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MARY IN THREE MOVEMENTS

*A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Liberal Studies*

By

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PREFACE

As my final thesis project, I have written a three part musical cantata simply entitled, *Mary in Three Movements*. The initial lyrical and harmonic structure of my music was written prior to my research. I then researched the archetype of Mary and the history of Marian music to give my composition an appropriate context. I have chosen to write my cantata in first person, past tense rather than follow traditional practices of using biblical or Marian texts, such as the *Stabat Mater* and the *Magnificat*. This is an imagined account of how Mary might have felt and observed her experiences through the three most important events of both Christian and human existence, the conception, the birth, and finally the death of her son. I have attempted to remain true to the biblical Marian references which primarily speak to Mary as a young woman in a first century patriarchal Roman Jewish society. Therefore, I have taken these three events and put them to verse for mezzo-soprano with piano accompaniment.

Mary

Movement 1

John Accola

Andante ♩ = 88

Voice

Piano

Andante ♩ = 88

p ³ *mp* ³

5

p

The ear-ly mor-ning broke

p ⁷

8

with a still-ness in the land. I

11

saw him in the dis-tance. He would ask for my hand— my

15

fa-ther what had hap-pened in the twi-light of my dreams.

18

I looked in - to the mir - ror at a

21

stran-ger it seemed. My fa-ther how I prayed.

24

I was wor-thy of your trust and wor-thy of your faith.

28

to car-ry your on - ly son. I could not un-der stand

32

— this gift I'd been giv-en. I knew it was your plan..

36

— He was meant for our sal-va tion. — And the

39

morn - ing broke the rain came down the an-gels sang with a

42

beau-ti-ful sound and the morn - ing broke and my heart filled with joy at the

45

thought of this beau-ti - ful boy. I sat by the light

48

of a flick-er - ing can-dle. I

51

sat by the light. and

53

placed a pray-er on the man - tle. My heart skipped a beat.

56

—as the child kicked in side. I asked why the lord had chosen me for his

59

bride. I was scared and a-lone. No

p

62

one could comp-re-hend this child was not my own

65

that this was God's plan. The

68

peo-ple on-ly stared—as I walked through the street. The mer-chants on-ly

71

whis-pered as they stared at their feet. And the morn-ing broke the

74

rain came down the an-gels sang with a beau-ti-ful sound and the

77

morn - ing broke and my heart filled with joy at the

79

thought of this beau-ti - ful boy. I

82

heard my fa-ther's cries _____ at my mo-ther's sad eyes. _____ But a

86

voice in the night _____ re - moved all their doubt.

90

Go to your child and swallow your pride for it's the Lord's

93

child she carries in - side. From heaven's gate the

96

an - gels soared they sang out and played the sac - red_ chords they

99

sang out to calm my deep-est fears of the won-der of this beau-ti-ful

102

boy.

106

Musical score for measures 106-107. The system consists of three staves: a single treble clef staff at the top, and a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) below. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). In measure 106, the treble staff has a whole rest. The grand staff has a triplet of eighth notes in the treble clef, followed by a quarter note. The bass clef has a whole rest. In measure 107, the treble staff has a whole rest. The grand staff has a whole note chord with a sharp sign (F#) in the treble clef, and a whole note chord in the bass clef.

108

Musical score for measures 108-110. The system consists of three staves: a single treble clef staff at the top, and a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) below. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). In measure 108, the treble staff has a whole rest. The grand staff has a dotted quarter note in the treble clef and a dotted quarter note in the bass clef. In measure 109, the treble staff has a whole rest. The grand staff has a whole note chord in the treble clef and a whole note chord in the bass clef. In measure 110, the treble staff has a whole rest. The grand staff has a whole note chord in the treble clef and a whole note chord in the bass clef. The system ends with a double bar line.

Mary

Movement 2

John Accola

Adagio ♩ = 82

Voice

Piano

Adagio ♩ = 82

f

p

4

mp

8

mf *p* *mf*

11

p

Morn-ing

14

p

broke of yel-low and gold. The sun could-n't warm this

16

chill I felt in my soul. I a - woke at the dawn with

19

sweat on my brow. It ran down my cheek so sweet. The___

22

mist of my breath embraced the light. The stars burned so bright that

25

night. We arrived at the inn so full we were told. They

28

mp

turned us a-way so cold. I closed my eyes and

32

heard them cry looked a - bove at the an-gels with tears in the sky

35

The drums in my womb the trum pets of hea-ven an -

38

nounced he would be here soon. The_ chill of wet straw the

41

fra-grance of ced-ar eases all my doubts and fears. Felt the

44

lord wipe the sweat and tears from my face. I knew I was wrapped in his

47

grace.

50

mp *f*

53

f

The an-gels sang the sac-red chords the sa-cred

ff *mf*

56

text and sang of hea-ven a - bove. They gazed at the star up in the

59

night and a - nounced the ar-riv-al of Je-sus the Christ

62

Je - sus the Christ.

65

Musical score for measures 65-67. The score is in 3/4 time and features a treble and bass clef. The treble clef part is mostly silent, with rests in measures 65, 66, and 67. The bass clef part contains the following notes: Measure 65: G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. Measure 66: G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. Measure 67: G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

68

Musical score for measures 68-71. The score is in 3/4 time and features a treble and bass clef. The treble clef part is mostly silent, with rests in measures 68, 69, 70, and 71. The bass clef part contains the following notes: Measure 68: G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. Measure 69: G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. Measure 70: G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. Measure 71: G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Mary

Movement 3

John Accola

Moderato ♩ = 88

Moderato *A* ♩ = 88

p

warm spring day was not to be I knelt to

4

pray they called to me the dead were

6

car-ry-ing their cross-es of wood the dead were

8

walk-ing these streets of blood I saw not the

10

man but on - ly the boy his spir - it was

12

strong his soul not de - stroyed I watched in

14

a-gon-ny I cried in pain at my lit-tle boy all_ in

17

vain all_ in vain

20

Allegro ♩ = 120
mp

The rain fell down The sky grew

Allegro ♩ = 120

24

dark down on my knees

27

I grabbed my heart. It burned my

30

face as it fell from a - bove

33

mixed with the blood of my beau-ti-ful

36

son I tried to speak but could

39

on - - ly cry from in my

42

breast my heart cried why

45

I would take his place _____ on the cross a -

48

bove _____ I would cleanse his face _____

51

— with my soul's blood I watched them

54

take him down from the cross

57

— my on-ly son this need-less loss

61

I tried to speak but could on - - ly

64

cry from in my breast my heart cried why

69

we buri-ed my son in a grave of

72

stone we bur-ied my son

75

in a tomb of his own to pro-tect his

78

bo-dy from the Ro-man guard

81

— to pro-TECT his mem-o-ry in this un-marked

84

yard did they not see did they not care

89

that my on-ly son was on the cross laid bare I tried to

94

speak but could on - ly cry

97

from in my breast my heart cried why Be-side his

102

grave I knelt to pray Be - side his

106

grave I prayed each day

109

— but the tomb was o-pen on that_ third

112

day his_ bo-dy had ri-sen

115

and flown a - way I tried to

118

speak but could on - ly cry

121

from in my breast my heart cried why On the road I

126

fled with a heav-y load

129

dried tears on my cheek blood spilled in the

132

road a stan-ger ap-proached

135

— and took my hand ————— fell on my knees —————

139

— in this ho-ly land I started to cry

143

as it started to rain ————— He looked in my

146

eyes and spoke his name

149

he told of his jour-ney from heav-en a-

152

bove ri-sen from the dead

155

— on the wings of a dove and now they'd see

159

and now they'd care that my on-ly son was on the cross laid

164

bare I tried to speak but could

167

on - - ly cry from in my

170

breast my heart knew why

Why Mary?

What is it about Mary that has inspired the devout throughout the past two thousand years? This is the question that must be answered in order to fully appreciate the musical project I have undertaken, *Mary in Three Movements* (Accola). For many, Mary is the archetype of the perfect mother, virginal and chaste; for she must remain virginal in order to be without sin, the perfect woman to bring forth Christianity's savior. She is also the revered mother who serves as the intercessor between the faithful and Christ or God himself, just as we would all have our mothers intercede for us with our fathers when we were young. Looking beyond Christianity, she is also a mother to whom we can all relate.

As an older Mary, she watched her son, not as the Christ, but as the little boy she raised, carrying his cross, walking toward his crucifixion. She is the mother kneeling at the foot of the cross watching his last breath while lamenting she would gladly take his place. In the Christian mind, she is the woman experiencing joy at the resurrection of her son, the savior of mankind. She is this Mary, but she is also every mother and every father who grieves at the death of a child taken before their time. She is both metaphor and mirror of all we cherish and hope to become. She is the Mary we are moved by when we listen to the *Ave Maria*. For these very reasons, I chose Mary as the perfect subject for this musical journey. But what defines the essence of Mary's mythological archetype?

Simone de Beauvoir in her classic, *The Second Sex*, said, "Any myth implies a Subject who projects its hopes and fears of a transcendent heaven" (162). This is a perfect description of the Marian myth. Further on of myth itself, she reflects, "it does not lend itself to being grasped or defined; it haunts consciousness without ever being posited

opposite them as a fixed object.” And of Mary and her counterpart Eve, “She is idol, a servant, source of life, power of darkness . . . she is his downfall, she is everything he is not and wants to have, his negation and his *raison d’être*” (162). She is all this, but so much more; her ever-changing, yet also fixed, archetype inspires the imagination of all those who have encountered her throughout history.

We find her mythology expanded in the Eastern Orthodox tradition from that found in the bible under the tableau of the Gnostic gospels, specifically the *Protevangelium of James* where one finds stories of Mary as a child. She is revered in Islam in the Qur'an, "Mary, God has chosen you and made you pure: He has truly chosen you above all women" (3:42). In the West, Mary is worshiped as *Medatrix* and intercessor in Catholicism. During the Protestant Reformation, she is viewed as a threat to the pure worship of Christ and discounted. She is an ongoing enigma for agnostics and atheists who would do well to consider what Mary has to offer as archetype and mirror, reflecting back upon our biases, prejudices and predilections.

To understand and appreciate fully why this project was undertaken, one must first have a brief appreciation for Marian thought throughout history. Next, one must have an appreciation of how Mary has been depicted in music. Finally, we will see how this musical composition was shaped conceptually and why this piece explores Mary from an entirely different, first person, humanistic viewpoint, but at the same time, pays homage to Mary as mother of Christ and Christianity. We will see how the experience of this music allows the listener options of interpretation based on his or her religious or non-religious belief systems and regardless of whether devout Christian or atheist, that an

appreciation for what Mary, as archetype and mirror, can teach us is both timely and universal.

MARY THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Music is the perfect vehicle for exploring emotional and spiritual themes. Musical settings for the worship of Mary have a long history, beginning predominantly in the Middle Ages. But in order to understand her importance, we must first explore the various aspects of Marian thought and devotion. Therefore, in this first section, we will briefly examine the psychological implications of Mary the unobtainable, next, the controversies of her virginal conception as a sacred vessel to carry the Son of God, and finally, what can be known about how this young woman likely would have lived in first-century Roman times.

The spiritual importance of Mary, for the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic, cannot be understated. She is the second Eve, the intercessor, the Medatrix, and the Theotokos (Mother of God). As Jaroslav Pelikan points out in his seminal work, *Mary through the Centuries*, she is above all mankind and third in line to God following her son, Jesus (204). But she was first a young girl who found herself pregnant and unwed. In order for the early church to proclaim that Jesus was truly the son of God, or God incarnate, it required a reinterpretation of her pregnancy as virginal and therefore divine.

Karen Saupe, in her wonderful collection of *Middle English Marian Lyrics*, provides a concise overview of Marian thought in the first few centuries, where during the rapid growth of the Christian Church, the primary emphasis centered on Mary the

Virgin (5). This prominence emanated from the controversy during the early Christian era as to how a mortal woman could give birth to the divine Son of God. It was this controversy that caused the rise in Marian interest and devotion, not only among the church fathers, but amongst the faithful. It was also during this time that Marian hymns, prayers and poems exploded in number (5).

Saupe argues that it is not hard to understand the attraction of Mary, especially amongst the medieval Christians, for "Christ was both human and divine; he was mediator, but also Judge, and therefore to be feared" (9). Therefore, "as virtuous virgin, queen of heaven, and loving human mother, Mary was perceived as a powerful and accessible intercessor" (9). Mary was the ultimate mother, the ultimate Medatrix between Christians and God. But it was not only the general populace that worshiped Mary, the monastic tradition as well found much in her to stimulate spiritual enlightenment.

Marina Warner, in her pivotal book *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, discusses how medieval monks would give themselves to images of the Virgin, the ultimate unavailable woman, just as knights gave themselves in courtly love to their "unavailable" queens (134). Julia Kristeva, in her comprehensive paper, "Stabat Mater," highlights this supreme devotion: "One *Miracle of Our Lady* tells of a young man who abandons his fiancée for the Virgin after Mary reproaches him in a dream for having left her for an 'earthly woman'" (141). Mary was the epitome of the ideal woman, every man's fantasy and desire. Was this of an overt sexual nature? Each man must answer that for himself, but Mary provided that perfect mother, or the perfect mate, the perfect companion to ease all of our doubts and fears.

Women were no less immune. Kristeva relates the story that “Catherine of Alexandria . . . imagined herself receiving the wedding ring from Christ aided by the Virgin; and later Catherine of Siena (d.1830) entered into a mystical marriage with Christ” (139). Therefore women, just as some men, in their hubris, have always strived to ascend to the heavens and for the unattainable. Mary is that perfect unattainable woman, forever chaste, forever holy, Queen of the Universe, with no physical presence other than the idealized representative images within paintings, verse, music, and ultimately one’s imagination.

In patriarchal societies, women have been subjugated and marginalized throughout the centuries and religious societies are not immune. However, de Beauvoir credits Christianity, with its emphasis on virginity, with an attempt at an “equality of man and woman on a certain level” (188). And therein lies the dilemma, for in order to attain this equality in the religion of Christianity the ordinary woman must reject the flesh and remain virginal like Mary. Hence, De Beauvoir argues that it is patriarchal Christianity that “detests the flesh in her; if she rejects the flesh, she is, like him, a creature of God, redeemed by the Savior: here she can take her place beside males, among those souls guaranteed celestial happiness.” But she is still not equal; she is chained to man, redeemed by a man, Christ. “As his docile servant, she will also be a blessed saint. Thus the image of the most perfected woman, propitious to man, lies at the heart of the Middle Ages: the face of the Mother of Christ is encircled in glory” (189). According to Pelikan, the myth is further refined as the one woman who is above all others; the Queen of the Universe (204). But in order to elevate Mary to this exalted position, she must be without

sin and untouched by man; she must be virginal. Here lies the complex theological conundrum; for how could a mortal woman have given birth to the Son of God?

Jo Ann McNamara in her study *A New Song: Celibate Women in the First Three Christian Centuries* says, “Mary was indisputably a virgin in the old sense of the word: that is, she was an unmarried woman. In that sense, she was the first of the women around Jesus who carried an aura of marginality, of suspicion, of rejection” (13-14). Some of the early church fathers challenged this virginal construct by as a mistranslation “for the Semitic word denoting the social-legal status of an unmarried girl the translator substituted the Greek *parthenos*, which denotes a physiological and psychological fact, virginity” (Kristeva 135). However, Mary’s virginal status was defended by early Christian apologists such as Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue with Trypho*.¹ Justin objects that “the correct translation of the Hebrew *almab* should be “young girl” rather than ‘virgin’ by pointing out that the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament . . . used the Greek *parthenos* (virgin), and not *neamis* (young girl), another argument that was to become standard fare among the [church] Fathers” (Reynolds 55). Regardless of these word games, Mary’s virginal status, in the truest sense of the word, became of paramount importance for the early church fathers in convincing not only their followers, but also the Jewish population of the legitimacy of the virgin birth and of Christ.

The principal theological problem during the early formation of the Christian Church was “whether the divine in Jesus Christ was identical with God the Creator”

¹ Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* “has been considered one of the basic documents for an understanding of the theological contacts between Christians and Jews in the second century,” although whether Trypho is an actual person, fictional, or both is not known and is generally regarded as a character made up by Justin (Trakatellis 289, 296-297).

(Pelikan 48). From this of necessity came the question “whether the divine man was truly ‘man’ in the fullest sense ... or whether ... he needed to be shielded from the total implications of an authentic humanity” (48). And where lies the answer to these questions but in his conception. Therefore, Mary must be pure and virginal. Warner goes as far as to say “that it was a deeply misogynist and contemptuous view of women’s role in reproduction that made the idea of conception by the power of the spirit more acceptable” (47).

This theological concept of virginity came after the early church was formed and became such an essential idea “that it overrode all other considerations, including the evidence of revelation itself” (50). The patristic fathers needed this virginity and purity in their debates to provide the necessary theological evidence to explain how a mortal woman could conceive and given birth the Son of God (Saupe 5). However, paradoxically, as we have seen, this concept also became essential to some women in allowing themselves an elevation out of marginality and into the higher spiritual sphere formerly reserved only for men (de Beauvoir 188).

In a patriarchal society, the virginal status of a woman is paramount and a source of control. This concept did not originate with Christianity; it is found as well in classical mythology. Ancient mythology looked upon virginity as “powerful magic and conferred strength and ritual purity” (Warner 48). It is therefore not surprising that Christianity embraced this ideal: “The interpretation of the virgin birth . . . was the overwhelming and distinctive contribution of the Christian religion to the ancient mythological formula” (48). Thus, while the ancient goddesses could be called virginal, but yet still take lovers,

the new Christian ascetic equated virginal status with the purity needed to counteract Eve's original damage in the fall of man (50-51).

Justin Martyr's arguments concerning her virginal status furthered the concept that Mary was the new Eve. Just as Eve was the first woman made by god from the flesh of Adam, so was Mary the second Eve, giving birth to the Christ (Pelikan 44). From the dialogue we find:

He became Man by the Virgin so that the course which was taken by disobedience in the beginning through the agency of the serpent, might be also the very course by which it would be put down. For Eve, a virgin and undefiled, conceived the word of the serpent, and bore disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy when the angel Gabriel announced to her the glad tidings that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her and the powers of the Most High would overshadow her, for which reason the Holy One being born of her would be called the Son of God. And she replied: 'Be it done unto me according to thy word' (Martyr).

This second Eve construct "once it was introduced into the vocabulary . . . took on a life of its own. Because in Latin the name of Eve spelled backwards became *Ave*, the greeting of the angel to Mary in the Vulgate as it was echoed by millions of souls in the prayer of *Ave Maria*, there appeared to be a mystical significance in the very name" (Pelikan 44).

According to Robert Sollod this view of the second Eve fits Carl Jung's "Mother Archetype . . . as symbolized by wife, Divine Mother (Virgin Mary)" (163). Furthermore, the fall of man through Eve and the redemption through Mary's role further fits this archetype, "The Mother archetype can be positive or negative, light or dark, good or evil"

(163). Thus we have good Mary redeeming the not so good Eve. Therefore, she becomes our redeemer by undoing Eve's damage and delivering us a savior. But regardless of these theological and mythological constructs, in order to attempt an understanding of a very real and human Mary, we must investigate what it meant to be a woman during her time period. What do we really know regarding the historical Mary? For if one is to imagine a human Mary speaking in her own voice, a consideration of all these aspects must be taken into account.

Determining what any young woman experienced in the Roman Empire at the time of Christ's birth is problematic at best. As Lynn Cohick has pointed out, the role of women is vastly influenced by the scholars' "theological and ideological convictions that inform their historical construction" (21). Women have been described as confined to the home in some sources and yet others have them moving freely throughout society (21). The ancient sources, written predominately by men, depict history through the prism of a patriarchal society not only from a man's viewpoint, but also colored by the political and religious influences of the time. Regardless, scholars such as Cohick have attempted, through careful research, to ascertain how women navigated their lives in the early Greco-Roman world of the Jews (21). This is an essential undertaking if the modern day reader is to attempt an understanding of the world in which Mary existed.

In the Greco-Roman world, it was the man who was responsible for the raising of the child (133). If the child were unwanted, then it would be "exposed," which meant that the child was left outside to die or, hopefully, be taken by the compassionate. One could speculate that in the ancient world, where sons were considered more valuable than daughters, Mary herself might have been exposed, but raised by the local temple,

however unlikely this would have been (Mathewes-Green 42). This conjecture might explain the story of Mary's childhood found in the Gnostic gospel, the *Protevangelium of James*, for when she was three years old she was given to the temple, and "the priest welcomed Mary" (43). Her parents recognized the special nature of their child when at six months old she took seven steps: "And Anna caught her up, saying, 'As my Lord God lives, you will not walk on this earth again until I bring you into the temple of the Lord'" (39). In this account, Mary was predestined for her role; she was pure and virginal, untouched by sin from her very birth. This led some patristic fathers to argue for her parthenogenic conception, but Bernard of Clairvaux, a major Christian scholar from the high Middle Ages, "In his famous *Epistle 174* . . . insisted [that] the glorious [Virgin] conceived by the Holy Spirit, but was not also herself conceived this way. I say that she gave birth as a virgin, but not that she was born of a virgin" (Pelikan 192). It was therefore not essential that Mary too be of virginal birth for her role was to give human form to the Holy Spirit that was Jesus.

McNamara has pointed out, "the female body was inferior to the male and periodically polluted," so it was that Mary attaining the age of menstruation would have been ejected from the Church (3). Again the *Protevangelium*, "What therefore shall we do with her, lest it come upon her as with women, and she defile the sanctuary of the Lord?" (Mathewes-Green 45). This dilemma is solved by calling for the twelve suitors, one of which is Joseph. The priest takes their staves and after prayer over them, gives each his own staff back. Only the final suitor, Joseph, is chosen as a dove springs forth from his staff and lands upon his head (47).

In Western Christianity and popular culture, it is not clear that Joseph is an old man. However, in the Gnostic gospel, *The Protevangelium*, it becomes clear; “I have sons and I am an old man, but she is a young girl” (47). Regardless of Western or Eastern traditions regarding Joseph, in general he plays but a small supporting role in the theological story of Mary, providing legitimacy in marriage and care for her and her son, Jesus. In addition, he provides textual support for Mary’s divine and virginal nature. In the Gospel of Matthew, Joseph considered divorcing her, not publically, but privately: “Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example as minded to put her away privily” (Matt 1:19).² And it is here that we see textual support for the divine nature of this conception, “the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream . . . fear not to take unto thee Mary thy Wife: for that which is conceived in her is of The Holy Ghost” (Matt 1:20). Furthermore, the patristic father’s used Joseph’s age and previous children as evidence to argue for Mary’s continual virginal, and therefore holy, status as an explanation for the sparse biblical accounts of Jesus’s siblings. This continual virginal status was essential to the early Church in order that Mary remain a symbol of purity, setting her apart from earthly women. But as a young woman, conceiving before marriage, how would she have been viewed during her time period?

Women with children out of wedlock were not uncommon in first century C.E. as in any other period of history. According to Cohick, “Illegitimacy was not a serious social obstacle” (134). Regardless, in Mary’s marriage to Joseph, the acceptance of her

² The Scofield Study Bible: King James Version.

child would have been his alone (133). The annunciation to Joseph, in biblical context, assures that he will raise this child as his own, given the divine nature of the conception (Matt 1:20).

The biblical accounts of Mary are sparse. There is no true sense of who Mary was as a woman. However, these passages have supplied the biblical context and verses used that composers have made regarding sacred music since the rise of Marian hymns in the Middle Ages. As we have seen, the controversies regarding the virginal birth and status of Mary as a vessel to carry the Son of God created such a reverence for her among the non-clergy, that Marian worship created a tremendous market for Marian music, predominantly in Catholicism and the Eastern Orthodox Church. This changed after the reformation, at least for the Protestants. As Marian Warner points out, although “the Virgin Mary was not an important figure in the theological issues raised by the Reformers . . . her cult excited precisely those extremes of external idolatry . . . that horrified the men who pressed for reformation” (296). For this reason, there is little to be found in Protestantism, as the Reformation sought to bring back the primary emphasis on Jesus. We will now explore some of this rich musical tradition as an argument is constructed for the originality of the lyrics chosen for this musical project.

MARY IN MUSIC

Mary in Three Movements, as with all musical art, attempts to elicit an emotional response from the listener, whether positive or negative. We are no longer listening to music that only praises Mary, or music appealing to her for intercession, forgiveness of our sins, or placing her in the exalted unobtainable position as Queen of

the Universe. If my compositional framework is valid, it is my sincere hope that one will identify with this young woman, scared and alone, carrying an unborn child whose meaning was not yet known to her.

In the history of religious devotion, early Christians would often use verse and song as a means to achieve spirituality. Religious pictorial art, such as icons, were also used as focal points for meditation, although periods of iconoclasm sought to eliminate this practice (Pelikan 99). Mary as Mediatrix was especially important in music. *Ave Maria*, as musical prayer, was a common theme and “the Lateran Council of 1215 made the *Ave Maria* compulsory learning for every layman” (Saupe 6). If one searches the International Music Score Library Project (imslp.org) for public domain music written with *Ave Maria*, one will find ninety-two manuscripts as of this writing. The two that are most familiar to modern audiences, especially heard during the Christmas season, are those by Franz Schubert (1825) and Charles Gounod/Bach (1853).

It was with all this in mind that this musical composition was devised as a means to explore the emotional viewpoint of Mary in her imagined own words, hopefully eliciting an emotional and contemplative state within the listener. But in order to understand the compositional framework chosen as well as some of the intentional ambiguities of the textual aspect of this piece, although not essential to musical experience, it furthers one’s understanding of this piece if one has a brief background on how Mary has previously been depicted in music.

It was with the rise of Mariology in the Middle Ages, where we begin to find the first extensive Marian musical devotion embedded within Gregorian chant. Saupe’s anthology alone lists ninety-one Middle English Marian lyrics (43 – 170). If one spends

any time listening to the beautiful sonorities of chant, one is struck by the familiarity of the lyrics. Jo Ann Rothenberg has an interesting observation about the ideal Mary: "It is a simple fact that prayers to the Virgin Mary and secular love lyrics of the high and late Middle Ages often sound alike . . . both frequently feature stylized praise of an idealized, impossibly virtuous woman" (4). According to Kristeva we see a mixing of Marian devotion and courtly love; "both Mary and the Lady were focal points of men's aspirations and desires" and these emotions were played out in both secular and sacred music, and not always separated (140). During this time one can find the mixing of the sacred and secular, "whose bawdy, sexually suggestive content could not be brought into line with Marian devotion" (Rothenberg 8).

Bawdy indeed, for man's desire for Mary as the virgin, the unobtainable, allows Mary's gaze to transfix the viewer. The viewer is seduced into a desire for spiritual union no less strong than that of the physical. This desire carried itself into the musical arts, where passionate prayers in song to Mary stir spiritual emotion; it was the ultimate sublimation of the sexual into the spiritual.

Through music, and specifically within the text, we participate in this gaze, this reflection upon the visual object. In medieval lyrics and poetry, Sarah Stanbury has gone as far as to say, "One of the most elegant and stately stripteases in medieval poetry occurs in the revelatory cantos of Dante's *Purgatorio*" (1083). She is referring to Dante's Beatrice, his guide through heaven in *The Divine Comedy*: "Beatrice's gaze, the object of Dante the spectator's intense desire, takes its power from the traditional iconography of Eros as well as from the imagery of divine rapture: love's arrows are transformed in the

service of a visual apotheosis that suggests a beatific vision” (1083). This same intense desire pervades the music and art of this period.

One contemporary portrayal speaks to the gaze of Mary described by Stanbury and we find it in Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of Christ*. As Catherine O’Brien has pointed out, “While the accusations of anti-Semitism and excessive on-screen violence have caught the attention, Gibson’s Mary (played by Maia Morgenstern) has won acclaim as a suffering human figure who breaks the cinematic ‘forth wall’ by looking towards the camera and drawing the audience into the action . . . through her eyes; her maternal instincts become our own” (Boss 535). As the audience identifies through her gaze, the same occurs during contemplation of her images in art and music where the lyrical structure and harmonic choices provide the aural equivalent of the visual.

What makes *Mary in Three Movements* different is on first listening obvious, as we hear the first-person narrative of Mary. She is no longer the immaculate Virgin, but is portrayed as the young woman who happens to find herself at a crossroad in her life. The birth of Jesus, her son, whether one believes or not, would change the world. Her gaze then is realized in the music and it is here we will examine the musical settings as comparison for the four motifs or events in her life; the Annunciation, Nativity, Crucifixion, and Resurrection.

The Annunciation that is typically portrayed is that of Gabriel to Mary found in the Gospel of Luke. Here we have context that has produced music such as *Gabriel’s Message* which is one of two annunciation hymns found in *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (16). This version was originally a Basque folk carol, the lyrics of which follow:

The angel Gabriel from heaven came
 His wings as drifted snow
 His eyes as flame
 "All hail" said he "O lowly maiden Mary,"
 Most highly favored lady, Gloria! . . .
 Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head
 "To me be as it pleases God," she said,
 "My soul shall laud and magnify God's holy name."
 Most highly favored lady, Gloria! (16).

From these lyrics, Mary speaks, but as a servant of the Lord only, as she "meekly bowed her head" (16). She is humble and praises the lord. However, what we do not hear is the anguish of a young woman, pregnant and un-wed. These traditional hymns use biblical verse, either as written or with some modification, but still keeping with the context of the biblical text. There is no reference to Mary as a person beyond her nature as merely a sacred vessel in which to carry Jesus.

"To a Maid Engaged to Joseph" begins the other annunciation hymn found within the hymnals, Presbyterian and Methodist (19, 215). Again we see biblical verses, this time from Luke 1:26-34, set to music as the annunciation is realized. Here, Mary does speak in first person, but only with the text taken strictly from Luke, revealing little of her humanity. Her emotional response is limited to the text:

Mary was most troubled To hear the angels word.

What was the angel saying? It troubled her to hear. . . .

‘How shall this be?’ said Mary, ‘I am not yet a wife.’ . . .

‘So be it, I am ready According to your word’ (19, 215).

The *Magnificat* is a perfect example of medieval song, derived from the Gospel of Luke 1.46-55, and sung at vespers and, as Nancy Van Deusen observes, the verse structure might have been arranged where the singer “brought together building blocks from the store of Psalms and Old Testament . . . so that the order, and the connection itself between the chunks constituted the real work of the singer” (53). This provided the main compositional method used throughout the medieval period for the “chunks of *cantus* (or, the common English translation, ‘chant’).”

Psalm 35.9: And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord: it shall rejoice in his salvation

I Samuel 1.11: remember me, and not forget thine handmaid

Malachi 3:12: And all nations shall call you blessed.

Ps 71.19: who has done great things

Ps 99.3: Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy

Ps 98.1: his right hand and his holy arm has gotten him the victory

Ps 33.10-11: The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought; he makes the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations (53).

This same verse structure has been used throughout history providing the text for compositions starting in the Renaissance with Monteverdi’s *Vespers for the Blessed*

Virgin (1610), Bach's *Magnificat* (1723), and more recently as part of combined works such as Howard Blake's *The Passion of Mary* (2006). The *Magnificat*, also called *The Song of Mary*, used by Monteverdi and Bach, is derived from the Luke narrative where Mary visits Elizabeth, her cousin, the future mother of John the Baptist. Again, Luke has Mary speaking in first person, but it is only in the context of prayer. There is little here that one can find concerning any actual emotional experience of Mary in her own voice that is not directly related to the Annunciation narrative.

How does this narrative speak to us of Mary as a young unwed woman, finding herself with child? Although Luke references Mary's puzzlement of her predicament, it is Elizabeth's words that proclaim the sacred nature of Mary's pregnancy. The words are sung in Latin with the title *Magnificat* coming from the first stanza, *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*. Luke's text is as follows:

- 46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,
 47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
 48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from
 henceforth all generations shall be blessed.
 49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy *is* his name....
 56 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own
 house (Luke 1:46-56).

In the modern era, we find the British composer Howard Blake's (1938 - present) *The Passion of Mary* (2006). It should be noted that my composition was conceived, both structurally and lyrically, without knowledge of Blake's composition. However, while the motifs are similar, in that I use the four main events in Mary's life, as we shall see, Blake

takes a traditional approach by adapting known biblical text to his compositional framework. Blake's composition was originally conceived only as a *Stabat Mater* which he retained for his part 3 (liner notes). But Blake expanded the concept to encompass four movements. The first, entitled *Visitation, Nativity, Childhood*, again uses the common practice of biblical verse, but expands on this concept by adding some text in Mary's voice: "Who is that? What do you want from me? How can this be? Be it unto me according to thy word" (liner notes). This limited text echoes the biblical conceptual framework of Mary. Although it is written in first person, again, it contributes nothing new to the concept of Mary as a person.

Blake follows with *The Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-53) and continues with interspersed biblical text and passages in Mary's voice. Specifically toward the end, Blake uses a construct from Apocryphal sources and Luke 2:48-49 where Mary says, "I cry but I cannot cry. I weep, but I cannot weep. My name 'Mary' means the 'bitterness of things.' Your father and I have sought thee, sorrowing" (liner notes). Again, all Blake's text is taken strictly from biblical or apocryphal sources.

Blake further divides Jesus' life into part 2; *Temptation, in the Wilderness, Sermon on the Mount, Crucifixion*, part 3; *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*, and finally, part 4; *Resurrection, Salve Regina (Hail, Holy Queen)*. However, throughout his composition, he retains the classical approach to his subject matter, utilizing biblical verse and context, relying on his compositional choices, just as Pergolesi, Vivaldi, Dvořák and others have done, to impart his own musical interpretation on the biblical text.

The *Stabat Mater* is named for the first two words in Latin of a Marian prayer often found in prayer books from the late fifteenth century (Rothenberg 198). Rothenberg

reports that this prayer was attributed to a thirteenth-century Franciscan, “Jacopone da Todi (ca. 1230-1306), though this attribution is not secure” (199). It is this “accessory prayer,” found in prayer books in the fifteen and sixteenth centuries, that is most likely “the context [accessory prayer] that Josquin des Prez [a Franco-Flemish composer] knew the text best.” It was here that the *Stabat Mater* was first heard in a musical setting and not as the prayer in which “the person praying empathized with Mary’s sorrow as she stood at the foot of the cross” (198). In his musical rendering, he took the first sixteen of the twenty verses to set in the two parts of his motet. Josquin’s piece is set in 5 voices, “cast in the meter of the late medieval sequence” (199).

From this beginning, the *Stabat Mater* would become the setting for works by Palestrina (ca. 1590), Pergolesi (1736), Vivaldi (ca. 1727), and Dvořák (1876-1877). In describing two of the versions, that of Rossini and Dvořák, Pelikan contrasts “the range of subjective emotion. Dvořák is heard as “meditative, looking inward into the anguished soul of the Virgin and then into the anguished soul of the pious believer” while Rossini’s version is described as “irresistibly operatic, at times almost exuberant” (126, 127). Regardless, the subjective emotional response differences in the various musical settings are a function of compositional vision and structure to convey an emotion through music, as the textural context is set, playing off the traditional verses of *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*.

The *Stabat Mater* is a prayer to Mary and as the first stanza indicates, a lamentation upon her sorrow, as she gazes upon her dying son:

At the cross her station keeping
 stood the mournful Mother weeping,
 close to Jesus at the last.
 through her soul; of joy bereaved,
 bowed in anguish, deeply grieved,
 now at length the sword hath passed . . .

O that blessed one, grief-stricken,
 blessed Mother, blessed Maiden,
 Mother of th' all-holy One:
 O that silent, ceaseless mourning,
 O those din eyes, never turning
 From that wondrous, suffering Son.

Who on Christ's dear Mother gazing,
 in her trouble so amazing,
 born of woman, would no weep?
 Who on Christ's dear Mother thinking,
 such a cup of sorrow drinking,
 would not share her sorrow deep? (Routly 160).

These lyrics ask the listener to imagine the sorrow of the Virgin. One hears these lyrics and can certainly picture Mary at the foot of the cross. There is reference to the sword that pierced Jesus's side, but at the same time, the lyricist uses a biblical reference,

as we have previously seen was common practice in chant, where Simeon says to Mary, “(Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed” to impart added emphasis upon Mary’s suffering (Luke 2:35).

However, unlike the *Stabat Mater*, my composition, asks the listener to participate directly in her sorrows listening to her in her own words as she gazes up at the cross.

These compositions, including mine, are written from a male perspective. I do not pretend to write from a feminist perspective. However, a comparison must be made between this work and the work of women composers, especially *Breath of Heaven* by Amy Grant; but first, we see how a rich tradition of women writers arose in the convents in the early Renaissance.

The history of the church is predominantly patriarchal. We talk of the Fathers of the Church and the patristic literature; and, on the surface, one would think music fits perfectly within this patriarchal framework. However, within the convents, musical education was a prominent activity for women. Cynthia J. Cyrus in her essay on *The Education Practices of Benedictine Nuns: A Slazburg Abbey Case Study*, explains that "we witness a shift in the practices of musical learning . . . from an aural environment to a literate one . . . from an emphasis on traditional and localized plainchant to a supplemental liturgy in which instrumental music and vocal polyphony moved to the fore" (257). This shift occurred in the sixteenth century paving the way for the musical education in convents such as Santa Radegonda of Milan, where Chiara Margarita Cozzolani (1602-circa 1676-1678) composed her *Magnificat, Vespro Della Beata Vergine: Second Vespers for the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin* in 1642 and 1650 (liner notes).

Modern era compositions of Mary include the songs *Mary, Did You Know?* (1984), by Mark Lowry and Buddy Greene, and *Breath of Heaven (Mary's Song)* (1992) by Amy Grant. Of the two, *Breath of Heaven* is the most important comparison to the current project. Therefore, we will examine it last. *Mary, Did You Know?* questions Mary about her son's future as the savior. However, these lyrics are not written in first person; Mary does not speak to us. Our only emotional connection is through the questions asked and our response to how she might have felt, "Mary did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water? Mary did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?" (Lowry and Greene). While *Mary, Did You Know?* is powerful in its construct of leaving the answers to the questions in the listener's imagination, and is a popular and effective song, it does not directly address how Mary felt from first person perspective.

Breath of Heaven, like *Mary in Three Movements*, speaks to us in Mary's voice. Amy Grant tells us that "this song is a prayer . . . that fits a lot of people's circumstances because it is a cry for mercy . . . my prayer for the listener, and the reader, as well as the singer:" (Grant n.p.)

I have traveled many moonless nights,
 Cold and weary with a babe inside,
 And I wonder what I've done.
 Holy Father you have come,
 And chosen me now to carry your son. (n.p.).

While my composition is similar to Grant's *Breath of Heaven* in using similar constructs in the self-questioning of Mary, I wanted her to tell her own story to the

listener. As an example, I used these lyrics “I asked why the lord had chosen me for his bride,” and while similar to Grant’s: “And chosen me now to carry your son,” they were chosen to convey Mary’s fears and doubts to the listener. Grant moves her action forward with Mary speaking in present tense. Her Mary speaks in prayer during Grant’s chorus. My lyrics were written in past tense in order to move each scene forward in time and hopefully leaving room for each listener’s own interpretation. What then is the overall structure and intent of this compositional project?

MARY IN THREE MOVEMENTS

The first movement is written in C minor. The tone is somber as Mary discovers she is with child. The lyrics make no attempt to interject the typical annunciation; however, room is left for the listeners to project their own religions or agnostic belief system into the structure as the story unfolds. Mary’s questioning at her condition takes this somber tone as she wonders if Joseph will still marry her. There is no attempt to comment on the age of Joseph. Mary becomes a mirror reflecting our own uncertainties, “I look in the mirror at a stranger it seems.” But the key changes to C major to provide a happier note as she wonders “at the thought of this beautiful boy.” This movement, like the following two, attempts to retain the sacred while also appealing to the secular.

The second movement tells the familiar story of the nativity, but again through Mary’s own voice. Her faith in God is presented, but it is the experiential visual picture painted of her as she gives birth in wonder of her child in the prototypical manger. The manger is not mentioned by name, but reflected in the lyric, “the chill of wet straw, the fragrance of cedar eased all my doubts and fears.” This movement again begins in a

minor key, this time one step above in D minor. The joyous aspects of the birth are reflected in a modulation to F major. Again the attempt is to paint the various moods with the chosen tonalities.

The third, and final, movement is the most challenging. The introductory section is written in minor, but with key changes to reflect her agony as she sees her son not as Christ the savior, but as her little boy. The opening key is C # minor with a quick change to A major. It then drops down to G minor as she sings, “the dead were carrying their crosses of wood,” and further to F minor as she sings, “the dead were walking these streets of blood.” This is the epitome of every mother’s nightmare of losing one’s child, as she watches her only son, forced to walk through the streets to his death.

This introductory narrative sets the stage for Mary at the cross. We find biblical references to this setting in John 19:25-27. In her lament, she sings that she would gladly take his place on the cross. The main body of the piece is written in A minor, again tonally reflecting her witness at the crucifixion of her son. There is a quick modulation up a step to B minor as she discovers the empty tomb. However, this third movement would not be complete without a scene change where Mary is given hope as she meets a stranger on the road. This device is a deliberate attempt to create ambiguity in the listener’s response, so as to leave room for interpretation of the narrative within each individual’s personal belief system.

Finally, as the stranger speaks, his identity is revealed to Mary. Her load is lifted as she grasps this possibility that her son is resurrected and will be remembered. This last movement again ends in the joyous key of A major. Hopefully, if this compositional framework is valid, each listener will have an emotional response to the narrative

presented, reflecting on this wondrous woman of ancient Jewish Roman society, who brought forth the one person that has changed and continues to change the world.

Regardless of whether one believes in the Resurrection or not, for better or worse, Mary has impacted every aspect of our lives, both from a patriarchal and a feminist perspective.

Mary is universal; she is timeless. She truly is, as Marina Warner has said, “*Alone of All Her Sex*.” However, Warner has also said, “the reality her myth describes is over; the moral code she affirms has been exhausted. [. . .] the Virgin’s legend will endure in its splendor and lyricism but it will be emptied of its moral significance” (338-339). This is indeed a sad commentary on what this author hopes is not the case. However, in a modern society striving for gender equality and understanding, one would hope to place less significance upon Mary’s virginal and divine construct and see her as the woman/mother archetype, human and vulnerable as both men and women are. I hope that her significance is what she tells us of ourselves as we look into the mirror she is. I hope she will continue to provide dialogue and inspire great art, literature and music.³

Why Mary? The question has been answered for this author. She is the quintessential Woman, Mother, and unobtainable love object. She is easily the single most talked about, written about, thought about, woman in Western Civilization; but, regardless of all her posthumous importance, she is still that quintessential sympathetic young woman, who was alone, scared, and vulnerable, who has changed civilization for

³ As of this writing, The New York Times announced that a new play *The Testament of Mary* will be premiered in the spring of 2013 (Healy C6). This play is based on a monologue by Colm Tóibín, and originally performed in Dublin in 2011 (C6). Tóibín later turned his monologue into a novel of the same title, published in 2012. This play explores, “the Virgin Mary, struggling to come to grips with the life of her son 20 years after the Crucifixion” (C6).

better or worse, the archetype of young woman everywhere and throughout the ages. Finally, let us abandon all pretensions and as Kristeva concluded, “Let us listen again, therefore, to the *Stabat Mater*, and to music, all music. It swallows goddesses and strips them of necessity” (152).

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