

THE TYGER AND THE LAMB: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEXT AND
MUSIC IN SELECTED CONTEMPORARY CHORAL SETTINGS OF TWO POEMS BY
WILLIAM BLAKE (1757-1827)

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ABSTRACT

Texts have been influencing composers of choral music for centuries. Some composers manipulate the text through the use of form and compositional technique, whereas others rely on highlighting specific words. Still others work to convey emotions or to conjure aural images for the listener. Expressive poetry, such as *The Tyger* and *The Lamb*, two poems by William Blake (1757-1827), has inspired several composers to set these texts to music, among them John Tavener (1944-2013), René Clausen (b. 1953), and Andrew Miller (b. 1983). This dissertation focuses on the choral settings of Blake's *The Tyger* and *The Lamb* by these three composers. It offers an understanding of their compositional thought processes, a key element for the interpretation and performance of these works. It is only through careful consideration of these thought processes that choral conductors can ensure an informed performance of this literature.

This study draws on interviews I have conducted with René Clausen and Andrew Miller, as well as on other scholars' interviews with the late John Tavener. Furthermore, I have analyzed the compositional style and updated previous research on each of the composers. Each composer sets Blake's texts in a different manner, however all approached the compositional process through the lens of imagery. Clausen's, Miller's, and Tavener's compositional techniques create aural images and, in doing so, rely entirely upon their musical backgrounds and belief systems. In Clausen's settings of *The Tyger* and *The Lamb*, he colors the melodic, harmonic, and textural material to reflect the nuances of each animal. For Tavener, his Orthodox faith guides his settings with the chant-like melody, *ison*, and use of canon, retrograde, and inversion. For Miller, he

highlights the emotion in the music to demonstrate the “core” meaning of the poetry.

Observing these three contemporary composers setting the same texts in different styles offers a glimpse into their creative process and gives conductors critical information for performance.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

For centuries, texts have influenced the musical decisions of choral composers. The relationship between text and music infuses all aspects of the compositional process and allows composers of choral music to interpret and give new life to poetry. Each composer goes about the process in different ways, and they all interpret texts in their own way by making individual choices when setting them to music.

The poetry of William Blake (1757-1827) has gone in and out of popularity since his death. “He was relegated to the madhouse in the nineteenth century, canonized as a mystic of visionary heavens around the turn of the twentieth century and pulled back to earth, in the thick of political and social involvements of his England....”¹ His poetry has once again come into popularity within the last several decades with many choral settings being written, particularly of *The Tyger* and *The Lamb*. *The Lamb* comes from Blake’s collection of poems entitled *Songs of Innocence* (1789), whereas *The Tyger* comes from his collection *Songs of Experience* (1794).

Songs of Innocence is a collection of nineteen poems published in 1789. In addition to the poetry, Blake illustrated or engraved visual images to accompany the poems. The images and poetry revolve around pictures of nature, lambs, shepherds, childhood, and innocence. A sense of optimism pervades the poetry and many of the poems make connections to the heavenly. *The Lamb*, the fourth poem of the set, speaks about the stream, mead, and vales in addition to describing the soft clothing of a lamb (fig. 1).

¹ Charles Robert Chillag, “Image and Meaning in William Blake’s Poetry” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1954), 1-2, ProQuest UMI 301990383.

Little Lamb who made thee
 Dost thou know who made thee
 Gave thee life & bid thee feed.
 By the stream & o'er the mead;
 Gave thee clothing of delight,
 Softest clothing wooly bright;
 Gave thee such a tender voice,
 Making all the vales rejoice!
 Little Lamb who made thee
 Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
 Little Lamb I'll tell thee!
 He is called by thy name,
 For he calls himself a Lamb:
 He is meek & he is mild,
 He became a little child:
 I a child & thou a lamb,
 We are called by his name.
 Little Lamb God bless thee.
 Little Lamb God bless thee.

Figure 1. William Blake, *The Lamb* (1789)

The poetic meter is trochaic, a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable, but the indented phrases all end with an unstressed syllable, highlighting the questions and tender tone. The voice of *The Lamb* is through the lens of a child, “I, a child, & thou a lamb.”

In contrast, the twenty-four poems that make up *Songs of Experience* are far less optimistic and focus on themes of darkness, of loss, and of the earth. Nature themes now focus on dark forests in the night, storms, wilted flowers, and thorns. The subject matter often deals with death and the title page illustration is two people grieving over a tomb. Many of the poems in *Songs of Experience* have parallel poems in *Songs of Innocence*. “Infant Joy” in *Songs of Innocence*, for example, is followed by “Infant Sorrow” in *Songs of Experience*. He published both sets together in 1794 with the title *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* with a subtitle of *Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul*. Three of the poems, “Nurses Song”, “Holy Thursday”, and “The Chimney Sweeper”,

appear in both sets of poems, however, with an entirely different interpretation – highlighting the two contrary states of the human soul, the innocence of a child juxtaposed with the experiences from a sometimes dark and cold world. *The Lamb* is answered with *The Tyger*. *The Tyger* is set in the dark forest and questions are asked about how such a menacing creature may have been created (fig. 2).

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

Figure 2. William Blake, *The Tyger* (1794)

The meter of *The Tyger* is mostly trochaic with occasional lines in iambic, an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. The second line of the third stanza illustrates the shift to iambic (stresses in bold) – Could **twist** the **sin**-ews **of** thy **heart**? The poem has an incessant drive throughout, giving it a sense of stalking or the moving parts of a machine.

Blake links the two poems as a pair with the line in *The Tyger*, “Did he who made the Lamb make thee?” Much has been written about their intentional reference to the heavenly, *The Lamb* depicting Christ and *The Tyger* depicting something sinister.² One of the reasons why Blake’s poetry has continued to be so popular is that it leads the reader to multiple interpretations. Many of his poems can be read with spiritual, political, ethical, societal, or moral interpretations. Take *The Tyger*, for example:

“The poem moves from physical power (who “Could frame thy fearful symmetry?”) to moral daring (who “Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?”), and any answer to the question is terrifying: Yes, it is the same God who creates the meekness of the lamb and the terrors of the tyger, or No, there are two creating Gods, one for the helpless lamb and one for the preying tyger.”³

The texts are colorful and stimulating for a composer to set to music.

Three prominent composers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Sir John Tavener [1944-2013], René Clausen [b. 1953], and Andrew Miller [b. 1983]) have composed a setting of both *The Lamb* and *The Tyger*. Tavener composed his settings in 1982 and 1987, respectively, Clausen wrote both of his settings in 2010, and Miller composed his settings in 2013. By analyzing their compositional style and their settings of these two Blake poems, we can draw conclusions about these composers’ choices and about how these texts influence their musical settings. Observing several contemporary composers setting the same text in different musical styles offers a glimpse into their creative process of composition and their choices for musical expression based on the descriptive quality of the poetry. Understanding how and why a composer intends a piece

² One such source that discusses the divine in Blake’s poems is by Robert Joseph Musante entitled, “Embracing the Divine: The Life of Spirit in William Blake’s ‘Songs of Innocence’, ‘Songs of Experience’, and ‘The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.’”

³ G.E. Bentley, *The Stranger from Paradise* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 147.

of music to sound is critical information for conductors to have in order to rehearse and perform the music as closely as possible to the composer's intentions.

This study draws on new interviews with Clausen and Miller, as well as old interviews conducted with Clausen and the late John Tavener. In addition, a musical analysis regarding form, melody, harmony, and rhythm of each of their settings of *The Tyger* and *The Lamb* will be presented. New information regarding Clausen's style and approach to text will be added to existing materials. For each individual Blake setting, the author discusses the relationship between text and music and the reasons behind the composer's musical decisions. The author also places these settings within the larger compositional output of each composer. This paper compares compositional styles, processes, and inspiration by examining similarities as well as substantial differences in their approaches. Numerous dissertations, articles, concert and recording reviews, books, and past interviews have provided source material for the direction of this dissertation and to support its argument.

Much has been written about John Tavener and his compositional style. Dr. Eric Alan Johnson suggests that the content of the available scholarship on Tavener typically falls into two categories. The first consists of analyses of various works that investigate Tavener's compositional techniques, including his interest in and influence of chant. Larry Parsons' dissertation, "An Analysis of Six Major Choral Works by John Tavener" (1978) and James Nowack's "Three Major Choral Works of John Tavener" (1994) are examples of this research. In addition, many articles on various pieces of Tavener also examine his compositional technique. The second type, often written by Tavener himself or by those that know him well, is more philosophical and speaks to his influences in life

and in what ways they affect his music.⁴ Eric Alan Johnson's dissertation, "John Tavener's Choral Anthems" (2003), is a good assimilation of several Tavener biographies. This knowledge of Tavener's philosophical viewpoints is critical to an informed analysis and interpretation of his choral music. In this dissertation, the discussion regarding Tavener will be similar in nature, but will focus primarily on his settings of *The Lamb* and *The Tyger*.

Scholarship on René Clausen is also extensive. Four dissertations have been written on various aspects of Clausen's compositional style. Of particular interest is the dissertation by Todd Guy in 1998, "The Compositional Process of René Clausen as Demonstrated in Selected Choral Works." Guy uses several interviews with Clausen as a basis to form a well-crafted argument for the way in which Clausen creates his compositions. The author will be presenting subtle changes in Clausen's approach based on interviews with the composer, updating some of Guy's initial research from fifteen years ago. Other notable research on Clausen includes John Warren's dissertation, "Four Twentieth-Century Settings of Walt Whitman's Poems by American Composers," (1999) and Kenneth Owen's dissertation, "Stylistic Traits in the Choral Works of Lauridsen, Whitacre, and Clausen (1995-2005)." No current scholarship is available on Clausen's approach to the texts of William Blake.

Finally, Andrew Miller is in the early stages of his compositional career and as such, no substantial research has yet been undertaken on his style and approach to composition. Miller has already achieved significant success in choral composition, most notably as winner of the Edwin Fissinger Choral Composition Competition in 2013, and

⁴ Eric Alan Johnson, "John Tavener's Choral Anthems 1985-1990" (DMA diss., University of Illinois, 2003), 2-3, ProQuest UMI 3101875.

this dissertation will be the first substantial research to discuss his compositional approach as it applies to setting text to music. Interviews with the composer will provide the basis for this research.

The Tyger and *The Lamb*, two poems by William Blake, each set by three contemporary composers, will be compositions under consideration here. How does each composer treat the text? Are there similarities in the musical treatment of various words or phrases? How does the structure of the poem affect the form of the music? And how does the imagery inherent in the poetry affect the musical message that these three composers intend to portray? These questions will organize the content of this disquisition. It is through this lens that we as choral conductors approach these pieces in rehearsal so that our singers and audiences can gain a better understanding of what the composer intended for us to hear and feel.

CHAPTER 2. THE COMPOSITIONAL APPROACH OF JOHN TAVENER

John Tavener, one of the most prolific and influential composers of the late twentieth-century, is a well-known name in choral music. His music is easily identified and there are few composers that use the distinct musical language of Tavener. His maturity as a composer follows a unique pattern, almost retrograde-design in which his mature works are simpler than his early music. His works in the 1960's and 1970's were avant-garde – full of dissonance, development, and some serial techniques. Yet Tavener worked hard throughout his life to make his music less complicated, rather than more developed. Even from an early age, Tavener developed a distaste for traditional musical training.

“Music was the first thing I was aware of. I cannot remember a time when there was no music in my life...I hated sight-reading, or being taught any of the grammar of music. From the age of three, I used to improvise...Then I was taught the piano. The idea of being taught never appealed to me very much, because I thought I could find out musical tunes with my ear. That has guided me throughout my life.”⁵

In addition to his natural dislike for traditional means of music learning, Tavener's religious beliefs had a profound effect on his compositions. In 1977, John Tavener converted to Russian Orthodoxy and for the next couple of decades, his music was influenced by the traditions of both Russian and Greek Orthodoxy. Later in life, he took on a more Universalist approach and composed music to texts from different faiths and cultures.

⁵ John Tavener, *The Music of Silence: A Composer's Testament* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 1.

Tavener spent the majority of his compositional life trying to strip away traditional Western influences from his music. This limited the kinds of texts he chose to set and how those texts were set to music. The sacred influence from the Orthodox church, in particular the Byzantine influences of chant and *ison* (drone), are staples in his musical settings. In addition, Tavener's compositional techniques of inversion, retrograde, and palindrome can be traced to the Byzantine tradition.

Tavener's choices for texts demonstrate his interest in sacred music, and his decisions regarding text setting are influenced by his deep connection with the Orthodox faith. Nearly all of his compositions use texts that are sacred, or secular texts with a sacred element. With longer compositions, Tavener has to absorb the text over the course of days, weeks, or even months.

“Basically it's a question of living with the text over a period of weeks, maybe months, doing other things – buying fish, choosing wine, driving the car, going for a walk. It's a bit like the Buddhist idea of planting a tree in order to concentrate the mind, by doing something very simple. All during this time the notes and patterns of notes are beginning to form in my head. I don't know where they come from”.⁶

Furthermore, the subject matter will greatly influence the sound, or spirit of the piece that Tavener refers to as the ethos. Even his orchestral music usually has a subtext that influences the “spirit” of the piece. For example, *The Protecting Veil* (1987) is a piece that he wrote for solo cello and an orchestra of strings. The subtext is based on the Protecting Veil feast of the Orthodox Church, in which the Mother of God appears in the sky over Constantinople and places a veil over the city while it is being attacked to save the Christians living there. This image gave Tavener the idea of writing a piece about the

⁶ John Tavener, *The Music of Silence: A Composer's Testament* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 143-144.

various feasts of the Mother of God so he studied the various tones of the feasts and absorbed their character.⁷

The images inherent in sacred texts also shape many of Tavener's choral works. Tavener speaks of his music as being choral ikons (icons), sacred images meant for devotion, prayer, and contemplation.

“Both chant and ikons reduce this worldly sophistication to a nullity. In that sense they're both totally dead to the world. They have nothing to do with the world, they have gone outside the world. There may be more ‘clever’ music, there may be more ‘clever’ paintings, more ‘attractive’ and ‘pleasing’ paintings. But such qualities belong to a kind of art that does not reach the high level on which ikons and chant exist.”⁸

It takes time to stare into the image of an ikon in order to absorb its meaning. Tavener incorporates repetition in his music as a way for the listener to absorb the meaning of the aural image, or musical ikon. *Village Wedding* (1991) demonstrates this technique. The chant-like tune of Isaiah's dance appears sixteen times throughout the piece interspersed with the Sikelianos' poetry. The repetition, similarly found in his popular piece *Song for Athene* (1993), gives the sense of transcending the music, or being lost in the image of an ikon.

Tavener, in the 1980's, began to strip his music of Western influence as a means to make his musical message easier to discern.

“I would say this is the first piece of mine (*Prayer for the World*, 1981) that had nothing to do with entertaining an audience, nothing to do with the concert hall: it was a prayer. I was beginning to organize my music according to a different order of ideas and maybe a higher order of reality. It was from this piece onwards that I found myself abandoning Western musical procedures and the whole idea of

⁷ Ibid., 62.

⁸ John Tavener, *The Music of Silence: A Composer's Testament* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 115.

development and I realized it was something that simply did not interest me – the whole idea of progression or evolution.”⁹

Instead, Tavener looked backwards for musical inspiration, to the music of the early church – chant. “Tavener’s melodies are simple and “chant-like”, but not because he desires to compose chant. They are ‘chant-like’ because anything else would be an imposition of the human ego.”¹⁰

“I have never attempted to write chant, but rather to find what the ethos of compunction, of humility, of certitude is, and also the prelapsarian innocence which chant at its best has. I attempt to take that ethos and try somehow, from the silence of ikons and the silence of chant, to reinstate both qualities into my music.”¹¹

Tavener, in an attempt to simplify his music, models his melodies after Byzantine chant, which is the most significant feature of Tavener’s choral music from the 1980’s and 1990’s.

“Examinations of Tavener’s melodic construction identify several features that can be readily linked to the Byzantine chant tradition. One generally associates limited range, primarily stepwise motion, syllabic declamation of text, use of reciting tone, use of agogic accents for textual stress, simple speech-like rhythms, and the use of short, melodic formulae as aspects of this chant tradition. The melodic formulae also exhibit many commonalities – opening and cadential formulae are closely related to the tonal center, opening motives that usually ascend, cadential motives that usually descend, the third as the most common melodic ambitus, and rhythmic values that progress from shorter to longer values at cadences.”¹²

Funeral Ikos (1981), serves as an example of his melodic construction (ex. 2-1).

⁹ John Tavener, *The Music of Silence: A Composer’s Testament* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 42.

¹⁰ Eric Alan Johnson, “John Tavener’s Choral Anthems 1985-1990” (DMA diss., University of Illinois, 2003), 58, ProQuest UMI 3101875.

¹¹ John Tavener, *The Music of Silence: A Composer’s Testament* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 118.

¹² Eric Alan Johnson, “John Tavener’s Choral Anthems 1985-1990” (DMA diss., University of Illinois, 2003), 57-58, ProQuest UMI 3101875.

Tenors

p e legato sempre

Why these bit - ter words of the dy - ing, O brethren, which they

Basses

p e legato sempre

Why these bit - ter words of the dy - ing, O brethren, which they

ut - ter as they go hence?

ut - ter as they go hence?

Example 2-1. Chant-like melodic construction in *Funeral Ikos*. John Tavener, *Funeral Ikos* (London, England: Chester, 1981), 1.

In this example, the melody is entirely stepwise, mostly syllabic, and of limited range with simple speech-like rhythms. In addition, the use of a reciting tone (A-flat), opening and closing material closely related to tonic (F), ascending opening material as well as descending cadential material, and longer note values at cadences are all present. The simplicity and chant influence in melodic construction is a hallmark of Tavener's style after his conversion to the Orthodox faith.

In addition to the rhythmic and melodic influences from chant, other considerations such as tempo, ornamentation, and performance practice issues are important considerations from the Byzantine tradition. Tempo in Tavener's music is slow, usually 40 to 60 beats per tactus. Tavener would often joke that his music should be sung at the rate of a heart rate and because his heart beats slower than normal¹³, at around 40 beats per minute, his music is even slower. The music of John Tavener has a

¹³ John Tavener suffered from Marfan syndrome that caused an unusually slow heart rate.

consistent tempo about it. It is never excitable and it rarely changes throughout the piece – another influence from chant, the consistency of delivery and the ethos of eternity.

Ornamentation is an important element of Byzantine chant and Tavener occasionally writes out melodic lines in the style of ornamented chant. In *Village Wedding*, the fourth line of text is in the style of Byzantine chant (ex. 2-2).

The image displays three staves of musical notation for the piece "Village Wedding".

- Staff 1 (T.):** Tenor part. Tempo: *molto f e marcatiss.* Lyrics: "Let them throw white rice". The melody features a triplet of eighth notes on "Let" and another triplet on "throw".
- Staff 2 (T.):** Tenor part. Tempo: *ben marc. sempre*. Lyrics: "Like a spring show er.". The melody is more melismatic, with a triplet of eighth notes on "show".
- Staff 3 (C. Ten. and T.):** Contralto Tenor (C. Ten.) and Tenor (T.) parts. Tempo: *molto f e marc.* Lyrics: "Let them throw white rice". Both parts feature triplets on "Let" and "throw".

Example 2-2. Ornamented chant influence in *Village Wedding*. John Tavener, *Village Wedding* (London, England: Chester, 1991), 3.

Finally, performance practice issues are an often overlooked element in the performance of John Tavener’s music. Influenced by the sounds of Byzantine chant, Tavener has an expectation that sounds of eastern chant will come through in the performance of his music. Tavener talks about a sound ideal that is primordial, rough, raw, or uninhibited. Some of the terms or phrases that Tavener writes in his scores for sound advice include: “strong”, “with awesome splendor”, “with awesome majesty”, and

“like flashes of lightning”. The tone has a brighter, more from the chest cavity production and it contains less vibrato. A greater amount of air is necessary in creating the sound to avoid singing with tension. Above all, Tavener hopes that the performers of his music will understand the music, that is, the reason behind the music. “That is what I need from every performer. I have to insist, any future performers of my music must understand what lies beyond the notes. Otherwise, the music will not exist at all.”¹⁴

Arguably, chant has the largest influence on Tavener’s music, but the Byzantine influence does not end there. The use of the *ison*, or eternity tone, is prevalent in Tavener’s music as well as manipulations of melodic material such as inversion, retrograde, and palindromes. The *ison* is a drone, usually on the tonic note, that accompanies a melodic line. “The *ison* represents for me the divine presence, and somewhere I suppose in every piece that I write this eternity note must be present – the presence of God, as it were.”¹⁵ Tavener and Orthodox parishoners place great meaning and importance on the *ison*. “There must be no harmony, no counterpoint, just a single melodic line with an *ison*, or the tonic note of the melody, representing eternity, at least according to Petros; and, I might add, according to the entire Greek Orthodox Church.”¹⁶ Sacred music exists purely in this form and Tavener uses the *ison* frequently in his music. In his study of Tavener’s choral anthems from 1985-1990, Dr. Eric Alan Johnson found that the *ison* was present in 19 of his 22 anthems.¹⁷

¹⁴ John Tavener, *The Music of Silence: A Composer’s Testament* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 163.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁷ Eric Alan Johnson, “John Tavener’s Choral Anthems 1985-1990” (DMA diss., University of Illinois, 2003), 104-105, ProQuest UMI 3101875.

Tavener is a choral composer who writes more than just chant with a drone. He is also careful to avoid unnecessary development in his music and he has to rely on other means to create momentum for the musical line. To achieve this, Tavener employs inversion, retrograde, parallel motion, responsorial effects by alternating solo with chorus, canon, and palindromes in his music. In the aforementioned study, Dr. Eric Alan Johnson also found that all but 1 of the 22 anthems from 1985-1990 contained one or more of these techniques, with the vast majority of them containing several techniques.¹⁸ *Song for Athene* contains many of these elements such as solo and chorus alternation, parallel motion, and an expanding *ison* (table 1).

Table 1. John Tavener, *Song for Athene* structure

Alleluia – Solo line with ison
 May flights of angels sing thee to thy rest – Chorus in parallel motion with ison
 Alleluia – Solo line with ison
 Remember me, O Lord, when you come into your kingdom – Chorus in parallel motion with ison
 Alleluia – Solo line with ison
 Give rest, O Lord, to your handmaid who has fallen asleep. – Chorus in inversion with ison
 Alleluia – Solo line with ison
 The Choir of Saints have found the well-spring of life and door of paradise - Chorus in inversion with ison
 Alleluia – Solo line with ison
 Life: a shadow and a dream. - Chorus in parallel motion with ison
 Alleluia – Solo line with ison
 Weeping at the grave creates the song: Alleluia. - Chorus in parallel motion with ison
 Alleluia – Solo line with ison
 Come, enjoy rewards and crowns I have prepared for you. - Chorus in parallel motion with ison
 Alleluia – Solo line with ison

Tavener builds momentum by adding layers of melodic components and expanding textures. The result is an increased intensity at moments of textual significance without changing tempo. *Song for Athene* (1992) illustrates this well. He layers voice parts gradually over the course of the piece until the climactic moment with the text, “Come enjoy rewards and crowns I have prepared for you” (ex. 2-3).

¹⁸ Ibid., 106-107.

This is also a good example of the harmonic implications in Tavener's music. He rarely uses harmony as a vertical event, rather it is made up of several horizontal melodic components, often in parallel triads or manipulated through inversion.

With resplendent joy in the Resurrection

The musical score consists of seven staves. The top four staves are for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B) voices, each with a vocal line and lyrics. The bottom two staves are for Soprano (S) and Alto (A) voices, each with a vocal line and lyrics. The music is characterized by layered, horizontal melodic lines, often in parallel triads, with dynamic markings like 'molto f' and 'molto sonore'.

Example 2-3. Layered voices at climactic moment in *Song for Athene*. John Tavener, *Song for Athene* (London, England: Chester, 1992), 5.

In order to understand the compositional process of John Tavener and how it relates to text, one must first understand his pre-compositional influences from the Byzantine tradition. His compositional style of the majority of his sacred choral music is quite simple. He starts with a melodic line where musical elements are shaped by the

Byzantine influence of chant. He frequently adds an *ison*, or eternity tone. Finally, he manipulates the melodic line or fragments of the melody in various ways such as inversion, retrograde, or palindromes. All of his compositional decisions stem from the interpretation of the text (ethos) and the pre-compositional influences of the Greek Orthodox Church. Decisions regarding musical expansion, dynamics, and moments of silence are all related to the text, whether it be form or metaphysical meaning. An authentic performance of his music rests on the knowledge of this tradition and the sound in which this tradition demonstrates.

CHAPTER 3. JOHN TAVENER'S SETTINGS OF *THE TYGER* AND *THE LAMB*

Finding the right ethos for a piece is important to John Tavener. In the book, *John Tavener: The Music of Silence*, Tavener explains that his understanding of the Byzantine tradition is that each of the eight tones (scales) carries with it a certain affect, or ethos. He has not studied them directly, rather he has absorbed them over the years and they have become a part of him. He strives to portray an ethos within each piece he writes. In *The Lamb*, the ethos is innocence, simplicity, and divinity. In *The Tyger*, the ethos is primal, powerful, and contrasts. When setting text to music, Tavener is careful to represent not only the poet's structure and meaning, but his own personal interpretation of the text with his biases of the Orthodox Church. *The Lamb* and *The Tyger* are two poems by William Blake that contain suggestions of the presence of the sacred and that is primarily why John Tavener chose to set them to music.

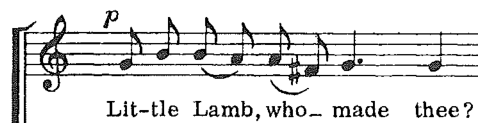
The Lamb, written for his nephew's third birthday, came to Tavener in just fifteen minutes time. Having a song come quickly to him was not unusual. In fact, if music does not come to Tavener quickly, he deems it as unworthy to be heard in the first place. "...if I have to labour with something for more than an hour I dismiss it as not being worthy of attention – not for me as the composer and therefore probably not for the listener."¹⁹ The ethos of the piece is written in the score at the beginning by Tavener, "With extreme tenderness – flexible – always guided by the words."²⁰ *The Lamb* stands out as an example of intense simplicity, especially when compared to the avant garde works by

¹⁹ John Tavener, *The Music of Silence: A Composer's Testament* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 73.

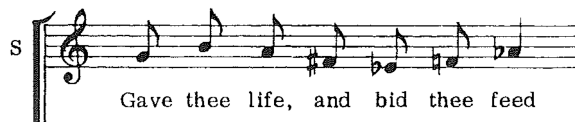
²⁰ John Tavener, *The Lamb* (London: Chester, 1982), 1.

Tavener just a few years before. Tavener, since his conversion to the Orthodox Church in 1977, began stripping his music of complexity for complexity's sake. He did not care for traditional development in music, such as harmonic or motivic development. Instead, Tavener uses just two phrases of melodic material in *The Lamb*. The first phrase has eight notes (only 4 different pitches), the second phrase has just seven (ex. 3-1).

Phrase 1:



Phrase 2:



Example 3-1. Melodic material in *The Lamb*. John Tavener, *The Lamb* (London: Chester, 1982), 1.

The economy of melodic pitches is remarkable as the four-minute anthem uses those two phrases in various combinations and manipulations. Table 2 shows the formal structure of Tavener's *The Lamb*.

Table 2. John Tavener, *The Lamb* formal structure

<u>Text</u>	<u>Voicing</u>	<u>Musical treatment</u>
Stanza 1:		
Little Lamb, who made thee?	S	Phrase 1
Dost thou know who made thee?	SA	Phrase 1 + I (Inversion)
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed	S	Phrase 2
By the stream and o'er the mead;	S	Phrase 2 in R (Retrograde)
Gave thee clothing of delight,	SA	Phrase 2 + I
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;	SA	Phrase 2 in R + RI
Gave thee such a tender voice,	SATB	Phrase 1 harmonized in e minor
Making all the vales rejoice?	SATB	Phrase 1 harmonized in e minor
Little Lamb, who made thee?	SATB	Phrase 1 harmonized in e minor
Dost thou know who made thee?	SATB	Phrase 1 harmonized in e minor and augmented
Stanza 2:		
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,	SATB, unison	Phrase 1
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee:	ST, AB	Phrase 1 + I (Inversion)
He is called by thy name,	SATB, unison	Phrase 2
For he calls himself a Lamb.	SATB, unison	Phrase 2 in R (Retrograde)
He is meek, and he is mild,	ST, AB	Phrase 2 + I
He became a little child.	ST, AB	Phrase 2 in R + RI
I, a child, and thou a lamb,	SATB	Phrase 1 harmonized in e minor
We are called by his name.	SATB	Phrase 1 harmonized in e minor
Little lamb, God bless thee!	SATB	Phrase 1 harmonized in e minor
Little lamb, God bless thee!	SATB	Phrase 1 harmonized in e minor and augmented

An obvious symmetry develops musically between the two stanzas. Tavener uses the exact same sequence of material but changes the voicing. Perhaps he is using a different voicing because the voice of the poem changes from a questioning point of view to a confident, exclamatory view. Tavener uses some of his favorite techniques of inversion and retrograde in the composition, techniques that are important both to the Byzantine tradition and his earlier experiences in twelve-tone serialism. He also creates a palindrome when phrase 2 is followed immediately by the retrograde of phrase 2. Perhaps most noteworthy is the inclusion of the harmonized melody that includes what author Geoffrey Haydon refers to as the “joy-sorrow” chord.²¹ The joy/sorrow sentiment refers to having both joy and sorrow happening at the same time. Tavener liked the idea of joy

²¹ Geoffrey Haydon, *John Tavener: Glimpses of Paradise* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1995), 161-62.

and sorrow, or light and darkness, or good and evil being present at the same time. He uses a *tenuto* marking eight times in *The Lamb*, and all eight times refer to the text on the joy-sorrow chord. No other articulations are present in the entire score.

Tavener's harmony is usually the result of horizontal lines happening concurrently or the use of parallel triads. In this case, however, Tavener harmonizes the melody in e minor and includes the "joy-sorrow" chord on the third note of each phrase, undoubtedly to line up with the word 'Lamb' when applicable (ex. 3-2). The chord, spelled A-C-G-B, could either be analyzed as a minor ninth-chord with the fifth omitted, or as an F# diminished triad in first inversion with the top two voices acting as suspensions (9-8 and 7-6). The latter analysis allows for the chord progression of i – ii dim.6 – v – i, a classic circle-of-fifths progression. Indeed, part of the charm of this piece is that he juxtaposes chant-like melody, inversion, and retrograde with a Western circle-of-fifths harmonization.

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The image shows a musical score for the piece 'The Lamb' by John Tavener. It consists of four staves of music. The first two staves are vocal lines, and the last two are instrumental accompaniment. The lyrics are 'Lit - tle Lamb, God bless thee!'. The music is in E minor and features a 'joy-sorrow' chord (A-C-G-B) on the third note of each phrase. The score is numbered 19 at the top left.

Example 3-2. Joy/sorrow chord on Lamb in *The Lamb*. John Tavener, *The Lamb* (London: Chester, 1982), 5.

Tavener uses this same technique of harmonization and the “joy-sorrow” chord in several of his pieces, always highlighting a significant part of the text and usually slowing down the harmonic rhythm to further magnify the moment. The chord first appears in *Funeral Ikos* (1981), which was written before *The Lamb*. He also uses the “joy-sorrow” chord in *Resurrection* (1988), in *Ikon of Light* (1983) for the word *fos*, or light, each of the six times it appears, and in the *Village Wedding* (1991).²² He resolves the chord in the same manner in *Village Wedding* (ex. 3-3).

The image shows a musical score for the text "And he lis - - tens." in four parts: C. Ten., T., T., and B. Each staff begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic marking. The music features a "joy-sorrow" chord, which is a triad with a major third and a minor third (e.g., C-E-G#). This chord is held for several measures, with a fermata over it, before resolving to a different chord. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating that the words "lis" and "tens" are stretched across multiple notes.

Example 3-3. Joy/sorrow chord and resolution in *Village Wedding*. John Tavener, *Village Wedding* (London: Chester, 1998), 6.

The Tyger, written in 1987 at the suggestion of Phillip Sherrard, was dedicated to Phillip on his 65th birthday as well as Phillip and Carolyn Brunelle. He certainly wrote it with *The Lamb* in mind, even quoting the earlier piece at one point in the music. Tavener stays true to the form of the poem and sets the music in six distinct sections mirroring the six quatrains of the poem. Even though the key used (e minor) is the same as the main tonal center of *The Lamb*, the sound of *The Tyger* is in stark contrast to that of *The Lamb*.

²² Geoffrey Haydon, *John Tavener: Glimpses of Paradise* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1995), 161-62.

Tavener achieves this through several features of the piece. First of all, he uses contrasting dynamics in the two pieces. *The Lamb* is marked piano throughout whereas *The Tyger* is forte or more until the end. Secondly, the suggestion of tone color at the opening of *The Tyger* states, “with awesome majesty.” The expectation for tone color of *The Tyger* is certainly brighter, primordial, and stronger than what would be expected for *The Lamb* which asks for “extreme tenderness.” Thirdly, even though the melody conforms to the general practice of imitating the likeness of chant, Tavener’s melody for *The Tyger* has larger and more frequent leaps and often outlines the dissonance of the seventh scale degree of the key (ex. 3-4). The melody contains one leap of a 6th, one leap of a 5th, and two leaps of a fourth, a large number of significant leaps for Tavener.

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the piece 'The Tyger' by John Tavener. The first staff begins with the dynamic marking 'f molto sonore' and the lyrics 'Ty-ger! Ty - ger! - bur - ning bright, In the fo - rests - of the night.' The second staff continues the melody with the lyrics 'What im - mor - tal hand or eye Could frame thy - fear - ful - sym - me - try?'. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and various note values and rests.

Example 3-4. Melodic motion in *The Tyger*. John Tavener, *The Tyger* (London, England: Chester, 1987), 1.

Finally, Tavener builds tension and dynamic in a way in *The Tyger* that does not exist in *The Lamb*. *The Tyger* is constructed almost as simply as *The Lamb*, with just three primary elements, but the way in which he varies them and layers them builds up the musical intensity crafting an image of a majestic tiger. The three elements he uses are the chant-inspired melody, *ison* (drone), and a secondary, bell-like theme. The melody is manipulated through augmentation, parallel motion in thirds with other voice parts,

The image displays a musical score for the piece "The Tyger" by John Tavener. The score is written for a choir and instrumental ensemble. It features a thick texture with multiple vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and instrumental accompaniment. The lyrics are: "And wa - tered - hea - - ven - - with their tears, - - Did - he -". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The vocal parts are written in treble and bass clefs, and the instrumental parts are written in treble and bass clefs. The score is divided into three systems, each with a vocal part and an instrumental part. The lyrics are repeated in each system. The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C).

Example 3-6. Thick texture in *The Tyger*. John Tavener, *The Tyger* (London, England: Chester, 1987), 9.

Tavener follows this dense texture with a direct quote from his piece, *The Lamb*. The *ison* drops out for the only time in the piece – possibly representing that the “silence of God”²⁴ has given way to his earthly son, the Lamb. He adds a couple of extra notes to the melody, but everything else remains the same. It is a unique moment in Tavener’s output and one that speaks to not only the shared meaning that Blake gave to the two poems, but it also suggests that Tavener felt the ethos of both were connected. Tavener had a special affinity for William Blake’s poetry. The music of the opening returns, this time, however, it is marked *pianissimo* and ‘with awe’.

Tavener’s settings of *The Lamb* and *The Tyger* show his skill in being expressive even though he is limited by his own adherence to break from Western musical tradition. Developing his melodies based on the ideals of chant and manipulating the music through augmentation, parallel motion, inversion, retrograde, and palindrome, Tavener is able to create his desired ethos through the most simple of ways. Tavener’s music is often called relaxing, or having an inner stillness to it. He achieves this through a careful consideration of the Byzantine influences he admires and audiences around the world continue to be delighted by his unique style.

²⁴ John Tavener, *The Music of Silence: A Composer’s Testament* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 154.

CHAPTER 4. THE COMPOSITIONAL APPROACH OF RENÉ CLAUSEN

René Clausen (b. 1953), an internationally renowned composer and conductor, has received commissions for over one hundred works in his career.²⁵ He has written for high school choirs, church and civic ensembles, college choirs, and many professional ensembles. Some of the more prominent commissions include works for the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, the King's Singers, the Dale Warland Singers, the St. Olaf choir, and the American Choral Director's Association. He also composes many pieces and orchestrations each year for the nationally acclaimed Concordia Christmas Concerts. His style is eclectic, ranging from polyphonic settings in a quasi-Renaissance style to a neo-Romanticism with lush harmonies, added-note chords, and sweeping crescendos. In Clausen's pieces, the compositional elements of harmony, melody, rhythm, and form are all influenced by the text he chooses to set. The text infuses everything, from the smallest motive to the overall shape. This chapter will discuss Clausen's approach to and process of composition, from choosing the text to the finished product. Much of the content in this chapter comes from two interview sessions with René Clausen, one conducted by Todd Guy in 1996, and the other conducted by the author on September 27, 2013.

The composer's selection and absorption of the text is the first step in organizing the music. Clausen chooses texts that evoke imagery, texts that will inspire his musical interpretation. His goal is to communicate with the audience, and the text must spark something within his imagination that he can interpret and share. It is important for Clausen to be honest and organic throughout the composition process. He purposely

²⁵ René Clausen, "Biography," René Clausen: Composer, Conductor, 2013, accessed October 22, 2013, <http://reneclausen.com/bioninfo/biography.html>.

avoids listening to other settings of the same text in order to keep his composition free from outside influences.²⁶ When choosing poetry, he makes sure that the poetry speaks to him in some meaningful way, and he never accepts commissions that do not allow him the opportunity to choose his own texts.²⁷ Early in his career, Clausen accepted a commission for a specific text and he likened the experience to swimming upstream. “I did it once and it never worked. I wrote one commissioned piece that was on a text that was prescribed by the church council, because it was a dedication. I never published the piece. I’ve found I can’t work that way.”²⁸

Clausen typically absorbs the meaning of the text over several weeks. Part of his absorption process is to see the poetry in its physical state, read it repeatedly, and meditate on it to understand its structure and symmetry. Clausen likens this step of the process to that of making a storyboard. He studies the poetry in its printed form and starts to formulate musical ideas based on the structure of the poem. Every element of the music germinates from this absorption process, and the most important aspect of this study is the formation of the image of the piece. Clausen thinks in terms of visual images; he sees an overall image as the basis for the general affect of the piece and many smaller images for various musical moments. These images will influence nearly every musical decision that follows. For both of his settings of *The Lamb* and *The Tyger*, Clausen attempted to recreate the spirit of each of the animals. For *The Lamb*, the predominant image is the defenseless, meek, and innocent animal needing shelter. For *The Tyger*,

²⁶ René Clausen, interview by author, Moorhead, MN, September 27, 2013.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Todd Guy, “The Compositional Process of René Clausen as Demonstrated in Selected Choral Works” (DA diss., Ball State University, 1998), 34, ProQuest UMI 9825891.

Clausen's overriding images that shaped the composition are the striking nature of the tiger's eyes and the contrasts of the animal's stripes.

Clausen depends on his musical training and experience when setting a text to music. He relies on what he calls the "deep background" for ideas in setting the text. His "deep background" consists of past compositions, pieces he has heard, and musical ideas that he has stored away for future use. In an interview with Todd Guy in 1996, Clausen described the "deep background" as the following:

"When I say deep background, that is where I think the whole element of studying and absorbing style [is transferred] into your brain. The more of every kind of music that you hear, all goes into this big hopper [brain], and comes out in ways [one does] not even think about. It all goes into the formation of ideas that stay there."²⁹

Furthermore, his experiences since childhood have had a profound effect on what goes into his "deep background." Clausen grew up in a musical family with his father as an organist. He was a successful instrumentalist and vocalist throughout high school. He attended St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN, where his "deep background" perhaps developed most fully. He sang in the St. Olaf Choir under the direction of Kenneth Jennings, and this experience molded his model of sound. Clausen fondly describes his years at St. Olaf:

"I saw the whole experience as a great opening of [my] field of view. I look at the [entire] experience as widening [my] whole perspective. When you get into an excellent college choir you're surrounded by just the visceralness of the sound in eight-parts. [You begin to absorb] the tone and color, and the kind of timbre feel that [type] of group [produces]. If you are steeped in that sound, you begin to absorb it, via an osmosis process."³⁰

Clausen goes on further to say about his process of composition:

²⁹ Guy, "Compositional Process of René Clausen," 13-14.

³⁰ Guy, "Compositional Process of René Clausen," 19.

“I think back, [and] all of these [musical influences] feed into who you are as a composer. I think the whole process comes out then in how you make decisions. Often times composition is a matter of making decisions about what [one is] going to choose from that repertoire.”³¹

The text influences Clausen’s compositional approach to harmony, rhythm, melody, and form. Clausen’s musical language depends entirely on what image or feeling he intends to evoke within the listener. Harmony, rhythm, melody, and form are all constructed in relation to the overall image he sees in a text. Clausen’s general harmonic palette consists of chordal, tertian harmony with a number of added chord tones such as sevenths, ninths, elevenths, and thirteenths. He usually establishes a tonal center with harmony leading towards a resolution. Clausen describes his harmonic language as “mostly traditional harmonic movement toward goal-oriented harmony and a traditional rise and fall of harmonic tension and release, involving dissonance and consonance in major and minor triads.”³² An example of Clausen’s goal-oriented harmony based on the text occurs in his setting of William Blake’s *The Lamb* (fig. 3).

³¹ Ibid., 14.

³² Ibid., 69.

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.
By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice!
Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee.
Little Lamb God bless thee.

Figure 3. William Blake, *The Lamb* (1789)

As Clausen studied the poem, he discovered a natural delineation between stanzas and a change in mood within the poetry. He mirrors this moment in the music with a harmonic shift from minor to major while using the E in the alto line to act as a common tone. The three-note “Lamb” motive now begins with a major 6th instead of the previous minor 6th. The two primary keys of the first half are E minor and A minor whereas the second half primary keys are E major and A major. The shift is noticeable and highlighted even further through the suspense of the held unison note (ex. 4-1 on next page).

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 2/4 time signature. It begins with a melodic line of eighth notes: F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4. The lyrics "Oo" are written below the first two notes. The middle staff is a piano accompaniment in treble clef, starting with a whole note chord of F#4, C#5, and G4, followed by a half note chord of F#4 and C#5, and then a whole rest. The lyrics "made thee?" are written below. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in bass clef, starting with a whole note chord of F#3, C#4, and G3, followed by a half note chord of F#3 and C#4, and then a whole rest. The lyrics "made thee?" are written below. The system concludes with a double bar line and a key signature change to three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

The second system of the musical score starts at measure 50. It consists of five staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 2/4 time signature. It begins with a melodic line of eighth notes: F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4. The lyrics "Oo" are written below the first two notes, and "Lit - tle lamb, I'll" are written below the remaining notes. The middle staff is a piano accompaniment in treble clef, starting with a whole note chord of F#4, C#5, and G4, followed by a half note chord of F#4 and C#5, and then a whole rest. The lyrics "Oo" are written below the first two notes, and "Lit - tle lamb, I'll" are written below the remaining notes. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in bass clef, starting with a whole note chord of F#3, C#4, and G3, followed by a half note chord of F#3 and C#4, and then a whole rest. The lyrics "Lit - tle lamb, I'll tell thee;" are written below. The system concludes with a double bar line and a key signature change to three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

Example 4-1. Common-tone modulation in *The Lamb*. René Clausen, *The Lamb* (Dayton, OH: Roger Dean Publishing, 2010), 8.

For Clausen, rhythm is another musical element that is shaped by the imagery inherent in the text. Joyful or celebratory texts typically receive active and varied rhythmic movement whereas more introspective texts receive a slower, more deliberate treatment of rhythm and tempo. Within his output, Clausen also frequently uses mixed

meter in order to fit the natural syllabic stress of the words.³³ In the setting of *The Tyger*, we see one such example of mixed meter with the text, “Tyger, Tyger burning bright in the forests of the night” (ex. 4-2). Clausen uses mixed meter not only to correctly accent the appropriate syllable, but also to propel the rhythm forward and create the image of burning flames.

Ty-ger! Ty-ger! burn-ing bright, in the forests of the night. What the hand

Ty-ger! Ty-ger! burn-ing bright, in the forests of the night. What the hand

Example 4-2. Mixed meter for text declamation in *The Tyger*. René Clausen, *The Tyger* (Dayton, OH: Roger Dean Publishing, 2010), 3.

Clausen has a unique perspective on the construction of melody. He generally does not think of melody as a top voice feature, but as a shared responsibility. Clausen believes his music is “vocally conceived,” that is to say he composes the various parts with the singers in mind.³⁴ Clausen shares this about melodic construction:

“The act of singing is melodic. When you put all the voices together doing different parts, you get verticalness, you get harmony. But if you think of it for each individual singer, it’s all melody. Even if you’re singing a bass part that skips from root to root, you’re connecting those dots in a melodic, in a one-line fashion.”³⁵

³³ Guy, “Compositional Process of René Clausen,” 100-101.

³⁴ Guy, “Compositional Process of René Clausen,” 113.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

The melodic lines in the voices tend to be mostly stepwise with occasional small leaps and a purposeful contour. More angular melodies develop for a specific reason from the text.

Clausen models the form of the composition after the form of the poetry. The structure of the poem will often affect the musical structure in his works. For example, if the poem has repeated text, the musical setting will have a similarly repeated musical phrase. Before the vocal lines are even written, he carefully maps out the climactic moments of the piece of music based on the significant lines of text. Voicing, registration, transitions, and textures are all dependent on the imagery that Clausen sees in the poetry.³⁶

Clausen maps out the use of musical elements well before he writes any music. From very early on, Clausen writes notes on the poetry about how he may use certain musical concepts like rhythm or a melodic motive. The imagery drives the usage of various musical elements. In shaping the aural picture, Clausen tries to be an artistic conduit between audience and composer:

“I feel a real responsibility, and it’s just been forming in the last few years. What makes me feel good about a composition is being a lens rather than a mirror between serious music and the public. I feel a pedagogical responsibility to create music that can make an audience feel better about themselves when they go home.”³⁷

While studying the poetry, Clausen forms the basic building blocks of the piece one single concept at a time. It may just be an image, a rhythmic idea, a three-note motive, a key center or harmonic direction, or a moment of word painting. After formulating

³⁶ René Clausen, interview by author.

³⁷ Guy, “Compositional Process of René Clausen,” 23.

enough building blocks, Clausen begins to let the piece take shape. He likens the project to putting together a puzzle, or connecting dots:

“I get the picture for the whole piece. That’s what I mean, I come back and say, things begin to emerge, not from beginning to end, but from all the shapes imploding in. I will get much more a sense of what the piece is going to be and its entire shape when I begin it. I think quite visually and then try to create music which expresses those images.”³⁸

When examining the music of René Clausen, it is clear that the text infuses every aspect of his compositional practice. When selecting the text to set, he seeks out poetry that can be nuanced and manipulated to create images. These images become the basis for the entire musical setting and Clausen spends a great deal of time studying the poetry in its physical state in order to tease out the various musical elements that will give life to the imagery. Once enough musical ideas are in place, Clausen eloquently weaves them together like a vocal tapestry in order to make sense of the whole and give the image life. His arsenal consists of melody, harmony, rhythm, and form, and they all work together in various degrees of importance in order to adequately connect the performing artists with the audience in a shared musical experience. Clausen’s goal is to give further meaning to poetry and it is his approach of text first that allows him to form an authentic musical experience for audiences and singers across the globe.

³⁸ Ibid., 39.

CHAPTER 5. RENÉ CLAUSEN'S SETTINGS OF *THE TYGER* AND *THE LAMB*

In 2010, René Clausen received a commission from Dr. Joseph Ohrt and the Central Bucks High School-West Chamber Choir in Doylestown, PA. For the commission he chose to set two William Blake poems that had been on his compositional radar for years, *The Tyger* and *The Lamb*. Limitations for setting these poems to music were few. The quality of the chamber choir was such that Clausen had his full arsenal of technique available to use. The only concession he made while composing was to keep the range of the high school singers in mind; he purposely never went lower than an F (2) for the basses and no higher than a G (5) for the sopranos. The altos and tenors are well within normal high-school ranges as well.

Clausen's settings of *The Tyger* and *The Lamb* are typical of his general twenty-first-century compositional style. The harmonic language is mostly diatonic with added ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chord tones. His melodies are consistent with his style: predominantly stepwise motion, diatonic, and the use of leaps reserved for important musical moments. The rhythmic language also falls within normal usage with a straightforward, declamatory approach. Clausen changes textures frequently between SSA and TTBB.³⁹ His compositional approach relies entirely on the structure and imagery inherent in Blake's poems. The information contained in this chapter largely comes from an interview the author conducted with René Clausen at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, on September 27, 2013.

³⁹ Soprano 1, Soprano 2, and Alto. Tenor 1, Tenor 2, Bass 1, and Bass 2.

Both *The Lamb* and *The Tyger* have an underlying image that helps to define the character of Clausen’s music. Clausen thinks of the lamb not only as an innocent and gentle creature, but also as one that is so meek that it requires help in order to survive.⁴⁰ The corresponding music depicting the lamb is delicate, refined, and not overly dramatic. Clausen uses a simple three-note motive and a transparent texture (ex. 5-1).

Example 5-1. “Little Lamb” three-note motive in *The Lamb*. René Clausen, *The Lamb* (Dayton, OH: Roger Dean, 2010), 3.

Consisting of an ascending sixth followed by a descending second, this three-note motive plays a significant role in both the beginning and the ending of the work. The motive, which sounds like a question, is also interspersed throughout the rest of the piece and passes from voice part to voice part suggesting the lamb’s constant asking for help. In

⁴⁰ René Clausen, interview by author, Moorhead, MN, September 27, 2013.

Clausen's conception, the entire piece rests on this image of a wandering lamb asking for help.⁴¹

For *The Tyger*, Clausen envisions the large, piercing eyes of the tiger and the menacing features and size of the wild cat.⁴² After opening with layered fifths, *The Tyger* is filled with harmonic tension that is maintained throughout much of the piece. The opening *forte-piano* and the quintal harmonies on the word "tyger" are intended to create the intimidating feeling of looking into a tiger's eyes (ex. 5-2).

The image shows a musical score for the song "The Tyger" by René Clausen. It features four vocal parts: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The score is in 4/4 time and includes lyrics: "Ty-ger! Ty-ger! burn-ing bright, in the for-ests" and "Ty-ger!". The dynamics are marked as *mf* (mezzo-forte) for the Soprano and *fp* (forte-piano) for the other parts. The score includes a key signature change from one flat to two flats and a time signature change from 4/4 to 3/4.

Example 5-2. The use of *forte-piano* dynamics in *The Tyger*. René Clausen, *The Tyger* (Dayton, OH: Roger Dean, 2010), 2.

Clausen's intent with the *forte-piano* marking is for the choir to sing the word "tyger" with a sense of onomatopoeia, causing the listener to feel the terror of the moment. He also finds that the openness and dissonance of the quintal harmony create a jarring

⁴¹ René Clausen, interview.
⁴² Ibid.

sensation akin to seeing a tiger in the wild.⁴³ The release of tension occurs briefly when the text speaks of the lamb, only to end the same way it began, with the unresolved sonority of the layered fifths.

Another important image of the tiger that Clausen translates into the music is the contrast and symmetry inherent in the tiger's coat. Like the stripes of the tiger, the textures and structure of the piece are constantly redefined.⁴⁴ Clausen frequently changes the number of voices singing and the vocal ranges for musical contrast. The opening of the piece is a good example of the contrasts he creates. On the word "tyger", the men are set relatively low in their ranges, and he places a soprano soloist above them. Clausen achieves rhythmic contrast in mm. 12-28 with not only the meter alternation between 6/8 and 2/4, but in m. 20 and m. 25, the men and women are singing in a rhythmic pattern of two against three. Further contrast is developed in his choice of texture and layers of sounds. Clausen frequently sets the women and men apart in alternating fashion with the two groups portraying a specific character. One such instance can be found starting in m. 77 when the women sing the lamb motive while the men are singing the text, "tyger, tyger burning bright." There are many moments in the setting when we hear a third layer, a background soundscape on the neutral syllable "ah" or "oo" with running eighth notes. Clausen explains this layer as a way to add depth to the aural image of the piece and it is a compositional trait that he has recently developed.⁴⁵

Specific moments of word painting and motivic development help to further illustrate the text. In *The Tyger*, Clausen allows the colorful language in the poem to

⁴³ René Clausen, interview.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

dictate the musical treatment. After the opening line of text, the images of fire and burning are paired with a mixed-meter, driving rhythmic section to propel the music forward. Clausen admits that this rhythmic section is somewhat unusual for his style, but he felt it necessary to portray the chaos of burning. The dynamic marking of *ff* further illustrates the tension building in the text. He achieves a similar dynamic and rhythmic contrast starting in m. 55 with the words, “in what furnace was thy brain.”

With the text, “and when thy heart began to beat,” Clausen changes the articulation with a combination of *tenuto* and *staccato* to imitate the rhythmic pattern of a beating heart (ex. 5-3).

And when thy heart be-gan to beat, and when thy heart began to beat,

And when thy heart be-gan to beat, and when thy heart began to beat,

Example 5-3. A beating heart in *The Tyger*. René Clausen, *The Tyger* (Dayton, OH: Roger Dean, 2010), 2.

This particular moment in the piece is an example of his “deep background,” a term Clausen uses to explain the source of his compositional ideas.⁴⁶ All of his musical experiences, from his own compositions to pieces that he has heard in performance, to musical ideas he has thought about but not yet used, are all congregating in the back of his mind ready to be used. He recalls a technique for articulation that he heard in a song by Michael Hennigan (1936-1993), *Walking in the Green Grass* (1962) In the piece,

⁴⁶ René Clausen, interview.

Hennigan sets the text, “walking in the green grass,” to a staccato ostinato pattern that imitates skipping-like motion (ex 5-4). Clausen uses a similar technique in setting the passage about the beating heart, and he credits Hennigan’s piece for the idea.⁴⁷

With gaity (♩ = 152)

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR *mf with bounce*

BASS *mf with bounce*

Walk - in' on the green grass. Walk - in' on

Example 5-4. Deep background example in *Walking on the Green Grass*. Michael Hennigan, *Walking on the Green Grass* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1962), 2.

The Tyger releases tension only for a moment on the line of text that Clausen refers to as the moment of clarity in the poem, “when the stars threw down their spears and watered heaven with their tears” (ex. 5-5).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

64

rit.

oo oo

rit.

oo oo

rit.

mf *rit.*

When the stars threw down their spears, _____

mf *rit.*

When the stars threw down their spears, _____

69 *a tempo*

a tempo Solo 3

ah _____ Did he smile his work to

a tempo *mp*

ah _____ oo _____

a tempo *mp*

ah _____ oo _____

a tempo *mp* *esp.*

and wa-tered heav'n with their tears, _____ did

a tempo *mp* *esp.*

and wa-tered heav'n with their tears, _____ did

Example 5-5. Moment of clarity in *The Tyger*. René Clausen, *The Tyger* (Dayton, OH: Roger Dean, 2010), 9.

Clausen knew that this moment would be the musical turning point well before he wrote any music based on the design and change in mood of the poem. He sets the text for men's voices, now in just two parts without the added dissonance from before. The women, who sustain an 'oo' vowel in three parts while the men sing, diminuendo and exit entirely as the men sing, "and watered heaven with their tears in four parts." A soprano soloist interrupts with the question, "did he smile his work to see?" only to be taken over again by the men as they ask, in Clausen's opinion, the most important line of the poem, "did he who made the Lamb make thee?" Following this exchange, the lamb motive from *The Lamb* makes its way into *The Tyger*. The sense of musical arrival and stability does not last long; the piece concludes much like it began, full of anxiety.

The Lamb has fewer moments of word painting, but it relies more on a single motive that came to Clausen early on in the compositional process. The defining characteristic of the musical treatment for *The Lamb* is the simplicity of its primary motive, an ascending sixth followed by a descending second. This motive permeates the entire piece and is meant to illustrate the meekness of the lamb, always asking and needing to be saved. To further illustrate the questioning aspect of the poetry, he sets the men's and women's parts up in such a way that they never sing the same words at the same time. He creates a choral dialogue between the two vocal groups. This only further highlights the helplessness and questioning of the tiny lamb.

One particular moment of word painting in *The Lamb* can be found in m. 34, starting with the text, "making all the vales rejoice!" The word "rejoice" is repeated in four separate declamations at a *forte* dynamic that give it the sense of celebratory bells ringing (ex. 5-6).

quintessential line in *The Tyger*, “did he who make the Lamb make thee?” Other musical similarities in Clausen’s settings include the use of a soprano soloist in both pieces, the added voice as a layer of texture on an “ah” or “oo” vowel with constant eighth notes, and TTBB alternating with SSA. Both pieces come to a unison pitch on E almost exactly half way before starting a new, important idea. Both pieces end without a release of musical tension. *The Tyger* ends without the expected resolution to e minor. Instead, it ends with an open fifth (E and B) and added ninth (F#), and one last reprise of the haunting three-note Lamb motive. *The Lamb* ends on an A-major triad with an added ninth chord tone and the raised fourth scale degree, a D#. Clausen purposely ends this way to illustrate the mystery inherent in the poetry, “little Lamb, who made thee?”⁴⁹

Clausen relies primarily on the text and form of the poetry to give himself a road map for his musical settings. There is nothing more important to Clausen than the meaning and images that can be drawn from the texts themselves. He spends a great deal of time studying the patterns of the text and thinking of images before he ever writes any music. Clausen jots down ideas like notes in a journal and he uses his deep background to guide his decisions for setting the text to music. He carefully and meticulously maps out the musical elements that develop during his study of the poetry. *The Tyger* and *The Lamb* offered Clausen an opportunity to connect the two poems both structurally and musically. Studying both of these works allows us to see how he treats different images that share a common thread, both in the poetry and musical setting. It gives us an opportunity to see how Blake’s poetry can come to life in the workmanship of a highly acclaimed composer such as René Clausen.

⁴⁹ René Clausen, interview.

CHAPTER 6. THE COMPOSITIONAL APPROACH OF ANDREW MILLER

Andrew Miller (b. 1979) is in the early stages of his compositional career and he writes for many different musical styles and voicings. He has received dozens of commissions ranging from music for young voices to music for professional ensembles. Perhaps his most prestigious compositional honor to date is his piece *The Tyger*, which won the 2013 Edwin Fissinger Choral Composition Contest. This chapter will discuss consistencies in his style regarding elements of melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, and form, especially as they relate to the setting of text. The text shapes the piece for Miller, and he takes great care in either selecting meaningful texts, or writing the poetry himself. Much of the content in this chapter comes from an interview with Andrew on February 12, 2015, at Bismarck State College in Bismarck, North Dakota.

Miller's interest in composition began when he was in high school. As a senior at Brainerd High School in Brainerd, Minnesota, Miller took an AP Music Theory class. Michael Smith, the director of music at Brainerd High School, taught the class and Andrew quickly realized that he had a gift for hearing music. Sonorities were easy to ascertain and he began to hear original music sounding in his head. He was enthralled by the idea that he could create something. Composition became a creative outlet for him. An outlet that he says began as a selfish act in order to impress people, but as he became more experienced with writing music, it became an act of service to others. He seems genuine when he says that he hopes his music will inspire a future generation of musicians and audiences. Once in college, at Bemidji State University, Miller started playing around with the musical software *Finale*, where he could play his music back as

quickly as he could write it. This started his obsession with composition. He would spend as many as six hours a day writing music on *Finale*, but for two years his music lacked a defining cohesion – he had yet to discover how to compose a melody. In his impulsive desire to create music that he liked, he composed vertical alignments of sounds, specifically major and minor triads with added ninths. “Adding a ninth to a major chord, or minor chord, I was just addicted. I was obsessed.”⁵⁰ He never composed more than eight measures of music for any text for almost two years. Miller just had a lot of beginnings to songs, but no idea on how to finish them.

One night in his dorm room, during an emotional low point, Miller had an epiphany.

“When I’m lost, when I’m lonely,
When I long for life to show me all the wonders of the world.
When I’m tired, when I’m burdened,
When I’m not for certain that the light is there,
I take a look around and I see that the beauty of the Earth is all around me and I know
your love surrounds me.”

Two things happened to Miller for the first time that evening: he heard words with the music in his head, and he heard a melody. He finally broke past the eight-measure threshold and finished his first composition, a composition that went on to be performed by the men’s chorus of Bemidji State University, *Musikanten*. Miller sees this critical time in his compositional career as a moment born out of the depths of his life’s struggles. He was battling substance abuse⁵¹, which led to depressive thoughts and anxiety, and he had an internal need to express himself that was manifested in poetry and melody. He had never written poetry before, but this text came to him in this moment of

⁵⁰ Andrew Miller, interview by author, Bismarck, ND, February 12, 2015.

⁵¹ Andrew is proud to report that as of August of 2014, he is sober and living a life of faith.

despair. He explains the moment as a need to express himself. “For the first time ever it was real. I wasn’t chasing the product, of wanting to write a great song tonight. Because it never works when you chase the product. The product is a byproduct of something that is real. And this was real, for the first time, I wasn’t thinking about composing, I was thinking about the need to get something out.”⁵²

For Miller, everything revolves around the text and finding the “core”⁵³ meaning of the text.⁵⁴ This core influences every compositional decision to follow and he takes great care in searching for the meaning. To that end, it is not unusual for him to start writing a piece of music only to leave it unfinished because the meaning has yet to come to him. *The Tyger* (2013), for example, is a piece that took him ten years to complete because he never really comprehended the meaning of the text. Other pieces, like *The Lamb* (2013), have come to him quickly, within a day. Similar to Clausen, Miller will spend a considerable amount of time with just the text in an effort to absorb its meaning. Miller prints out the text in triple spacing and he begins to analyze it. He attempts to find the singular meaning that the poet is intending as he submits to the text. The voice of the poetry is often just as important as the subject of the poetry. Miller’s interpretation of *The Lamb*, for example, is that the Holy Spirit is the voice in the poetry and this affects his setting of the piece that will be discussed in the following chapter.

Once the core meaning of the text is revealed to Miller, he begins the process of finding the music that will reflect the meaning of the text. He typically starts from the beginning of the poem because it is usually there, Miller explains, that the mood of the

⁵² Andrew Miller, interview by author, Bismarck, ND, February 12, 2015.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

poem reveals itself. Miller's melodic ideas come from a combination of craft, instinct, and inspiration. He speaks the text aloud to feel the natural speech rhythms and when the right music comes to him in thought, he sings it aloud without the aid of a piano.

Whatever key he sings it in almost always becomes the key in which he writes. There is an element of serendipity to his key selection, an organic process that he feels strongly about. Only rarely, if the range of the tune may be difficult for the particular voice part to sing, will he move away from the key center of that original inspiration. From there, Miller typically composes from the beginning to the end of the text. He is careful to follow the physical structure of the poem that will influence the form of his musical setting. The core meaning of the text is always present and he brings back motives and melodies from earlier in the composition as the text and interpretation dictate.

Miller follows the form of the poetry as he sets the poem to music. In *The Lamb*, for example, Miller composed the music symmetrically just as the poem delineates (fig. 4).

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.
By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice!
Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee.
Little Lamb God bless thee.

Figure 4. William Blake, *The Lamb*, symmetrical stanzas

Miller's musical composition mirrors that of Tavener's setting of *The Lamb* in its formal structure. There are two main halves of the piece that share almost the exact same treatment musically, with just subtle changes to voicing and texture. Poetry that is strophic will generally receive a strophic treatment from Miller whereas a freer-versed poetry will generally be a through-composed setting.

Andrew Miller speaks of a number of influences on his compositional style. His compositions are definitely text driven – the interpretation of the text is paramount in the musical treatment of the melodies, harmonies, form, and rhythm. He credits John Rutter (b. 1945) and Samuel Barber (1910-1980) as models for his melodic writing. Miller's melodies tend to be lyrical, diatonic, and follow a natural rhythmic speech pattern. Furthermore, Andrew was trained as a singer and his vocal writing is careful to allow for adequate usage of breath and the vocal lines have a natural phrase shape. Miller's use of harmony is also rather conventional. It is mostly tertian harmony that functions tonally with a clear direction towards tonic, usually progressing in traditional ways. As stated earlier, Miller primarily uses major and minor triads, seventh-chords, and ninth-chords. He is especially taken by the vertical sonority of the added ninth (ex. 6-1).

36 $\text{♩} = 70$
pp
 here is the deep-est se-cret no-bo-dy knows

pp
 here is the deep-est se-cret no-bo-dy knows

divisi **pp**
 here is the deep-est se-cret no-bo-dy knows

Example 6-1. Added ninth on ‘deep’ and ‘knows’ in *i carry your heart*. Andrew Miller, *i carry your heart* (Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Music Publishing, 2013), 8.

This example illustrates his primary usage of major and minor triads with an occasional added seventh or ninth. He adds the color of the ninth for arguably the two most important syllables of the phrase, ‘deep’ and ‘knows’.

Miller appreciates the ease of melody within the vertical sonorities of the music of Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943), Eric Whitacre (b. 1970), and Eric William Barnum (b. 1979). Barnum, in particular, was influential to Miller because he saw first hand Barnum’s success as a young composer when they went to Bemidji State University together. Modulations are prepared conventionally and the use of chromaticism and dissonance is limited, unless the text specifically dictates the usage of chromaticism or dissonance. He is fairly consistent in making sure that descriptive syllables in the text receive equally representative musical treatment. In his piece, *Seeds*, Miller paints the text ‘horror’ and ‘kill’ with strong dissonance in mm. 36-37 (ex. 6-2).

34

die, _____ Some ab - sorb the hor - ror, _____ and

don't all die, _____ Some ab - sorb the hor - ror, _____ and

37

kill what made them

kill what made them

Doh Doh

Doh

Example 6-2. Dissonance on 'horror' and 'kill' in *Seeds*. Andrew Miller, *Seeds* (Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Music Publishing, 2013), 9.

Texture in Miller's music is predominately homophonic with moments of imitative writing, especially between two vocal parts at a rather small interval of time as seen in the alto and soprano parts in the piece, *Seeds* (ex. 6-3).

34

die, _____ Some ab - sorb the hor - ror, _____ and

don't all die, _____ Some ab - sorb the hor - ror, _____ and

mp *p*

Doh Doh Doh Doh Doh Doh

Doh _____ Doh _____ Doh _____

Doh _____ Doh _____ Doh _____

Detailed description: This musical score is for Example 6-3, showing imitation between soprano and alto. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are vocal lines in treble clef with lyrics. The bottom two staves are piano accompaniment in bass clef. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 8/8. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings like *mp* and *p*. The lyrics are: 'die, _____ Some ab - sorb the hor - ror, _____ and' for the soprano and 'don't all die, _____ Some ab - sorb the hor - ror, _____ and' for the alto. Below the piano part, there are 'Doh' syllables and lines for vocalists to follow the melodic line.

Example 6-3. Imitation between soprano and alto in *Seeds*. Andrew Miller, *Seeds* (Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Music Publishing, 2013), 9.

Another example of his imitative writing can be seen in his piece, *The Lamb* (ex. 6-4).

Here he writes the melodic line as a three-part canon.

♩ = 55 *Ethereal, echo-like* Poem by William Blake

The musical score is a three-voice canon for Soprano 1, Soprano 2, and Soprano/Alto. It is set in 4/4 time with a tempo of 55. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are from William Blake's poem 'The Lamb'. The score includes dynamic markings: *p* (piano) for Soprano 1, *mp* (mezzo-piano) for Soprano 2, and *mp+* (mezzo-piano plus) for Soprano/Alto. The lyrics are: 'Little Lamb, who made thee? Dost thou know who made thee? Lit-tle Lamb, who made thee? Dost thou know who made thee? Gave thee life, and bid thee feed by the stream and o'er the mead; Gave thee cloth - - - ing of de-light, soft-est cloth - - - ing, woo-ly bright;'. The score is divided into systems, with measures 5, 9, and 13 marked at the beginning of new systems.

Example 6-4. Three-voice canon in *The Lamb*. Andrew Miller, *The Lamb* (San Pedro, CA: Pavanne, 2015), 2.

Andrew Miller is still early on in his compositional career and is interested in multiple styles and influences on his music, believing that simple is best. He is not interested in being unique for the sake of being unique. Miller has learned to follow his heart when composing and that motivates him to discover melody with natural speech rhythms, to find vertical sonorities that depict the desired affect, and to always seek to portray the message of the text.

CHAPTER 7. ANDREW MILLER'S SETTINGS OF *THE TYGER* AND *THE LAMB*

Andrew Miller wanted to write something special for the 2013 Edwin Fissinger Choral Composition Contest sponsored by North Dakota State University. He was relatively new to North Dakota, having only begun his job at Bismarck State College back in 2010 and he wanted to cement his North Dakota presence with a win in the competition named after one of the great North Dakota musicians, Edwin Fissinger. Fissinger was a long time conductor at North Dakota State University and earned national recognition for both his conducting and composition. For the competition, Miller chose a text that had been dear to him for many years, ever since he sang *The Tyger*, arranged by Eric William Barnum in 2001. He was taken by the descriptiveness of the text and he had tried many times before to set it, but to no avail. In retrospect, he says he never quite fully absorbed the text. With the composition contest as a deadline, it was just enough of a nudge for him to compose the piece that defines his early success as a composer.

For the opening of *The Tyger*, Miller wanted to establish the various “core” meanings that he felt were a part of the poetry: good vs. evil, power, and mysticism. He decided on an A-flat minor triad significantly spaced out among the voices followed by an F-flat major seventh-chord with an added ninth. This progression becomes an important element in both *The Tyger* and *The Lamb*. The *forte* dynamic and homophonic texture adds to the element of power at the opening (ex. 7-1).

Example 7-1. Opening progression in *The Tyger*. Andrew Miller, *The Tyger* (San Pedro, CA: Pavanne, 2015), 2.

Following the arresting opening, the women sing another important musical theme that depicts the battle between good and evil being constant, never-ending. The women sing the ‘burning bright’ motive in quick imitation to signify the constant fire that burns on in the battle between good and evil (ex. 7-2).

Example 7-2. Burning bright in *The Tyger*. Andrew Miller, *The Tyger* (San Pedro, CA: Pavanne, 2015), 2.

Finally, in measure ten, the basses sing the haunting melody that becomes the basis for most of the melodic material of the piece (ex. 7-3).



Example 7-3. Bass melody in *The Tyger*. Andrew Miller, *The Tyger* (San Pedro, CA: Pavanne, 2015), 3.

Miller found the melody suited well to his own bass voice. The depth of the melody, starting on an E-flat below the bass clef staff reflects the darkness of the text. The second basses, in fact, have a low tessitura for most of the piece that limits performances of the piece to those choirs that have comfortable E-flats and occasional D-flats. The tessitura in the other vocal parts are easily managed and should provide no difficulty for most choirs. The soprano range extends from E-flat 4 to A-flat 5. The alto range is from B-flat 3 to E-flat 5. The tenor range extends from D-flat 3 to F-flat 4. The bass part extends from D-flat 2 to E-flat 4 with most of the baritone lines avoiding the lower notes.

Harmonically speaking, the piece is rather simple in structure. It never deviates from A-flat minor and it revolves around the usage of five primary chords: i, VI, iv, ii dim.6, and the V. He occasionally hints at a vii dim.6 as well. One may think that with this limited pallet of chords, that the five-minute piece would become stagner. Miller does several things, however, to ensure that the piece maintains vitality throughout. First of all, most of the chords contain added pitches, most often an added seventh or ninth for color. He also occasionally adds a non-chord tone, usually a suspension, neighbor tone, or passing tone. Secondly, Miller creates harmonic tension through the use of a pedal. The pedal is sometimes a single note as it is in mm. 20-23 in the bass 2 part (ex. 7-4).

20 *pp*
 S Burn - ing bright, burn - ing bright, burn - ing bright,
 A Burn - ing bright, burn - ing bright, burn - ing
 T *mp*
 On what wings — dare he as - pire?
 On what wings — dare he as - pire?
 B *mp*
 On wings he as - - - pire?

22 *f*
 S burn - ing bright, burn - ing bright.
 A bright, burn - ing bright, burn - ing bright.
 T *mf* *f*
 What the hand — dare sieze the fire?
 What the hand — dare sieze the fire?
 B *mf* *f*
 What hand sieze the fire?

Example 7-4. Bass pedal in *The Tyger*. Andrew Miller, *The Tyger* (San Pedro, CA: Pavanne, 2015), 5.

The pedal sometimes includes an octave as it does in mm.16-19 between the bass and tenor (ex. 7-5).

17

mp

S
skies _____ burnt the fire _____ of thine eyes? _____

A
skies _____ burnt the fire _____ of thine eyes? _____

T
skies burnt thine eyes? _____

B
skies burnt thine eyes? _____

Example 7-5. Bass pedal plus octave in *The Tyger*. Andrew Miller, *The Tyger* (San Pedro, CA: Pavanne, 2015), 4.

Furthermore, the pedal sometimes includes the fifth along with three octaves as it does in mm. 33-39 between bass, baritone, alto 2, and soprano 1 (ex. 7-6).

32 *f* Ty - - - ger! Ty - - - ger!

S feet? ——— What the ham-mer? What the chain? In what fur - nace

f What the ham-mer? What the chain? In what fur - nace —

A beat... Ty - - - ger! Ty - - - ger! Ty - - - ger!

f

T feet? ——— What the ham-mer? What the chain? In what fur - nace —

f

B feet? ——— Ty - - - ger! Ty - - - ger! Ty - - - ger!

Example 7-6. Four-voice pedal in *The Tyger*. Andrew Miller, *The Tyger* (San Pedro, CA: Pavanne, 2015), 7.

Miller further creates harmonic tension through his propensity to cadence on an open fifth sonority or the dominant chord in A-flat minor, E-flat major. At every major cadence at the end of a stanza of text, Miller ends with the harmonic equivalent of an antecedent, or question. It is not until the fourth to last measure that we get the answer, the consequent harmonic resolution to tonic. Even that resolution is obscured purposefully because the women finish with the burning bright figure from before that extends the haunting quality of the piece with a sense of mysticism.

Miller also uses dynamics, articulations, word painting, tempo, and textures to musically illustrate the poetry. *Rubato* and *ritardando* are used effectively to frame the various stanzas of poetry and to draw attention to climactic moments. Dynamics vary wildly throughout the piece and they are dependent on the text and how Andrew Miller interprets the poem. After the opening call to attention, the dynamics steadily build from

soft to the climatic moments of the fifth stanza. In Miller's interpretation of the Blake poetry, an epic battle between good and evil commences with the text, "When the stars threw down their spears and watered heaven with their tears". Miller admits that he was inspired by the book, *Paradise Lost*, by Milton when thinking about this text. Miller imagines the angels of heaven led by the Archangel Michael successfully fighting off the fallen angels led by Lucifer. Following the great battle, "watered heaven with their tears", signifies the sadness of God in seeing his once beloved fall due to pride. This leads to the most poignant and baffling questions in the Blake poem, "did He smile, His work to see? Did He who made the Lamb make thee?" The F-flat major sonority holds briefly with the suggestion of the Lamb only to give way to a half cadence on E-flat major, suggesting that the question is left unanswered.⁵⁵ The piece ends much the same way it began, with the burning bright theme against a backdrop of the opening chords, this time lacking the great fervor from the opening. Miller allows the piece to fade off into the distance, never actually setting the entire last stanza of the Blake text, just the first line.

Articulations become an important part of setting a text that is as descriptive as the Blake text, *The Tyger*. Similar to Clausen with his setting of the text, "and when thy heart began to beat", Miller intentionally brings out certain syllables as a means to express the text in a more meaningful way. Stanzas three and four of the Blake poem are the most descriptive, asking the questions as to how something so sinister could be made. Miller treats the text with accents and short, rhythmic motives to make sure that the text will be understood and dramatic (ex. 7-7).

⁵⁵ Andrew Miller, interview by author, Bismarck, ND, February 10, 2015.

What the ham-mer? What the chain? In what fur - nace_

Ty - - - ger! Ty - - - ger! Ty - - - ger!

What the ham-mer? What the chain? In what fur - nace_

Detailed description: This musical score consists of two systems. The first system features a vocal line on a treble clef staff with lyrics 'What the ham-mer? What the chain? In what fur - nace_'. Below the vocal line is a piano accompaniment on a bass clef staff with lyrics 'Ty - - - ger! Ty - - - ger! Ty - - - ger!'. The second system repeats the vocal and piano parts with the same lyrics. Accents (>) are placed above the words 'ham-mer?', 'chain?', and 'fur - nace_'. The piano part uses a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.

Example 7-7. Accents on descriptive words in *The Tyger*. Andrew Miller, *The Tyger* (San Pedro, CA: Pavanne, 2015), 7.

Miller also uses word painting to help him depict the text. With the word “fire” in measure 18, Miller has the women leaping by octave to a dissonance of a minor second (ex. 7-8).

17

S skies _____ burnt the fire _____ of thine eyes? _____

A skies _____ burnt the fire _____ of thine eyes? _____

Detailed description: This musical score shows two vocal parts, Soprano (S) and Alto (A), in a 2/4 time signature. The key signature has three flats. The lyrics are 'skies _____ burnt the fire _____ of thine eyes? _____'. The Soprano part starts on a higher pitch than the Alto part. In measure 18, the Soprano part leaps an octave up to a note that is a minor second above the Alto part's note, creating a dissonance. The dynamic marking 'mp' is present above both parts.

Example 7-8. Fire dissonance in *The Tyger*. Andrew Miller, *The Tyger* (San Pedro, CA: Pavanne, 2015), 4.

“And when thy heart began to beat” gets a rhythmic treatment found only once in the entire piece, a dotted eighth note followed by a sixteenth note. This illustrates the “lub-dub” of a beating heart (ex. 7-9).

28

S heart? — And when thy heart be-gan to beat,

A heart? — And.. thy heart be -

T 8 heart? — And when thy heart be-gan to beat,

Example 7-9. Beating heart in *The Tyger*. Andrew Miller, *The Tyger* (San Pedro, CA: Pavanne, 2015), 6.

Andrew Miller wrote *The Lamb* shortly after finishing *The Tyger*. It was not for any particular commission or event, it was merely a project that had been on his mind for years and since *The Tyger* had been written, he decided to write the companion piece of *The Lamb*. Miller connects both *The Tyger* and *The Lamb* in a couple of ways. The most obvious is through key signature. Both pieces share the same key signature of seven flats and they both use a predominance of the A-flat minor sonority and F-flat major sonority. *The Lamb*, however, resolves to F-flat major whereas *The Tyger* resolves to A-flat minor. The primary motive in *The Lamb* is an ascending second followed by an ascending fourth. The melody from *The Tyger* begins with an ascending second followed by an ascending fifth. The connections between the pieces end there. Miller was more concerned with drawing the distinction between the two pieces, rather than connecting them; the innocence of *The Lamb* juxtaposed with the sinister nature of *The Tyger*.

Miller struggled to ascertain the “core” meaning of *The Lamb* poetry. “What entity can have the knowledge, ask questions in rhetoric, but is not God or Jesus?”⁵⁶ His answer was the Holy Spirit. He then set out to understand how that may sound in music and when submitting himself to that concept, he heard an echo. The echo was undefined, having several repetitions. Once he decided that he would set the piece in a canon, the piece came to him very quickly, within just one day. The structure of the piece is very simple – it is two halves of music that are nearly identical. This mirrors the structure of the poem. For the first four lines of text in the first stanza, Miller sets the tune as a three-part canon in the women’s voices. For the next four lines of text, Miller sets a similar canon in the women with slow, homophonic chords in the men. For the final two lines of text, Miller rearranges the order of them to end with the question, “Little Lamb, who made thee?” The canon has given way to straight homophonic chords with the harmonic progression of iii – V – I in F-flat major. Although the progression cannot be found in his setting of *The Tyger*, the two chords of A-flat minor and F-flat major play a prominent role in both pieces. He has an added seventh and ninth chord tone in the F-flat major triad just as it was in *The Tyger*.

The second half of *The Lamb* is nearly identical in structure with just subtle changes to voicing. The men begin the same canon in three parts for the first four lines of poetry. For the next four lines, the men and women both sing the three-part canon while the same homophonic chord progression in the men exists from the first stanza. Finally, the last line of text, “Little Lamb, God bless Thee!” uses the same progression as the first stanza, but is now voiced higher and with a *fortissimo* dynamic. It then ends with one

⁵⁶ Andrew Miller, interview by author, Bismarck, ND, February 10, 2015.

more repetition of the last line of text in the lower octave at a pianissimo dynamic and slower as well (ex. 7-10).

The musical score consists of four staves labeled S (Soprano), A (Alto), T (Tenor), and B (Bass). Each staff begins with a treble clef (except for the Bass staff which has a bass clef) and a key signature of three flats. The time signature is 3/8. The lyrics are 'God bless thee.' The dynamics are marked 'ppp slowest yet' and 'lunga et morendo'. The score shows a chord progression that repeats the last line of text in the lower octave at a pianissimo dynamic and slower as well.

Example 7-10. Chord progression in *The Lamb*. Andrew Miller, *The Lamb* (San Pedro, CA: Pavanne, 2015), 5.

The homophonic chords at the close of each stanza create a stark contrast to the earlier imitative texture. Time stands still both visually and aurally, eventually fading into silence.

CHAPTER 8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The text of a musical composition dictates in many ways the direction of musical ideas. Composers strive to bring a deeper understanding of the text through musical rhetoric. They may use different tools and have different backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs; but are there similarities in the musical settings of these two poems? And do the differences in the musical settings change the overall ethos of the poetry?

All three composers of this study used the form of the poetry in guiding the form of their musical setting. In *The Lamb*, both Miller and Tavener used the same material for the second stanza as they did for the first. Clausen didn't use the same material, but there is a clear delineation between stanzas and they are of similar lengths with shared melodic material. For *The Tyger*, all three composers used the structure of the six quatrains to divide their musical setting. Furthermore, they all developed motives and/or themes throughout the piece with a significant change at the start of a new quatrain. Finally, by repeating the text from the first quatrain in the sixth quatrain, Blake sets up the rhetorical significance – a good argument is stated at both the beginning and the end. Each composer reinforced this similarity by bringing back elements of the beginning at the end. It is rhetorically different the second time around, however. Each composer made the rhetorical significance even more important by fading out at the end. It highlights the ambiguity of the questions asked during *The Tyger*.

Though they have different backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs, each of the three composers of this investigation arrived at nearly the same ethos. *The Lamb* is one of simplicity, innocence, and awe. Similar sentiments like the “joy-sorrow” idea that

Geoffrey Haydon coined when referring to a particular chord found in Tavener's setting of *The Lamb* can be found in the other two works as well. For Clausen, the transition from A minor to A major with the advent of the new stanza and voice in the Blake poetry is a significant contrast of emotions. For Miller, the block chords at the end of *The Lamb*, *fortissimo* followed by *pianissimo*, represent the sentiment of juxtaposed feelings. Simplicity and innocence are displayed in the Tavener through the economy of means. A four-note melody followed by a seven-note melody is used to structure the entire piece of music. Listeners are struck by the simplicity of composition and he uses repetition, inversion, and retrograde to complete the music. Clausen identifies a three-note motive in his setting of *The Lamb* to represent innocence and simplicity. His piece is full of Western musical development, but the three-note motive stands out and brings shape to the overall work. Andrew Miller portrays simplicity with a three-part canon that drives the piece from beginning to end. Finally, awe is achieved in Tavener's *The Lamb* through the use of silence. Tavener puts fermatas over rests at key points in order to allow for the silence of God. Clausen creates a spirit of wonder or awe in the resolution (or lack there of) of the last chord in which he adds an F#, B, and eventually D# to the A major tonality. Miller strives to create the voice of the Holy Spirit with his canon that acts like an echo. Innocence, simplicity, and awe are brought out by different means, but they all form the basis of the composition.

In *The Tyger*, the ethos is one of power, primal, and contrasts. All three composers begin with an arresting opening. The rhetorical argument gains strength and each composer highlights the fifth quatrain of the text as the most significant. Tavener has everything layered at full throttle, Clausen builds an enormous climax before

returning to the Lamb theme, and Miller moves to strong homophonic chords to depict the battle scene between heaven and hell. Contrasts are built in each three by alternating women's and men's voices, and the use of dynamics. Tavener builds contrasts with the layering of the different themes with various techniques like inversion and retrograde. Clausen and Miller build contrasts by changing musical textures and tempo at times. Finally, the primal quality of the text comes through in all three settings. Clausen and Miller use accents and other articulations to bring out the visceral depiction of the text and Tavener relies on the tone color of the Byzantine tradition to color his chant-like melody and bring forth a primordial sense.

The spirit of each composer is represented in the music. John Tavener, the sacred minimalist, demands that the Western influences be stripped from his compositions and likewise, the performances of his music. René Clausen, the experienced story-teller, is interested in creating a story line with the ebb and flow of climax and development. His hope is for the musician to get carried away in the story and get lost in the music. Andrew Miller, the emotional composer, is interested in the listener feeling his music as much as they are in understanding it. All three take descriptive poetry such as William Blake's poems, *The Tyger* and *The Lamb*, and they bring the music to life through musical devices, understanding of the human condition, and their own personal belief system. In the end, we get six very different pieces of music that depict the same ethos, the ethos inherent in the William Blake poetry.

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