubled in instruments above the soprano, such as the first flute or oboe and the tenor voice part often doubled by flute or at other times by viola.

2.5 The chorus as metaphor

The choruses are intently used in separate and simultaneous treatment. With very few exceptions, each choir retains its own separate identity with Choir 1 representing the disciples and the voice of the Daughters of Zion and Choir 2 representing the larger congregation, labeled "the Faithful" by the librettist Picander. With the exception of turba choruses the two "Christian groups" of the disciples and congregation seldom combine, with the exception of the chorales and seven other notable moments. Charles Sanford Terry has argued that Bach did this to "express the numerical minority of the Christian community."⁸⁶ The first of these combined moments is the concluding section of Part 1 and the other six can all be found in the second part of the passion. Terry has stated that the choirs combine in Movements 54 and 59 to "voice the vindictive enmity that assailed the Savior", in

⁸⁶ Terry, Charles Stanford *Bach, The Passions* (London: Musical Pilgrim, 1926), 13.

Movement 73 to “express the awe that drew from His persecutors the admission, ‘Truly this was the Son of God,’ in Movement 67 in a turba chorus to represent a “tumultuous mob round the Cross becoming united as it flings the taunt, ‘If He be King of Israel, let Him come down!’” and finally in Movement 76 “in outraged recollection of the Savior’s blasphemy.”⁸⁷

The esteemed American choral conductor Robert Shaw claimed three functions in the use of the chorus, a viewpoint that has been largely accepted by the choral academic community. The first function is that of the chorale response by the congregation of believers, making the listener a “true witness at the moment of drama” with a spontaneous response that “means that our own spiritual emotion is involved. We speak out of the centuries of religious and musical heredity.”⁸⁸

The second function of the chorus is that of the *turba* chorus by the crowd, which involves the listener in the drama, either as a disciple, high priest or as part of the common masses.⁸⁹ The fact that the opening and closing choruses are given to the collective group, combining both the believers and the non-believers, and not an individual, could also be viewed as a socio-cultural statement.

The third function of the chorus is that of architectural integrity in the form of the opening and closing choruses that prepares the listener for the drama and releases the listener from the drama.⁹⁰ Shaw stated that these choruses are “moralities, philosophical utterances – soul-utterances of Bach.”⁹¹

⁸⁷ Terry, *Bach, the Passions*, 12.

⁸⁸ Shaw, Robert, lecture notes, 1955.

⁸⁹ Shaw, *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Shaw, *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Shaw, *Ibid.*

These statements deserve further investigation. The power of Bach's passion settings lies in the way that the listener is placed in the middle of the action. The combination of Biblical text with Picander's texts, especially those written in the first person, places the listener in the middle of the action, but also paints the listener as active participant. The texts alternate between questioning, pondering and admitting the extent of this participation. After Jesus predicts his death, the first chorale *Herzliebster Jesu* asks: "Jesus, most dear to my heart, what have you done wrong that such a harsh judgment is pronounced. What is your guilt? In what misdeed have you been caught?" After Jesus gets anointed with costly lotions, at the disciples utter consternation, the alto recitative concludes: "Then let **me** in the meanwhile pour water on your head with floods of tears from **my** eyes." This is immediately followed by the collective reflection in the second chorale: "Penance and remorse; grind **my** sinful heart in two so the drops of **my** tears may carry forth pleasing spices for you, faithful Jesus."⁹²

By combining and linking Biblical times with the current day, and linking the listener into the narrative in this way, Bach successfully created a passion that transcended one particular time and place, setting the standard for successive passion settings.

⁹² It is interesting to note that Lang uses these exact texts, to the same effect, in his *the little match girl passion* (2007).

2.6 Performance tradition of passion music after Bach

Musicologists like to say that Bach's passion music was "rediscovered" in 1829 by Felix Mendelssohn. Larry Todd's biography on Mendelssohn concurred with this image of Mendelssohn's grandmother, Bella Salomon, giving him a copy of the manuscript of the *St Matthew Passion*, an "all but forgotten masterpiece."⁹³ Celia Applegate's study of Mendelssohn's "rediscovery" reads as follows on the book sleeve: "Bach's St. Matthew Passion is universally acknowledged to be one of the world's supreme musical masterpieces, yet in the years after Bach's death it was forgotten by all but a small number of his pupils and admirers. The public rediscovered it in 1829, when Felix Mendelssohn conducted the work before a glittering audience of Berlin artists and intellectuals, Prussian royals, and civic notables. The concert soon became the stuff of legend, sparking a revival of interest in and performance of Bach that has continued to this day."⁹⁴

More recent scholarship has suggested however that the passion genre was alive and well in the period after Bach's death, although oftentimes in locations that were off the beaten track, such as Riga, Latvia.⁹⁵ Whereas the statements made by these authors are not incorrect as such, it would only apply to those areas within the modern-day definition of "Germany." Investigating the period after Bach and the passion tradition therein, does not however diminish Mendelssohn's own significant

⁹³ Todd, Larry, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music*, (New York, NY: Oxford), 2003.

⁹⁴ Applegate, Celia, *Bach in Berlin – Nation and Culture in Mendelssohn's Revival of the St. Matthew Passion*, Ithaca, NY, 2005.

⁹⁵ Clark, Stephen L. "C.P.E. Bach and the Tradition of Passion Music in Hamburg," *Early Music Vol. 16, No. 4, November 1988*, 533.

contribution to popularizing Bach in Leipzig, and subsequently a broadening audience base in Europe, or the role thereof in the forming of the *Bach Gesellschaft* and subsequent Bach scholarship.

Georg Phillip Telemann started a tradition of composing a passion setting annually from his arrival in Hamburg in 1721 until 1767, composing a total of forty-six passions, the largest output within the passion genre by any single composer. Unlike other composers he would never use the same poetic text twice and used the four Gospel texts in sequence without fail over these 46 years.⁹⁶ His grandson Georg Michael Telemann would host twenty-one performances of his passions in Riga (modern-day Latvia) between 1776 and 1827, a mere two years before Mendelssohn's so-called "rediscovery."⁹⁷

Bach's second oldest son, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, who continued his tradition of annually composing a passion setting, succeeded Telemann in Hamburg. He composed twenty-one passions until his death in 1788. At this time the performance of passions in Hamburg ceased.⁹⁸ Both CPE Bach and Telemann frequently borrowed music from J.S. Bach's passions and even used his *turba* choruses verbatim, meaning that exact sections of Bach's material would have been

⁹⁶ Clark, Stephen L. "C.P.E. Bach and the Tradition of Passion Music in Hamburg," *Early Music* Vol. 16, No. 4, November 1988, 533.

⁹⁷ Clark, Stephen L. "The Letters from Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach to Georg Michael Telemann," *Journal of Musicology*, iii (1984), 182.

⁹⁸ Clark, "Letters from C.P.E. Bach", 534.

performed until 1788, four decades after his death.⁹⁹ Even if this was the case, Mendelssohn's own contribution to raising awareness and creating a revival in the popularity of Bach's music cannot be overlooked. Musicologist Paul Henry Lang argues that "...it was understandable that with the new music appearing everywhere his [Bach's] own was looked upon as conservative in tone and aim, and was quickly silenced by the youthful eloquence of the rising style."¹⁰⁰

There were two catalysts in Leipzig for this resurgence in popularity of the *St. Matthew Passion*. Mendelssohn was appointed as conductor of the Gewandhaus Orchestra in 1829, where he performed the *St. Matthew Passion* in 1840. A decade later, the *Bach-Gesellschaft* was established with the publication of Bach's complete works as its main aim, forming the foundation for Bach-related musicological research ever since.

2.7 Graun's *Der Tod Jesu*

Carl Heinrich Graun's 1755 work *Der Tod Jesu* has been called both a passion cantata and passion oratorio. It is considered one of the key transitional choral works in the eighteenth century and was the most popular of all works within the passion genre, rivaling even those settings by C.P.E. Bach.¹⁰¹ The text is by the poet Karl Wilhelm Ramler (1725-1798) and was set both by Graun and Georg Philipp Telemann, with both composers premiering their settings thereof during March of

⁹⁹ Miesner, Heinrich. *Philipp Emanuel Bach in Hamburg*, Leipzig, 1929, 64.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Henry Lang, *Music in Western Civilization*, New York: W.W. Norton, 512.

¹⁰¹ Smither, Howard, *A History of the Oratorio*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000, p. 88

1755. Telemann stuck to the expected style with rich, contrapuntal, late-Baroque treatment of the text, whereas Graun's piece was considered slightly more controversial and groundbreaking. Graun shied away from representing the anguish and suffering of Jesus, and instead opted for a more genteel portrayal, which proved immediately popular with the nobility.¹⁰² It was reprinted several times well into the early 20th century, was mentioned by Beethoven in his preparation for *Christus am Olberge*, and was regularly performed on Good Friday until 1884, when it was "...finally knocked out of contention, presumably overtaken by the growing popularity of J.S. Bach's works for Passiontide."¹⁰³

2.8 Conclusion

Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* was the inspiration and basis for David Lang's *the little match girl passion*, both in form and text. When investigating the *St. Matthew Passion* it becomes clear that its multi-functional character is a direct result of the evolution of the Lutheran/German passion genre and those socio-political, theological and practical issues that impacted Bach directly. The function of the recitative-aria-chorale structure, adapted by David Lang in his passion setting, is also seen as a direct result of these influences. These functions and forms were further expounded by Bach's successors, effectively keeping the passion genre in the minds and ears of the eighteenth and nineteenth century public. It was especially

¹⁰² Pfeiffer, Harald. *Einführung in Carl Heinrich Grauns Passionskantate*, Keynote address, Heidelberger Studente Kantorei, 2007.

¹⁰³ Pfeiffer, *Ibid.*

through performances of Graun's *Der Tod Jesu* that this genre was preserved until the twentieth century, at which time composers would start expanding both the textual and musical practices related to settings of the passion.

Bach's model, the finessed culmination of centuries of development in the Protestant passion genre, provided the listener with opportunities to reflect on the dramatic narrative in a personal and elaborately poetic way on an individual level in the aria sections, on a collective level in the chorale sections and ultimately on an even more universal level in the closing chorale movements for the two sections. It is important to note as well that the role of this chorus changes: from the exclusive, dogmatic, holier-than-thou religious leaders to the earnest-yet-limited disciples to the crowds rallying and pleading for this unjust act to be committed. Bach places the listeners in the shoes of the "Other," leading them through an embodied experience of a different point-of-view. As a devout Lutheran Bach ascribed to one of Luther's central teachings: that the gospel had to be understood in one's own life and that this faith should result in works.

It is possible, even in as early a composition as the *St. Matthew Passion*, even in the early eighteenth-century, to see the seeds of social conscience as depicted through an understanding of suffering that weaves through the passion settings of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Furthermore the interplay between the individual/personal and collective psyche as response to the political plot, good vs. evil, and the inability and powerlessness experienced by the listeners to affect the outcome of these events, laid the groundwork for more universal and in cases, secular socio-political passions of the twentieth century.

Chapter 3: Political Passions of the Twentieth Century

3.1 Overview

This chapter will investigate six passions composed in the twentieth century. These passions, while not the only ones composed during this time, exhibit some of the changes in the trajectory of the evolution of the passion genre, and display characteristics most relevant to the eventual practices of composers in the 21st century in general, and David Lang specifically.

3.2 Outline of main passion settings of Twentieth Century

Six passions dominate the landscape of twentieth century passion settings – those by Hugo Distler (1933), Frank Martin (1946), Ernst Pepping (1950), Krzystof Penderecki (1965), Arvo Pärt (1982) and Mikis Theodorakis (1982).¹⁰⁴ The level to which this socio-political undercurrent is brought to the front differs from piece to piece. Yet the majority of these pieces, with the exception of Arvo Pärt's, contain prominent social commentary on some topical issue or another during this turbulent time in human history.

¹⁰⁴ For timeline of passions integral to this study, please refer to Appendix section.

Hugo Distler's *Choralpassion* of 1933 can rightfully be seen as the first seminal passion setting in the twentieth century. Distler's life was characterized and deeply affected by his immediate surroundings. Being a composer in National Socialist Germany took its toll on Distler and ultimately led to his suicide in 1942. Distler was born in Nuremberg, an important industrial city in the Bavarian region that would soon become the bastion of National Socialism in Germany after Hitler's ascent to power in 1933 (coincidentally the year the *Choralpassion* was composed). Distler studied composition, conducting, piano and organ at the Leipzig Conservatory and was part of the twentieth century revival of the early German Baroque style after the example of Schütz. Distler was a part of the "Recognized Church", a movement that was extremely opposed to the racial policies of the Nazi regime.¹⁰⁵ This movement served as antitheses to the so-called "German Christian Movement." The German Christian Movement was a Nazi-sponsored movement that wanted to rid Christianity of all "foreign" influences such as the Judaic-centric Old Testament of the Bible. The Nazi party was particularly hostile to the church, with several of the church's leaders arrested or deported to work camps as "political enemies."¹⁰⁶ In light of this milieu, it is surprising then that Distler chose to set the passion in a very traditional way.

He follows the structure of Schütz's *Sieben letzte Worte* narrowly and follows the form of the seven strophes of the chorale *Jesu, deine Passion will ich jetzt*

¹⁰⁵ Neumann, Klaus L, "Distler, Hugo", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Vol. 7*, London: Macmillan, 2001.

¹⁰⁶ Kater, Michael, *The Twisted Muse: Musicians and their Music in the Third Reich*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, 158.

bedenken.¹⁰⁷ The passion is scored for five-voice a cappella choir and two soloists: Jesus as baritone and the Evangelist as tenor. Both of these roles sing unaccompanied recitatives in another reference to Schütz and the earlier German passion. Distler chooses German text from all four of the gospels in Luther's original translation, including all of the seven last words. The traditional and sacred nature of the *Choralpassion* in this politically charged time reads not as passive adherence to tradition, but rather as an active defiance of the policies and expectations of the National Socialist Party.

Swiss composer, Frank Martin composed his passion, *Golgotha* after seeing the etching by the Dutch artist Rembrandt titled "The Three Crosses." Rembrandt's etching is known in the art world for its ambiguous nature – despite the obvious presence of light, the darkness and chaos depicted in the artwork has left viewers with all but a sense of closure.¹⁰⁸ Art historian and former curator of the Smith Museum of Art, Amanda Schubert argues: ¹⁰⁹

...the crucifixion is ultimately a tale of redemption: Christ's sacrifice brings about the salvation of humankind. But the fourth state [of Rembrandt's etching] is so dark and bleak, it casts doubt upon the redemption narrative. The looming shadow that threatens to engulf the whole scene, the rearing horse, the obscurity of the figures, and the emphasis on Christ's suffering transforms *The Three Crosses* from an image of pathos and sacrifice to one of darkness, doubt and chaos."

¹⁰⁷ Hutcheson, Robert Joseph, *Twentieth Century Settings of the Passion: An Opusculum of the Powerless God*, insert page

¹⁰⁸ Schubert, Amanda. "Rembrandt's The Three Crosses", *Smith Museum of Art Catalogue*, 18 April 2012.

¹⁰⁹ Schubert, *Ibid*.



Figure 1: Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Three Crosses*. (c. 1653)¹¹⁰

The combination of this religious doubt with the influence of Dutch Calvinism (Martin's father was a Calvinist minister) significantly influenced Martin's *Golgotha*. Martin was born in Geneva, Switzerland in 1890 and would spend a large part of his life in the Netherlands, where he eventually passed away in Naarden, Netherlands in 1974.¹¹¹ He studied mathematics and physics at Geneva University and studied composition, piano and harmony during this time with Joseph Lauber.¹¹² Martin was interested in twelve-tone theory but never completely abandoned tonality. He was considered conservative by the *avant garde* and chose to opt for leaner

¹¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Three_Crosses.

¹¹¹ Billeter, Bernhard. "Martin, Frank." *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 15. London: Macmillan, 908.

¹¹² An interesting relationship formed during this time between Martin and Emile Jaques-Dalcroze.

textures.¹¹³ Martin felt largely influenced by Bach (a formative moment for Martin as young boy was seeing the *St. Matthew Passion* performed at the age of 12).¹¹⁴

Golgotha, composed in 1946, utilizes texts from all four of the gospels (in French) interspersed with writings from St. Augustine. The form follows ten tableaux in two parts. Martin scored *Golgotha* for five soloists, chorus, organ and orchestra. His musical depiction of the passion events narrowly reflects Rembrandt's depiction: there is no "happy ending," extremely dramatic tone painting is used during Christ's final moments and a general sense of apathy pervades throughout.¹¹⁵ As a composer operating in the largely conservative, Calvinist societies of Switzerland and the Netherlands, Martin used the passion genre to express his own doubt in the redemption narrative so central to Christian faith.¹¹⁶ This aspect of the composer's beliefs comes to the fore in this piece much more than anything else he had written, and as such has been labeled an "atheist manifesto."¹¹⁷ While this labeling might appear slightly exaggerated the persistence of doubt and chaos is undeniable in this musical monument within Martin's *oeuvre*.

Another composer struggling with inner beliefs who chose to express this through a setting of the passion is Ernst Pepping. Like Distler, Pepping's career was characterized by his interaction with the Nazi party. Pepping, a relatively unknown composer to Western audiences, was born in Duisberg, Germany in 1901 and died in

¹¹³ Billeter, "Martin", 909.

¹¹⁴ Hutcheson, *Twentieth Century Settings of the Passion*, 69.

¹¹⁵ Billeter, *Ibid.*, 910.

¹¹⁶ Tommasini, Anthony, "The Passion, without Hyperbole", *The New York Times*, July 16, 2010.

¹¹⁷ Tommasini, *Ibid.*

Berlin-Spandau in 1981. He studied composition with Walther Gmeindl at the *Staatliche Hochschule für Music* in Berlin and started his career by mostly composing instrumental works. It was his association with the *Singbewegung* of the 1920s that would significantly influence the size and nature of his choral and religious output.¹¹⁸ Like Distler, Pepping also had an interest in the earlier practices of German musicians. He consistently used church modes in combination with polyphony. In the *Passionsbericht der Matthaus* (1950) for example, he combined three modes (Dorian, Phrygian and Lydian) to achieve all twelve tones of the octave from D to D.¹¹⁹ There are also some neo-Baroque elements discernible in his works, as evidenced by the titles of some of his published treatises on the topic, such as *Stilwende der Music* (1934), *Der Polyphonie Satz, Vol 1: Der Cantus-firmus Satz* (1943) and *Der Polyphonie Satz, Vol 2: Übungen in doppelten Kontrapunkt und in Kanon*.¹²⁰

Pepping's musical career in hindsight can be characterized by the combination of his thinking on religious music and his relationship with the Nazi party and personal response and guilt over this.¹²¹ This is very much reflected and exhibited in his *Passionsbericht*. Pepping was a member of the Confessional Church, a movement in reaction against the Nazi regime's attempts to create an official state church. Its focus was on "purifying German music" of all outside influences

¹¹⁸ The *Singbewegung* centered on an emphasis in music education in the 1920s to rediscover the folk song and soon led to the popularity of lyricism based on folk melody and folk identity. Pepping's works exhibited this lyricism and playfulness, akin to his Hungarian counterparts, Kodaly and Bartok.

¹¹⁹ Hutcheson, *Twentieth Century Settings*, 10.

¹²⁰ Kirchberg, Klaus, "Pepping, Ernst", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Vol. 19*, London: Macmillan, 2001, 323.

¹²¹ Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, 163.

(including Judaic ones) and simplifying Protestant church music. This was in line with Pepping's affinity for Renaissance and mid-Baroque German church music. His use of the modal scale in combination in the *Passionsbericht* lends a tonal, traditional feeling for the passion.¹²² His theological beliefs similarly hearken back to an earlier style, while using supplemental text from scripture to reaffirm the historical validity of the passion events, sticking "religiously" to Luther's text and translation.¹²³

Despite Pepping's earnest desire for religious and dogmatic transformation, the uneasy anti-Semitism inherent in the Confessional Church is further complicated by his close involvement with the National Socialist Party, a controversial issue that has been discussed in depth by several academics.¹²⁴ The undeniable fact is that Pepping was by and large a pragmatic man. He never left the country, and instead used the opportunities provided him by the Nazi party. His works were performed at anniversaries of Hitler's ascent to power and he was frequently commissioned to compose works and dramatic narratives for the *Hitler Jugend*.

An accurate description of this pragmatism by composers of the Confessional Church, such as Pepping, Fortner, Distler and Nepomuk David, is provided by musicologist Michael Kater, who specializes in Third Reich music studies: "...a shabby compromise with the regime leaders on the part of calculating composers...[who]...in their reformist zeal proceeded to exorcise the devil with the

¹²² Hutcheson, *Twentieth Century Settings*, 11.

¹²³ Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, 164.

¹²⁴ Thacker, Toby. *Music after Hitler*, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007, 118.

help of Beelzebub.”¹²⁵ In layman’s terms these composers “co-opted” the Nazi authorities to aid their mission statement of reforming the church and church music.

Several musicologists including Kater have however argued that Pepping used the *Passionsbericht* as a request for redemption from guilt over the Holocaust and the National Socialist era within German history. The *Passionsbericht* was composed in post-war Germany and Pepping was free to compose as he wished in the free *Deutscher Demokratische Republik*. The *Passionsbericht* displays a curious absence of the heroism and masculinity of German choral works of the National Socialist era. Pepping uses text from the gospel of John to conclude the passion with “the Good News of the Eternal God in whom is all life and power and love, who brings “grace and truth” to man”¹²⁶ in which “...the believer has seen himself taken through a recounting of saving mysteries that concern forgiveness and presently existing divine life for him.”¹²⁷ The use of such redemption theology at this crucial time in Germany’s history has successively been hinted at as a personal confession and request for redemption from Pepping and his fellow Germans. This is debatable, but Kater has made strong statements in favour of this argument.¹²⁸

Pepping uses the traditional chapters from Matthew but added text from the other gospels to reinforce the theological content. An Intermedium is added forming a “mini-sermon” that consists of the Emmaus men’s invitation to Jesus to stay with them (Luke 24:29), followed by the cries of the frightened disciples on the stormy sea (Matthew 8:25) and concluding with the resolution text in which Jesus

¹²⁵ Kater, *Twisted Muse*, 160-61.

¹²⁶ Hutcheson, *Twentieth Century Settings*, 23.

¹²⁷ Hutcheson, *Ibid.*, 23-4.

¹²⁸ Kater, *Ibid.*, 161.

promises his continual presence to his disciples and followers (Matthew 28:20). Pepping is the first composer since the nineteenth century to employ a double chorus: Choir 1 sings the Matthaen Gospel text and Choir 2 the reactions to this text. The five sections of the *Passionsbericht* consist of an introduction, *bericht*, *intermedium*, *bericht* and *schluss*, while hinting at chiasmic structure with the chorale “*Herr, bleibe bei uns*” forming the crux of the piece.

Arguably the most famous passion of the twentieth century, Krzysztof Penderecki’s *Passio et mors Domini nostri Iesu Christi secundum Lucam* of 1965, was unlike any passion to come before. Penderecki, a living composer, was born on 23 November 1933 in Debica, Poland and studied composition with Franciszek Skolyssewski, Arthur Malowski and Stanislaw Wiehowicz. He graduated from the Krakow *Musikhochschule* in 1958. It was however at the end of the Stalinist era with its decrease in state controls that he would hear the music of composers such as Webern, Stravinsky and Xenakis. These composers had a considerable impact on his own style.

Texture plays an important part in Penderecki’s passion setting – the piece is scored for narrator, three soloists (soprano, baritone and bass), three SATB choirs, 2-part boys choir, organ, pianoforte, harmonium and large orchestra with an extended percussion section. The work is divided into 27 sections (with only 24 sections in the libretto) with a larger division of two parts: the first leading up to Christ’s appearance before Pilate and the second starting at the walking of the *Via Dolorosa* and culminating in the finale. Penderecki uses Latin text from the Gospel

of Luke, Chapters 22 and 23, interspersed with writings from the Gospel of John, Chapter 19, the Lamentations of Jeremiah (missal version) and the 'Improperia' as well as 3 hymns, 8 psalms and the Stabat Mater.

Penderecki's style is an eclectic one, utilizing the characteristics and methods of the Second Viennese School but still never becoming completely serial in pitch organization. He uses a basic set in the passion, using all of the chromatic notes contained in a perfect fourth.¹²⁹ The first two rows are stated on the first two pages of the score and display similarities to the symmetry of Webern's *Symphonie und Orchester-Variationen*. (One of these tone rows interestingly enough includes the B-A-C-H motif, acting as a link between the conventional and more experimental elements of the *St. Luke Passion*.)¹³⁰ Tetrachords are used throughout the piece and transposed four steps higher to form a minor-seventh interval and to create tritone relationships between corresponding pitches of different sets.¹³¹ Penderecki uses sound blocks or clouds that vary in thickness (time periods of uninterrupted sound activity) of non-metrical quality (despite written metrical indications) and some aleatoric moments in which too few or too many time values are organized according to the tactus of the conductor.¹³²

Two tonal moments in the *St. Luke Passion* have proved controversial: a simple D major chord in the *Stabat Mater* and an E major chord at the very end of

¹²⁹ Hutcheson, *Twentieth Century Settings*, 27.

¹³⁰ Robinson, Ray & Allen Winold. *A Study of the Penderecki St. Luke Passion*, Moecke-Verlag, 1983, 72.

¹³¹ DiOrio, Dominick. "Embedded Tonality in Penderecki's *St. Luke Passion*", *The Choral Scholar*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 2013, 2.

¹³² DiOrio, Dominick. "Embedded Tonality in Penderecki's *Stabat Mater* and *St. Luke Passion*", MMA thesis, Yale University, 2009.

the work.¹³³ The cluster at the end of the *Stabat Mater* contains all the other pitches that are not contained in this E major chord. The rest of the passion features no other discernably 'tonal' harmonies.

Penderecki certainly had a lot to say through the *St. Luke Passion*. The end of Stalinism allowed for more freedom of speech within the narrow spectrum of Soviet allowances. He composed the first major religious work post-WWII to come out of Eastern Europe, and the performance of this piece on the millennial celebration of Christianity in Poland sent a clear message about Poland's Catholic heritage, contrary to the arguments of USSR officials.¹³⁴ 1966 also marked the end of the Second Vatican Council. In light of the peculiar timing of this commission, the character of Christ in Penderecki's *Passion* becomes a metaphor for all those unjustly treated (and slain) victims. Hutcheson has argued that "Penderecki's *Passion* is not simply the traditional Christian Gospel but is an expression of belief on Penderecki's part probably intended to implicitly counter the Nazi occupation and the Communist take-over of Poland and the totalitarian state's mocking of a transcendent, religious reality."¹³⁵ Penderecki bravely delivered a socio-political commentary by using a traditional sacred form and would expound this idea in his *Polish Requiem* of 1984, honoring Polish patriots in history.¹³⁶ A piece that features strongly in both the *St. Luke Passion* and the *Polish Requiem* is the traditional Polish

¹³³ Thomas, Adrian, "Penderecki Krzysztof", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 19, London: Macmillan, 307.

¹³⁴ Thomas, *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Hutcheson, *Twentieth Century Settings*, 40.

¹³⁶ He dedicated the *Lacrimosa* movement specifically to the trade union leader Lech Wałęsa, and the piece was commissioned to commemorate those killed during the 1970 Polish anti-government riots of 1970.

hymn *Święty Boże (Holy God)*, further emphasizing the folk-song elements and implied non-Russian identity of the Polish people, a powerful socio-political statement. When one considers the various ways in which composers beyond the Iron Curtain used hidden codes and meaning in their compositions, the inclusion of *Święty Boże* becomes a powerful socio-political statement. While it might not be evident to modern audiences, it would have served as a consolation and message of perseverance to those who sought it.¹³⁷

In Penderecki's case, his activities and sympathies later in life could be used to inform the twenty-first century reader's understanding of his motivations for the *St. Luke Passion*. The *Polish Requiem* had close ties with Polish politics, stretching far beyond its title. He dedicated the *Lacrimosa* movement, for example, to the trade leader and future democratically elected president Lech Wałęsa, and the piece was commissioned to commemorate those killed during the 1970 Polish anti-government riots of 1970. Wałęsa's *Solidarity* movement (in Polish: "*solidarność*")

¹³⁷ Baltic Studies scholar Guntis Šmidchens has investigated similar occurrences to that of Penderecki in Poland in the case of Baltic music during the Soviet occupation of the Baltic countries, and argues in *The Power of Song* that one should "interpret meanings as Balts themselves may have imagined when they sang" to fully understand the impact such hidden references may have had on their original audience. Baltic composers have dug into folklore and mythology ever since Muradeli's opera *The Great Friendship* was criticized by Soviet authorities and led them to thoroughly examine all new works for qualities exhibiting principles contrary to those of Marx, Engels and Lenin across the USSR (including Poland). Composers were encouraged to dig into their national histories and present seemingly innocent folk tales, while digging into "the most ancient layers of national mythology and history," allowing composers to use specifically ambiguous folk texts. The ethnomusicologist and Baltic music specialist Joachim Braun has done extended research on how this has inspired such seminal works of hidden resistance as Dambis' *Sea Songs*, Tormis' *Incantation of Iron* and Bronius Kutavicius' *Druzkian Variations*. In this light, Penderecki's actions become even more defiant, bordering on cultural heroism.

advanced worker's rights and social change through civil resistance. Penderecki's association with such a controversial figure clearly displayed his anti-Soviet and anti-government sympathies.

It is very tempting to attribute socio-political significance to the works of Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. A large part of his life was spent in Soviet-era Estonia, from which he fled after being overwhelmed by the restrictions and limitations of Soviet-era regulations. Despite these circumstances, any allusions to socio-political factors in his works need serious consideration. Although contemporaries like Veljo Tormis openly included social-conscience based messages in their works, in Pärt's work this is overwritten by his sincere spirituality, religion and the mystical effect of tintinnabuli on his works' respective affect.¹³⁸ The famous conductor and scholar, Paul Hillier, who is intimately familiar with Pärt's style and personality describes tintinnabuli as follows: "This word refers to the ringing of bells, music in which the sound materials are in constant flux, though the overall image is one of stasis, of constant recognition. Listening to a good sonorous peal of bells you may notice that, apart from the rich jangle of overtones, the reiteration of lower notes creates an undertow of strange pitches that both belong and do not belong, revealing melodic numeration and variation known as 'ringing the changes;' and at its simplest there is the single tolling bell with its ominous insistence. Each of these phenomena is present in some way in Pärt's tintinnabuli music."¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Pärt, Arvo, quoted in Enzo Restagno, *Arvo Pärt in Conversation*, Dublin: Dalkey Archive, 2011.

¹³⁹ Hillier, Paul. "Arvo Pärt – Magister Laudis", *The Musical Times*, Vol. 130, No. 1753, March 1983, London: Musical Times Publications, 1983, 134.

Pärt was born in 1935 in Paide, Estonia and gained entrance to the preparatory music school in Tallinn. This was followed by two years of compulsory military service. His earliest compositions were in the “Socialist Realism” style and he was condemned for the use of twelve-tone techniques. After Stalin’s death he started using dodecaphony in his *Nekrolog* (1960). He converted to archaism and the tintinnabuli style after hearing chant in the late sixties. This was followed by an eight-year period of reflection during which only two works were composed. His tintinnabuli era started in 1976 and continues to define a large portion of both his choral and orchestral output to this day.

Pärt uses text taken from John 18:1 through 19:30 and also includes the *exordium* – the setting of the full title of the work: *Passio Domini Nostri Jesu Christi secundum Joannem* and the *conclusio*: *Qui passus es pro nobis, miserere nobis, Amen.*¹⁴⁰ The text is entirely in Latin and taken from the Vulgate Bible. The passion is scored for baritone solo, tenor solo, SATB quartet, SATB choir, violin, oboe, cello, bassoon and organ. The Evangelist text is divided into four sections of 50 phrases each with a concluding section of 10 phrases, creating a total of 210 phrases. Each section starts with a different solo voice, joined subsequently by an instrument, with continuation of this pattern until all eight voices sound together.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Holm, Thomas Robert. “Analysis and Comparison of Three Major Vocal/Instrumental Works of Arvo Pärt: *Passio*, *Miserere*, and *Litany*.” DMA Thesis: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1998.

¹⁴¹ Matthews Whiteman, Carol. “Passio: The Iconography of Arvo Pärt.” Ph.D Dissertation: City University of New York, 1997, 119-121.

Where Pärt's *St. John Passion* is curiously devoid of socio-political meaning, Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis' *Sadducean Passion* is everything but. Theodorakis provides an unfiltered, uncensored criticism of the Greek political left. Theodorakis was born on the Greek island of Chios in 1925 and is considered Greece's most prominent living composer.¹⁴² He was raised in an environment that was prominently influenced by Greek folk music and Byzantine liturgy.¹⁴³ He was also an outspoken and pivotal political figure in Greece. He was arrested during the Civil War and sent into exile on first the Icaria and the Markonisos islands where he endured extreme torture. During his non-exiled/non-jailed years he studied at the Athens Conservatoire under Filokitis Economidis. He entered the *Paris Conservatoire* in 1954 and studied musical analysis under Messiaen.

His style could be considered a combination of influences from Greek folk music and 'Messiaenic' serialism and timbre.¹⁴⁴ He uses traditional tonal language and modal harmony (close chromatics with falling sevenths), and his works, including the *Sadducean Passion* are characterized by their rhythmic vitality and constantly changing time shifts (e.g. in first movement the time signature alternates between 5/8, 5/16, 9/16 and 7/16.¹⁴⁵

Theodorakis used text of his friend, Michalis Katsaros, whom he lived with for two years.¹⁴⁶ The titles of the movements already hint at the biting social

¹⁴² Karageorgis, Evagoras. "Theodorakis, Mikis" *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 25, 354.

¹⁴³ Karageorgis, *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Karageorgis, "Theodorakis", 354.

¹⁴⁵ Kraemer, Uwe. CD Liner Notes. *Theodorakis Saducean Passion*. Berlin Classics 0092082BC.

¹⁴⁶ Karageorgis, *Ibid.*

commentary and allegations contained therein: *Form meines Ego* (“shape of my ego”), *Blinde Zeit* (“blind time”), *Jetzt diesen Schritt* (“now this step”), *Dorier, Im toten Wald* (“in a dead forest”), *Blonder Jungling* (“blond boy/youth”) and finally, *Nach Sadduzäer* (“after the Sadducees”). These movements form a seven-part cantata scored for soloists (tenor, baritone and bass), narrator/speaker, choir and orchestra.¹⁴⁷ Theodorakis held strong opinions on the oppression and condemnation of the innocent, resonating strongly of course with his own exile and periods of imprisonment.¹⁴⁸ Historically the Sadducees were a Jewish group with religious and political objectives very contrary to those of the more ‘populist’ Philistines. They insisted on sole authority of scripture and denied the resurrection of the dead and existence of angels. The Sadducees are compared in Katsaros’ text to the mistakes of the Greek political left in the twentieth century.¹⁴⁹ Kraemer states that “...the grimaces, bitter comments, flashes of sarcasm and contemptuous distortions summoned up by this comparison leave their mark on the poetical images of the text, which are to be seen as the cry of the despairing soul.” The work closes with the extinction of the Sadducees or in parallel symbolism of the Greek left.

Other passions that were composed in the period after the *Sadducean Passion* and the turn-of-the-century include Norwegian composers Trond Kverno’s *St. Matthew Passion* (1986), Kjell Karlsen *St. John Passion* (1992), American composer

¹⁴⁷ Karageorgis, *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Kraemer, *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Kraemer, *Ibid.*

Robert Kyr's *Passion According to the Four Evangelists* (1995), British composer Ivan Moody's *Passion and Resurrection* (1996), Hungarian composer Gyorgy Orban's *Passion* (1997), and American composer Mark Alburger's *The Passion According to St. Matthew* (1997).¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ For timeline of passions integral to this study, please refer to Appendix section.

Chapter 4: Turn-of-the-century and the *Passion Project 2000*

4.1 Introduction

The passion settings of the twentieth century, each with coded references to socio-political issues and inferences to the other inner demons of their respective composers, would pave the way for even more direct criticism and socio-political commentary in passion settings at the turn of the century. The most notable of these is the so-called *Passion Project 2000*.

Helmuth Rilling, on behalf of the *Internationale Bachakademie Stuttgart* and the Stuttgart city council, commissioned four composers in 2000 to compose one passion each for the 2000th anniversary of Christ's birth and the 250th anniversary of Bach's death. Each composer was to use the Bach *St. Matthew Passion* composed in 1727 as the basis for their own compositions, but were encouraged to look at other gospels if it suited their requirements better. They were furthermore encouraged to use these works to reflect on what they felt to be relevant in current times, both theologically and musically.¹⁵¹

The four composers chosen were Tan Dun, Osvaldo Golijov, Wolfgang Rihm and Sofia Gubaidulina. The significance of this choice of composers was increased furthermore by the fact that they hailed from four different countries, spoke four different mother tongues as first language and in the combination of religion and

¹⁵¹ Adair, Marcia. 2001. *The Passion Project 2000*. Master's Thesis, Royal Northern College of Music. United Kingdom, 2-4.

language in each composer's respective cultural background: Buddhist-Chinese for Dun, Catholic Latin-American for Golijov, Atheist-German for Rihm and Orthodox Russian for Gubaidulina. These choices are even more significant when one considers the strong Lutheran and church-based development of the genre leading up to Bach's passion settings.

Of the four passion settings it has arguably been those by Dun and Golijov that have been performed the most since their premieres in 2000. Gubaidulina's setting creates a dark and ominous affect, whereas Rihm's setting is firmly based in theoretical musical concepts and more mathematic in nature. In contrast it has been the spirituality and Buddhist Zen of Dun and the vitality and political messages behind Golijov's composition that have appealed most to audiences and performers in the past decade.

4.2 Tan Dun's *Water Passion after St. Matthew* (2000)

Tan Dun was born in the Hunan province of China in 1957. His own background and musical journey was severely influenced by Chairman Mao Tse Tung's Cultural Revolutions and many aspects of his biography have been contested and questioned. Certain facts are however certifiable, such as his date and place of birth and the fact that he collected folk songs as a young adult. Registration records show that he entered full-time study at the Central Conservatory in Beijing in 1978 after Chairman Mao's death and that he received a fellowship to study at Columbia

University in New York in 1986. He soon excelled in film score composition, and is well known for his scores for box-office hits such as *Crouching Tiger / Hidden Dragon*, *House of Flying Daggers* and *Hero*.¹⁵²

There are certain overriding philosophical concepts in Tan Dun's *Water Passion after St. Matthew*. Dun is interested in the concept of universalization within traditional music genres such as the passion genre. Dun seeks to create "a single language and distinctive style that is made up of many cultures and that can reach many different diverse cultures." The work has an undeniable Buddhist Zen influence, a logical influence if one considers that he grew up in Communist China and subsequently would have virtually no background in Christian faith constructs. Dun uses Buddhist Zen and minimal mysticism to convey a message of simplicity and meditation of 'moving inward', in a way similar to the so-called "mystic minimalists" Arvo Pärt and Henryk Gorecki. This is especially seen in the stripping down of text to the metaphorical 'bare bones.'¹⁵³

The principal symbolism of the *Water Passion after St. Matthew* lies, as the title would suggest, in water. It serves as a unifying image throughout the composition in the same way that water is regarded a 'sacrament' in many of the world's religions and spiritual traditions. The composer states: "...so many cultures

¹⁵² Dun, Tan. 23 February 2013. Tan Dun Online. Retrieved February 6, 2013, from <http://tandunonline.com>

¹⁵³ Allred, Brady. 2009. Program notes. *Water Passion after St. Matthew* by Tan Dun. Libby Gardner Concert Hall, Salt Lake City, UT. April 10, 2009, 3-4

use water as an essential metaphor – there is the symbolism of baptism, it is associated with birth, creation and re-creation. If you think of the water cycle, where it comes down to earth and returns to the atmosphere, only to return – that is a symbol of resurrection. I think of resurrection not only as a return to life but as a metaphor for hope, the birth of a new world, a better life.”¹⁵⁴

In keeping with this concept, Dun strips down the gospel texts to a bare minimum of narrative material. As expected, the text, about the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus, is taken from the Christian Bible, more specifically the Gospel of St. Matthew, but Dun only includes 7 of the 18 events mentioned in the original Biblical text.¹⁵⁵ The only text included is that spoken by Christ and the disciples, almost all of the third-person narration is excluded. Dun includes two texts from the Gospel of St. John in keeping with the concept of water as symbol for creation and re-creation: “I thirst” and “It is finished.” He also, surprisingly, includes text from the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes to demonstrate the cyclical nature of life and above-mentioned symbolism of the water cycle: “a time to love, a time of peace, a time to dance, a time of silence.” He finally includes seven original texts, sung in parallel perfect fifths. The inclusion of these sections seems peculiar, as it is in direct opposition to some of the Baroque compositional conventions that guided Bach and some of his contemporaries. These sections ironically enough serve to bring cohesion to the whole, an effort that is largely successful.

¹⁵⁴ Allred, Program notes, 7.

¹⁵⁵ Adair, Marcia. 2001. *The Passion Project 2000*. Master’s Thesis, Royal Northern College of Music. United Kingdom.

The staging of the *Water Passion after St. Matthew* is unique within the choral genre. A crux of water bowls dominates the stage, with several percussive water effects required of the musicians. The passion is scored for soprano and bass soloists, mixed choir, solo violin, solo cello, three percussionists and water sampler. The tessitura for the composition makes the piece as a whole challenging to sing. There are also several improvisation demands required of the performers that might be unusual to Western 'classical' performers.

The power (and success) of Dun's *Water Passion after St. Matthew* lies in the combinations of opposites that it exhibits: conflicting spiritualities, musical traditions and source origins are brought together cohesively through the use and symbolism of water, a concept that has proved 'fresh', original and universalizing to audiences in many different settings since its original conception at the turn of the millennium.

4.3 Osvaldo Golijov's *Passion Segun San Marco* (2000)

Where Dun's *Water Passion* is meant to lull and comfort, Osvaldo Golijov's *Passion segun San Marco* (2000) is meant to provoke. Golijov sets off on a righteous mission to right several historical and contextual 'wrongs' through his composition, to great effect. Golijov was born in La Plata, Argentina in 1960 to Jewish-Russian parents. As a result his musical influences in childhood were as wide ranging as

Klezmer music, Jewish liturgical music and classical chamber music as well as the tango in its popular “Astor Piazzolla” incarnation. Golijov similarly studied both at the La Plata Conservatory, followed by studies in Israel and finally studies in the United States under the esteemed avant-gardist George Crumb.¹⁵⁶

Golijov’s reasoning behind his *Passion segun San Marco* is based on both musical and philosophical-theological concepts. Musically Golijov wanted to portray a different passion tradition than the Catholic and Protestant traditions that are most often represented in passion settings. Golijov instead sets out to portray the Spanish procession tradition in a simple way that is close to the roots of Latin American folk traditions. He mostly accomplishes this through largely Latin American instrumentation choices, reminiscent of such seminal works in Latin American ‘classical’ choral music as the Ramirez *Misa Criolla* and Sierra *Misa Latina*.¹⁵⁷

Philosophically Golijov’s *Passion* settles many scores. Concepts of social conscience prevail throughout the work. First Golijov portrays a “dark Jesus” instead of the white Jesus that dominates Western art and music canon.¹⁵⁸ Golijov has also stated that he refused to use the Gospel of St. Matthew as a result of its alleged anti-Semitism and instead chose the Gospel of St. Mark as it is considered to be far less

¹⁵⁶ Marysol, Quevedo. 2011. Osvaldo Golijov. *The Grove Dictionary of American Music, 2nd edition*. Edited by Hitchcock and Sadie. New York: Macmillan.

¹⁵⁷ Ross, Alex. 2001. “Resurrection: The Passion according to Osvaldo Golijov.” *The New Yorker*, 1 March 2001.

¹⁵⁸ Adair, *Passion Project*, 45.

anti-Semitic: "I knew always that St. Mark was safe for the Jews."¹⁵⁹ Another composer of the *Passion Project 2000*, German composer Wolfgang Rihm, opted to set the Gospel of St. Luke instead for his *Deus Passus*, to circumvent the same issue of anti-Semitism.¹⁶⁰

By focusing on the unjust suffering of Jesus and the trials and tribulations of this protagonist within the narrative, Golijov provides an unrelenting, uncompromising message steeped in the depiction of suffering and social conscience:¹⁶¹ "Growing up Jewish in an officially Catholic country left me with a burning curiosity about the dichometric [sic] nature of institutional Christianity. I would see priests who worked tirelessly in slums being "disappeared" and then watch the Church condone the behavior by blessing the chief of the Argentinean junta on national television."

Golijov transforms the figure of Christ into a metaphor for all suffering people, "transformed into a collective spirit"¹⁶² and simultaneously uses the figure of Mary as a rallying force, in a concept expounded on by such diverse works as Lars Jansson's *To the Mothers of Brazil* and Seattle composer John Muehleisen's *Pietà*: "Mothers all over the continent are united with Mary by the grief brought on by the

¹⁵⁹ Ross, Alex. "Resurrection: The Passion according to Osvaldo Golijov." *The New Yorker*, 1 March 2001.

¹⁶⁰ Rihm, Wolfgang. Liner Notes. *Deus Passus*. Helmuth Rilling, conductor with Stuttgart Gachinger Kantorei, Stuttgart Bach Collegium; soloists Banse/Vermillion/Kallisch/Pregardien?Schmidt. Hanssler 98397. CD., 12

¹⁶¹ Adair, *Passion Project* 45.

¹⁶² Adair, *Ibid.*, 45.

torture and murder of their sons.”¹⁶³ Here we see an obvious way in which the composers seek to relate the narrative to the daily lives of the listener, the seed of which was sown by Bach nearly three centuries earlier. By focusing on the unjust suffering of people, Golijov creates his own call-to-action and shines the light not only on the injustice of these events, but also on the potential for reconciliation based on inclusion and a merging of seeming opposites.

Golijov marries the text of St. Mark with the different affects of musical traditions within the Latin American and Jewish spiritual traditions. The gospel text is interpolated by four sections: the first, the “Aria of Judas” a flamenco to show Judas’ remorse; the second, a hymn of thanks from Psalm 113-118 showing the perseverance in faith during hardship that the composer observed in his own grandfather’s life; the third an “Aria of Peter’s Tears” through the poem “*Luna descolorida*” (Colourless moon) by female poet Rosalio de Castro; the fourth and final interpolated text is the *Kaddish*, a Jewish mourning prayer.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Muehleisen, John. Music, Meaning and Message in John Muehleisen’s *Pietà*: an introduction and overview. Extended notes. *John Muehleisen’s Pietà – The World Premiere Performance*. Choral Arts, St. Mark’s Cathedral, Seattle, WA. March 14, 2012,2.

¹⁶⁴ Claver, Javier. “Semiotic Analysis of Osvaldo Golijov’s Musical Setting of the Passion Narrative in *La Pasión según San Marcos*.” Master’s Thesis, University of Cincinnati, 2002, 26.

Golijov dispenses with the traditional Western orchestra for his *Passion* opting instead for more Latin American-centric instrumentation choices. These include a reduced Latin horn section, accordion, guitar, percussion, six violins, six celli, full choir and several male and female soloists, each specializing in a different kind of Latin-American singing tradition.

A unique inclusion of Golijov's *Passion segun San Marco* is that of dance. He uses this art form to further convey the message in keeping with Latin American musical customs and customs within the Latin American church. A particularly poignant moment is in the Aria of Judas, where a *flamenco* is danced to show the quiet defiance of a condemned man.

Compositionally Golijov divides his passion into thirty-four episodes, some of which are less than thirty seconds in duration. Throughout the passion Golijov uses Gregorian chant as a unifying device, an unusual choice in light of the polarity of Latin American and Jewish musical cultures represented in his composition. The piece as a whole is characterized by intense momentum from the onset, further emphasized by inclusion of physical movement, and dynamic scoring. The powerful political message behind the narrative provides the stature and uniqueness to Golijov's *Passion segun San* to stand a chance at posterity.

4.4 Wolfgang Rihm's *Deus Passus* (2000)

Of the four passions of the *Passion Project 2000*, Golijov's is certainly the most accusatory in nature, containing a message of social conscience extended outward, away from the originator of this commentary. German composer Wolfgang Rihm provides an introspective viewpoint in his *Deus Passus*.

Rihm was born in Karlsruhe, West Germany in 1952 where he sang in the Karlsruhe municipal choir as teenager. He studied music theory with Eggebregt in Darmstadt and is currently the Head of the Institute of Modern Music at Karlsruhe Conservatory. As a student he was exposed to the music of Stockhausen and Berio, but his musical style exhibits more similarity with that of the Second Viennese School.¹⁶⁵

Rihm's *Deus Passus* combines the *musica antica* with the inclusion of Catholic liturgy, with Baroque practices in harmonization.¹⁶⁶ Another interesting influence on the *Deus Passus* is that of Penderecki. (Rihm sang the *St. Luke Passion* as a teenager with the Karlsruhe municipality choir; one of the first choirs to perform it, and it would have a large influence on his compositional style, especially in the pre-Darmstadt period.)¹⁶⁷ Rihm's piece consists of a patchwork of twenty-seven fragments with chronologically ordered events. *Deus Passus* is scored for five soloists (soprano, mezzo-soprano, alto, tenor and baritone), chamber choir and chamber orchestra. This minimal scoring is also reflected in the choice of text, taken

¹⁶⁵ Adair, *Passion Project*, 25.

¹⁶⁶ Adair, *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Adair, *Ibid.*

from the Gospel of St. Luke, stripping away all extraneous information, adjectives or third person interjections, e.g. “thus spake” or “he said,” with only the essence of the narrative remaining.

Two philosophical themes permeate Rihm’s passion setting: that of vilified religion and that of redemption. Rihm empathizes with the suffering of Christ on the cross but still rails against the deity for the inability to prevent suffering in the modern world. The composer has stated: “The Passion is the space in which the suffering of God occurs. However, the suffering that been and still is being thrust into the world in the name of the Christian faith must also be held to account from the vantage point of this space.”¹⁶⁸ In *Deus Passus* this paradox (of violent acts committed in the name of God) is constantly referred to. For this reason, Rihm seeks to separate the ‘validity’ of Christ’s suffering from the baggage of the church and faith in general. As already discussed, he strips away all extraneous information in the text so as leave the thread of a narrative without the Christian-specific connotations of said narrative.

Rihm, similar to Ernst Pepping half a century earlier, also seeks out redemption from the connotations of German culture to the Holocaust. He uses the St. Luke Gospel as it is “least tinged with anti-Semitism”¹⁶⁹ and combines it with text by Paul Celan, a leading Jewish German-language poet from Romania who suffered tremendously during the Second World War. Rihm’s central message, within the context of Rilling’s commission for the *Passion Project 2000*’s composers, is that of

¹⁶⁸ Rihm quoted in Kanold, Jürgen. Liner Notes. *Deus Passus*. Hanssler Classic, 98397.

¹⁶⁹ Rihm quoted in Andrew Clements, “Dark Star”, *The Guardian*, Thursday 21 June, 2001.

absolution for the German language and culture.¹⁷⁰ In interviews regarding *Deus Passus* Rihm mentions the journey of the German language through “thousand darkneses,”¹⁷¹ no doubt referring to Celan’s vivid “Bremen speech”: “*Sie, die Sprache, blieb unverloren, ja, trotz allem. Aber sie musste nun hindurchgehen durch Ihre eigenen Antwortlosigkeiten, hindurchgehen durcht furchtbares Verstummen, hindurchgehen durch die tausend Finsternisse todbringender Rede.*” (“It, the language, remained, not lost, yes, in spite of everything. But it had to pass through its own answerlessness, pass through frightful muting, pass through the thousand darkneses of deathbringing speech.”)¹⁷² Rihm’s own impetus in writing *Deus Passus* could perhaps be expounded further by considering the next section of Celan’s “Bremen speech” *not* referred to directly (but possibly implied) by the composer: “...It passed through and gave back no words for that which happened; yet it passed through this happening. Passed through and could come to light again, “enriched” by all this. In this language I have sought, during those years and years since then, to write poems: so as to speak, to orient myself, to find out where I was and where I was meant to go, to sketch out reality for myself.”¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Rihm quoted in Kanold, Jürgen. *Liner Notes. Deus Passus.* Hanssler Classic, 98397.

¹⁷¹ Jürgen. *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Celan, Paul. *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, 395.

¹⁷³ Celan, *Ibid.*, 395-6.

4.5 Sofia Gubaidulina's *Johannespassion* (2000)

Where Rihm's passion setting might be "sketching out reality" for himself, Gubaidulina's plunges the listener into an apocalyptic vision of judgment and justice. Gubaidulina was born in Tartarstan in 1931 and studied piano and composition at the Kazan Conservatory and continued graduate studies under Nikolai Peiko at the Moscow Conservatory where she also found a mentor in the form of Shostakovich. Gubaidulina's works were widely performed in the former USSR, most notably by Popov and Kremer and she managed to maintain a relatively non-tempestuous relationship with the Soviets until the end of the Cold War.¹⁷⁴ Her popularity in the west increased steadily after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

As with Rihm, we see an interesting combination of modern and 'ancient' in Gubaidulina's works, specifically the *Johannespassion* of 2000. She uses a full symphony orchestra with auxiliary instruments, double chorus (one of 80 voices and one of 24 voices) and five soloists (basso profundo, bass, tenor, alto and soprano). Despite the monumental size of these performing forces Gubaidulina manages to use sparse orchestration in many parts of the *Johannespassion*. Gubaidulina combines these modern compositional techniques with Russian orthodox liturgy and chant. Text is taken from the Gospel of St. John and from Revelations as well as other fragments of the Bible with particular significance

¹⁷⁴ Adair, *Passion Project*, 81.

within Russian orthodoxy.¹⁷⁵ The passion is set in the Russian language (with Cyrillic characters).

The combination of modern compositional elements with the antiquity of chant within this work is further emphasized by the obvious influence of Bach. The same emphasis on hermeneutics and numerology that current scholars are finding in Bach's works permeate Gubaidulina's *Johannespassion*.¹⁷⁶ She states: "There were periods of attraction to Wagner, the Russian school, Josquin, Gesualdo and the Second Viennese School but the figure to whom I experience a constant devotion is J.S. Bach. His works are still a great source of learning for me."¹⁷⁷

Gubaidulina's use of Russian orthodoxy within an increasingly secularized Russian society has raised a few eyebrows, and is within itself an act of defiance.¹⁷⁸ However, when asked what her central message in the *Johannespassion* was, Gubaidulina eloquently replied: "The whole world is threatened by spiritual passivity, an entropy of the soul, a transition from more complex energy to a simpler form... amorphousness. What puts the brakes on that process is the human spirit and in part, art, and that is a matter for serious music."¹⁷⁹

4.6 Conclusion

¹⁷⁵ Adair, *Passion Project*, 82.

¹⁷⁶ Gubaidulina also uses the Fibonacci sequence in the *Johannespassion*.

¹⁷⁷ Gubaidulina, Sofia in interview with Karen Campbell, "A Russian Composer's Path to Freedom", *The Christian Science Monitor*.

¹⁷⁸ Adair, *Ibid*.

¹⁷⁹ Campbell, "Path to Freedom," *CSM*.

As a whole the four passions of the *Passion Project 2000* might not be included in the choral canon in years to come. The unique positioning and origins of these compositions might prove difficult to relate to and the virtuosity and alterity of some might deter conductors from programming them. The powerful, universal socio-political messages of these pieces however make them integral to the movement in art to address issues of suffering and social conscience.

The presence of these messages or themes can be found in the long trajectory of passion settings, dating from Bach to current times. Very few of these compositions have theology or functioning within the liturgy as their absolute goal. It can be assumed as modern performers that to remain true to authentic performance practice, *all* of the impetuses behind these compositions need to be investigated in a thorough and contextual manner. A quick survey of the reception and position/reputation of works within the passion genre shows that the most popular works within the choral canon and within musicology have been those that have elicited universalized reactions in its listeners, related to, but necessarily restricted to a religious construct.

In general these passion settings have proved effective in their primary goal: to musically and philosophically reflect current, relevant values and messages for the turn-of-the-millennium audience. The increased popularity of some of these composers could potentially result in the addition of these works to the choral

canon or mainstream musicological anthologies in years to come. The interaction between faith and humanism depicted in these pieces furthermore laid the groundwork for twenty-first century composers to expound and develop the genre into previously unexplored territories.

Chapter 5: The Twenty-first Century and the compASSION Project

5.1 Introduction

After the *Passion Project 2000* commission, with its request for composers to set passions with a message of social justice, the upcoming compASSION project by the Texas-based choir *Conspirare* most clearly shows the relationship between old and new, faith and humanism and the evolution of the passion genre since Bach. During the month of June 2014, *Conspirare* will present performances including the Bach *St. Matthew Passion*, the Seattle-based composer John Muehleisen's *Pieta* (2012), a new *Gnostic Passion* by brother composers Doug and Brad Balliett and interviews and talks on the role of social justice within the passion genre by conductor Craig Hella Johnson, John Muehleisen and Oregon composer Robert Kyr. Whereas Robert Kyr's *Passion according to the Untold Witness* is still in process (and will be premiered by *Conspirare* in coming years), and the Balliett passion has yet to be performed, John Muehleisen's *Pieta* was premiered by Choral Arts 8 February 2012 in Seattle, Washington. *Conspirare's* performance thereof will no doubt thrust the piece in a larger spotlight and facilitate further discussion about its content and social message. For this chapter the Muehleisen *Pieta* will be investigated based on performance notes, program notes and a personal interview conducted with the composer. Brief commentary by composer Robert Kyr on his *Passion according to the Four Evangelists* as well as his upcoming *Passion according to the Untold Witness* based on a personal interview conducted with the composer, will also be included in

this chapter, to further contextualize the contemporary composers' view and relationship to Bach, the passion genre and the themes of depicting suffering and social conscience.

5.2 Robert Kyr's *Passion according to the Four Evangelists* (1995)

Robert Kyr is a prolific composer with 12 symphonies, 3 chamber symphonies, three violin concerti, several large choral and orchestral works as well as an impressive output of chamber music.¹⁸⁰ He is also a writer, filmmaker and has been a professor of music composition and theory at several academic institutions including Yale University and most recently, the University of Oregon.

His musical style is difficult to categorize due to the diverse nature of his output: "His choral music is distinguished by a warmly compelling lyricism, as well as by a contrapuntal mastery that arises from his love of early music, especially the work of Dufay, Josquin Des Prez, and above all, J.S. Bach."¹⁸¹ *The Passion According to Four Evangelists*, written for four soloists, mixed chorus and orchestra, also uses various tonal methods. Kyr has stated that the *Passion* makes "consistent use of variation and transformation techniques as opposed to the limited use of materials by Arvo Pärt."¹⁸² Strimple argues that Kyr's *Passion* is "a radical work, since it runs counter to most of the tonal music of our day which is hardly concerned with

¹⁸⁰ Campbell, Brett. "Portland: A Kyr for Insomnia." *NewMusicBox*, 17 July 2006.

¹⁸¹ Strimple, Nick. *Choral Music in the Twentieth Century*, Pompton Planes: Amadeus Press, NJ, 2002, 242.

¹⁸² Seeley, Gilbert. "Robert Kyr: *The Passion According to Four Evangelists*. *Sforzando*, September 1999, 17.

contrapuntal refinement, or with modulatory paths that are any more complex than the tonic-dominant duality of functional tonality.”¹⁸³ Kyr’s choral music is characterized by contrapuntal intricacy as well as use of extended tonalities/modalities.¹⁸⁴ His background as writer also influences the way he sets text, which each word audibly discernible in the *Passion According to the Four Evangelists*.¹⁸⁵

A composer such as Kyr could comfortably be positioned within the larger scope of passion settings that address issues of suffering and social conscience. He has created numerous large-scale projects focusing on peace and reconciliation, for example, the “Waging Peace through Singing” global initiative based on new choral repertoire composed on peace-related texts, his tenth symphony, *Ah Nagasaki: Ashes into Light*, premiered and co-conducted by Japanese and American musicians in 2008, and works commissioned by the Oregon Repertory Singers with such titles as *Eight Steps for Peace*, *Into the Hour of New Life*, *The Bell Ringer*, *O Jerusalem*, *A Vision of Peace*, *Three Hopes for the Future* and *Alleluia for Peace*.

His conviction regarding the depiction of suffering and social conscience is also evident in another recent project, *The Unutterable* (2013): “...This piece really deals with the themes of oppression and human suffering, and how we relate to

¹⁸³ Strimple, *Choral Music*, 250.

¹⁸⁴ Wyers, Giselle. “Waging Peace through Intercultural Art in Kyr’s *Ah Nagasaki*”, *Choral Journal*, May 2008, pp. 10-11.

¹⁸⁵ Wyers, *Ibid*.

suffering and how music in particular can help us to understand the nature of suffering better and what we can do about it – these social justice issues.”¹⁸⁶

Kyr and Muehleisen’s processes in composing their respective passion settings all return to the themes explored in Bach’s passions and those of the twentieth century: the depiction of suffering, of social conscience, and the very intentional decisions regarding what subject material should be used. Kyr’s explanation of the impetus for composing *Passion According to the Four Evangelists* clearly reflects this process:¹⁸⁷

Well, the composer in history that I feel closest to is Bach, and I love the passions and particularly love the way each passion focuses on the first-person witness telling and it is kind of a collection of stories that then becomes gospel; the way that three gospels more or less correspond with one another and then there’s one that does correspond but is also quite different in certain ways [Gospel according to John]. And Bach gives an account of those, each one is so singular, and then you have the *Mark Passion*, for which we have the text, but we don’t have the music, and then there is the question, some of the music and concertos for example that supposedly were reworkings [sic] of pieces, some of those pieces might have been from the last cantatas or even from the *Mark Passion*, we don’t really know. So all of that, and actually the mystery around it as well, inspired me to ask the question: what about the idea, if Bach had written a fourth passion and we had all four of them, how would that have changed our view to Bach’s relationship with the passion? [To] the actual music, not just the text. And what would that mean? So I started thinking about the *Passion According to Four Evangelists* to create the composite story that combines to create a new organic whole that is greater than the sum of the parts.

An interesting feature of the *Passion According to the Four Evangelists* is that of a female Evangelist. As in Muehleisen’s *Pieta*, discussed later in the chapter, the role of women is central in Kyr’s composition. Kyr describes the female evangelist

¹⁸⁶ Kyr, Robert. Personal Interview. Dallas, TX, 16 March 2013.

¹⁸⁷ Kyr, *Ibid.*

as the “pivot” of this passion setting and touches upon some current social issues in his explanation:¹⁸⁸

Well, a part of it relates to the fact that we’re born of man and woman, regardless of what our thought of that is, as we are faced with new perceptions on marriage and how children are brought into the world. At the root of it we have to admit, we are a union of some kind of feminine and masculine. Christ’s approach is a universal one, to embrace all, the centrality of life, so in my passion, nothing is left out that I could possibly embrace, because I couldn’t have entered into that spirit of exploration, discovery, hopefully in some ways, revelation, without embracing all of it.”

This inclusivity is further depicted in the theological sense in Kyr’s thoughts on the redemption found in the passion narrative:¹⁸⁹

It’s not just happening outside of him [Christ], it’s in him because it’s a fulfillment... you say that it’s a fulfillment of scriptures, that’s one way of looking at it, but it’s the fulfillment of spiritual obligation, of a spiritual journey that was already imprinted inside of him, it was his to fulfill, but in all ways, embracing *all* of humanity. And in essence, in representing *all* of humanity, the harrowing of hell, he [Christ] goes down to the lowest and then goes up and *all* is arisen, not just the faithful, but *all* of creation. That’s at the heart of what I’m doing.”

5.3 Robert Kyr’s *Passion according to the Untold Witness* (2015)

Another feature of the compASSION project in 2014 will be a series of “dialogues” hosted by Robert Kyr. These include an in-depth discussion of murdered gay teenager, Matthew Sheppard (discussed later in this chapter) followed by a performance of the Durufle *Requiem* in his honor; and talks titled “A Passion Walk for Our Time” and “The Passion as Text for Music” by Robert Kyr.¹⁹⁰ His passion for issues of suffering and social conscience are furthermore reflected

¹⁸⁸ Kyr, Interview.

¹⁸⁹ Kyr, *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Conspirare*. Official website. <http://conspirare.org/now-singing/compassion/>

by an upcoming passion setting, *Passion According to the Untold Witness*, to be discussed at this event and to be premiered by *Conspirare* in 2015.¹⁹¹

This passion setting shows yet another way in which composers manage to extract the message of unjust suffering and retrospective reconciliation from the passion narrative. Kyr is extracting accounts from the gospels not included in the Bible, among them the *Apocrypha*, and texts from *The Other Bible*.¹⁹² These sources are used to “...tell the story from a universal point of view and not from pre-written accounts or specific historic figures like Mary Magdalene, but rather from an a-historic figure, the unknown witness, and doing that based on an understanding of the culture and the social upheavals of the time.”¹⁹³ Kyr hints that this piece may have “very strong, and I would say, even shocking, political content.”¹⁹⁴

5.4 John Muehleisen's *Pieta* (2012)

John Muehleisen, a freelance composer in the Seattle area, studied composition at the University of Washington and Indiana University. He has received several composition awards and commissions and is known for combining archaism and traditional tonal language with post-romantic harmony. His sacred music also shows a clear preference for the modalities of Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox Church music. His *Pieta* has only had one performance, thus there has been limited journalism and discourse. This will doubtless change after

¹⁹¹ *Conspirare*. Website.

¹⁹² Kyr, Interview.

¹⁹³ Kyr, *Ibid*.

¹⁹⁴ Kyr, *Ibid*.

Conspirare's comPASSION project, where it will be performed with the other commissioned passion settings and the Bach *St. Matthew Passion*. Seattle music journalist Philippa Kiraly has said of the *Pieta* however: "...the insight, thoughtfulness, and musicianship with which he has created a major religious piece... this *Pieta* could be performed in Lenten seasons and should enter the choral repertoire with acclaim."¹⁹⁵

Muehleisen's *Pieta* is a play on the words "com-passion" (*Pieta* translated into English is "compassion" or "mercy"). Other than the obvious inspiration of Michelangelo's famous marble sculpture where Mary is holding the corpse of Christ, Muehleisen was also inspired by the bond of all mothers to their children, and thus all of humanity.¹⁹⁶ He stated that his goal was for the audience to re-examine how they treat each other; whom they treat well and whom they treat poorly. *Pieta* further addresses universal concepts of tragedy and loss and how to deal with these events. The composer also sought to provide healing through the piece: "The commission is not only the most extensive and sophisticated choral work I have composed to date, but I also hope that it will be the most meaningful and profound work thus far in my career, bringing together choral, solo vocal, and instrumental forces to provide a musical experience of emotional and spiritual intensity and

¹⁹⁵ Kiraly, Philippa. "Instant Acclaim for John Muehleisen's *Pieta*", *The SunBreak*, 15 March 2012.

¹⁹⁶ All information in Chapter 5.4 taken from the composer's extended program notes for the world premiere performance of the *Pieta* in March 2012 by ChoralArts, accessible online at: <http://www.choral-arts.org/images/PDFs/pieta.pdf>, and personal interviews conducted with the composer on 16 and 17 July 2012.

conviction.”¹⁹⁷ There are definite references to the folly of war, equality of all men, liberation of minority groups and to our own role in the evils that have transpired in the modern world. It is especially the references to Matthew Sheppard that introduces contemporary social issues into the *Pieta*. (Matthew Sheppard was a gay American student at the University of Wyoming who died as a result of a homophobic attack in October 1998).¹⁹⁸ Muehleisen also includes an eclectic variety of texts from the Orthodox Christian Church, the Roman Catholic Church, Martin Luther King Jr., Wilfred Owen, a letter from Rudyard Kipling’s son (written two days before he was killed in 1915) and William Blake.

Musically, Muehleisen seeks to create coherency in the *Pieta* through the use of innovative architectural structure and compositional devices. The *Pieta* consists of six different sections, forming twenty-three different movements in total and unfolds on three different dimensions: the current day, the First World War, and finally the Biblical events at Calvary. In investigating the piece, a pseudo-chiastic structure comes to the fore.

¹⁹⁷ Muehleisen, John. “Music, Meaning, and Message in John Muehleisen’s *Pieta*: An Introduction.” Program Notes. ChoralArts. Accessible online at <http://www.choral-arts.org/images/PDFs/pieta.pdf>, p. 2.

¹⁹⁸ The naming of the 2009 Hate Crimes Prevention Act in Sheppard’s honor attests to the impact this event had on civil society in the United States.

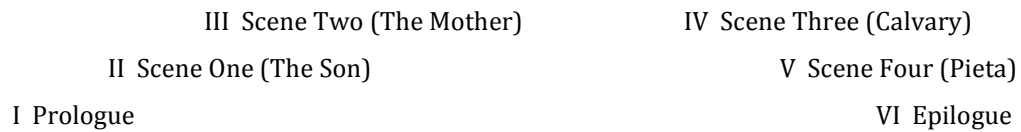


Figure 2: John Muehleisen’s *Pieta*: Structure and organization.

Chiastic structure¹⁹⁹ within a passion setting would make sense in light of depictions of the crucifixion and also of the mathematics that inspired Michelangelo’s sculpture of the *Pieta*. This and other hermeneutic devices were frequently used in passion music of Bach, Schütz and other earlier German composers. The piece at large is framed by a processional at the start and a communal hymn at the end, both serving functional and dramatic purposes. The next layer inward consists of peculiar pairings of secularized and gospel texts. Movement 1.2 in the Prologue, for example, combines the words of Jesus with the disbelief uttered in the homily for Matthew Sheppard. Movement 6.2 similarly combines words of Martin Luther King Jr. with Bach’s “halo” chord and the words “alleluia!” The innermost movements of the *Pieta* continue to exhibit this symmetry: Sections 2 through 4 all conclude with some of Bach’s most famous chorales, with

¹⁹⁹ The term ‘chiastic’ derives from the word ‘chiasmus’ (*khiasmos* in Greek) referring to a cross-like arrangement or architecture. In music this is often related to the number 7, which is synonymous in the Christian religion with perfection and God. The central part of this larger architecture, usually 4 within a 7-sectioned structure, is referred to as the *crux* (‘cross’) and often serves as the apex within the dramatic development of the structure.

the traditional text replaced by more contemporary texts by Owen and Blake, among others: “Oh Holy Jesus” for Section 2, “O Sacred Head” for Section 3 and “*Jesu, meine Freude*” for Section 4. Section 5 ends with a chorale set to an original melody by Muehleisen. In this inner trio of sections, the crux seems to be the conclusion of Section 3: “O Sacred Head” set to Wilfred Owen’s text “I dreamed kind Jesus fouled the big-gun gears.” It could be argued that this moment serves as the *crux*, or apex of the thread of development within the *Pieta*.²⁰⁰ The even numbering of sections however allows an argument to be made for the intentional absence of chiastic structure to further separate the *Pieta* from the traditional passion possible as there is no clear, inarguable axis.²⁰¹

As already stated, Muehleisen overlays poetry over the already familiar hymn melodies of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*. There are however several other compositional devices that are used in an effort to establish coherency and consistency in this extended composition. Antonio Caldara’s *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* opening motif is used throughout in adaptation as a lamentation theme set to the words *lacrimosa*. This theme is permuted and expanded into a lullaby theme using shorter note values.

The composer also quotes his own *The King of Glory* (1998) for the “resurrection theme” which is recycled and used during the closing Alleluia section.

Different primary tonalities and tonal “characters” are furthermore used to create

²⁰⁰ This moment in the *Pieta* makes comparisons to Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem* with texts by Wilfred Owen inevitable.

²⁰¹ In additional correspondence with the composer since, he confirmed that this is neither intentional nor unintentional and that chiastic structure, although important, receives less attention than the symmetry and concentric circles of the *Pieta* in its finished form.

coherency: C minor to represent hopelessness, tragedy, despair, strife and lack of healing;²⁰² Ab Lydian (Eb major) to represent hope, mercy, compassion, love healing and reconciliation, prefiguring the succeeding tonality of the fifth section; and finally, B Lydian (F# major) used as a primary tonality from Movement 5.5 towards the end, as resolution.²⁰³

Three important philosophical themes emerge from the *Pieta*. First, a clear social conscience-based message emerges in the inclusion of words from Matthew Sheppard's homily (one of the first instances since Britten's *War Requiem* where text by/about a homosexual individual stand side by side with those of the church) and the use of the "halo" chord, not for the words of Jesus, but for those of Martin Luther King Jr., attributing a Messianic prominence to his words.

The second theme is that of universalization, a term approved of by the composer. The basic structure and possible lack of chiastic structure as discussed earlier, combined with other downplayed aspects in religious sections, exhibit a continuation of the process of secularization within the passion genre, starting in the twentieth century. The desertion of the iconography of the cross could also be an important and essential component of the position of this piece within the trajectory of the evolution of philosophy within the passion genre. In the Epilogue the phrase "...be devoted to one another in brotherly love" is sung by only the women, eradicating the male gender. The traditional audience would recognize the

²⁰² This derives from this use of a dark minor tonality of the oboe/English horn in the "Herr, unser Herrschen" in Bach's *St. John Passion*.

²⁰³ Muehleisen, correspondence.

paraphrasing of the *Ubi Caritas*: “Where peace and love is, is God.” The compassion and mercy or “Pieta” that we exhibit replace God in this phrase, or at the very least stands side by side with God in the continuous thread of secularization and “universalization” within the passion genre.

Thirdly and finally the role of Mary as protagonist deserves some attention. Mary in the *Pieta* is not the typical demure motherly image traditionally portrayed in art and music. We see, instead, a stoic, agitated and strong woman, almost frozen like Michelangelo’s statue. The soprano soloist similarly has agitated coloratura passages and cathartic outbursts until Jesus’ death after which her character changes dramatically. Mary claims one of the seminal seven last words of Jesus for herself after the *Nunc Dimitis* section: “Father, into thy hands I commit the spirit of my dear Son. It is finished, my work is now done.” Mary through these words becomes a manifestation of the message of compassion and the emphasis on the plight of women and relationship between them and their children, completing the thread of universalization. After Jesus’ death, Mary sings a lullaby, becoming more approachable and vulnerable.

The composer pertinently states in his extended program notes that Mary in the *Pieta* serves as a metaphor for all mothers and for their relationships with their sons. As Muehleisen states, the purpose of the composition is for the audience to re-examine the way they appreciate and interact with those in their lives, this serves as a biting social commentary for materialist culture and the way in which people live past each other, even within their closest family circles, until it is “too late.”

5.5 Conclusion

The comPASSION project could rightfully be seen as the American response to the same questions that led to Helmuth Rilling's *Passion Project 2000*. It also shows the prominence of those driving questions that compel composers to create these works, in line with the guiding questions to this dissertation stipulated on page 9. It is interesting to compare Kyr and Muehleisen's attempts to depict these issues of suffering and social conscience in their passion settings, and to see the framework in which *Conspirare* has chosen to present these works, all the while contextualizing the "unmovable" monumental masterpiece of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*.

It is especially in the added dialogues and discussions scheduled for this festival that it becomes clear that the topics of suffering and social conscience are not to be overlooked, but investigated, debated and addressed through these settings of the passion narrative. The central role of women in both Muehleisen and Kyr's passion settings, the role of Andrew Shepard and 21st century viewpoints on sexuality and gender roles, the general reconsidering and contextualization of religion, the role of theology and Bach's original intentions are all prominent focal points during this festival. It will also be interesting to see the reception of Muehleisen's *Pieta* and Kyr's *Passion According to the Untold Witness* when they are performed at this level of exposure.

Further investigation into these pieces makes it clear that the main agenda for these two composers, is to address our view on suffering and on social conscience, clearly placing it in a prominent position in the development of these themes in the passion genre, aligning with composers from Bach to Penderecki to those of the turn-of-the-century. The stage has been set for further musical compositions and commissions to keep on addressing these issues, all the while expanding the perceived limits of theology, socio-political commentary and musical innovation.

Particular attention needs to be paid, however, to one specific composition that has caught the attention (and imagination) of the American choral public: *the little match girl passion* by composer David Lang.

SECTION 2:

the little match girl passion

Chapter 6: The *little match girl passion* in the twenty-first century

6.1 Introduction

David Lang was born in Los Angeles, California on 8 January 1957. He studied at Stanford University, the University of Iowa and Yale University where he currently teaches composition. He has won several awards for his compositions, including the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for *the little match girl passion*²⁰⁴ and 2013's Musical America "Composer of the Year."²⁰⁵ The list of ensembles that have performed his works is never-ending and includes several of the world's best choirs, orchestras and other kinds of performing ensembles.²⁰⁶

In the words of The New Yorker, "With his winning of the Pulitzer Prize for

²⁰⁴ The recording of *the little match girl* by the Theatre of Voices under Paul Hillier also won the 2010 Grammy award for best small ensemble performance.

²⁰⁵ Other awards include Carnegie Hall's Debs Composer's Chair, the Rome Prize, the BMW Music-Theater Prize (Munich), and grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

²⁰⁶ His works have been performed by the BBC Symphony, the International Contemporary Ensemble, eighth blackbird, Santa Fe Opera, the New York Philharmonic, the Netherlands Chamber Choir, the Boston Symphony, the Munich Chamber Orchestra, and the Kronos Quartet; at Tanglewood, the BBC Proms, MusicNOW festival, The Munich Biennale, the Settembre Musica Festival, the Sydney 2000 Olympic Arts Festival and the Almeida, Holland, Berlin, Adelaide and Strasbourg Festivals; in theater productions in New York, San Francisco and London; alongside the choreography of Benjamin Millepied, Twyla Tharp, La La La Human Steps, The Netherlands Dance Theater, Susan Marshall and the Paris Opera Ballet; and at Lincoln Center, the Southbank Centre, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Barbican Centre, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

the little match girl passion (one of the most original and moving scores of recent years), Lang, once a post-minimalist *enfant terrible*, has solidified his standing as an American master."²⁰⁷

His catalogue is extensive, and his opera, orchestra, chamber and solo works are by turns ominous, ethereal, urgent, hypnotic, unsettling and very emotionally direct. Much of his work seeks to expand the definition of virtuosity in music — even the deceptively simple pieces can be fiendishly difficult to play and require incredible concentration by musicians and audiences alike.

His style expands the concepts of virtuosity in music, even his “deceptive simple pieces require intense focus and concentration.”²⁰⁸ His biography on his website states his compositional mission as follows: “Lang embodies the restless spirit of invention... at the same time deeply versed in the classical tradition and committed to music that resists categorization, constantly creating new forms.”²⁰⁹ Mark Swed of the *Los Angeles Times* concurs: “..there is no name yet for this kind of music.” Indeed, attempts to classify his music usually end up referring to influences from modernism, minimalism and rock. He is however most frequently classified as a totalist or post-minimalist composer.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ Lang, David. Official website. <http://davidlangmusic.com/about/bio>.

²⁰⁸ Lang, *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ Lang, *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ Totalism refers to an art music style of the 80s and 90s that is based on the static confines of minimalism, but that utilizes greater rhythmic complexity, often with more than one tempo discernible at the same time. The aim is to have enough surface energy but also to retain background complexity. An argument for totalism could be justified when looking at some of Lang’s most accessible choral works. The repurposing of serialist “total organization” and structuring devices of pitch are

A quick investigation of Lang's choral and vocal output shows a large and diverse oeuvre, mostly composed in the first decade of the twenty-first century, with settings of eclectic texts from a vast array of poets, writers and other sources of textual inspiration.²¹¹ *by fire* (1984) is set for SATB choir with texts by Sun Tzu and Robert Scheer; *this condition* (2000) is set for a small SSA treble choir with text by Lydia Davis; *pay me now* (2000) is set for a soprano soloist with viola, cello and bass; *i want to live* (2005) is set for SSA treble choir; *again (after ecclesiastes)* (2005) is set for small SATB choir with text by the composer; *the little match girl passion* (2007) (with a version for chorus and four soloists released in 2008) is set for four voices (SATB) with each voice playing their own percussive instrument, with text by Hans Christian Andersen, Picander, H Paulli and the apostle Matthew; *evening, morning day* (2007) for treble choir or men's chorus is set to text by the composer after the book of Genesis; *water* (2008) is set for amplified SATB quartet with amplified contrabassoon, percussion, piano, and strings with texts by David Lang, Michael Gordon and Julia Wolfe; *for love is strong* (2008) for SATB chorus a cappella plus one instrument with texts by the composer after the book of Song of Songs; *battle hymns* (2009) for large chorus with snare drum with text by the composer after Sullivan Ballou, Stephen Foster and Abraham Lincoln; *statement to the court* (2010) for SATB, strings and bass drum with text by Eugene Debs; *oh*

applied to rhythm, e.g. a major second interval would have a ratio of 9:8 and thus 9 against 8 is an important tempo contrast in totalist music, e.g. dotted eighth-notes in one part and triplet half notes in another. Lang however has repeatedly expressed disapproval of the use of this term to describe his music.

²¹¹ Complete works list accessible at <http://davidlangmusic.com/music>

graveyard (2010) for SATB choir with text by David Lang after the spiritual “Lay this Body Down”; *i never* (2010), a homage to Thomas Tallis’ *Spem in Alium*, for forty voices arranged in five SATBB choirs with text by the composer after Thomas Tallis; *the wood and the vine* (2011) for SSAA playing simple percussion instruments with text by the composer after Lydia Davis, Marie de France, Gottfried von Strassburg, Bérroul, Thomas of Britain and Richard Wagner; *i live in pain* (2011) for SSA women’s chorus with text by the composer after Beatriz de Dia; *where the bee sucks* (2012) for voice and piano; *the same train (same train)* (2012) for SATB; *love fail* (2012) for SSAA playing simple percussion instruments with texts by the composer after Lydia Davis, Marie de France, Gottfried von Strassburg, Bérroul, Thomas of Britain and Richard Wagner; *when we were children* (2013) for chamber choir with text by the composer; and most recently, *the national anthems* (2014) for SATB and string quartet with text by the composer.

David Lang commented: “I really love choral music and I love singing in a choir. But I never wanted to be a choral composer and I feel like I’m a text composer. All of the decisions I made in that piece [*the little match girl passion*] was based on the text. I feel that all choral music I have written is that way – it is something that is text-based... My loyalty is completely to the text and if something comes up and I have a choice between telling the story better and making a beautiful sound, I’m always going to choose telling the story better. This has been the motivation for the rather eclectic sources of texts for my choral output.”²¹²

²¹² Lang, David. Personal Interview. SoHo, New York City, NY, 18 March 2014.

In his own bio, Lang states that he tries to create music that resists categorization.²¹³ It could be argued that, first and foremost, his compositions do propel the field of composition forward and bring forth a unique voice amid the din of twenty-first century compositions. As the titles and choice of texts within his choral output suggests, a certain focus on social conscience and the related fields of equality and gender advocacy permeates his text-based works. Lang's music, despite simply "pushing the envelope" also manages to be "ominous, ethereal, urgent, hypnotic, unsettling and very emotionally direct."²¹⁴

6.2 Background and reception

the little match girl passion was commissioned by Carnegie Hall for the vocal ensemble Theatre of Voices in 2007. Looking for inspiration, Lang was drawn to the passion genre for its interpolation of texts and commentary by the chorus after dramatic episodes. Finally Lang's wife (to whom the piece is dedicated) suggested he use the Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Match Girl* fairytale, specifically the 1872 H.P. Paull English translation.²¹⁵

Lang intersperses text based on the Picander libretto for Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* throughout. Andersen's prose is portioned into seven even-numbered movements with texts from Picander placed around Andersen's texts as well as around certain movements. This alternating of poetry and prose is reminiscent of

²¹³ Lang, David. Official website. <http://davidlangmusic.com/about/bio>

²¹⁴ Lang, *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ Lang, David. Personal Interview. SoHo, New York City, NY, 18 March 2014.

the use of aria and recitative in the passion genre, a concept that propels the word forward. Lang has stated “...the telling of the story while simultaneously commenting upon it... has the effect of placing us in the middle of the action, and it gives the narrative a powerful inevitability.”²¹⁶

Excerpts from Lang’s program notes for the original commission premiere explain his motives for composing this piece. Lang states:²¹⁷

I wanted to tell a story. A particular story — in fact, the story of *The Little Match Girl* by the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen. The original is ostensibly for children, and it has that shocking combination of danger and morality that many famous children's stories do. A poor young girl, whose father beats her, tries unsuccessfully to sell matches on the street, is ignored, and freezes to death. Through it all she somehow retains her Christian purity of spirit, but it is not a pretty story.

What drew me to *The Little Match Girl* is that the strength of the story lies not in its plot but in the fact that all its parts—the horror and the beauty—are constantly suffused with their opposites. The girl's bitter present is locked together with the sweetness of her past memories; her poverty is always suffused with her hopefulness. There is a kind of naive equilibrium between suffering and hope.

There are many ways to tell this story. One could convincingly tell it as a story about faith or as an allegory about poverty. What has always interested me, however, is that Andersen tells this story as a kind of parable, drawing a religious and moral equivalency between the suffering of the poor girl and the suffering of Jesus. The girl suffers, is scorned by the crowd, dies, and is transfigured.

Lang places the emphasis on the death of a little fragile girl instead of the expected figure of Christ. The girl’s own suffering and the rejection/apathy she

²¹⁶ Lang, David. CD Liner notes. *the little match girl passion*. Harmonia Mundi, HMU 807496, 2009.

²¹⁷ Lang, David. 2009. Program notes. *the little match girl passion*. Accessible at <http://davidlangmusic.com/music>.

experiences from the rest of the world resonates strongly however with the martyred messianic figure of the traditional passion genre. The response of twenty-first century audiences to this harrowing tale has proved the power of the work to move its audience, despite the avant-garde nature of Lang's compositional style. Another American composer, Joshua Shank, investigates this power in a paper entitled "David Lang's *the little match girl passion*: Reportage and Emotionality." He writes:²¹⁸

David Lang's *the little match girl passion* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2008, and has since gone on to be performed by vocal ensembles all over the world. On the surface the work is a minimalist treatment of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Match Girl* which Lang suffuses with texts from Johann Sebastian Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, but what is interesting to note is that, despite the somewhat robotic way in which Lang sets the text of Andersen's story, the reception of this work is almost universally spoken about in viscerally emotional terms. Words like "raw", "heart-stopping" and "chilling" are used; the work has obviously made a tremendous impact on its audience.

Even normally measured music critics have raved about the piece. Tim Page of the *Washington Post* (and Pulitzer Prize juror) stated: "I don't think I've ever been so moved by a new, and largely unheralded, composition as I was by David Lang's *the little match girl passion*, which is unlike any music I know."²¹⁹

This language seems to be in line with the objective David Lang described for his setting of *the little match girl passion* in an interview conducted with the composer during March of 2014:²²⁰

²¹⁸ Shank, Joshua. 2012. David Lang's *the little match girl passion*: Reportage and Emotionality. *Contemporary Styles and Techniques Class*. 15 December 2012.

²¹⁹ Huizenga, Tom. "David Lang wins Music Pulitzer." *NPR Music*, 7 April 2008.

²²⁰ Lang, David. Personal Interview. SoHo, New York City, NY, 18 March 2014.

Well, the reason why the little match girl story works is because I was looking for something that would allow me to be an observer of what the passion is traditionally, so I was looking for something that would highlight what to me seemed to be the paradox of the passion which is that you are supposed to notice the suffering of Jesus, but, you know, we live in New York, people are suffering all over the place, we live in a world where if we actually noticed everyone's suffering, it would be impossible to live. It seemed to me that there's a kind of paradox in that and I wanted to find an example of that. The first text I actually looked at was the writings of the social critic Jacob Riis, because I thought that imagining a poor person who was in a slum in New York was something that was actually local, and those were the first texts I looked at. I couldn't find anything that worked there and then I went to obituaries. But the whole point was, and I think that's why Suzanne suggested it, was that I was looking for someone that would highlight that problem.

It is very interesting to note the similarities in language of those attempting to describe the work and its depiction of the suffering of the Passiontide. Jayson Green from pitchfork.com calls it "breathtakingly spare...icily gorgeous...a haunting and evocative hall of echoes."²²¹ He also calls the ninth movement "Have mercy, my God" "heart-stopping."²²² Reed Johnson mentions the work's "sublime austerity" in a review for the *Los Angeles Times* and proceeds to quote the Los Angeles Master Chorale conductor, Grant Gershon: "When I listen to the recording, it's impossible to get through the piece without weeping."²²³ Music critic Molly Sheridan claims that even "reading just the poetry of the libretto... is chilling."²²⁴ The sentiment that overrides the framing of the piece in its performances as part of the Santa Monica Jacaranda chamber music series reads as follows: "The piece allows your mind to spiral away from the story and into the ethos of the moment."²²⁵ In his summation of the reception of *the little match girl passion*, Joshua Shank concludes: "Clearly

²²¹ Green, Jayson. *Pitchfork.com*, January 15, 2010.

²²² Green, *Ibid.*

²²³ Johnson, Reed, *Los Angeles Times*, January 16, 2011

²²⁴ Sheridan, Molly. *New Music Box*, June 8, 2009.

²²⁵ *Los Angeles Times*, January 16, 2011.

listeners are finding something incredibly powerful to engage with when they hear this music.”²²⁶

Further analysis of the textual and musical content, in the form of a hermeneutic reading a la Schleiermacher, might help to determine why audiences’ reactions have been so visceral yet consistent in terms of language. Schleiermacher posits that the interpretation of text must occur through the framing of its content in the larger overall organization of the work. The psychological interpretation thereof then investigate show peculiar combinations characterize the work as whole. The emphasis then lies not with just understanding the exact words, in this case a fairy tale and re-imagined text from Picander, but to understand the writer [Lang’s] “distinctive character and point of view.”²²⁷

6.3 Musical and Textual Analysis

6.3.1 Overview

the little match girl passion consists of two different kinds of movements: the “recitatives”, called thus for their plot-advancing role in the same way recitatives are used in traditional passion settings; and the “chorales” which serve the function of the chorale of drawing the audience into the narrative, taking a moment to reflect on the happenings of the narrative. The chorales make up the odd movements (1, 3, 5,

²²⁶ Shank, Joshua. “David Lang’s *the little match girl passion*: Reportage and Emotionality.” *Contemporary Styles and Technique Class*, University of Texas, 15 December 2012, 4.

²²⁷ Ramberg, Bjorn and Kristin Gjesdal. “Hermeneutics”. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/summer2013/entries/hermeneutics>.

7, 9, 11, 13 and 15) and the recitatives the alternating even movements (2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14). Movements 7 and 9 could also be seen as a third-person narration outside of the events, taking the role of the traditional Evangelist.

The prose of Andersen's story is presented in the recitative sections in what Shank has coined the "Narrator" voice (replacing the role of the Evangelist in the traditional Lutheran passion setting.)²²⁸ This narrator voice is usually in the alto, but occasionally joined by other voices and tells the story of the little match girl. The music is repetitive, simple and has the feel of a news broadcast. David Lang has confirmed Shank's theory that the intention for this narrator voice was to "remind us of a news wire mechanically chunking out stories... in a rapid-fire nature."²²⁹

6.3.2 Music

the little match girl passion is scored for 4 soloists – soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. These soloists play percussion instruments (brake drum, sleigh bell, crotales, glockenspiel, bass drum and tubular bells). The piece is around 35 minutes long. There is also a full chorus version of the work, arranged by the composer. There are two options for performance of the choral version: either the chorus can sing the entire piece throughout, or only sing the chorale movements, with the soloists singing the narrative recitative portions, reminiscent of one Evangelist in four bodies.

²²⁸ Shank, Joshua. "David Lang's *the little match girl passion*: Reportage and Emotionality." *Contemporary Styles and Technique Class*, University of Texas, 15 December 2012, 2.

²²⁹ Shank, *Ibid.*, 5.

Lang achieves coherency throughout the piece through intentional use of tonal centers, consistency in tempo and consistency in form. *the little match girl passion* as a whole is set in the same tempo (quarter note = 72.) The first movement is described as (dotted quarter note = 48) but when the eighth notes are counted it comes down to the same tempo, as illustrated in the following calculation by Joshua Shank:²³⁰

Every movement but #1 is at quarter note = 72 (*this is 144 eighth notes per minute*)
 Movement #1 is at dotted quarter note = 48 (*this is 144 eighth notes per minute*).

The recitatives are mostly sung by the alto. It is characterized by the “rapid-fire” nature of reporting, reminiscent of the mechanical, robotic nature of a news wire as it churns out stories. The other voice groups sing repeated rhythmic patterns, but only as much as their pattern allows, as illustrated by this text excerpt from Movement 8, m. 27

S (main)	she rubbed another match on the wall it burst into a flame and where its light fell upon the wall...
A (main)	she rubbed another match on the wall it burst into a flame and where its light fell upon the wall...
T	she rubbed a...it burst in..and where...
B	she rubbed a...it burst into... and where...

The recitatives can furthermore be divided into two separate worlds: the “real world” (coined by Shank) recitatives take place in the moment and the “imagined world” recitatives take place in multiple dimensions.²³¹ Where Bach used chorales to link and cross settings, Lang effectively achieves this through his use of this technique in the recitatives. The real world recitatives use six pitches: F□, G□,

²³⁰ Shank, Reportage., 5.

²³¹ Shank, *Ibid.*, 5.

A□, B□, C□, D□. The imagined world recitatives use the same pitches with an added E□. By looking at these sets of pitches, it can be argued that the piece as whole revolves around a tonal center of F, and implied key of F minor. It is important to note however that Lang never specifies tonality or key signatures and deliberately remains ambiguous in this regard. From an interview with the composer:²³²

Author: ...Could you speak a little bit as to the expanded harmonic language or expanded palette of this section where she starts imagining things?

David Lang: Well, my thought about the expansion wasn't so much harmonic: I wanted to have her story unified from start to finish, so that's why they all have the glockenspiel and I imagined that each one started where the last one left off so that the Bach texts wouldn't refer to each other. It's like you're watching a story, and then there's a punctuation that says: "let's step back and look at this." So that changes every time but the story itself is exactly the same... I tried to plan something out in the music that would be analogous to what the little girl is doing. What is happening to her is that she is in a way purifying herself and she is becoming complete. So I thought what could that possibly mean on a musical level, and how could you possibly show that, and I thought maybe the way to show that is that conflicts are being resolved and so there is a progression from rhythmic independence and contrapuntal writing to something where they sing in unison. That was my focus and the text was the thing that told me to do that, so the expansion of the harmonic world was a subset of that kind of action, so it wasn't because I needed to add those keys, or the relationships.

The arias are contrasting in nature to the recitatives and reflect the feeling of "helplessness at metaphorically watching this little girl freeze to death... and not being able to do a thing about it."²³³ These arias create a direct link between Lang's composition and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and play upon the familiarity with certain chorales in the choral canon, used by Bach in the *St. Matthew Passion*.

²³² Lang, David. Personal Interview. SoHo, New York City, NY, 18 March 2014.

²³³ Shank, Reportage, 2.

The *St. Matthew Passion* starts with the setting to Picander's *Komm ihr Töchter* ("come ye daughters") and ends with *Wir setzen uns mit Tränen nieder* (we sit down with our tears"). Lang starts with "Come Daughter" and ends with "We sit and cry". Bach's uses Cruger's *Herzliebster Jesu* (literally translated "heart's most loved Jesus"), Lang turns it into "Dearest Heart." Picander's *Erbarme dich* ("have mercy") becomes "God have mercy"; the fauxboudon aria "Geduld" (patience) becomes "Patience"; *Wen ich einmal soll Scheiden* ("when I must at once depart") becomes "When it is time." Throughout these chorale movements one particular rhythmic motive is used repeatedly, that of a repeated syllable, also referred to as a shivering motif.

The image shows a musical score for the chorale movement 'Come Daughter'. It consists of six staves. The top two staves are vocal parts with lyrics 'come daugh-ter' and 'come daugh-ter'. The third staff is a keyboard accompaniment with a repeating rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with the instruction 'breathe as needed - sing as long as you can and exaggerate slightly the struggle for air when you run out and reenter' and 'come come come etc...'. The bottom four staves are a basso continuo part with lyrics 'come daugh - ter' and 'come'.

Example 1: Movement 1, mm. 5 & 6. "Shivering motif."

As a minimalist composer, Lang's musical style in *the little match girl* is somewhat reminiscent of Arvo Pärt's. Lang has stated that the Pärt *Passio* was his largest influence when composing *the little match girl passion*, both in form and

affect. The forward propulsion of *the little match girl passion* is reminiscent of Pärt's continuous 75 minute passion setting: "...now **that** is a courageous composer, who says that I don't want you dropping in, I don't want you thinking which parts are your favorite. Either you listen to the whole piece or you stay away... that was probably one of the most important things I got out of that piece for the making of *the little match girl passion*. That the point is not to make a series of movements that could be extracted, or a series of movements that had their individual values, but the point was to make something that goes from start to finish without stop."²³⁴

This minimalism is reflected in the main compositional components of *the little match girl passion*. When looking at the tonal areas and micro- and macro structure of the piece, it becomes clear that *the little match girl passion* revolves around a tonal center of F, starts expanding through upward and outward, movement by movement, and has a "germinal cell"²³⁵ at the root of each movement, a four-note motive, in its original form C-F-G-Ab, or in movable-doh solfege "me-la-ti-doh."²³⁶

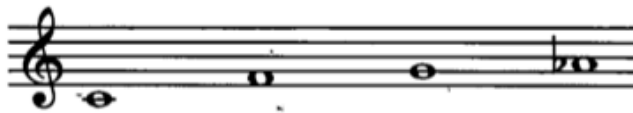


Figure 3: *the little match girl passion* – germinal cell.

²³⁴ Lang, Interview.

²³⁵ The germinal cell or "germinal motif" is mostly attributed to Beethoven, who used a motive to create subsequent motives and themes throughout a whole work, e.g. his Fifth and Eighth Symphonies.

²³⁶ The succeeding musical analysis was conducted in conjunction with University of Washington professor, Geoffrey Boers.

This cell is used in several modulations and permutations throughout the piece, most notably in the soprano line, but also in augmentation in the male voices. An outflow of this figure is that of the alternation of the fourth and fifth step of the F minor scale. This is most recurring set to the text “so the little girl went on,” (Example 2) introduced in Movement 2, which in and of itself serves to propel the piece forward. In the soprano voice it is first introduced to the text “lights were shining” in movement 6 (Example 3).

The image shows a musical score for four voices: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The score is divided into two measures. The lyrics are: "went on with her lit - tle so the lit - tle girl went on with her lit - tle na - ked feet". The music features a prominent triplet figure in the soprano line, which is repeated in the other voices. The lyrics are: "went on with her lit - tle so the lit - tle girl went on with her lit - tle na - ked feet".

Example 2: Movement 2, mm. 34 & 35.

s *mp* lights were shi-ning from ev-'ry win-dow

a *mp* lights were shi-ning from ev-'ry win-dow

t *mp* lights were from e

glock

b *mp* lights from

Example 3: Movement 6, mm. 1 & 2.

A third harmonic motif is that of alternating chords based on the interval of a minor third. Movement 5 centers around alternating C min and Eb maj chords (Example 4), Movement 10 around alternating Ab and C min chords (Example 5) and Movement 12, similar to Movement 5, around alternating C min and Eb chords (Example 6).

pon your poor face may they fall down like rain my

pon your poor face may they fall down like rain my

Example 4: Movement 5 mm. 7-9. (C min to Eb maj)

s *mf* she light - ed a - no - ther match and then she found her - self sit - ting
 a *mf* she light - ed a - no - ther match and then she found her - self sit - ting
 t *mf* she light - ed and then she
 glock
 b *mf* she light - ed and then she

4
 s un - der a beau - ti - ful christ - mas tree it was lar - ger and mon
 a un - der a beau - ti - ful christ - mas tree it was lar - ger and mon
 t un - der a christ - mas tree lar - ger and
 glock
 b un - der a christ - mas tree lar - ger and .

Example 5: Movement 10 mm. 1-6. (Ab maj to C min)

s *mf* she a - gain rubbed a match on the wall and the light shone round her
 a *mf* she a - gain rubbed a match on the wall and the light shone round her
 t *mf* she a - gain rubbed a match on the wall and the light shone round her
 glock
 b *f* she rubbed a match on the wall and the light shone
 poco espressivo

Example 6: Movement 12 mm. 1-3. (C min to Eb maj)

The last, and perhaps most important component at a macro-level is that of an ascending scale from a tonal center of F. Two arguments could be formed with regard to the pitches comprised in this scale.

The first sees an expansion from E (Movement 1, m. 2) to F# (m. 26) to G# (m.42), to Bb (Movement 2, m. 1), carried through as tonal center for Movement 3 and expanding to C (Movement 4, m. 1), creating a whole-tone scale as the first five notes of this expansion.

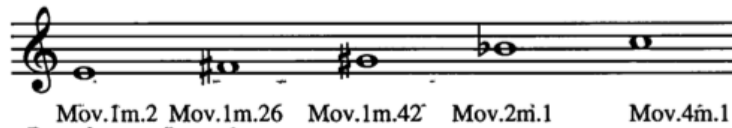


Figure 4: *the little match girl passion* - tonal expansion based on E

Another possible analysis is to view F as the tonal center for the entire piece (the dominant scale in all movements but the first). This would imply a “false start” on E for the first movement, establishing F as the tonal center in Movement 2. Lang comments on this: “I’m sure I tried to start it in the ‘right’ key, and ended up transposing it to keep it in a better range, depending on what it is I needed.”²³⁷ Disregarding Movement 1 then, F, G and Ab are established through the germinal cell (Movement 2 m. 1), with an added Bb (Movement 2 m. 1), said Bb serves as the tonal center for Movement 3, expanding to C (Movement 4 m. 1).

²³⁷ Lang, Interview.

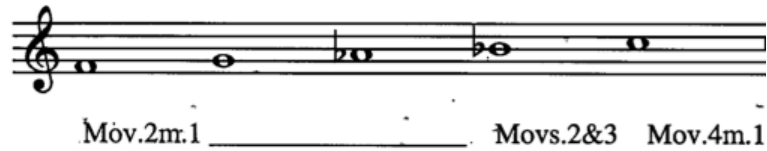


Figure 5: *the little match girl passion*: tonal expansion based on F

The scale continues to expand to Db (introduced in Movement 6 m. 1 but receiving its first dramatic emphasis as a solo utterance in m. 28), Eb (Movement 8 m. 2), Movement 10 remains at this level of expansion, almost straining to lift to F, but this resolution to the octave only occurs in Movement 11 m. 12. Movement 13 briefly insinuates a dominant minor ninth chord of the tonal center of F minor (C⁹) which resolves solidly into F minor with the homecoming of the germinal cell on C-F-G-Ab. The tension that has been built in this octave expansion from F to F is finally released in a descending F minor melodic scale in the tenor, starting Movement 15 m. 25. The voices receive as much of a resolution as possible on m. 57 after which the instruments keep playing, ending on steps G and Ab of the germinal cell (without a clear resolution back to F). This also links to the ‘decapitated’ nature of the first measures of Movement 1 on steps F# and G of the germinal cell in E minor. Lang comments: “I had this idea that the percussion instruments [played by the four soloists] form their own community, but the community will be this kind of ghostly abstracted percussion community, just the skeletons of their voices, which I find was a really beautiful idea.”²³⁸

²³⁸ Lang, Interview.

The image displays a musical score for a percussion coda, spanning measures 61 to 65. The score is organized into two systems of staves. The first system consists of five staves: the top two are treble clefs, the third is a bass clef, and the bottom two are treble clefs. The second system consists of two staves, both treble clefs. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p' (piano) and 'f' (forte). The percussion part is indicated by a double bar line with a triangle symbol at the beginning of the first measure in the first system.

Example 7: Movement 15 mm. 61-65. Percussion coda.

Example 7: Movement 15 mm. 61-65. Percussion coda (continued).

Another interesting relationship exists between Movements 10 and 11 and 14 and 15. Movement 10 uses the harmonic progression based on the pitches of Ab-Bb-C (Example 8), which continues in Movement 11 with C to prominent D and Eb pitches (Example 9), creating a five note pairing of Ab-Bb-C-D-Eb.

Example 8: Movement 10 mm. 1-4. (Ab-Bb-C in bass and tenor parts)

s
p e - li e - li e - li

a

t

b

spoken: (don't rush)
From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.
And at the ninth hour she cried out:

Example 9: Movement 11 mm. 1-4. (C-D-Eb in soprano)

The same pairing exists in Movement 14, which includes F-G-Ab from the original germinal cell (Example 10) expanded to Bb and C in the “we sit and cry” motive (Example 11), creating a five note pairing of F-G-Ab-Bb-C.

s
p in there with and

a
p in the dawn of mor-ning there lay the poor lit-tle one with pa-le cheeks and smi-ling mouth

t

glock
p

b

Example 10: Movement 14 mm. 1-4. (F-G-Ab prominent in each measure.)

Example 11: Movement 15 mm. 1 & 2. (Bb & C prominent)

The tonal expansion of an octave at a macro level musically sketches the Little Match Girl's ascension from this life upwards into that which awaits her. Lang comments: "What is happening to her is that she is leaving this world, and she is in a way purifying herself and she is becoming complete. So I thought what could that possibly mean on a musical level, and how could you possibly show that, and I thought maybe the way to show that is that conflicts are being resolved and so there is a progression from rhythmic independence and contrapuntal writing to something where they sing in unison. So that was my focus and the expansion of the harmonic world was a subset of that kind of action. The section that is there before the recapitulation, I thought about it long and hard. I didn't actually want it to

recapitulate. It seemed like at the end we are back at observing her, she's dead and her purification is over, so that's why I went back to the beginning, the same way Bach did."²³⁹

6.3.3 Text

The text for *the little match girl passion* is drawn from H.P. Paull's 1872 English translation of Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Match Girl," with interspersed libretti by Picander for J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. The prosaic text from Andersen is used for the even-numbered movements and the poetry for the odd-numbered movements. This alternating of poetry and prose is highly reminiscent of traditional practices in the Lutheran passion of Bach's time and propels the work forward. Lang stated: "The telling of the story, while simultaneously commenting upon it... has the effect of placing us in the middle of the action, and it gives the narrative a powerful inevitability."²⁴⁰

1. Come, daughter

Come, daughter
Help me, daughter
Help me cry
Look, daughter
Where, daughter
What, daughter
Who, daughter

²³⁹ Lang, Interview.

²⁴⁰ Lang, David. 2009. Program notes. *the little match girl passion*. Accessible at <http://davidlangmusic.com/music>.

Why, daughter
Guiltless daughter
Patient daughter
Patient daughter
Gone

The first movement of Lang's passion setting is a play on the first line of text of the Bach *St. Matthew Passion*: "Come ye daughters of Zion." Whereas the Picander text soon compels the daughters of Zion to behold the central figure of the passion narrative, Jesus, the "bridegroom", the "lamb", Lang's textual adaptation does not include those references. Bach's *cori spezzati* passages ("see", "who?", "the bridegroom" and "see", "how?", "as a lamb" turn into "look, daughter", "where, daughter", "what, daughter", "who, daughter" and "why, daughter." At first these utterances seem to have no object; it is not specified what the 'daughter' should look at or ponder about. By this omission the daughter becomes both the subject and the object. It could also be argued that the listener is instructed to look at and ponder the "daughter", the "guiltless one", the "patient" one, and one who soon will be "gone." In Lang's narrative, instead of the patriarchal figure of Jesus, the listener is presented with a protagonist in the form of a female gendered individual of young age and disenfranchised background. This choice of protagonist serves to break down any segregating or separating ideas resulting from issues of religion, sexism and elitism.

2. It was terribly cold

It was terribly cold and nearly dark on the last evening of the old year, and the snow was falling fast. In the cold and darkness, a poor little girl, with bare head and naked feet, roamed through the streets. It is true she had on a pair of slippers when she left home, but they were not of much use. They

were very large, so large, indeed, that they had belonged to her mother, and the poor little creature had lost them in running across the street to avoid two carriages that were rolling along at a terrible rate. One of the slippers she could not find, and a boy seized upon the other and ran away with it, saying that he could use it as a cradle, when he had children of his own. So the little girl went on with her little naked feet, which were quite red and blue with the cold.

This first recitative describes the utter poverty of the little match girl, a figure of relative social insignificance in relation to her surroundings. There is a repeated emphasis on the word “little”, resonating with the title of the “little” match girl. This recitative, as those after it, depicts these happenings in a very non-emotional, subjective way, similar to the neutral spitting out of news on a telegraph machine. This movement, the first featuring Hans Christian Andersen’s text (in the H.P. Paull translation), already introduces the concept of injustice that will prevail throughout, and ultimately, cost the girl her life. The first such event is the loss (and in this version, theft) of her left shoe. The perseverance of this little girl is further depicted in the repeated statement “so the little girl went on”, drawing the listener further ahead in the narrative.

3. Dearest heart

Dearest heart
Dearest heart
What did you do that was so wrong?
What was so wrong?
Dearest heart
Dearest heart
Why is your sentence so hard?

This chorale is a play-on-words on the chorale *Herzliebster Jesu*, literally translated “heart-dearest Jesus” which becomes “Dearest heart.” The repetition of the word “dearest” establishes affection and empathy toward the protagonist. Lang further plays with the succeeding text from the chorale, turning “what have you done wrong” (already in the informal “du” case in the original German, showing Christ’s humanity and close relationship with his followers) into “what have you done that was so wrong?” The addition of “that was so” implies the unspoken: “what have you done that was so wrong *that you deserved to die for it?*” The text however is ambiguous in terms of whom it is addressed to. “Heart” could be an endearing term for the little girl, but could also simply refer to the listener’s own “heart”, their own conscience and sense of morality. This concept gets developed further in each successive movement, implying humankind’s own responsibility and autonomous power, and implying the listener’s own role in the injustices of the world. This is clearly in line with the role of the chorale in the traditional passion: reflecting on mankind’s own complicit part in the actions, and serving as a “time warp” into the present time to draw the audience into the action as active participant.

4. In an old apron

In an old apron she carried a number of matches, and had a bundle of them in her hands. No one had bought anything of her the whole day, nor had any one given her even a penny. Shivering with cold and hunger, she crept along; poor little child, she looked the picture of misery. The snowflakes fell on her long, fair hair, which hung in curls on her shoulders, but she regarded them not.

The second recitative continues in the depiction of the cycle of poverty and injustice that defines the girl's life. The fact that her earnest attempts at making a living is unrewarded and ignored by society at large further emphasizes this theme. A dramatic shift comes in the introduction of the falling snow, playing on the inherent dramatic irony: the audience knows the girl will perish (the word "gone" at the end of the first movement as well as the general nature of a passion in which the protagonist always dies gives this away) but she is unaware of this coming threat.

5. Penance and remorse

Penance and remorse
Tear my sinful heart in two
My teardrops
May they fall like rain down upon your poor face
May they fall down like rain
My teardrops

Here, daughter, here I am
I should be bound as you were bound
All that I deserve is
What you have endured

Penance and remorse
Tear my sinful heart in two
My penance
My remorse
My penance

As with the first chorale, this states the listener (and humankind)'s own role in the events and reflects thereupon, in this case more implicitly stating our role in society's treatment of the downtrodden, with the introduction of the personal pronoun "my." The introduction of falling snow in the preceding movement

continues; as the snow starts falling on the little girl, the observer's tears start falling as well, linking both settings together. The second stanza is a play on Lutheran (and Catholic) theology that is also evident in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*: the desire of the observer, moved by compassion and remorse, to take the place of Christ on the cross. The vulnerability of the little girl also resonates with the more Catholic intention of the *Stabat Mater* in which the speaker expresses their desire to take the place of Mary weeping at the foot of the cross after her son has died.²⁴¹ Lang expresses this in the simple words "...all that I deserve is what you have endured." Any remaining doubt as to the guilt of the observer is completely eradicated in the final stanza: "*my penance, my remorse, my penance...*"

6. Lights were shining

Lights were shining from every window, and there was a savory smell of roast goose, for it was new year's eve – yes, she remembered that. In a corner, between two houses, one of which projected beyond the other, she sank down and huddle herself together. She had drawn her little feet under her, but she could not keep off the cold; and she dared not go home, for she had sold no matches, and could not take home even a penny of money. Her father would certainly beat her; besides, it was almost as cold at home as here, for they had only the roof to cover them, through which the wind howled, although the largest holes had been stopped up with straw and rags.

Her little hands were almost frozen with the cold.
Her little hands were almost frozen with the cold.

²⁴¹ The text in question from the Latin *Salve Regina*: "Ah Mother... let me feel the force of grief, that I may grieve with you. To stand by the cross with you, to join you in lamentation, I desire this..." The imagery of Mary with Jesus also reminds the modern audience to the imagery of the *Pieta* and its universal implications as expounded by Muehleisen in his *Pieta* (2012).

This recitative centers on the differences in prosperity and opportunity between the freezing hard-working girl and the seeming effortless love-filled lives of those with enough money for heat and food. Once again the theme of injustice appears, for she cannot return home without having sold enough matches, as she will be scrutinized by her father if this were the case. The word “beat” to modern ears might suggest domestic abuse, but when considered in Andersen’s time it might simply refer to corporal punishment. Nevertheless, it is clear that the punishment would be of such a nature that the girl chooses the pain and discomfort of the cold instead. Here we once again encounter dramatic irony. “Her little hands were almost frozen with the cold...” As audience members, aware of her eventual death, this serves as an update as to how far along she is in this inevitable process, as we feel helpless to prevent it from happening.

7. Patience, patience!

Patience. Patience!

The discomfort of watching the little girl’s demise is highlighted by the uncomfortable silence (reminiscent of that seminal commentary of silence, John Cage’s 4’33’) interrupted only by the words “Patience!” repeated twice. This word brings together the respective worlds of the listener and the girl; in a sense we are instructed to be patient in waiting for the little girl to die. This feels uncomfortable and incongruous: we are made aware of our own *Schadenfreude* and the desire to hasten through this uncomfortable process.

8. Ah! Perhaps

Ah! Perhaps a burning match might be some good, if she could draw it from the bundle and strike it against the wall, just to warm her fingers. She drew one out – “scratch!” how it sputtered as it burnt! It gave a warm, bright light, like a little candle, as she held her hand over it. It was really a wonderful light. It seemed to the little girl that she was sitting by a large iron stove, with polished brass feet and a brass ornament. How the fire burned! And seemed so beautifully warm that the child stretched out her feet as if to warm them, when, lo! The flame of the match went out, the stove vanished, and she had only the remains of the half-burnt match in her hand. She rubbed another match on the wall. It burst into flame, and where its light fell upon the wall it became as transparent as a veil, and she could see into the room. The table was covered with a snowy white tablecloth, on which stood a splendid dinner service, and a steaming roast goose, stuffed with apples and dried plums. And what was still more wonderful, the goose jumped down from the dish and across the floor, with a knife and fork in its breast, to the little girl. Then the match went out, and there remained nothing but the thick, damp, cold wall before her.

This is the first of the “imagined world” recitatives. It also connects even a third “world,” that of the afterlife, to the plot. In the first sequence of this recitative the desire of comfort is combined with a humorous depiction that only a child could conceive. The observer sees a glimpse inside the imagination and memory world of the protagonist for the first time, a little girl using her imagination to dream up better alternatives than what reality is offering her. This resonates strongly with Lutheran theology of reaching for religion and prayer as a comfort even though one’s direct circumstances might not be changed thereby; a central theme in music that depicts social justice, such as the Civil Rights Movements’ anthem “We shall overcome, *someday...*”

9. Have mercy, my God

Have mercy, my God.
Look here, my God.
See my tears fall. See my tears fall.
Have mercy, my God. Have mercy.
My eyes are crying.

My heart is crying, my God.
See my tears fall.
See my tears fall, my God.

The concept of begging for mercy in music is a concept that is well known to a choral audience, e.g. the “Kyrie Eleison” movement of the liturgical Mass (literally translated “God have mercy”). This movement focuses on the listener’s own admission of guilt and participation, as evidenced through the use of the repeated pronoun “my” – *my God, my tears, my eyes, my heart*. This movement renders the listener unable to not participate. It could be argued that after the “Patience” movement, this movement contains the most intimate material: an overlaying of the lulling lullaby effect of the repeated “God have mercy” with the “see my tears” countermelody building intensity and dissonance to emphasize the melancholy and desperation of the scene, all the while continuing the metaphorical imagery of snow and tears falling.

10. She lighted another match

She lighted another match, and then she found herself sitting under a beautiful Christmas tree. It was larger and more beautifully decorated than the one which she had seen through the glass door at the rich merchant’s. Thousands of tapers were burning upon the green branches, and colored pictures, like those she had seen in the show-windows, looked down upon it all. The little one stretched out her hand towards them, and the match went out. The Christmas lights rose higher and higher, till they looked to her like the stars in the sky. Then she saw a star fall, leaving behind it a bright streak of fire. “Some one is dying,” thought the little girl, for her old grandmother, the only one who had ever loved her, and who was now dead, had told her that when a star falls, a soul was going up to God.

This movement, in startling opposition to the lamenting and lulling qualities of the previous movement, contains imagery of aesthetically pleasing things: toys, expectations, the illusion of hope. This movement, the second of the “imagined

world” recitatives starts with longing and depiction of beauty and ends with the arrival of her grandmother. At this moment the little girl experiences a premonition of her own death continuing the ever-existent dramatic irony of this composition: “some one is dying... a soul was going up to God...” but she does not realize it will be her own soul that will soon undertake this journey.

11. From the sixth hour

In the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.
And at the ninth hour she cried out: Eli, eli.

This movement, with its spoken narrative, breaks the cycle of arias in the chorale sections, immediately creating an expectation of something different to come. The imagery of the sixth hour, an integral part of the Passion and Seven Last Words genres, eradicates all doubts as to what is to follow. The words “Eli, eli” are sung by a soprano solo a cappella, an intimate vulnerable cry, “father, father.” The audience familiar with the Biblical events will be able to complete the implied thought: “Father, father, why have you forsaken me?” The girl has been forsaken by the world and those who were meant to love and protect her and is about to transcend into the afterlife, and the audience once again is powerless to prevent it.

12. She again rubbed the match

She again rubbed a match on the wall, and the light shone round her; in the brightness stood her old grandmother, clear and shining, yet mild and loving in her appearance. “Grandmother,” cried the little one, “O take me with you; I know you will go away when the match burns out; you will vanish like the warm stove, the roast goose, and the large, glorious Christmas-tree.” And she made haste to light the whole bundle of matches, for she wished to keep her grandmother there. And the matches glowed with a light that was

brighter than the noon-day, and her grandmother had never appeared so large or so beautiful. She took the little girl in her arms, and they both flew upwards in brightness and joy far above the earth, where there was neither cold nor hunger nor pain, for they were with God.

This is the third and final of the “imagined world” recitatives, showing the transitioning of the girl into “light” (death). In this final moment, the girl undergoes an apotheosis and becomes godlike, with the imagery of haloes surrounding her, as she fulfills her final destiny. It is time for her to “go up to God.”

13. When it's time for me to go

When it is time for me to go
Don't go from me
When it is time for me to leave
Don't leave me
When it is time for me to die
Stay with me
When I am most scared
Stay with me

This movement shows the juxtaposition of opposites, such as the opposites of denial and acceptance: “when it is time to go, don't go... to leave, don't leave... to die, stay...” It also brings to mind the text of the traditional *Abendlied*: “stay with me when it will become evening and when darkness descends.”

14. In the dawn of morning

In the dawn of morning there lay the poor little one, with pale cheeks and smiling mouth, leaning against the wall; she had been frozen to death on the last evening of the year; and the new-year's sun rose and shone upon a little corpse! The child still sat, in the stiffness of death, holding the matches in her hand, one bundle of which was burnt. “She tried to warm herself,” said some. No one imagined what beautiful things she had seen, nor into what glory she had entered with her grandmother, on new-year's day.

This movement returns to the “real world recitatives” in an incredibly formal, businesslike manner, similar to the manner in which news gets repeated after the fact in the tragedies of stage.²⁴² It comments on the inability of humankind at large to recognize the value of the little girl’s suffering and experience, simultaneously serving as a commentary on the eluding nature of the enlightenment/fulfillment that she experienced and the inability of the world at large to empathize with it.

15. We sit and cry

We sit and cry
And call to you
Rest soft, daughter, rest soft
Where is your grave, daughter?
Where is your tomb?
Where is your resting place?
Rest soft, daughter, rest soft
Rest soft
Rest soft
Rest soft
Rest soft
Rest soft
Rest soft
You closed your eyes.
I closed my eyes.
Rest soft

Lang closes his pieces, similar to Bach, with the imagery of the “daughters of Zion,” linking this movement to the opening movement and bringing the composition “full circle.” His textual adaptation is a play on words from the Picander: “here we sit with tears” becomes “we sit and cry.” The repeated phrase

²⁴² An example is the famous closing monologue of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*: “A glooming peace this morning with it brings; the sun, for sorrow, will not show his head: Go hence, to have more talk of these sad things...”

“rest soft” similarly is a free translation of the final words of the Bach *St. Matthew Passion*, but stripped of specific connotation to any particular religion or view of the afterlife. The phrase “rest soft” thus becomes a truly universal phrase that could relate to a universal audience. The commentary on her final resting place, or lack thereof similarly becomes a universal concept – she could be anywhere, or metaphorically be in the listeners’ own respective “world.” The final step in the universalization and connection between the listener and the little girl is achieved in the phrase “you closed your eyes... I closed my eyes.” This phrase could be interpreted in two possible ways: either that the listener refused to see what was happening and chose to be ignorant of the plight of this disenfranchised person until the end; or that the listener finally is able to empathize and experience her pain, experiencing assimilation and eradication of differences – a utopian society ideal has been reached, and as she closes her eyes, we follow suit.

6.3.4 Conclusion

In *the little match girl passion* we see an organic marriage of several components, all of which serve to provide a unique and harrowing investigation of suffering and social conscience and one relatively insignificant overlooked figure’s apotheosis and passing from this world. The timbre of the piece is cold and austere and unforgiving with short interrupted motives and deconstructed motives accompanied by sparse instrumentation, “cold and bleak” by the composer’s own

admittance.²⁴³ The expansion upwards of an octave from F to F musically depicts this journey and transfiguration while building dramatic tension, before a final resolution back to F. The use of tempo and of these tonal centers to achieve coherency is largely successful and Lang succeeds in creating a linear narrative that is relentless in its forward progression. His use of the germinal cell in the recitative movements further serves to create this coherency and creates a sense of timelessness.

In the chorales, Lang's adaptation of the Picander's texts effectively draws the listener into the narrative, while stripping away the religiously specific terminology of the Christian faith. If Brahms strove to deliver a "Human Requiem", Lang strove to deliver a "Human Passion" like so many others before him (Pepping, Golijov, Rihm, to mention but a few). The response from audiences and critics the world over, would suggest that he has succeeded in this task, while continuing to confront his audiences with the themes of suffering and social conscience in a compelling way that renders them impossible to look away.

²⁴³ Lang, David. Personal Interview. SoHo, New York City, NY, 18 March 2014.

Conclusion

On 11 April 2010 the *Berlin Philharmoniker*, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle, performed a staged version of Bach's *Matteuspassion* BWV 244. Peter Sellars choreographed the production. Sellars described the event as follows: "Here, Christ's Passion is not simply retold in the form of a narrative whose events took place in the past but is depicted with a directness that allows us to experience it at first hand and to feel for ourselves the extreme emotions triggered by the events that the work describes."²⁴⁴ Karl Böhmer, in his reconceptualization of the *St. Matthew Passion* attempts to depict "Jesus of Nazareth as a human being" and stated "...no other 18th-century Passion setting brings the human being Jesus of Nazareth so palpably near us as this work, especially in Gethsemane. We experience him approaching his death on the Cross, step by step, and his disciples accompanying this event with an increasing sense of helplessness."²⁴⁵

This frailty is reflected nearly three centuries later in David Lang's *the little match girl passion* which has seen audiences placed in the position of the above-mentioned disciples, feeling a sense of participation and accompanying guilt for their own role in the protagonist's demise, all the while feeling increasingly powerless to stop the events at hand. The way that devout Lutherans and Pietists would have responded in the eighteenth century to Bach's setting is without doubt

²⁴⁴ Möller, Tobias. "Not theatre but meditation – Peter Sellar's ritualization of the St. Matthew Passion." DVD liner notes. *Johann Sebastian Bach – Matthäus-Passion*, Berlin Philharmoniker, BPH120011, 2010.

²⁴⁵ Böhmer, Karl. "Jesus of Nazareth as a human being – The St. Matthew Passion by Johann Sebastian Bach." DVD liner notes. *Johann Sebastian Bach – Matthäus-Passion*, Berlin Philharmoniker, BPH120011, 2010.

no less powerful or visceral than the current-day response to David Lang's *the little match girl passion*.

These themes of suffering permeate throughout passion settings from the onset of the genre to current times. Böhmer claims of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*: we see individuals being confronted with his suffering and reacting with the human frailties we all share."²⁴⁶ Lang comments: "The word 'passion' comes from the Latin word for suffering. There is no Bach in my piece and there is no Jesus – rather the suffering of the Little Match Girl has been substituted for Jesus's, elevating (I hope) her sorrow to a higher plane."²⁴⁷

It is this desire to understand and depict suffering that has compelled several composers to create their settings of the passion narrative. Suffering is central to the passion narrative and the passion genre, and it is not surprising that it emerges as the overarching theme that has influenced composers in their settings of choral passions.

A second theme that emerges is that of doubt, uncertainty and a desire for things to change, ultimately leading to pondering and portraying the concept of social conscience. Not surprisingly it is in the tumultuous setting of the twentieth century, where composers had increased freedom to express themselves outside of a church setting on various concert stages, that these themes would come to

²⁴⁶ Böhmer, Karl. "Jesus of Nazareth as a human being – The St. Matthew Passion by Johann Sebastian Bach." DVD liner notes. *Johann Sebastian Bach – Matthäus-Passion*, Berlin Philharmoniker, BPH120011, 2010.

²⁴⁷ Lang, David. "Program Notes for *the little match girl passion* (for chorus)", 2008. <http://www.davidlangmusic.com/music/little-match-girl-passion-for-chorus>

dominate settings of the passion. These expressive pieces oftentimes were also created in the face of political oppression. A quick summary of twentieth century passions shows some of these themes.

Concepts related to a recontextualization of theology include religious doubt, atheism and secularism in the settings by Frank Martin, Mikis Theodorakis and Wolfgang Rihm, and a return to tradition and religion (in the face of possible persecution) in the works of Pepping and Distler. Both Distler and Pepping provide traditional settings using conventional Biblical texts going against the prescriptions of the Nazi-era administration in Germany and Penderecki provides an unapologetically Christian Catholic passion setting contrary to the customs and expectations of Soviet-controlled Poland. Theodorakis' passion setting is likewise a non-camouflaged critique of the Greek political left and Golijov's passion setting a clear condemnation of the misconduct in Latin American churches and governments that he perceived.

In the midst of this philosophical evolution in the passion genre, Christ becomes a symbol of social conscience. Penderecki portrays Christ as a metaphor for all unjustly slain victims, implicitly countering Poland's Nazi and successive Communist regime's "mocking of a transcendent, religious reality."²⁴⁸ Golijov presents a "dark Jesus", a "Jesus that represents the people, transformed into a collective spirit."²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ Hutcheson, Robert J. "Twentieth Century Settings of the Passion: an Opusculum on the Powerless God." PhD diss., Michigan University, 1976.

²⁴⁹ Adair, Marcia. "The Passion Project 2000." Master's Thesis, Royal Northern College of Music, 2001.

Other composers choose to shy away from the drama in their effort to portray suffering and social conscience: Martin downplays the drama in favor of a more reserved and neutral Calvinist depiction of the crucifixion; Pärt, through his tintinnabuli and minimalism, creates an affect devoid of space, effort and subjective viscosity; Dun conveys a message of simplicity and meditation through the use of Buddhist Zen; and Rihm edits out all extraneous information, adjectives and interjections to create a human story where the audience can form their own conclusions.

The inherent potential in settings of the passion narrative, namely to address the issue of social conscience, is demonstrated by the existence of projects such as the *Passion Project 2000* and Conspirare's "comPASSION project" (2014). It can also be seen in the visceral nature of the general reception of David Lang's *the little match girl passion*. Whereas Lang set out to contextualize and portray suffering in a way that would move audiences, he does not consider himself a social activist: "...I was looking for something that would allow me to be an observer of what the passion is traditionally, so I was looking for something that would highlight the paradox of the passion: you are supposed to notice the suffering of Jesus... I wouldn't say that I'm an activist or a social critic, I'm just curious... I still don't know what the answer is. And to be honest I had no idea when I wrote it that people were going to respond to it."²⁵⁰

The inherent possibility of this genre, especially in some of the more non-traditional settings therein, of showing a different viewpoint and increasing the

²⁵⁰ Lang, David. Personal Interview. SoHo, New York City, NY, 18 March 2014.

empathy of the listeners and performers alike, is an exciting prospect. A recent example of this can be found in the performance of Tan Dun's *Water Passion after St. Matthew* in Salt Lake City in 2009. Conductor Brady Allred programmed this setting between performances of the Bach *St. Matthew Passion* and Mark Grey and Laure Tohe's *Enemy Slayer: A Navajo Oratorio*, providing Salt Lake City audiences with two recontextualized interpretations of traditional sacred forms. Allred admitted in interviews with local media outlets that he understood the calculated risk involved in performing these pieces in Salt Lake City: "I know I'm taking a real chance doing this piece [Tan Dun's *Water Passion*], especially in this community, because of the preconceived notions of how sacred texts should be set." The program notes for this performance included extensive notes on the universality of Dun's message and its connection to the more known Judeo-Christian principles. Several choir members that took part in this performance have subsequently commented that the experience of performing the *Water Passion after St. Matthew* was influential in their own worldview of other cultures and religions, and prepared them for the succeeding performance of the *Navajo Oratorio*.

The fact that composers are still composing passion settings in contemporary times might in and of itself attest to the relevance of the passion narrative, especially when it is viewed through these themes of suffering and social conscience. The sheer amount of recent passion settings is remarkable, especially in comparison to the absence of passion settings in general during the nineteenth century. Pärt's and Penderecki's passion settings are arguably the most well known

of the twentieth century passions (as confirmed by Kyr, Muehleisen and Lang) and inspired a slew of successive composers to compose in this format. Pärt's *Passio* has inspired the next generation of composers in the use of minimalism, iconography and its continuous momentum. It is however Penderecki's bold *St. Luke Passion* that demonstrated the potential of a passion setting to have a significant impact on audiences the world over while making a powerful political statement in the face of adversity.

In this way, the genealogy of principal influencers in passion music could be drawn from Bach to Penderecki to composers such as Lang who are redefining it in a 21st century construct. The passion genre today is receiving a level of attention and popularity akin to Bach's time and audiences are experiencing equally arresting, socially and culturally relevant messages through these modern passion settings.

The increasing amount of performances of *the little match girl passion*, seven years after its premiere, might be an indication of its potential for prosperity and inclusion in the choral canon. Dialogue-based projects and commissions like Rilling's and Hella-Johnson's might well increase the discourse regarding the relevance of these themes in current-day life. It is clear, however, that the narrative of the passion story and the unfair suffering of its protagonist, whether depicted as Messiah or Pariah, continues to inspire composers and entrance their audiences as they wrestle with the implications of events millennia in the making.

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Appendix

Timeline of Passions Integral to this Study

DATE	TITLE	COMPOSER
1400	Latin Passion a 3 <i>St. Matthew Passion</i> Unnamed	Anonymous Davy, Richard Anon. (Eton)
1510	<i>Passio Secundum Matthaëum</i>	Obrecht, Jacob
1530	Unnamed	Walther, Johann
1534	Unnamed	Sermissy, Claudin
1538	<i>Mark</i>	Gallicus, Mars
1568	<i>Johannespassion</i>	Burck Joachim
1578	Unnamed	Bucenus, Paulus
1585	<i>St. Matthew Passion</i> <i>St. John Passion</i>	Vittoria, Tomas Luis Vittoria, Tomas Luis
1607	<i>St. John Passion</i>	Byrd, William
1613	<i>St. Matthew Passion</i>	Vulpus, Melchior
1619	<i>Passio D.N. Jesu Christe</i>	Suriano, Francesco
1631	Latin Passion a 6	Gesius, Bartholomäus
1631	<i>St. John Passion</i>	Demantius, Christoph
1637	<i>St. Matthew Passion</i>	Mancius, Thomas
1640	<i>St. John Passion</i>	Selle, Thomas
1642	<i>St. Matthew Passion</i>	Selle, Thomas
1643	<i>St. John Passion (2nd setting)</i>	Selle, Thomas
1645	<i>Sieben Letzte Worte am Kreuz</i>	Schütz, Heinrich
1653	<i>St. Matthew Passion (lost)</i>	Schultze, Christoph
1664	<i>St. Matthew Passion (lost)</i>	Strutius, Thomas
1664	<i>St. Luke Passion</i>	Schütz, Heinrich
1665	<i>St. John Passion</i>	Schütz, Heinrich
1666	<i>St. Matthew Passion</i>	Schütz, Heinrich
1667	<i>St. Matthew Passion</i>	Flor, Christian
1670	<i>Sieben Letzte Worte am Kreuz</i>	Pleger, Augustin
1672	<i>St. Matthew Passion</i>	Sebastiani, Johann
1673	<i>St. Matthew Passion</i>	Theile, Johann
1683	<i>St. Luke Passion (lost)</i>	Funke, Friedrich
1697	<i>St. Matthew Passion</i>	Rothe, Johann Christoph
1700	<i>St. Matthew Passion</i>	Meder, Johann
1700	<i>St. Matthew Passion</i>	Kühnhausen, Johann
1704	<i>Der blutige und sterbende Jesus</i>	Keiser, Reinhard

1704	<i>St. John Passion</i>	Händel, Georg Friedrich
1711	<i>St. Luke Passion (lost)</i>	Böhm, Georg
1711	<i>Tranen unter dem Kreuze Jesu</i>	Keiser, Reinhard
1712	<i>Der fur die Sunder der Welt gemarterte und Sterbende Jesus</i>	Keiser, Reinhard
1715	<i>Der zum Tode verurtheilte und gekreuzigte Jesus</i>	Keiser, Reinhard
1716	<i>Der fur die Sunden der Welt gemarterte und Sterbende Jesus</i>	Händel, Georg Friedrich
1721	<i>St. Mark Passion</i>	Kuhnau, Johann
1722	<i>St. Matthew Passion (first of 46)</i>	Telemann, G.P.
1722	<i>St. John Passion</i>	Bach, Johann Sebastian
1727	<i>St. Matthew Passion</i>	Bach, Johann Sebastian
1755	<i>Der Tod Jesu</i>	Graun, Carl Heinrich
1767	<i>St. Mark Passion (last of 46)</i>	Telemann, G.P.
1768	<i>St. Matthew Passion (first of 21)</i>	Bach, C.P.E.
1829	<i>St. Matthew Passion (Bach)</i> performed in Berlin as a result of efforts by Felix Mendelssohn	
1896	<i>Die Passion</i>	Herzoggenberg, Heinrich
1933	<i>Choral Passion</i>	Distler, Hugo
1946	<i>Golgotha</i>	Martin, Frank
1947	<i>Lukaspassion</i>	Mauersberger, Rudolf
1950	<i>Passionsbericht der Matthaus</i>	Pepping, Ernst
1954	<i>Markuspassion</i>	Micheelsen, Hans Friedrich
1957	<i>Matthauspassion</i>	Micheelsen, Hans Friedrich
1959	<i>Passion</i>	Baumann, Max
1959	<i>Passion according to St. John</i>	Bender, Jan
1961	<i>Johannespassion</i>	Micheelsen, Hans Friedrich
1963	<i>Passion according to St. Mark</i>	Bender, Jan
1965	<i>St. Luke Passion</i>	Penderecki, Krysztof
1981	<i>Passion and Resurrection</i>	Harvey, Jonathan
1982	<i>Passio Domini Nostri Joannem</i>	Part, Arvo
1982	<i>Saduccean Passion</i>	Theodorakis, Mikis
1986	<i>St. Matthew Passion</i>	Kverno, Trond
1992	<i>St. John Passion</i>	Karlsen, Kjell
1995	<i>Passion according to Four Evang.</i>	Kyr, Robert
1996	<i>Passion and Resurrection</i>	Moody, Ivan
1997	<i>St. Matthew Passion</i>	Alburger, Mark
1999	<i>Passió</i>	Orban, Gyorgy
2000	<i>St. Matthew Passion</i>	Averitt, William
2000	<i>Water Passion after St. Matthew</i>	Dun, Tan
2000	<i>Johannespassion</i>	Gubaidulina, Sofia
2000	<i>Deus Passus</i>	Rihm, Ernst
2000	<i>St. Luke Passion</i>	Golijov, Osvaldo
2001	<i>Passia</i>	Hallgimsson, Hafliði

2005	<i>Passion and Resurrection</i>	Ešenvalds, Eriks
2006	<i>Passion and Death of Jesus Christ according to the Gospels</i>	King, Scott
2006	<i>A Swedish St. Mark Passion</i>	Sixten, Fredrik
2007	<i>the little match girl passion</i>	Lang, David
2012	<i>Pietà</i>	Muehleisen, John
2014	<i>A Gnostic Passion</i>	Balliet, Doug & Brad
2015	<i>Passion According to the Untold Witness</i>	Kyr, Robert