SOLO ANGEL ROLES IN VOCAL MUSIC:
TRACING THE USE OF ANGEL ROLES FROM 1600 TO THE PRESENT

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF ARTS

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MUNCIE, INDIANA
DECEMBER 2015
ABSTRACT

This study traces the use of solo angel roles in vocal music from 1600 to the present, focusing specifically on one to two works from each period that contain the most prominent angel roles. Each chapter centers on a particular period of time, analyzing the angel roles and seeking to find a relationship between the representation of the angel in vocal music and the religious and social climate of the era. The fascination with the spiritual and supernatural during the baroque era, as well as the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, affected the amount of angel solo roles. In the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many began to question traditional religious beliefs in the search for rational and scientific thought. The amount of sacred vocal music composed during this time suffered an overall decline, causing a corresponding decline in angel roles composed. The nineteenth century also witnessed a general decline in sacred choral works; however, movements such as German nationalism, romanticism, and historicism, as well as the influence of Felix Mendelssohn helped to revive interest in sacred vocal music. The twentieth century witnessed a renewed fascination with angels, causing a resurgence in the amount of musical angel roles, especially towards the latter part of the century.

The angel roles from the following works are studied in detail: Heinrich Schütz’s Weihnachtshistorie, George Frideric Handel’s La Resurrezione, Franz Joseph Haydn’s The Creation, Felix Mendelssohn’s Elijah, Sir Edward Elgar’s The Dream of Gerontius, Arnold Schoenberg’s Die Jakobsleiter, and Olivier Messiaen’s Saint François D’Assise. The chapters include a brief historical background for each work, a description of the Angel’s role within the work, and an analysis of its music. The final chapter gives a comparison of the musical elements of angels’ music throughout the past four hundred years and affirms that the use of solo angel roles in vocal music reflects trends in society and religion.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank my chair and voice teacher, Dr. Kathleen Maurer, for her encouragement and support during my doctoral studies. I express my gratitude to Dr. Murray Steib for his advice and assistance with editing. In addition, I thank the other professors who served on my doctoral committee: Professor Dawn Condon, Dr. Meryl Mantione, Dr. Jody Nagel, and Dr. Lauren Shaffer. I am also indebted to my previous music teachers for their wisdom and encouragement throughout the years: Mrs. Kate Berkebile, Professor Lambert Brandes, Mr. Thomas Jones, Dr. Kenneth Millican, Dr. Timothy Shelter, Ms. Jayne West, and Mr. Thomas Wise. I thank my family, especially my parents, for the many sacrifices they have made on my behalf. Their prayers, support, and encouragement have been especially meaningful. Lastly and most importantly, I am grateful to God for His strength and provision during the process of obtaining my doctorate.
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Chapter I

Introduction

The presence of angels in artwork, architecture, literature, music, and media suggest that angelic beings have fascinated humans for centuries. Although societal trends constantly change, angels have remained an important part of art and spirituality. Angels have also played an important role in the realm of classical music, particularly in vocal music during the past four hundred years. Mentions of angels in music date back as far as the Middle Ages; solo angel roles began as early as 1600, and are still being written into modern works. From Emilio de’ Cavalieri’s *Rappresentatione di anima et di corpo* (Play of Soul and of Body, 1600) to George Benjamin’s *Written on Skin* (2012), angel solo roles have appeared in numerous oratorios, operas, and other vocal genres. The angel roles from the following works will be studied in greater detail: Heinrich Schütz’s *Historia von der Geburt Jesu Christi* (History of the Birth of Jesus Christ), also known as *Weihnachtshistorie* (The Christmas Story), George Frideric Handel’s *La Resurrezione* (The Resurrection), Franz Joseph Haydn’s *The Creation*, Felix Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*, Sir Edward Elgar’s *The Dream of Gerontius*, Arnold Schoenberg’s *Die Jakobsleiter* (Jacob’s Ladder), and Olivier Messiaen’s *Saint François D’Assise* (Saint Francis of Assisi).

In order to have a common understanding of the term, the word “angel” simply means messenger. The English word “angel” derives directly from the Greek word *angelos*, and represents an earlier Hebrew word *mal’akh* whose meaning also centers on the role of messenger or minister.¹ In addition to being a messenger, angels’ roles include protecting, guarding, comforting, fighting evil, carrying out God’s judgment, singing praise, and playing on harps and lyres. Angels, or angel-like creatures, exist in many different religions and mythologies, and date

back as far as ancient Egyptian civilization. The angel-like creatures of the Babylonians and Egyptians most likely influenced the Hebrew image of the angel, which in turn influenced the Christian concept. As early as the second to third centuries, artists depicted Christian angels in visual art, as seen in the first known image of the Annunciation, found in the Catacombs of Priscilla. During these early centuries of the Common Era, many church fathers and theologians attempted to describe the nature of angels and find ways to categorize them. In the fifth or sixth century, the Christian theologian and philosopher Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite combined Neoplatonic and Christian ideals to create an angelic hierarchy. This hierarchy is organized according to the angels’ closeness to God in three sets of three: Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones; Dominations, Powers, and Virtues; and Principalities, Archangels, and Angels. Musical elements containing the number three and multiples of three appear often in angel music.

In sacred music, composers use angel roles most commonly in Christmas works where the Angel serves as God’s messenger to Joseph, Mary, and the shepherds. Composers also utilize angel roles from various parts of the Bible including the Easter story; the stories of Job, Joshua, and Abraham, to name a few; and extra-biblical narrative, as found in the story of Saint Francis. The history of angels in vocal music dates back to the middle ages, as seen in chants such as Hildegard von Bingen’s O gloriosissimi lux vivens angeli and O vos angeli, written during the twelfth century. Renaissance works contain mentions of angels, such as Josquin des Prez’s Annunciation motet, Missus est Gabriel angelus, and Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina’s famous motet, O Magnum Mysterium, which speaks of the angels praising the newborn Lord. This study focuses specifically on solo angel roles, which originated approximately around the same time as the development of monody at the turn of the seventeenth century in Italy.

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Purpose of the Study

This study serves as a unique and original contribution to recent work that seeks to tie together the themes of religion and music. Recent works such as Bruhn’s book *Messiaen’s Interpretations of Holiness and Trinity: Echoes of Medieval Theology in the Oratorio, Organ Meditations, and Opera*,3 or Michael Alan Anderson’s article “The One Who Comes After Me,”4 demonstrate religious symbolism found in sacred musical compositions. In the same way, this study seeks to find symbolism throughout the music of these works in the representation of the character of the Angel. From a performance standpoint, this topic is pertinent for a vocalist preparing to perform one of these angel roles, since the historical and analytical information give a deeper understanding about the character, its music, and its significance within the work. In addition to the angel roles mentioned in each chapter, the appendix contains a selected list of solo angel roles in vocal literature from 1600 to the present. This may assist a singer desiring to give an angel-themed recital program or find an angel aria or set of arias to perform.

Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses specifically on solo angel roles in vocal music and not simply music about angels, because of the immense breadth of music containing angelic choirs or themes of angels. The study discusses heavenly angels, not demonic or rebellious angels, since the topic would also be too broad in scope. It also includes only angels from the Jewish and Christian traditions, since the majority of classical sacred vocal literature containing angels is based on biblical scriptures. From the numerous classical vocal works containing angel roles, the pieces chosen for further analysis contain the largest angel roles and/or are works with special historical

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significance. The works have also been selected in an attempt to best represent a variety of time periods and compositional styles.

**Need for the Study**

Despite the presence of angels in many sacred vocal works, there exists very little research about the role of angels in music. Books and articles have been written concerning angels in visual art, literature, or religion, but very few resources exist about angels in music. Publications can be found that contain information about the specific work, the composer’s view of angels, or the role of the angel within a certain work, but no resources exist that seek to find commonalities between the roles and how they relate to society. With the great amount of solo angel roles, tracing the use of these roles and comparing the characteristics of their music is significant. Analyzing the symbolism within the angelic music and the relation to society and religion is important for tying together the themes of religion and music. The study also gives the soloist performing one of these roles a greater understanding of the part, informing the performance both musically and stylistically.

**Review of Literature**

Very few publications or dissertations focus on the study of angels in music. Although it is challenging to find information about the angels in specific musical works, a number of resources assist in gaining knowledge about the roles of angels within these works. Books such as Valery Rees’ *From Gabriel to Lucifer*, David Albert Jones’ *Angels: A History*, and Rosa Giorgi’s *Angels and Demons in Art* contain general details about angels, including important theological information, and their role in visual art. Rees discusses the cultural history of angels and gives information about angels from various religions such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam,
and Zoroastrianism. She writes about the origin of the word “angel” and explains Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite’s Celestial Hierarchy. These facts, as well as her detailed description of the four archangels, provided helpful information for the section in this study that discusses the solo angel roles in Haydn’s The Creation.

Jones discusses the general history of angels and explains stories and speculations about angels in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. He examines the portrayal of angels in art, literature, and cinema and explores what attracts people to angels and why they remain relevant and powerful in modern culture. His discussion of the impact of society and religion contained information of particular interest, especially concerning the effects of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation on popular beliefs about angels.

Giorgi gives a collection of images of heavenly and demonic angels in visual art from the Middle Ages through the present day. In addition to examples of artwork, she discusses the iconography of angels and demons and how they have evolved through time. Most of the images derive from European art and she presents the images in chronological order to show the iconographic development of angels. She organizes her chapters by themes such as the Path of Salvation, the Path of Evil, the Last Days, the Infernal Cohorts, and the Angelic Cohorts. The book gives useful information about society’s views of angels, such as the general association of heavenly angels with stringed instruments. Her images of the archangels and corresponding information about the traditional associations of Gabriel with a dove or lily branch, Raphael with a fish, and Uriel with a sword of light, provided important clues as to why Haydn may have chosen certain voice parts for those roles in his Creation.

Smither’s four-volume set of A History of the Oratorio gives the historical backgrounds and analyses of many of the major religious choral works from the baroque era through the
In the individual sections about each work, Smither discusses the social context of the composition, the libretto, and gives an analysis of its music. In addition to the information about the works containing angels, Smither includes details about each angel role and its music. These volumes were frequently referenced in this study because they give much of the background history for the works, as well as general information about the historical development of the oratorio. The study drew upon Smither’s historical facts about the libretti, instrumentation, premiere performances, analyses of the music, and information about how the piece fits into the general history of the oratorio.

Several of the works containing angel solo roles, especially those from the baroque period, are not well-known, but articles and books regarding the works and angel roles within them exist. Jean-Michel Vaccaro and Charles S. Fineman discuss the numerological symbolism found in the music of the different characters in Schütz’s *Historia von der Geburt Jesu Christi*, also known as *Weihnachtshistorie*. In their analysis, the authors study rhythm and metrical structure, revealing ternary characteristics in the music of the Angel and chorus of angels, as opposed to the human characters of the Shepherds, Magi, High Priests, and Herod. They also compare the interludes containing the good human characters (the Shepherds and the Magi) against the wicked characters (the High Priests and Herod). Vaccaro and Fineman contrast the vocal and instrumental color and find that the general principle holds true: high pitch is equivalent to goodness and low pitch is equivalent to wickedness. This study affirms their belief since a large majority of the composers in the study set their angel roles in a high tessitura and any roles connected with death or evil in a low tessitura. Vaccaro and Fineman also suggest

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10 Ibid., 221.
that Schütz’s use of three groups of three voices—instrumental voices (1\textsuperscript{st}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} violin, bassoon); high voices (1\textsuperscript{st}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} soprano, alto); and low voices (1\textsuperscript{st}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} tenor, bass)—in the angelic chorus after the first intermedium shows ternary symbolism.\textsuperscript{11} In addition to Schütz’s \textit{Weihnachtshistorie}, other works mentioned in this study, such as Bach’s Sanctus from his Mass in B Minor and Schoenberg’s \textit{Die Jakobsleiter}, show possible numerological significance in instrumentation.

Handel’s \textit{La Resurrezione} is not often performed and is relatively unknown; however, some articles about the work exist, as well as references to the work in biographical books about Handel. Anthony Hicks discusses the history of the work, including information about the premiere and libretto. He also describes the organization and storyline, giving analytical details about many of the arias.\textsuperscript{12} Hicks writes about the use of trumpets in the Angel’s triumphant opening aria, as well as the solo violin that echoes the Angel in the following aria. Although angels are often paired with stringed instruments, specific angels tend to be associated with specific instruments according to their duties. The baroque chapter and the final comparison include a discussion of Handel’s use of instrumentation.

Winton Dean gives important details about Handel’s general compositional style and the dramatic characteristics of his oratorios and masques.\textsuperscript{13} He writes about the association between key and mood, which relates to several of the arias in \textit{La Resurrezione}. The natural key signatures for trumpets during this time, C major and D major, represent an association with themes of martial strength in arias from the oratorio, such as “Disserratevi, oh porte d’averno” (Be unbarred, ye gates of Avernus). He also discusses the use of the pastoral key of G major in the Angel’s aria “Risorga il mondo lieto e giocondo” (Let all the world arise and rejoice). The

\textsuperscript{11} Vaccaro and Fineman, “Metrical Symbolism in Schütz’ Historia der Geburt Jesu Christi,” 228.
\textsuperscript{13} Winton Dean, \textit{Handel’s Dramatic Oratorios and Masques} (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).
specific analyses of these arias include a discussion about the use of key signatures. Dean writes about the lack of duets, trios, and ensembles in Handel’s music during this time, which makes the duet between the Angel and Lucifer more meaningful. Handel uses this final confrontation between the two characters to highlight the oratorio’s main theme of the battle between good and evil. The section in this study about La Resurrezione contains this information as well as a brief background of the work from Dean’s chapter regarding Handel’s early works and Italian operas.

The work representing the classical period, Haydn’s oratorio, The Creation, is still very popular and performed often, so substantial information regarding the oratorio exists. Max Stern discusses The Creation and the influence of John Milton’s epic poem, Paradise Lost, on the text.\textsuperscript{14} Stern analyzes the passage about God creating light and also discusses the cultural backdrop against which Haydn’s oratorio is written in relation to the Age of Reason. He writes about the various literary sources for The Creation such as the biblical account of the creation from Genesis 1, paraphrased text from John Milton’s epic poem Paradise Lost (1674 revised edition), and selected texts from the biblical book of Psalms, particularly Psalms 19 and 145. In a later chapter, he also discusses Schoenberg’s Die Jakobsleiter and the literary sources that inspired the composer. In addition to the inspiration of the biblical texts from the account of Jacob’s ladder in Genesis, he writes about the influence of August Strindberg’s Jakob ringt (Jacob Wrestles) and Honoré de Balzac’s Séraphîta. Stern’s information about the literary sources of both oratorios added to the sections in this study about The Creation and Die Jakobsleiter.

\textsuperscript{14} Max Stern, Bible and Music: Influences of the Old Testament on Western Music (Jersey City, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 2011).
Nicholas Temperley speaks in detail about the composer and background of The Creation. He first gives background information about the Viennese oratorio, English oratorio, and the influence of Handel’s English oratorios on the composition of The Creation. This study mentions Haydn’s attendance at the Handel Festival in England, which inspired him to write an oratorio. Temperley then gives the theological and religious contexts in England and Catholic Austria, and the influence of the Enlightenment movement on the work and its reception. He presents a detailed study of the sources, structure, and revision of the libretto; overall design; and the organization of tonality and its symbolism in this work. This study made use of Temperley’s historical information about The Creation, as well as original intentions for the work such as the use of a single narrator angel.

Lawrence Schenbeck gives a detailed background of the work, as well as information about the libretto and general structure. He discusses Haydn’s use of tempos, textures, timbres, and rhythms, and explains how Haydn used those parameters symbolically and how he used word painting to further illustrate the text. He includes two of Gabriel’s major solos, the arias “With verdure clad” and “On mighty pens,” in his analysis. He also includes a chapter about general performance practice in Haydn’s music with information about singers and their technique.

In the fourth volume of his five-volume series Haydn: Chronicle and Works, H. C. Robbins Landon gives extensive details about Haydn’s life and his works written between 1796-1800. In addition to biographical details, Landon devotes a large portion of the book to the background, origins, and musical analysis of The Creation. He analyzes each recitative, aria,

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ensemble, and chorus in the oratorio, writing about elements such as literary sources, instrumentation, motifs, word painting, tonality, and form. Some of the information used in this study includes the key significance of the Fall of Man in Part III and the use of the long prelude in Gabriel’s ‘bird’ aria as a small orchestral overture for Part II.

In his discussion of Mendelssohn’s oratorio *Elijah*, Jack Werner presents a detailed account of the genesis and premiere of the work. In addition to giving an extensive background of the piece, he provides quotes from the librettist, various critics, and the composer himself. This study used some of these quotes, as well as information about the premiere of the work. Werner also includes individual analyses for each movement with information such as the original source for the melody in the angelic quartet, “Cast Thy Burden Upon the Lord,” found in the *Meiningen Gesangbuch* (Meiningen Hymnbook). He writes about the use of the four chords at the opening of the work, which symbolize the appearance of the prophet Elijah, as well as the descending tritones that represent the curse motif. This study included information about the various motifs in *Elijah* when discussing Mendelssohn’s use of leitmotifs in the work.

Eva Maria Jensen gives a detailed analysis of *The Dream of Gerontius*. She discusses the leitmotifs found in the work, including the Angel’s, which she describes as short, airy, and light. The Angel motif consists of a minor third followed by a major sixth, which this study suggests may be related to the numerological significance of the number three and multiples of three. Jensen also talks about key significance, as found in the chorus of the Angelicals singing in A-flat major, then rising up to C major, symbolizing their ascent to Heaven. The concept of

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20 Ibid., 147.
C major being related to heaven affirms a common association found in many of the works mentioned in this study. She notes metric symbolism in certain sections, which involve multiples of three. The use of ternary meter may also reflect a common theme in angelic music, which this study mentions.

Jerrold Northrop Moore discusses the history of *The Dream of Gerontius* and writes extensively about the various motifs found in the work that signify various characters and concepts such as fear, judgment, and prayer. August Johannes Jaeger, Elgar’s friend and music publisher, analyzed and labeled the large majority of these motifs. Throughout the book Moore gives many excerpts from Elgar and Jaeger’s correspondences. He also writes about the Catholic chant quotations in the work, as well as connections with the motifs in Elgar’s following oratorio, *The Apostles*. During the Angel’s “Alleluia…” statements, Elgar uses the Gregorian chant tune “Ite, missa est,” the Catholic chant typically used at the end of the Mass as a word of departure (roughly translated: “Go, the dismissal is made”). Elgar uses this chant in places where the Angel leads The Soul into a new environment, such as the dismissal from earth to the afterlife, and later from the afterlife to the face of God. The analysis of the music of the Angel in *The Dream of Gerontius* includes Moore’s ideas about the Angel’s motifs and the connections with Gregorian chant.

Schoenberg’s unfinished oratorio, *Die Jakobsleiter*, holds an important place in the history of modern music and in the formation of his twelve-tone technique. David Schroeder gives specific information about the role of the angel Gabriel in *Die Jakobsleiter* and how the character bridged the fusion of Judaic and Christian texts within the work. This study affirms

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Schroeder’s belief that Gabriel, an angel mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments, reflects Schoenberg’s vacillation between Judaism and Christianity during that time. Schroeder also speaks of the many connections with the number six in *Die Jakobsleiter* and how they relate to the seraphim because of their six wings. This study mentions these connections when speaking about the numerological significance in angelic music. It may be presumptuous, but the possibility exists that Schoenberg purposefully made these connections. He also suggests that this work points most clearly to Schoenberg’s future musical development, and the inspiration for his twelve-tone principle.

In the same book, Jennifer Shaw’s article about androgyny and the eternal feminine in *Die Jakobsleiter* is of interest, especially when looking at Schoenberg’s choice of voice part and gender for the work. She discusses Balzac’s novel *Séraphîta*, one of the oratorio’s primary literary sources, which contains an androgynous being who has transcended humanity. Schoenberg chooses to use a baritone for the role of Gabriel in *Die Jakobsleiter* and twice refers to the angel as a male in the work, even though Shaw claims it is asexual. Shaw discusses Swedenborg’s views that directly affect *Die Jakobsleiter*, such as the idea that the souls of men and women can become asexual angels reintegrated with God after passing through three steps on a ladder—love of self, love of humanity, and love of God. She speaks about Schoenberg’s use of gender in regard to the soloists and the use of *Sprechstimme* or song for each character; she also discusses Gabriel’s ability to move from one vocal style to the other and the significance of this ability. This study supports Shaw’s beliefs and agrees that Gabriel’s use of *Sprechstimme* is affected by the location of the characters on the ladder. The souls farther down on the ladder, and thus farther from God, receive Gabriel’s words of chastisement in *Sprechstimme*, contrasting

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with his use of song for his responses to those located higher on the ladder. The reason for Schoenberg’s choice of a baritone for the role is not known; however, it may be due to the darker nature of the oratorio or his desire to do something different.

Alan Philip Lessem writes about the connection of the music and text in the works of Arnold Schoenberg from the years 1908-1922. He discusses the text of Die Jakobsleiter and its sources and gives an overview of some of the most important musical elements, such as the initial six-note theme from the opening of the work. He also describes Gabriel’s use of song when speaking to ones higher on the ladder and the interplay of different themes. The section regarding Die Jakobsleiter is found in his chapter titled “The Quest for Faith,” where he discusses Schoenberg’s pieces that contain religious content. Lessem’s organization of the work differs slightly from Schoenberg’s, as he separates the music from the oratorio into four categories: the choruses, representing collective voices, singing primarily in Sprechstimme; individuals appearing before Gabriel with Gabriel answering each one; a heavenly scene represented by The Soul and Gabriel, with choruses, and orchestras, on- and off-stage; and a large symphonic interlude that precedes the final duet for soprano souls. He also gives a short analysis of several sections of the oratorio with information about themes, harmonies, and instrumentation. This study discusses Lessem’s organization of Die Jakobsleiter, the beliefs about Gabriel’s use of song for those characters higher on the ladder, and the possibility of Schoenberg’s personal connection with the character of the ‘Chosen One,’ a prophet and visionary.

A discussion of Messiaen’s opera, Saint François D’Assise, concludes this study. In an interview with Claude Samuel, Messiaen spoke extensively about the opera, his devout

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Catholicism, his fondness for Saint Francis of Assisi, and his thoughts about the role of the Angel. In Samuel’s book, *Olivier Messiaen Music and Color: Conversations with Claude Samuel*, Messiaen tells why he chose the subject of Saint Francis for his opera and why he chose to represent only certain portions of the saint’s life. He speaks often of the Angel in the work, including the Angel’s role in the saint’s journey, the bird song that accompanies the Angel, and comments about the orchestration in the Angel’s excerpts. Messiaen also comments about the staging and costuming of the Angel. This study presents many of Messiaen’s ideas about the iconography and music of the Angel and quotes several of his statements about the role.

This study made use of many of Siglind Bruhn’s theories about the religious symbolism and significance in *Saint François D’Assise*. After giving general information about the saint, including his biography, influence, reception, and companions, she gives an overview of the plot and recurring components of the opera. She discusses the character of the Angel in great detail, including much of the musical numerological and symbolical significance. Bruhn speaks of the significance of Messiaen’s sound-color relationships, with the angelic music either hovering above a C-major six-five chord, which relates to his view of pure light, or his view of the blue, heavenly triads of A major, which are central in preparing the arrival of the Angel. She compares this to the use of C major in Haydn’s oratorio *The Creation*. Bruhn also writes about Messiaen’s pairing of the Angel and the gerygone, which announces each appearance of the Angel, as well as the instrumentation associated with the Angel, which includes three ondes martenots. Finally she gives a detailed theoretical analysis of the music and themes associated with the Angel.

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Methodology and Organization

This study traces the use of solo angel roles in vocal music from 1600 to the present, focusing specifically on one to two works from each era that contain the largest angel roles. Each chapter centers on a particular period of time, seeking to find a relationship between the representation of the angel in vocal music and the religious and social climate of the era. The angel roles from the following works are studied in depth: Heinrich Schütz’s *Weihnachtshistorie*, George Frideric Handel’s *La Resurrezione*, Franz Joseph Haydn’s *The Creation*, Felix Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*, Sir Edward Elgar’s *The Dream of Gerontius*, Arnold Schoenberg’s *Die Jakobsleiter*, and Olivier Messiaen’s *Saint François D’Assise*. The section regarding each work contains a brief historical background of the work, a description of the Angel’s role within the work, and an analysis of its music. The study concludes that the use of solo angel roles in vocal music reflects trends in society and religion and compares the musical elements of specific angel roles throughout the past four hundred years.

Each chapter gives a brief historical background about the religious and social climate of the time and the subsequent effect on composers and their works. Examples of these influences include the baroque fascination with the forces of good versus evil, the Enlightenment movement, the revival of sacred choral music during the nineteenth century, and the resurgence of interest in angels and spirituality in the twentieth century. Sections regarding each work contain general information about the composition, the specific involvement of the angel within the work, and an analysis of its music. Musical analyses include discussion about elements such as word painting, instrumentation, meter, harmony, melodic structure, the issue of voice part and gender, and numerological significance.
Several of the angelic excerpts contain word painting with examples, such as lengthy melismas on the word “eternal,” a higher tessitura when talking about heaven, or extended high notes giving the feeling of the angel hovering above the earth. Similarities in instrumentation also occur in several of the angelic passages including the use of stringed instruments, often associated with angels. Meter and rhythm in some of the angel excerpts display symbolism with the number three or multiples of three. These ternary characteristics may be associated with the traditional linking of the number three to the Trinity and Christianity, the association with the angelic hierarchy involving three sets of three different types of angels, or the six wings of Seraphic angels. When comparing the harmonic structures of the angelic excerpts, the use of C major seems to be a common occurrence. Also, in music written before the twentieth century, angelic excerpts tend to be written in a major modality unless talking about evil or negative topics.

The melodic structure in several of the angel solo sections contains similarities such as the use of a high tessitura when singing about heaven, suspended notes in excerpts giving the feeling of the angel suspended from heaven, and ascending or descending lines symbolizing an ascent to heaven or descent to the underworld. In many of the angel roles similarities occur with gender and voice part, as many composers write the roles for high voice, whether for soprano, castrato, or boy soprano. By the twentieth century these conventions are not as common, and in the latter part of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century many composers have written angel roles for countertenors. The use of gender in angel roles contains similarities throughout musical works as many composers use females for their angel roles. Finally, examples of possible numerological significance occur in many of the angelic excerpts in these
works. Some examples of this symbolism include ternary characteristics found in meter, the number of voices or instruments, and melodic intervals.

The dissertation chapters are organized according to time periods with the major works highlighted in the corresponding chapters. Chapter One presents an introduction to the concept of angels, their specific roles, and the system of the Christian angelic hierarchy, created by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in the fifth or sixth century. Although several religious traditions contain angels, this study focuses mainly on the heavenly angels from Judeo-Christian texts, since the libretti for the majority of classical vocal works containing angels derive from these sources. Each of the following chapters includes a brief historical and religious background for the time period with in-depth analyses of one or two vocal works with the largest solo angel roles. For each work, a brief historical background will also be given, as well as a description and analysis of the angel’s role and musical involvement within the work.

Chapter Two contains a brief historical and religious background for the baroque era, which includes society’s fascination with the supernatural and the forces of good against evil. Throughout Italy, France, and Germany, a large amount of music also focused on the supernatural, and several composers used angelic beings in their sacred works. The chapter gives an overview of three baroque composers who included angel roles in their works: Emilio de’ Cavalieri, Giacomo Carissimi, and Marc-Antoine Charpentier. Although many works from this period contain angel roles, this study focuses specifically on Schütz’s Weihnachtsthistorie and Handel’s La Resurrezione because they contain larger angel roles.

Chapter Three gives brief information about the historical and religious background of the classical era, focusing specifically on the Enlightenment and its effects on music. After Handel’s later oratorios written during the mid-eighteenth century, the late-eighteenth to the
early-nineteenth centuries experienced an overall decline in oratorio composition and sacred vocal music. The chapter includes background information about Haydn’s *The Creation* and an analysis of the role of the angel Gabriel. The chapter also speculates Haydn’s choice of voice part and gender for the three angels in the work: Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael. Discussion regarding *The Creation* includes the significance of the key of C major, as well as the many instances of text painting. The end of the chapter contains information about the revival of sacred vocal music in the nineteenth century, as well as the role of the Seraph in Beethoven’s oratorio *Christus am Ölberge*.

Chapter Four discusses the romantic era, beginning with a brief introduction about the historical background of the period and the movements of nationalism and historicism. Mention is made of Mendelssohn’s famous performance of Bach’s St. Matthew Passion on March 11, 1829, which sparked a renewed interest in Bach’s sacred vocal music. The chapter then gives an analysis of the music of the solo and choral angels in Mendelssohn’s oratorio *Elijah*. The portion of chapter four devoted to Elgar’s oratorio, *The Dream of Gerontius*, discusses the use of leitmotifs, Catholic chant quotations, and compares the music of the two angel characters in this work—the Guardian Angel and the Angel of the Agony.

Chapter Five contains a brief historical background for the climate of the twentieth century, mentioning the resurgence of angel interest, especially in the latter half of the century. Primary musical analyses in Chapter Five include the role of the angel Gabriel in Schoenberg’s *Die Jakobsleiter* and the Angel in Messiaen’s *Saint François D’Assise*. The section regarding *Die Jakobsleiter* centers on Schoenberg’s use of harmony, the technique of *Sprechstimme*, and possible examples of numerological symbolism. The end of the chapter discusses the role of the
Angel in *Saint François D’Assise*, focusing on Messiaen’s view of the Angel, his association between sound and color, the connection to birds, and instrumentation.

The final chapter compares the musical elements of specific angel roles throughout the past four hundred years, including harmony and key associations, tessitura and gender, descending/ascending motives, instrumentation, echoing, and numerological significance. The study concludes that the use of solo angel roles in vocal music reflects trends in society and religion.
Chapter II

The Baroque Era

The arts of the baroque era display a fascination with the spiritual, supernatural, and the forces of good against evil. Vast amounts of baroque visual art, architecture, literature, and music contain religious themes. Looking specifically at the fascination with the forces of good against evil, numerous pieces of artwork depict angels and demons. Famous literature of the time period includes themes about spiritual warfare such as John Milton’s epic poem, Paradise Lost, and John Bunyan’s Christian allegory, The Pilgrim’s Progress. Throughout Italy, France, and Germany a great amount of music also focused on the supernatural with angelic beings present in several composers’ sacred works. Some of the earliest vocal compositions from the baroque period that contain solo angel roles were written by composers such as Emilio de’ Cavalieri, Giacomo Carissimi, and Marc-Antoine Charpentier.

Vocal music from as early as the Middle Ages contains texts about angels, as seen in Hildegard von Bingen’s O gloriosissimi lux vivens angeli and O vos angeli. Composers began to include solo angel roles in their works around the same time as the development of monody. At the turn of the seventeenth century in Italy, a renewed interest in ancient Greek writing and the desire to find the true purpose of music ultimately created a new movement that combined speech and song. Seeking to recreate the expressiveness of ancient Greek music, the Cameratas of Florence developed the concept of a single vocal melodic line with instrumental accompaniment. Composers used this style of monodic recitative as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century with the creation of opera. It morphed into arioso, a combination of recitative and aria, and eventually evolved into the standard separation of the two. With the advent of solo roles in dramatic musical compositions, composers such as Cavalieri, Carissimi,
and Charpentier, began to include solo angel characters in their sacred works. Cavalieri, one of the primary composers in this movement, had a great role in the development of opera and oratorio. His *Rappresentatione di anima, et di corpo* (Play of Soul and of Body) is the first major musical work to contain a solo angel role.

Cavalieri’s *Rappresentatione* had its first performance in Rome in the oratory of the Chiesa Nuova in February 1600. This *drama allegorico*, or morality play, was used to instruct people who were deceived by the world and its apparent pleasures. Debate exists among scholars as to whether the work is an opera or oratorio, as well as if his was the first of either genre. Often recognized for being the earliest printed opera and the first printed score with a figured bass, *Rappresentatione* holds an important place in music history.\(^{28}\) The bulk of the work centers around the conflict between the forces of the world and of heaven, with the Angelo custode (Guardian Angel) disputing the lies of the allegorical character, Mondo (World), and attempting to convince Anima (Soul) to remain faithful to God. In addition to the Guardian Angel, a chorus of angels sings in Acts II and III. In addition to Cavalieri, Carissimi is another important baroque Italian composer who wrote several works with angel solo roles.

In the mid-seventeenth century, Carissimi wrote a prolific amount of sacred vocal music, including several works that contain solo angel roles. Considered the most famous composer of Latin oratorios during this time, he had a great influence not only in the development of the oratorio in Italy, but also in its expansion into Germany and France. By the 1660s in Italy, the term oratorio was generally recognized, although Carissimi’s works were not labeled as oratorios in his time.\(^{29}\) Carissimi included solo angel roles in several of his sacred works including *Historia di Ezechia, Judicum extremum, Historia di Abraham et Isaac*, and *Historia di

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\(^{28}\) Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, vol. 1, 80.

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 4.
Job. Some of the musical characteristics of his solo angel music would influence the angel music found in later composers’ works, including word painting and the use of the echo device between angels. Carissimi’s oratorios would also eventually have an influence on one of the most popular composers of oratorios, George Frideric Handel.

One of Carissimi’s most prominent pupils, Charpentier, is generally recognized for bringing the Italian oratorio to France and is the earliest-known French composer of oratorios. Charpentier did not classify any of his works as oratorios, but labeled them histoires, motets, cantica, dialogues, and meditations; however, most modern scholars generally classify them as oratorios because of their resemblance to Carissimi’s Latin oratorios. Histoires is the French plural term for historia, a musical biblical story; a motet, in its most basic form, is a sacred vocal composition; cantica, the plural form of canticum, in a broad sense translates as “songs;” dialogues, in this context, are works that present biblical and reflective texts in a dramatized form; and meditations are another form of motet. H. Wiley Hitchcock classifies the compositions that closely resemble Carissimi’s oratorios as ‘dramatic motets,’ of which the composer wrote thirty-five. Like Carissimi’s oratorios, these works have distinct characters, narrators, and dramatic action, but were written for use in church services as motets, not for oratory meetings. Like his teacher, Charpentier used solo angel roles in several of his compositions, including Extremum Dei judicium, In obitum augustissimae necnon piissimae Gallorum reginae lamentum, In resurrectione Domini Nostri Jesu Christi, Le sacrifice d'Abraham, In nativitatem Domini nostri Jesu Christi Canticum, Praelium Michaelis archangeli factum in coelo cum dracone, Un Oratorio de Noël, and Sur le naissance de notre Seigneur Jésus Christ.

31 Ibid., 7.
33 An oratory is a room designated for prayer, similar to a chapel.
The concept of the oratorio and Charpentier’s musical style reflect Carissimi’s compositional style, but his works display a fusion of Italian and French styles that show the influences of Charpentier’s generation. One particular characteristic that distinguishes Charpentier’s oratorios is the emphasis upon instrumental music. Often a trio-sonata ensemble of two violins and continuo will accompany the vocalist, with more prevalence than most seventeenth-century oratorios.35 The Air of the Angel in In Nativitatem Domini Nostri Jesu Christi Canticum displays this instrumentation. This particular air resembles the Italian characteristics of his teacher in its bel canto melody and imitation between the voice and the two violins.36 Charpentier also uses great amounts of dance-like meter and vocal and instrumental imitation in his angelic music, such as in the duets of the Angeli in Extremum Dei judicium. In this work, he uses trumpets that signify the biblical angel’s trumpet on the final Day of Judgment. During this time, Charpentier was essentially the only major French composer writing oratorios. Although French composers such as Jean Baptiste Lully, André Campra, and François Couperin wrote motets, Charpentier’s dramatic motets most closely resembled the Italian oratorio.

The German Historie

In Protestant Germany, the genres of opera and oratorio developed at a much slower rate than in France and Italy. The German oratorio began around the mid-seventeenth century, however the term oratorio (Oratorium) was not generally used until the early eighteenth century. At this time, the genre was becoming more prevalent in German concert life and Lutheran church services. Some compositions by German composer Heinrich Schütz have been labeled oratorios,

35 Ibid., 426.
including his Easter and Christmas “oratorios,” since they bear similarities to the Italian genre; however the composer classified them as *historiae*, since they were musical settings of biblical stories. The *historie* in the early Lutheran church was in its most basic sense a biblical story;\(^\text{37}\) however, by the late sixteenth century it emerged as a musical genre based on a biblical story, with its text taken from one or more of the four Gospels.\(^\text{38}\)

The most prominent difference between the *historie* and the oratorio is the *historie*’s use of strict quotation of the Bible. The *historie*, and Schütz’s Christmas and Easter *historiae* in particular, played an important part in paving the way for the development of the oratorio in Germany. In these works, Schütz introduced the dramatic elements of Italian music, especially in the style of recitative, which differed from the plainsong recitation tone of typical *historiae*. The two compositions that will be analyzed in further detail in this chapter are Schütz’s *Historia von der Geburt Jesu Christi*, also known as *Weihnachtshistorie*, and George Frideric Handel’s Easter oratorio, *La Resurrezione*. Both works contain solo angel roles that are more substantial than any of the aforementioned pieces.

**Heinrich Schütz’s *Weihnachtshistorie***

Schütz, one of the most important German composers in the baroque era, was largely responsible for the development of the oratorio in Germany. From 1609-1613 he studied with Giovanni Gabrieli in Venice and his music, particularly his *historiae*, display characteristics of Italian dramatic music. One of the Italian influences heard in his music is the dramatic recitative style, or *stile recitativo*; Schütz claimed that its use in his *Weihnachtshistorie*, was the first of its kind printed in Germany.\(^\text{39}\)

\(^{37}\) The *historie* is the German version of the Italian *historia*.


The declamatory rhythms of Schütz’s vocal lines closely follow the natural rhythms of the German language. Instead of being bound by regular metrical patterns, this music was made more expressive and dramatic in order to best emphasize the importance of speech. He often uses word painting and echo techniques, which will be studied in depth during the later analysis of the Angel’s arias in his *Weihnachtshistorie*. For Schütz, the text was of utmost importance and his harmonies often reflect the words, using chromaticism for expressive effect. An example of this occurs in the Evangelist’s text after the Angel’s message to Joseph in *Intermedium VII*, telling him to flee to Egypt. As the Evangelist sings of Herod’s decree to murder all babies two years of age and under, he speaks of a voice lamenting, weeping, and mourning. Schütz reflects this sorrow with increased dissonance and chromaticism (see example 2.1).


Schütz composed his *Weihnachtshistorie* relatively late in his life, at the age of seventy-five. The text is almost completely taken from the Biblical accounts in Luke 2:1-21 and Matthew 2:1-23, framed by a choral introduction and *Beschluss* (Conclusion), which includes a translation of the Christmas sequence *Grates nunc omnes* (Let us all now give thanks) by Johann Spangenberg. *Weihnachtshistorie* was probably first performed in Dresden in 1660, in a
Christmas service at the court chapel of Johann Georg II, Elector of Saxony. However, the work was not published until 1664 and was a partial publication, including only the Evangelist’s recitatives with their accompanying figured bass. Schütz included a list of his ten intermedia and their orchestration in this publication, but did not include any of the printed music.\(^{40}\) In 1908, the complete instrumental and vocal parts were found in a set of manuscripts at the University Library of Upsala, Sweden.\(^{41}\)

**General Organization**

Schütz’s *Weihnachtshistorie* is scored for choir in up to six parts (SSATTB) plus soloists who portray the characters of the Angel, Shepherds, Wise Men, High Priests and Scribes, and Herod.\(^{42}\) It contains a total of eight intermedia, framed by a choral Introduction and Conclusion. The Evangelist’s recitatives, included between each intermedium, give commentary and unify the text. The following chart gives the organization for the work, showing each section, its character or characters, and their message, and the orchestration that accompanies them (see table 2.1).

Schütz gives the Angel a major role in *Weihnachtshistorie*; it appears more than any of the other characters, giving important messages to the shepherds and to Joseph, the Father of Jesus. The Angel’s number of appearances, voice part, instrumentation, and metrical and harmonic characteristics carry significance and symbolism.

\(^{40}\) The term *intermedium* (pl. *intermedia*) refers to the separate scenes which include individual texts sung by soloists, ensembles, or the chorus.


\(^{42}\) The letters SATB here and throughout this chapter are abbreviations for the voice parts of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass.
The Angel has three appearances in *Weihnachtshistorie* with solos in the first, seventh, and eighth *intermedia*. The number three contains special significance in the music of angels from as early as the baroque period to the twentieth century. For the Jewish people, three represents the number of perfect completion. For Christians, the number three often symbolizes the divine perfection of the Trinity – God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Biblical angels also contain several instances of multiples of three. As described earlier in the introduction, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite’s angelic hierarchy is organized according to the angels’ closeness to
God in three sets of three. The Seraphim, the highest rank in the angelic hierarchy, are described as having six wings in Isaiah 6 and say continually, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD God Almighty.” Revelation 14:6-14 speaks of three angels who give messages to prepare the world for the second coming of Christ. Only three angels are named in the Protestant biblical canon: Gabriel, Michael, and Lucifer. In Schütz’s work, a possible correlation with the Angel’s music and the number three may be represented in the number of appearances, meter, and instrumentation.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, treble parts in Protestant church music were typically sung by boys or men using falsetto, so the role of the Angel in Schütz’s Weihnachtshistorie was most likely sung by a boy. In the large majority of works that contain angel roles, at least until the twentieth century, the role of the angel is often set for high voice, whether for boy soprano, castrato, or female soprano. In the Bible, little is said about the specific gender of angels; however, most references to angels are male, as the Hebrew word “mal’akh,” meaning “angel,” or “messenger,” is a masculine noun. Also, Michael and Gabriel, the two biblical angels who are named, are masculine names. Despite this fact, females often sing the roles of musical angels. The high tessitura may represent the creature’s dwelling in the heights of Heaven or perhaps composers used the soprano voice because of its purity that bears a similarity to the purity of an angel. Jean-Michel Vaccaro and Charles S. Fineman, in their analysis of the work, speak about the differences between the human characters and the angels, and also the differences between the human characters. The good characters (the Shepherds and the Magi) and the wicked characters (the High Priests and Herod) contrast in range as the good characters reside in a higher register and the wicked in a lower register. The authors give the general principle that high pitch equals whiteness and goodness, and low pitch equals blackness and

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wickedness. As Schütz set the music for the good humans in a higher register, he also gives the holy Angel a high tessitura.

In the Angel’s three *intermedia*, two *violette* accompany the character. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the term *violetta* commonly denoted the viola or small bass violin. The connection between characterization and instrumentation in this work is of particular interest. As seen in the above outline (see table 2.1), instruments typical for the characters in this work portray them—for example, pastoral recorders portray the shepherds, trumpets announce Herod, and alto and tenor trombones accompany the High Priests. In the Angel’s three appearances, two *violette* accompany the delicate character, creating a total of three voices, possibly another example of symbolism. Composers in past centuries commonly used either stringed instruments or the trumpet in conjunction with music representing or portraying angels. The trumpet often reflects angels’ destructive power, such as in the Last Judgment, and the stringed instruments represent the Divinity manifesting itself.

During the renaissance and baroque periods, many pieces of artwork display angels with stringed instruments. A famous example is Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio’s painting *The Rest during the Flight into Egypt* (c. 1599). Rosa Giorgi writes that in this painting, “The violin-playing angel is a double representation, being at once an apparition to Joseph and a symbol of the redemptive power of heavenly music” (see figure 2.1). Another famous painting displaying an angel with a stringed instrument is Guy François’s painting *Saint Cecilia* (c. 1613), in which a classical-looking angel is instructing Saint Cecilia in how to play the chitarrone, an early stringed instrument of the lute family (see figure 2.2).

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46 Ibid., 319.
The metric structure of the Angel’s three intermedia also centers around some form of triple meter, with the exception of a few short recitative sections. In the entire work, the Angel and the choir of angels are the only characters with music in triple meter, with the exception of ten measures in the Evangelist’s recitative in No. 16 and the final chorus, which speaks about praising God with the angels. Vaccaro and Fineman point out the difference in the metrical characteristics of the Angel and the chorus of angels, and the human characters of the Shepherds, Magi, High Priests, and Herod. The music of the angels resides in a ternary metrical structure throughout the work and the human characters communicate in a binary meter. As far back as the medieval era, theoreticians were connecting ternary musical characteristics with the perfection of the Holy Trinity. The Angel’s three intermedia also share the use of a two-note basso ostinato in triple meter, starting with the introduction to the Angel’s first appearance (see example 2.2).

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Howard Smither states, “This motive contributes to general structural unity, for it occurs in the first and in the last two *intermedia*, and it is of further interest as a musical description of cradle rocking: in Schütz’s heading for each of the Angel’s *intermedia*, he describes the number as a soprano solo ‘under which the Christ Child’s cradle is occasionally introduced.’”\(^{48}\)

Key/Modality

In Schütz’s vocal music, the music often reflects the text. The majority of this work centers around the key of F major, which may symbolize the pastoral nature of the story. Most modern scores of this work utilize the key of G major since the original range is too low for the modern violin. Schütz also uses unexpected chromaticism at times for dramatic effect, showing the importance of certain words. One example, stated earlier, is found in the Evangelist’s description of Rachel’s mourning and weeping for her children. The Angel’s text is primarily positive and largely diatonic, but one particular example of chromaticism occurs in Intermedium VII during his text regarding Herod’s search to find and kill the Christ child discussed below.

Intermedium I

The Angel’s first *intermedium*, the message to the shepherds, contains five distinct sections, making it the longest and most complex of the three *intermedia*. In the A section, the Angel sings, “Fürchtet euch nicht! Siehe, ich verkündige euch grosse Freude” (Fear not! Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy). As stated earlier, it begins with the rocking cradle *ostinato* in the bass line featuring descending half steps (see Example 2.2). Throughout the section, the two *violette* accompany the Angel, interweaving with each other and echoing the Angel’s melodic motives. The use of echo in heavenly music is common, which may be traced to Isaiah 6:3, where it states that the seraphim around God’s throne were calling to each other: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” Schütz’s use of echo may also have been an influence of the late sixteenth-century Italian polychoral music he experienced in his studies with Giovanni Gabrieli in Venice. During the early seventeenth

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century the echo device in European music and literature was a popular means of evoking wonder or accessing another world. Monteverdi used heavenly echoes, displayed in his motets *Duo Seraphim*, which includes angelic text from Isaiah 6, and *Audi coelom*, where heaven echoes answers in response to an invocation from earth. Schütz’s studies with Gabrieli, and possibly Monteverdi, likely influenced his decision to use echoing as part of the Angel’s music. The use of three voices – the voice and two *violette* – may be another example of numerical symbolism with the number three.

Examples of word painting appear in the melody of *Intermedium I*, which contains continual descending motives and phrases, possibly symbolizing the Angel’s, or Christ’s, descent to earth. Schütz often emphasizes the most important words by elongating them or setting them in a high part of the range. For example, in the A section (mm. 1-30), the two instances of the word *siehe* (behold) have the longest and highest notes of the section (see example 2.3).

Example 2.3. Heinrich Schütz, *Weihnachtshistorie*, SWV 435, Intermedium I, mm. 7-20: two instances of the word *siehe* (behold) given elongation and a high tessitura.
The words *grosse, grosse Freude* (great, great joy) also receive special emphasis as the phrase is repeated five times, in each case starting on the highest note of the 5-note descending phrase. With the exception of a temporary shift to G minor, the A section centers around and ends in F major.

In the B section of *Intermedium I* (mm. 31-45), the Angel states, “Freude die allem Volk widerfahren wird, ich verkündige euch grosse Freude” (Joy which shall be to all people, I bring you good tidings of great joy). This section is significantly shorter than the previous one, but contains similar elements, such as the use of the rocking cradle ostinato and the descending five-note motive on the words *grosse Freude*. Schütz gives special emphasis to the word *allem* (all) by setting it with a ten-note melisma, emphasizing that this joy is for all people (see example 2.4).

Example 2.4. Heinrich Schütz, *Weihnachtshistorie*, SWV 435, Intermedium I, mm. 29-33: ten-note melisma on word *allem* (all).

The C section (mm. 46-67) contains the Angel’s text “Denn euch ist heute der Heiland geboren, welcher ist Christus, Christus der Herr in der Stadt David, ich verkündige euch grosse Freude” (For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. I bring you tidings of great joy). The melody at the beginning of this section contains a perfect fifth and perfect fourths, resembling a trumpet fanfare that would announce someone’s arrival. Unlike the other sections that mostly rest in F major, Schütz uses more chromaticism in this section, possibly because this text includes the most exciting part of the message. The highest
note of the entire *intermedium* occurs in this section, with the Angel singing a G5 at the beginning of each statement of *grosse, grosse Freude*.

In the D section (mm. 68-87), the Angel exclaims, “Und dies habt zum Zeichen, ihr werdet finden das Kind in Windeln gewickelt und in einer Krippe liegen. Ich verkündige euch grosse Freude” (And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. I bring you good tidings of great joy). This section contains a sparser accompaniment than in previous sections, beginning with a recititative-like opening. The accompaniment becomes fuller with the reappearance of the words *Ich verkündige euch grosse Freude*. The harmony begins in F major like the others, but modulates briefly to D minor and ends on a D major chord.

The last section of *Intermedium I* (mm. 88-108) contains the Angel’s words “Ihr werdet finden das Kind in Windeln gewickelt und in einer Krippe liegen” (Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger). This section features the widest range, which occurs in just one measure (see example 2.5).


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\text{Example 2.5. Heinrich Schütz, *Weihnachtshistorie*, SWV 435, Intermedium I, mm. 92-99: wide vocal range in m. 99.}
\]

The phrase *und in einer Krippe liegen* features a descending line with a steep descent, possibly symbolizing Christ’s descent to the lowly manger on earth. Unlike the other four sections, this section begins on a chord other than the tonic, but the ending returns to the home key of F major and the rocking cradle ostinato reappears. It is interesting to note that this section is the only one
that does not end with the text *Ich verkündige euch grosse Freude*, arguably the most important words in the *intermedium*, considering the number of times the phrase is repeated.

*After Intermedium I*, the Evangelist gives the brief statement, “Und alsbald war da bei dem Engel die Menge der himmlischen Heerschaaren, die lobten Gott und sprachen” (And suddenly, there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly Hosts, praising God and saying). *Intermedium II* follows in the form of an angelic choir singing, “Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe, und Friede auf Erden und den Menschen ein Wohlgefallen” (Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men). Imitation abounds between the six voices of the choir, symbolizing heavenly echoes, bearing similarity to a Gabrieli polychoral motet. Like the Angel’s *intermedia*, Schütz sets the chorus in triple meter and writes it for six voices, two violins, and an optional complement of viols doubling the voices. Some editions show only first and second violins and the bassoon accompanying the chorus. Vaccaro and Fineman state that this use of three groups of three voices: instrumental voices (1\textsuperscript{st}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} violin, bassoon); high voices (1\textsuperscript{st}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} soprano, alto); and low voices (1\textsuperscript{st}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} tenor, bass) shows ternary symbolism.\textsuperscript{50} The importance of the number three and multiples of three appears again, as well as the use of stringed accompaniment for angelic music. Like this work, many compositions containing solo angel roles feature an angelic chorus directly following the Angel’s aria.

**Intermedium VII**

*Intermedium VII* contains the Angel’s message to Joseph: “Stehe auf, Joseph. Stehe auf und nimm das Kindlein und seine Mutter zu dir, und fleuch in Egyptenland, und bleibe allda, bis ich dir sage, denn es ist vorhanden, dass Herodes das Kindlein suche, dasselbe umzubringen” (Arise, Joseph. Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him). Like

\textsuperscript{50} Vaccaro and Fineman, “Metrical Symbolism in Schütz’ *Historia der Geburt Jesu Christi,*” 228.
Intermedium I, it features the rocking cradle ostinato in the bass line, as well as two accompanying violette. This intermedium is much more declamatory in nature, possibly due to the urgency of the message. The meter changes often between triple and common time, giving it a more unstable feeling. During this period it was not uncommon for composers to change quickly from recitative to arioso to aria, and Schütz’s focus on the expressiveness of words makes the text even more realistic and dramatic.

Although Intermedium VII begins and ends in F major, the harmony is more unstable than in Intermedium I. The harmony changes keys for a long period of time and uses more chromaticism in the melody, possibly because of the unsettling nature of the words. He includes several examples of word painting, including a four-measure virtuosic melisma to depict the word fleuch, meaning “flee” or “escape” (see example 2.6). This melisma contains a range of a major tenth (Eb4-G5), as well as a mostly ascending contour. Angel music commonly includes the use of ascending runs and motives, possibly symbolizing the Angel’s brilliance, height in heaven, or its exciting message. Another example of word painting is found in the many repetitions of Stehe auf (Get up) that begin in the low part of the range and rise higher, while also increasing the intervals between the two words. This most likely symbolizes the increase in urgency of the Angel’s exclamation.

Example 2.6. Heinrich Schütz, Weihnachtshistorie, SWV 435, Intermedium VII, mm. 21-27: virtuosic melisma on the word fleuch (flee).
Intermedium VIII

In Intermedium VIII, the final intermedium of the work, the Angel bears the message to Joseph: “Stehe auf, Joseph, und nimm das Kindlein und seine Mutter zu dir, und zech hin in das Land Israel, sie sind gestorben, die dem Kinden nach dem Leben stunden” (Arise, Joseph, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child’s life). This intermedium begins like the first, in triple meter with the rocking cradle ostinato in the bass line. The instrumentation contains two violette and, as in the first, they imitate and echo each other’s motives, as well as the vocal line. In general, this intermedium has more motion than the first, with its running lines in the violetta parts and an active vocal line. This rhythmic motion reflects the text that those seeking to kill Jesus have been put to death.

Schütz also shows excitement in the music by using general upward motion, in both the melody and harmony. The first section of the intermedium (mm. 1-25), consists of several repetitions of the words Stehe auf, Joseph and contains a mostly major modality. It follows an A-B-A-B pattern, with the second A-B portion modulating upward by a whole step. The melody of the first section also contains mostly ascending intervals, giving a feeling of excitement and reflecting the text that says, “arise” (see example 2.7).

Example 2.7. Heinrich Schütz, Weihnachtshistorie, SWV 435, Intermedium VIII, mm. 5-10: ascending melody on words stehe auf (arise).
The second part of the intermedium reflects its text that those who sought the child’s life are dead. This section passes through the key of G minor and features mostly descending motion. The character changes in the final five measures, as the music passes through B-flat major and ultimately ends in the work’s central tonality of F major.

Conclusion

After the Angel’s final intermedium and a recitative sung by the Evangelist, the work concludes with a four-part chorus Beschluß (Conclusion) in alternating meters of 3/8 and 3/4. As mentioned before, throughout the work Schütz uses triple meter only for the music of the Angel and the chorus of angels with the exception of a brief section of the Evangelist’s recitative and the final chorus. Although the choral conclusion is not officially sung by a chorus of angels, the text states, “Den sollen wir alle mit seinen Engeln loben mit Schalle singen: Preis sei Gott in der Höhe” (Him shall we all loudly praise with his angels: Praised be God in the highest). This final reference to angels underscores their importance to Schütz in his Weihnachtshistorie.

George Frideric Handel’s La Resurrezione

George Frideric Handel, one of the most famous German composers to follow Schütz, had an enormous influence on the development of oratorio. Growing up in Germany, the German Passion and Historie had an influence on Handel, as well as Italian and Latin oratorios by composers such as Carissimi. From approximately 1706 to 1711, Handel spent time in Italy and composed several works including two Italian oratorios. He composed his second oratorio, La Resurrezione, for Francesco Maria Ruspoli, one of the most influential men in Rome and a patron of the arts. La Resurrezione had its first performance in Rome at the Bonelli palace, on Easter Sunday April 8, 1708. This work, his only sacred Italian oratorio, exemplifies the early
eighteenth-century genre *oratorio volgare*. The libretto by Carlo Sigismondo Capece recounts the events between and during Good Friday and Easter Sunday, containing two simultaneous plots, which alternate between scenes on the earth and in the supernatural realms. The characters in this oratorio are: Angelo (Angel), San Giovanni Evangelista (Saint John the Evangelist), Santa Maria Maddalena (Saint Mary Magdalene), Santa Maria Cleofe (Saint Mary of Cleopas), and Lucifero (Lucifer).

Although unstaged, the premiere of *La Resurrezione* contained musical and dramatic elements very similar to the Italian opera. A large hall in the Bonelli palace was converted into a richly ornamented theater with a proscenium-framed and curtained stage, along with elaborate painted backdrops illustrating scenes from the story. Even early in his career, Handel had a special flair for dramatic effect, displayed in the characterizations in this oratorio and in its dramatic opening. He originally planned to begin the work with the music of Lucifer, but decided that the opening would place too much emphasis on evil. At the last minute, he modified the order, allowing the overture to lead directly into the Angel’s first aria, which speaks of God’s power to overcome evil.

At this time orchestras were generally small; an orchestra for an oratorio at the Ruspoli palace during this time typically contained thirteen to sixteen players, the score for *La Resurrezione*, however, called for a massive orchestra of at least forty-five players. The orchestra consisted of 21 violins, 4 violettas, 5 cellos, 5 double basses, 2 trumpets, 4 oboes, and a trombone. Handel’s score also includes music for a flute and two recorders, bassoon, and a viola.

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51 Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, vol. 1, 265. The *oratorio volgare* is an oratorio in the Italian language.
52 Ibid., 344.
53 Ibid., 265.
Handel used various combinations of solo instruments that differed from other Roman oratorios during this time. Records show that a trombone-player was paid for his services, although Handel does not include a trombone part in the score. Trombone parts were rare during this time, but the trombone may have doubled the bass part of the basso continuo during Lucifer’s arias, since characters from the underworld were often accompanied by trombones.

In this oratorio, the Angel serves as a messenger to the women, telling them that Christ has risen from the dead, but also celebrating Christ’s victory and calling for the blessed souls to join in the celebration. Throughout the oratorio the Angel serves as the voice of God and often battles with Lucifer. The oratorio begins during the second night after the crucifixion with the Angel’s dramatic aria as he stands at the gates of hell, demanding admittance for Christ.

“Disserratevi, o porte d’Averno”

Directly following the opening Sonata, or Overture, the Angel sings the opening aria “Disserratevi, oh porte d’averno” (Be unbarred, ye gates of Avernus). As displayed in the main autograph, Handel originally began the work with a secco recitative, aria, and accompagnato for Lucifer, however this seemed to overshadow the oratorio’s theme of good conquering evil and God raising Christ from the dead. As noted earlier, the Angel’s triumphant opening aria also serves to give the work more of a dramatic flair. A literal translation of the aria’s lyrics read: Be unbarred, ye gates of Avernus, and let your dismal darkness be dispelled by the radiance of the eternal God! Yield, dread gates, yield to the King of Glory, for yours is the first submission to

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57 George Frideric Handel. *La Resurrezione* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2011): VII.
His victorious might!\textsuperscript{58} This is one of only three arias in the work that contain *tromba*, or trumpets. Angels are often associated with trumpets, since the instrument signifies the power of God, such as destructive power in the Final Judgment. In this case, the trumpets in the Angel’s aria also signify the power of Jesus Christ over Lucifer and the underworld.

Handel often uses instances of word painting within the recitatives and arias of this work. In this opening aria, the home key is D major, one of the only two practical keys for trumpets built during this time. In baroque symbolism and association regarding keys, C major and D major were typically used to display power and martial strength.\textsuperscript{59} The range spans from D\textsubscript{4} – B\textsubscript{5} and the aria contains many long melismas. Handel wrote the part of the Angel for a castrato and the character’s virtuosic melody, with its extreme range and long phrases, substantiate his decision.\textsuperscript{60} Due to the castrato’s larger than normal chest and child-size vocal folds, he had unrivalled breath capacity, vocal agility, and a brilliant tone. Handel’s use of a castrato allowed the music of the Angel to be more powerful and virtuosic. Some of the Angel’s melismas span up to nine measures with basically no opportunity to breathe. The Angel’s melismas occur on important words such as *eterno* (eternal) and *lampi* (radiance) (see example 2.8). In mm. 15-16, the melody descends as the Angel is talking about the underworld: “Be unbarred, ye gates of Avernus” (see example 2.9). In ancient Roman society, Avernus was believed to be the entrance to the underworld, and later became another name for the underworld. Several times the Angel sings the phrase *tutto in lampi si sciolga l’orrore*! (By the radiance of the eternal God!) The Italian word *lampi* can be translated literally as a flash of lightning; this is one of the only places that the trumpets play during the Angel’s singing, while he sustains a long high note. This gives

\textsuperscript{58} The translations for *La Resurrezione* are from: Anthony Hicks and Avril Bardoni, Liner Notes, *La Resurrezione*, Ton Koopman and The Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, Erato 0630-17767-2, 1997, compact disc.

\textsuperscript{59} Dean, *Handel’s Dramatic Oratorios and Masques*, 60.

\textsuperscript{60} The castrato was a male soprano or contralto whose voice was preserved by castration before puberty.
a taste of God’s awesome power, as seen in the biblical passage of Revelation 4, which describes
the flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder resounding from God’s throne.

Example 2.8. George Frideric Handel, *La Resurrezione*, HWV 47, Part One, no. 1, mm. 22-31:
melisma on the word *eterno* (eternal).

Example 2.9. George Frideric Handel, *La Resurrezione*, HWV 47, Part One, no. 1, mm. 15-16:
descending melody on *Disserratevi, oh porte d’averno* (Be unbarred, ye gates of Avernus).

The B section (mm. 83-102) features the oboe, as the Angel sings, “Cedete, orride porte,
cedete al Re di Gloria, che della sua vittoria voi siete il primo onor” (Yield, dread gates, yield to
the King of Glory, for yours is the first submission to His victorious might!) The instrument
often plays in parallel thirds or sixths with the voice, possibly symbolizing the sweetness that
comes with yielding to the King of Glory. Johann Sebastian Bach often used parallel thirds and
sixths in his music representing heaven. The Sanctus of the B Minor Mass includes the text of
the seraphim’s song around God’s throne as taken from Isaiah 6:3: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God
of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory.” In this movement, and in his Christmas
cantatas, Bach writes vocal and instrumental parts filled with parallel thirds and sixths.61 Parallel
thirds and sixths can also symbolize two voices or characters being in synchrony, so to yield in
this way could mean joining together. Many composers have used this convention, including the

(Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2011), 86.
classical composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. William Kinderman suggests that Mozart used parallel thirds and sixths to express the tenderness of love, such as in his famous duet, “Là ci darem la mano” (There we’ll hold hands), from the opera *Don Giovanni*. Mozart waited to have the characters sing in parallel thirds until the final section when Zerlina has finally succumbed to Giovanni’s advances. In his use of parallel thirds and sixths, Handel may be musically representing submission to God.

“D’amor fu consiglio”

After a short recitative dialogue with Lucifer, the Angel sings the aria “D’amor fu consiglio” (By love’s inspiration). The Angel explains to Lucifer that the Son paid to the Father the price of mortal sin, restoring to man the life he forfeited by tasting of the apple in the Garden of Eden. Handel set this aria as a sarabande in triple meter. The sarabande, a dance form with accents on beats one and two, might symbolize dragging steps, representing Christ’s hesitation or the challenge that came with his sacrifice (see example 2.10).

Example 2.10. George Frideric Handel, *La Resurrezione*, HWV 47, Part One, no. 5, mm. 1-5: sarabande rhythm in “D’amor fu consiglio.”

Like the aria “Dis serratevi, o porte d’Averno,” it contains a wide range spanning from D4 to Bb5, and the angular melody, with its wide leaps and dissonant intervals, possibly symbolizes Christ’s descent to Hell and ascent to Heaven. The initial dissonant interval of a descending

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63 The sarabande, a dance form originating in Latin America and Spain, became a popular instrumental dance in the baroque period; it was often included in instrumental suites.
minor seventh shows the painful sacrifice Christ made by coming to earth. Handel also depicts pain or grief in this aria by using “sigh motives” in the vocal line, which consist of two-note descending stepwise figures that often have a dissonance on the first note.

The idea of grief is also evident with the use of a minor modality. The large majority of angel arias are in a major key since their messages are generally joyful; however, the minor mode is typical for angels’ texts about evil or sorrowful topics. An additional feature of this aria includes the use of a solo violin that intertwines with and echoes the vocal line. As mentioned in the previous section about Schütz, stringed instruments are commonly associated with angels, as well as the use of echoing; both were often used to evoke heavenly music.

“Risorga il mondo”

In the Second Part of La Resurrezione the Angel sings two arias. Handel sets the first aria, “Risorga il mondo lieto e giocondo” (Let all the world arise and rejoice), as a minuet in the meter of a moderate 3/8. This aria is the only place in the score that includes the bassoon. It mostly reinforces the bass line, but also plays with the oboes in places where there is no continuo. Instances of word painting abound in this aria, as seen in the use of woodwind instruments in the pastoral B section (mm. 60-85). The Angel sings “Il Ciel festeggi, il suol verdeggi, scherzino, ridano, l’aure con l’onde, l’erbe coi fior” (Be jubilant, ye heavens, flourish, o earth, play and smile, ye breezes, with the waves, ye grasses with the flowers). This section features the oboes and bassoon, as the voice, strings, and woodwinds playfully toss motives back and forth. Imitation occurs several times throughout this section, especially during the text scherzino, ridano, l’aure con l’onde (play and smile, ye breezes, with the waves), in which the music literally depicts the joking light breezes playing with the waves, and grasses with the flowers. During the B section, the da-capo aria modulates from G major to the relative E minor,
and returns to the tonic G major key. In the association with keys during the time period, G major is often an open-air pastoral key, used for pictorial scenes showing man and nature in happy communion.64

The Angel’s following recitative “Di rabbia indarno freme coi mostri suoi l’incatenato Averno” (In vain doth fettered Hell with all its monsters rage) shows a complete mood change from the previous aria. In contrast with the world rejoicing and the breezes playing with the waves, the Angel now sings “Di rabbia indarno freme coi mostri suoi l’incatenato Averno: L’Odio…La Crudeltà…L’Invidia…L’Empietà…” (In vain doth fettered Hell with all its monsters rage: Hatred…Cruelty…Envy…Impiety…) As the Angel describes Hell’s monsters, Handel’s music reflects the text with a disjunct, declamatory melody and rapid figurations in the strings. Word painting occurs in mm. 7-8 with a descending sigh figure during the word piange (weep). Just before the descent in m. 8, Handel uses chromaticism to highlight the pain of the word by suspending the E of the vocal line against a B dominant seventh chord, before resolving to D-sharp (see Example 2.11). He also uses word painting in mm. 14-15, where the voice vacillates rapidly between pitches on the word vacillante (vacillating) (see example 2.12).

Example 2.11. George Frideric Handel, La Resurrezione, HWV 47, Part Two, no. 19, mm. 7-8: descending figure on the word piange (weep).

64 Dean, Handel’s Dramatic Oratorios and Masques, 60.

**Duro è il cimento – Impedirlo saprò**

In a later duet with Lucifer and the Angel, “Duro è il cimento – Impedirlo saprò” (Thy task will be hard – I can prevent that), the two characters have contrasting musical characteristics that reflect their dispositions. Lucifer, with his short notes and declamatory melody, claims that he will stop the Resurrection, but the Angel, with his extended notes and smooth melody, states that Lucifer’s task will be hard. Duets in Italian settings from 1707-10 are rather rare during this time; typical structures include mostly secco recitative and da capo aria, but there are few duets, trios, or ensembles. Handel includes this duet, which is the last confrontation between the two opposing characters, for a special reason – to highlight the oratorio’s main theme of the battle between good and evil, with good ultimately the winner.

**Se per colpa di donna infelice**

In Part II, Scene 4, after a recitative telling Cleofe and Maddalena that Jesus has risen from the dead, the Angel sings the aria “Se per colpa di donna infelice” (As through the fault of an unhappy woman). The text states, “Se per colpa di donna infelice all’uomo nel seno il crudo veleno la morte sgorgò, dian le donne la nuova felice” (As through the fault of an unhappy woman death discharged its bitter poison into the breast of man, then let women bear the joyful news that He who died and rose again has thereby vanquished death, rekindled life). The

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65 Dean, *Handel’s Dramatic Oratorios and Masques*, 16.
modality of C minor reflects the first section of the text, as it speaks about death discharging its bitter poison. The harmony shifts to B-flat major when the Angel sings about the women bearing the joyful news. Symbolic melismas occur on important words such as *sgorgò*, which literally means to “gush” or “flow.” As seen in mm. 3-4 (and 9-10), these melismas symbolizing the discharge of poison are basically descending lines (see example 2.13). Mm. 17-18 contain a similar melisma on the word *avvivò*, which literally means to “animate” or “give life.” The aria is a stark contrast to the triumphant opening aria with its intimate nature and sparse continuo accompaniment until the addition of the violins playing in unison during the final ritornello. It is interesting that even with the triumphant ending of good over evil, Handel gave the Angel a quiet, intimate aria for his last appearance.

Example 2.13. George Frideric Handel, *La Resurrezione*, HWV 47, Part Two, no. 24, mm. 3-5: melisma on the word *sgorgò* (gush/flow).

![Example 2.13](image)

Although *La Resurrezione* was well-received, no records are found showing any other performances during Handel’s lifetime or for more than two centuries afterwards. The work has been revived to some extent within the twentieth and twenty-first centuries because of a renewed interest in early music, however it is still relatively unknown. Though he composed many operas and oratorios, Handel included angel roles in only two other works, the oratorios *Joshua* and *Jephtha*, which were both written relatively late in his life. In the latter, the librettist Thomas Morell modified the biblical story of Jephtha in several ways, including the addition of a minor
angel role. In both of these oratorios, the angel plays only a minor role; in *Joshua*, the Angel sings only one recitative, and in *Jephtha*, the Angel sings a recitative and aria. In addition to Handel, other baroque composers included angels in their compositions, such as his contemporary, Johann Sebastian Bach. In the hundreds of Bach’s sacred vocal works, including his religious cantatas, passions, motets, and chorales, I have found several mentions of angels, but only one small solo angel role in his *Weihnachts-Oratorium* (*Christmas Oratorio*).

**Johann Sebastian Bach**

Bach composed for choirs of angels and set music to texts about angels, but wrote only small angel solo role, consisting of only a seven-measure recitative, “Fürchtet euch nicht”, found in Part II of his *Christmas Oratorio*. In this setting, the Angel does not even finish its biblical text since Bach gives the rest of the message to the Evangelist, sung by a tenor. Although the role of the Angel in Bach’s *Christmas Oratorio* is very minor, several instances of angels and angelic texts can be found in Bach’s music, including four cantatas for the feast of St. Michael and All Angels, an important festival in the Lutheran calendar. These cantatas center around angels’ protection over mankind, but do not include any solo angel roles and any of the texts related to angels are either narrative or choral. Angelic musical characteristics as previously discussed also appear in Bach’s vocal and instrumental music regarding angels. In the Gloria of the B Minor Mass, Bach uses majestic trumpets and high vocal parts to represent the angels singing at Christ’s birth, “Glory to God in the highest.” The first section, a triple-metered dance, changes to common time when the topic shifts to earth and the angels sing, “et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis” (and on earth, peace, good will toward men).67

An example of angelic musical symbolism in one of Bach’s organ works is found in the opening variation of his Canonic Variations on *Vom Himmel hoch da komm’ ich her* (From

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Heaven above to Earth I come) (BWV 769a/769). The text is taken from Martin Luther’s Christmas hymn with several stanzas of text describing the angels’ message about Christ’s birth. Here Bach uses a descending line for the opening motive, which symbolizes the descending gift from heaven as the angel brings his message to earth. This variation also includes running sixteenth-note scales, symbolizing the ascending and descending angels. Philipp Spitta describes it best: “These partitas [variations] are full of passionate vitality and poetical feeling. The heavenly hosts soar up and down, their lovely song sounding out over the cradle of the Infant Christ, while the multitude of the redeemed ‘join the sweet song with joyful hearts.’”68

One last example, found in the Sanctus of the B Minor Mass, includes the text of the seraphim’s song around God’s throne as taken from Isaiah 6:3: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory.” In this movement, and in his Christmas cantatas, Bach writes vocal and instrumental parts filled with parallel thirds and sixths.69 The feeling of sweetness resides in these harmonies, which may symbolize the comfort and love of heaven. Bach also extends the harmony in the Sanctus to six vocal parts, possibly reflecting the biblical text of the six-winged Seraphims singing this text from Isaiah 6. The biblical passage also states that the angels cried to one another, which is reflected in the passages where the upper and lower voices are echoing each other. His use of instrumentation in the movement depicts God’s throne with the blare of trumpets and thunder of drums.70

Though Bach composed only one very small angel solo role, the music of angels abounds in his vocal and instrumental music. Part of the reason for the lack of angel solo roles in Bach’s music may be partly due to the fact that, unlike Handel, Bach is not a dramatist and does not

69 Leahy, J. S. Bach’s “Leipzig” Chorale Preludes: Music, Text, Theology, 86.
include many specific character roles within his vocal works. The lack of solo roles may also be
due to Bach’s close association with the Lutheran Church and the fear of elevating angels to an
inappropriate level.

**Religious and Societal Influences on the Use of Angels in Music**

The Reformation (1517-1648) and Catholic Counter-Reformation (1545-1648) greatly
impacted the arts, including society’s views about angels. Martin Luther, the spearhead of the
Reformation movement, believed in the existence of both good and evil angels and made many
statements regarding their existence and duties, including general protection and leadership
through the shadows of death.\(^1\)

Although Martin Luther believed wholeheartedly in angels, he
criticized the Roman Catholic practice of artwork depicting saints and angels, which erred on the
side of idolatry. During the Reformation in the sixteenth century, many zealous Protestants
rejected the use of artwork in churches and destroyed painted and sculpted images, severely
reducing the amount of religious art in heavily Protestant countries. They claimed the Catholic
Church had abused the use of these images, and that the money that was contributed to their
creation would provide spiritual benefits and material blessings for the donors.\(^2\)

Some in the
Catholic Church viewed the images as holy in themselves, so the Protestants sought to end this
idolatry by destroying the images altogether. David Albert Jones states:

> The Protestant Reformers were to a greater or lesser extent suspicious of the cult of
angels and saints and the use of religious images. They favoured a simpler form of
religion focused on the Bible and on the person of Jesus. In this context, art and painting
did not die out but looked to more secular and domestic themes. Artists in Protestant
lands typically painted portraits for private homes rather than religious images for
churches, and there was a decline in the depiction of angels.”\(^3\)

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The amount of angels and demons in European architecture, artwork, literature, and music during the baroque era reflects the general public’s interest in the spiritual and supernatural. However, the Enlightenment movement that began to spread across Europe altered society and religion, affecting the amount of angelic beings used in the arts. Although the amount of sacred vocal compositions generally declined during the Enlightenment, Haydn’s oratorio, *The Creation*, is one of the masterpieces from this period that has stood the test of time. This work will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter regarding angel solo roles in the classical era.
Chapter III

The Classical Era

The baroque era witnessed a time of religious renewal, inspiring the appearance of a large number of sacred works in the arts. In the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many in western European society began to question traditional religious beliefs in the search for rational and scientific thought. The number of sacred vocal works composed during the classical era (c. 1750-1825) suffered an overall decline after Handel’s later oratorios written during the mid-eighteenth century. The Enlightenment movement that swept across Europe during this time greatly affected music, as its rational, secular ideals and aversion to traditional religion caused a general decrease in religious musical compositions.

In its early years, Enlightenment thought was largely held by the intellectual elite, but by the late eighteenth century this secularization of thought and behavior crept into a larger segment of the population. Howard Smither states that secularization’s “social roots are found in the ever-growing industrialization and urbanization of nineteenth-century society, which eroded religious belief and church attendance, particularly in Protestant Germany.”

The German oratorio had mostly moved from the church to the concert hall, the principal venue for art music, and society appreciated oratorios more for the artistic content than for spiritual edification. Franz Joseph Haydn’s oratorio, Die Schöpfung (The Creation, 1796-98), was largely popular because of its “rationalistic, humanistic, naturalistic, and optimistic approach to the creation,” which espoused Enlightenment ideals and caused little offense to Christians in either Austria or England.

Although the number of works containing angel solo roles decreased, Haydn’s Creation contains

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75 Temperley, Haydn: The Creation, 18.
three angel soloists and a chorus representing the Heavenly Hosts. Because of the large amount
of angel involvement in the oratorio, it will be the primary focus of this chapter.

Franz Joseph Haydn’s *The Creation*

Although Haydn was primarily a composer of symphonies, string quartets, and keyboard
sonatas, he also wrote sacred vocal works such as *Il ritorno di Tobia* (1775) and *The Seven Last
Words of Christ* (1787). These two oratorios exemplify the late eighteenth-century Italian
oratorio, but his later choral works would be greatly influenced by his time in London in the
1790s. Haydn traveled to London in 1791-92 and 1794-95 and experienced Handel’s oratorios
firsthand, witnessing their broad appeal to a large section of the population. It was specifically at
the 1791 Handel Festival at Westminster Abbey, that Haydn heard oratorios such as *Israel in
Egypt, Messiah*, and others, and acknowledged the British veneration for Handel and his music.\(^76\)

According to one of his early biographers, Haydn “confessed…that when he heard the music of
Hendl [sic] in London, he was struck as if he had been put back to the beginning of his studies
and had known nothing up to that moment. He meditated on every note and drew from those
most learned scores the essence of true musical grandeur.”\(^77\) Inspired to write another oratorio,
Haydn returned from London in 1795 with the anonymous libretto of *The Creation*, and began
composing the work in 1796. In 1797, at sixty-five years old, he finished the composition that
would become one of his most famous works.

The libretto of *The Creation* was originally written for Handel at least half a century
earlier, but its specific origin is unknown. Baron Gottfried van Swieten translated the text into
German for Haydn, who set it first in German and later to Swieten’s English translation from the

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German. Haydn intended to give equal standing to both texts and the work was given the distinction of being the first to be published with a bilingual text.\textsuperscript{78} The author’s sources include the biblical account of the creation from Genesis 1, paraphrased text from John Milton’s epic poem \textit{Paradise Lost} (1674 revised edition), and selected texts from the biblical book of Psalms, particularly Psalms 19 and 145.\textsuperscript{79} The pictorial quality of the texts made it easy for Haydn to use many instances of imagery and text painting in the music. The work’s word painting, although criticized during the romantic period as being frivolous and naïve, made it lovable to audiences then and now. The earliest performances of \textit{The Creation} in 1798 were exclusive and semi-private, held at the Palais Schwarzenberg, but the first public performance took place at the Burgtheater in Vienna on March 19, 1799.\textsuperscript{80} \textit{The Creation} obtained instant popularity on a pan-European scale and still remains one of Haydn’s most-performed works.

The oratorio divides into three parts: Part I celebrates the creation of light, Earth, heavenly bodies, water, weather, and plant life; Part II celebrates the creation of sea creatures, birds, animals, and man; and Part III is set in the Garden of Eden in the hours before the Fall of Man. Haydn did not include the Fall, but some scholars suggest that he alludes to it by the descent of the central tonality from C major in Parts I and II to B-flat major in Part III. The exclusion of the Fall of Man garnered some criticism, but Haydn intended for the work to uplift its listeners. In response to a letter expressing admiration for the work, he stated “A secret voice whispered to me: ‘There are in this world so few happy and contented people; sorrow and grief follow them everywhere; perhaps your labour will become a source in which the man bowed

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Temperley2009} Temperley, \textit{Haydn: The Creation}, 35.
\end{thebibliography}
down by care, or burdened with business matters, will for a while find peace and rest.”

The work follows the general pattern of a recitative containing text from Genesis; an aria with paraphrased text from \textit{Paradise Lost}; and a choral psalm of praise. Parts I and II contain this general pattern of scripture-commentary-praise.\footnote{Franz Joseph Haydn, Letter to Jean Philipp Krüger (22 September 1802), quoted in Nicholas Temperley, \textit{Haydn: The Creation} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 17.}

\textbf{Angels in The Creation}

\textit{The Creation} features five solo roles, including three archangels: Gabriel (a soprano, doubling as Eve in Part III), Uriel (a tenor), and Raphael (a bass, doubling as Adam in Part III).\footnote{Schenbeck, \textit{Joseph Haydn and the Classical Choral Tradition}, 301.} The end of the oratorio calls for an SATB solo quartet to sing with the choral finale. Some ensembles use five soloists, but Haydn’s performances typically only included three.\footnote{Haydn also used the angel Raphael (“Raffaelle”) in a previous oratorio, \textit{Il ritorno di Tobia}, which is derived from the biblical Book of Tobit. Although the Catholic Church considers this book part of their biblical canon, the Protestant Church does not.} Throughout Parts I and II, the three angel soloists narrate and comment on the creation of the world, but in Part III, Haydn turns from angels to mortals and includes an extended love duet between Adam and Eve. In Parts I and II, the chorus represents the Heavenly Hosts as it sings psalms of praise to God at the end of the Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Days of the Creation, and at the conclusion.\footnote{The letters SATB here and throughout this chapter are abbreviations for the voice parts of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. Temperley, \textit{Haydn: The Creation}, 110.} An example of Handel’s influence on Haydn may be found here, as Handel also often gave his chorus a dramatic role to play, such as the People of Israel in his oratorio \textit{Saul}. Handel’s influence also appears in the large amount of choral involvement and in his style of choral writing, which includes large amounts of polyphony and descriptive elements. An example of such descriptive choral music in \textit{The Creation} includes the dramatic choral portrayal of the appearance of light in the first chorus.

\footnote{Ibid., 79.}
The arias in *The Creation* feature paraphrased text from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, which describes the revolt of Lucifer’s angels before creation, the creation of the world, and the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Milton’s poem contains eight heavenly angel characters including Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, Abdiel, Ithuriel, Urania, Uriel, and Zephron. Some critics, including librettist Giovanni Battista Rasi, disapproved of Haydn’s use of the angel Uriel and not Michael. Rasi claimed that even though *Paradise Lost* contains Uriel, the angel was not scriptural.\(^8\) His version of the creation story includes Gabriel, Raphael, and Michael in the cast of characters. Michael is typically deemed the warrior angel and in *Paradise Lost*, he fights against Satan and the fallen angels and eventually leads Adam and Eve out of Eden after the Fall. Haydn wanted *The Creation* to be an uplifting and positive oratorio, so perhaps he did not use Michael because of the somewhat negative nature of his duties.

In Swieten’s original libretto, the angels were anonymous and the names were added only shortly before the first performance. Temperley suggests that the English author’s original intention may have been to give all prose written in the past tense to a single ‘narrator’ angel, while giving the commentary in the present tense to an ensemble of voices. However, throughout *The Creation* Swieten assigned the prose and commentary to one voice type, making the soloist have to shift from past tense in the recitative to present tense in the aria. This can be confusing at times, making for an awkward textual translation from recitative to aria.\(^9\)

There does not appear to be any particular reason for the choice of the specific angels; however, one could speculate that the individual texts assigned to the angels correspond with their biblical identities and responsibilities. The archangel Raphael appears in the book of Tobit,

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a biblical book generally recognized as scriptural by the Catholic Church, but not by the Protestant Church. He is known as the angel of healing, and his name, derived from the Hebrew, means “God heals.” In the book of Tobit, Raphael helps the young boy Tobias through several perils on his voyage, including helping the boy catch a large fish that was trying to eat his foot.\textsuperscript{88} The heart, liver and gall of this fish would later be used to heal his father Tobit’s eyes. Visual art often depicts Raphael holding or standing on a fish, such as \textit{Bartolomé Román’s painting Archangel Raphael} (see figure 3.1). Raphael is also generally known as the angel who stirs the water at the healing pool of Bethesda in Chapter 5 of the Gospel of John.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{archangel_raphael.png}
\caption{Bartolomé Román, \textit{Archangel Raphael}, c. 1628–1647. Oil on canvas. Church of San Pedro de Lima, Peru.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{88} Giorgi, \textit{Angels and Demons in Art}, 368.
Several of Raphael’s recitatives and arias in *The Creation* mention or allude to some form of water or sea creatures. After the orchestral depiction of The Representation of Chaos, in No. 1, Raphael sings a recitative about darkness upon the face of the deep, which immediately precedes the choir’s text, “And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters…”89 His recitative in No. 3 speaks about God dividing the waters from the firmament, and the tempests raging with life-giving rain, hail, and snow. In No. 5, Raphael sings about the waters being gathered to one place and the following aria (No. 6) speaks of the stormy sea rolling in foaming billows, as well as referring to the river and limpid stream. In his recitative in No. 16, Raphael talks about God creating the great whales and God’s command for the creatures to multiply, including the “dwellers in the seas.” Finally, in the trio in No. 18, Raphael sings, “Through the clear water dart the fish, twisting and coiling in thronging swarms. From the deepest depths heaves up Leviathan on the foaming wave.”90 Whether or not Haydn made the connection between Raphael and water and sea creatures is unknown, but for describing and symbolizing images of the deep waters, a bass voice would likely be the best choice.

A similar connection might be made with the angel Uriel and the image of light. His name literally means “Light of God,” and he is recognized as the custodian of time and the stars. In visual art, he is sometimes surrounded by planets or pictured with a flaming sword or fire in his palm, as he is also generally regarded as the angel mentioned in the third chapter of Genesis who bears a flaming sword to keep Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. Alonso Miguel de Tovar’s painting, *Archangel Uriel*, depicts Uriel with a flaming sword (see figure 3.2). Uriel also

89 All of the translations in this chapter are taken from Franz Joseph Haydn, *Die Schöpfung*, The Gulbenkian Choir and Orchestra of the 18th Century, Frans Brüggen, conductor, Philips 446 074-2, CD, 1995.
90 The leviathan is a sea monster referenced in the Old Testament and now in Modern Hebrew this term typically refers to great whales.
bears the distinction of “regent of the sun” and is considered the angel who reveals to Enoch the science of the heavenly luminaries, bearing power over night and day.  

Figure 3.2. Alonso Miguel de Tovar, Archangel Uriel, c. 18th century. Oil on canvas. Fine Arts Museum, Seville, Spain.

In The Creation, Uriel sings several times about light. In the aforementioned recitative in No. 1, he sings, “And God saw the light, that it was good, and God divided the light from the darkness.” He then sings an aria with the chorus that speaks about night vanishing due to the holy beams of light on the first day. In his recitative in No. 11, he sings God’s words, “Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night, to give their light upon the earth…He made the stars also.” In the following recitative (No. 12) he sings about the sun in

91 Rees, From Gabriel to Lucifer, 150.
shining splendor bestriding the sky, the moon shimmering, and the shining of an unnumbered magnitude of stars. In the trio in No. 18, he sings about the colors of the birds’ feathers enhanced by golden rays of sun. Perhaps Haydn chose the bright quality of the tenor voice to symbolize the brightness of the sun, moon, and stars.

The name Gabriel literally means “God is strong,” and the angel is known primarily as God’s messenger. In the Bible, he gave messages to several important people including the prophet Daniel and Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist; his most important announcement was to the Virgin Mary, foretelling the birth of Christ. In visual art depicting the Annunciation, Gabriel often carries a lily or palm branch, symbolizing purity and truth, and ultimately Mary’s virginity. Many images of the Annunciation also display a dove, a symbol of the Holy Spirit, which was connected with Jesus’ birth and baptism. An example of artwork displaying Gabriel with both the lily and dove is Paolo de Matteis’s The Annunciation (see figure 3.3). Scenes connected with Jesus’ birth tend to feature angels with more feminine characteristics. Perhaps this is why some visualize Gabriel as female, even though Daniel 8 describes the angel as one who looked like a man, and every scriptural reference to Gabriel is in the masculine gender. These iconographic traditions may have influenced Haydn’s choice for a soprano to sing the role of Gabriel.

In works that contain angel roles, especially those related to the Christmas story, the role of the angel is often set for a high tessitura. Until the twentieth century, a large majority of the angel roles were written for the female voice, perhaps due to the purer tone color and an association of higher range with the heights of heaven. There may be some symbolism connecting Gabriel and the texts she sings. In the aria “With verdure clad” (No. 8), she sings about flowers, herbs, healing plants, and trees; Gabriel often appears in images with the lily or

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92 Giorgi, Angels and Demons in Art, 360-62.
palm branch. In her other solo aria, “On mighty pens” (No. 15), she sings about different types of birds, including the dove. The image of the dove associated with Gabriel in Annunciation artwork, or the idea of a bird as messenger, may have influenced Haydn’s decision to use the angel Gabriel for these texts. The soprano voice also has the capability to produce the high-pitched trills and ornaments necessary for imitating birds’ tweets and calls. Both of Gabriel’s arias also contain more coloratura than is found in the other movements of the work.

Figure 3.3. Paolo de Matteis, *The Annunciation*, 1712. Oil on canvas. Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis, Missouri, United States.

**Analysis – Music of Gabriel**

The following portion of this chapter will include a more detailed musical analysis. Due to the large scope of the piece and the extensive amount of angel involvement, this analysis will
focus solely on the music of Gabriel. In *The Creation*, the angel has three major arias which occur in Parts I and II; these arias will be discussed as follows. The following chart shows Gabriel’s total involvement throughout the oratorio (see table 3.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Character(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. 4</td>
<td>Gabriel with Chorus</td>
<td>Aria with chorus: “The marv’lous work beholds amaz’d”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 7</td>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>Recitative: “And God said: Let the earth bring forth grass”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 8</td>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>Aria: “With verdure clad”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 13</td>
<td>Trio of Angels with Chorus</td>
<td>“The heavens are telling”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 14</td>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>Recitative: “And God said: Let the waters bring forth”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 15</td>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>Aria: “On mighty pens”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 18</td>
<td>Trio</td>
<td>“Most beautiful appear”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 19</td>
<td>Trio with Chorus</td>
<td>“The Lord is great”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 27</td>
<td>Trio</td>
<td>“On thee each living soul awaits”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1. Franz Joseph Haydn, *The Creation*, Hob. XXI:2: Gabriel’s Involvement in *The Creation*.

“The marv’lous work beholds amaz’d” (No. 4)

Gabriel’s first aria, “The marv’lous work beholds amaz’d,” concludes the second day of creation in the text and features the chorus of Heavenly Hosts. The text reads, “The marv’lous work beholds amaz’d the glorious hierarchy of heav’n, and to th’ethereal vaults resound the praise of God, and of the second day.” The chorus of Heavenly Hosts then repeats Gabriel’s words, “And to th’ethereal vaults resound the praise of God, and of the second day.”

Haydn features the oboe in this movement with several small solos. The aria begins with an oboe solo and a rather sparse accompaniment, including only woodwinds and strings. In mm. 12-14 the oboe solo directly echoes the voice, but in mm. 39-40, during the modified repeat of the A section, the oboe plays in unison with the voice and the chorus now functions as the echo (see examples 3.1 and 3.2). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the concept of angelic echoing appears in biblical passages regarding heavenly angels praising God. Upon the entrance of the chorus in m. 16, the orchestra greatly expands as horns, trumpets, trombones, contrabassoon, and
the timpani are added, giving the marvelous effect of all of the heavenly powers praising God.

Haydn uses another oboe solo to transition back to the repeat of the A section, beginning similarly with a sparse accompaniment, which grows quickly as the rest of the instruments and voices join together to make one of the most joyous movements of the work.

Example 3.1. Franz Joseph Haydn, *The Creation*, Hob. XXI:2, No. 4, mm. 10-14: oboe solo echoing the voice.
The movement resembles the da capo form, in which the A section is repeated after a contrasting B section. Typically in a da capo aria, the B section will modulate to the dominant key or relative minor and return to the tonic key in the repeat of the A section. Like the typical da capo aria, the B section of this aria rests in the dominant key of G major and returns to C major with the return of the opening material. In a written-out da capo form, the composer has the opportunity to change the tonal structure and/or embellish the melody of the first A section. Here, Haydn only does the latter, as he modifies the soloist’s melody and choral parts with the return of the text in the repeat of the A section (mm. 32-49). In the soloist’s first full bar of the second A section (m. 32), Haydn changes the melody by eliminating the octave descent. As mentioned in the section regarding the oboe, the choir enters earlier and takes the place of the original oboe echoes. One of the most significant ways Haydn modifies the repeated section is with the use of a running scale up to a high C6 near the end of the movement in m. 44.

The aria centers around the key of C major, an important key in The Creation, as several scholars claim the tonality of the work revolves around this key. In the opening instrumental movement, The Representation of Chaos, Haydn depicts aurally the transition from darkness to light as he modulates from dark C minor to triumphant C major on the words, “and there was light.” This transition from darkness to light also may have had symbolic meaning connected with the Enlightenment movement. In addition to The Creation’s opening instrumental movement, Haydn uses C major in the following places: No. 4, which celebrates the second day; the famous chorus “The heavens are telling” (No. 13) at the end of the Third Day, Uriel’s aria (No. 24) celebrating the creation of man, and Adam and Eve’s love duet (No. 30). In a summary of these events, Jessica Waldoff states, “C major is thus used to represent a series of wonders including the first illumination, the birth of man, and the cradle of conjugal felicity (presented
here without the complication of original sin).”

Although Adam and Eve’s love duet begins in C major, it quickly modulates from C major to F major, B-flat, A-flat, G-flat, E-flat minor, F minor, G minor, G major and back to the last appearance of C major in the work. Some scholars claim the central tonality of C major changes in Part III, which falls to B-flat major, possibly tonally inferring the impending Fall of Man. The fall to B-flat also represents the shift of Part III from angels down to earthly mortals.

During the baroque and classical eras, several composers believed that the key of C major expressed a particular character or mood. The following German classical composers had similar thoughts about the key of C major: Georg Joseph Vogler considered it to be pure; Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart thought C major was pure, innocent, simple, and naïve; and Justin Heinrich Knecht pictured C major as cheerful and pure. Composers such as Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Amy Beach, and Olivier Messiaen considered the key of C major to be associated with the color white, which connects with the idea of heaven, light, and purity. (The connection of key and color in regards to the composer Olivier Messiaen will be discussed in a later chapter.)

Haydn uses text painting in several places in The Creation. As in many angel arias, the major modality and diatonic harmony in No. 4 reflect the cheerful and uplifting text. In the German text, a short melisma occurs on the word *frohe* (“glad/happy”) in m. 8 (see example 3.3).

In m. 44, the soprano has an ascending scale up to a C6 as she sings, “And from th’ethereal vaults,” symbolizing the heights of heaven (see example 3.4).

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Example 3.3. Franz Joseph Haydn, *The Creation*, Hob. XXI:2, No. 4, mm. 7-8: melisma on the word *frohe* ("glad/happy").

Example 3.4. Franz Joseph Haydn, *The Creation*, Hob. XXI:2, No. 4, mm. 41-44: ascending scale symbolizing the heights of heaven.

“And God said: Let the earth bring forth grass” (No. 7) and “With verdure clad” (No. 8)

“Let all the earth bring forth grass” (No. 7) is a short, nine-bar secco recitative before the aria “With Verdure Clad.” The text from Genesis 1:11 states, “And God said: Let all the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth; and it was so.” With its declamatory nature and simple harmonies, the recitative bears similarity to all of the recitatives in this work that narrate the biblical text from Genesis 1. The recitative modulates from the previous aria in D major to B-flat major, the key of the following aria.

“With verdure clad” is probably the most well-known aria from the oratorio. Its text states, “With verdure clad the fields appear delightful to the ravish’d sense; by flowers sweet and gay enhanced is the charming sight. Here vent their fumes the fragrant herbs, here shoots the healing plant. By load of fruits th’expanded boughs are press’d; to shady vaults are bent the tufty
groves; the mountains brow is crown’d with closed wood.” The aria is one of only five in the work that do not contain choral sections (Nos. 6, 8, 15, 22, 24).

The peaceful aria reflects the pastoral text in several ways. Haydn uses a siciliano rhythm throughout, typically associated with pastoral scenes and moods. The siciliano, often used in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, could be either an aria type or instrumental movement. The meter was usually a slow 6/8 or 12/8 with an iambic feel to the rhythm. It typically contained a simple melody separated into clear one-or-two bar phrases and straightforward harmonies. The aria “He shall feed his flock” and the Pifa from Handel’s Messiah, both contain siciliano characteristics. The Pifa directly precedes the text about the angel’s appearance to the shepherds, giving them the news of Christ’s birth. Pastoral music, often associated with shepherds, is a common feature in many Christmas works. Perhaps a connection exists between the pastoral aria and Gabriel, the angel associated with Christmas.

The pastoral text is also reflected in the prominent use of woodwinds throughout the aria, although surprisingly the oboe, often used in pastoral settings, is not included within the orchestration. At the beginning of the aria in mm. 1-4, the clarinet and bassoon share a short soli passage, introducing the melody, which returns at the repeat of the A section. Haydn began to include the clarinet more frequently in his compositions written during the 1790s and The Creation was one of Haydn’s first vocal compositions to include the instrument. Composers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries often used the clarinet-horn combination as a hunting-call theme in opera. “With verdure clad,” with its pastoral orchestration, uses horn “calls” in bars

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97 Howard E. Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, vol. 3, 498. Haydn first composed for clarinets in his five-movement Divertimento, H II: 14 for two C clarinets and two C horns (1761). After moving to London in the 1790s, he used the clarinet more regularly in his works. His first symphony to use clarinets was No. 99, written in 1793.

98 Albert R. Rice, *The Clarinet in the Classical Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 112. Jean-Philippe Rameau first makes the association between clarinets and horns and hunting in his opera *Acante et Céphise* (1751). This work was a *pastorale héroïque*, a form of French baroque opera with a libretto based on pastoral poetry.
16-19 and 65-68, which evoke the sound of the hunter’s horn in the forest. In these places, the horn call is echoed by a motive that anticipates the vocalist’s melody, played in octaves by the flute, clarinet, and bassoon (see example 3.5).

Example 3.5. Franz Joseph Haydn, *The Creation*, Hob. XXI:2, No. 8, mm. 65-70: horn call echoed by the flute, clarinet, and bassoon.

One other key point of interest in the orchestration is found in mm. 76-81, where the flute and clarinet trade echoing motives during the vocalist’s words, “Here vent their fumes the fragrant herbs, here shoots the healing plant.” These short motives being tossed back and forth between the flute and clarinet seem to suggest the idea of the breezes tossing the herbs’ fragrances back and forth (see example 3.6).
Example 3.6. Franz Joseph Haydn, *The Creation*, Hob. XXI:2, No. 8, mm. 76-82: echoing flute and clarinet motives suggesting the tossing of fragrances back and forth.

"With verdure clad" is also one of only five arias in *The Creation* that resemble da capo form, which was decreasing in popularity after the baroque period. Other movements of *The Creation* containing a similar transformed da capo form include Nos. 4, 6, 15, and 27.\(^9^9\) Many of the arias in the work did not retain the traditional da capo form because the strongly narrative element of this libretto made it difficult to fit the text into the conventional forms found in earlier Italian and German oratorios.\(^1^0^0\) In this aria Haydn tends to retain the tonal structure of the da capo form, but alters the melodic material in the return of the A section.\(^1^0^1\) After the opening A section (mm. 1-38), mm. 39-51 resemble a tonally unstable B section, passing through D-flat, A-

\(^1^0^0\) Ibid., 72.
\(^1^0^1\) Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, vol. 3, 375.
At the return of the A section, Haydn alters the instrumental introduction by adding trills in the clarinet and bassoon soli passage. The repeat of the A section stays basically the same until the pick-up note to m. 70, where Haydn changes the melody, writing a chromatic, twisting melisma on the word heil (“heal”) in mm. 71-72 (see example 3.7). Haydn also alters the melody in the conclusion with several more repetitions of, “Here shoots the healing plant,” prolonging the final cadence much longer than the first A section.

Haydn gives emphasis to certain words in “With verdure clad,” especially in the German version, where in m. 8 he writes an ornamented turn on Ergötzung (“delight”) (see example 3.8). Later in m. 15 (and m. 64 in the second A section), he brings out the word erhöht (“enhanced”) with a melisma up to B-flat 5, the highest note in the aria (see example 3.9).

Example 3.7. Franz Joseph Haydn, The Creation, Hob. XXI:2, No. 8, mm. 71-72: chromatic melisma during the repeat of the A section.

Example 3.8. Franz Joseph Haydn, The Creation, Hob. XXI:2, No. 8, mm. 6-8: ornamented turn on the word Ergötzung (delight).

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The composer gives the word *heil* (“heal”) special treatment because it talks about the “wound-healing” plant sprouting. The two instances of long melismas on “heal,” found in mm. 25-29 and 72-75, may symbolize the plant “sprouting” or simply show the importance of the word “heal” (see example 3.10). Another instance of word painting is found in m. 47, where the melodic contour ascends to G-flat on the word *Berg* (“mountain”) symbolizing its height (see example 3.11). Although the aria sounds somewhat simple, the colorful orchestration and amount of coloratura make it a memorable part of the oratorio as well as a beautiful showpiece for the soprano.

Example 3.10. Franz Joseph Haydn, *The Creation*, Hob. XXI:2, No. 8, mm. 70-77: long melisma on the word *heil* (heal).

Example 3.11. Franz Joseph Haydn, *The Creation*, Hob. XXI:2, No. 8, mm. 46-49: ascending melodic line up to the word *Berg* (mountain).
“And God said: Let the waters bring forth” (No. 14) and “On mighty pens” (No. 15)

The narrative element of The Creation gave Haydn many opportunities for tone painting, also known in Germany during this time as Thonmahlerey. Typically within the work the composer depicts the image musically in the orchestra before the singer actually sings the text. Gabriel’s “bird aria” is one of the prime examples of the tone painting in this work. Gabriel sings the recitative and aria at the beginning of Part Two. The recitative “And God said: Let the waters bring forth” (No. 14), comes from Genesis 1:20. Again, this recitative bears melodic and harmonic similarity to the other recitatives that narrate the biblical passages about God’s creation.

The “bird” aria, “On mighty pens” (No. 15), opens with a 34-bar ritornello, which is quite lengthy even for Haydn’s arias. He probably intended it to take the place of a small prelude for Part II.103 The aria is another one of the five solo arias that do not contain a chorus and it is substantially longer than any of Gabriel’s previous arias at 207 bars.104 The aria stands as the third longest movement in the work, after “By thee with bliss, o bounteous Lord,” sung by Eve, Adam, and the chorus (No. 30, 340 bars), and the duet between Adam and Eve (No. 32, 219 bars). The text for the aria, taken from John Milton’s Paradise Lost, Book VII, comments on the creation of different species of birds, such as the eagle, lark, dove, and nightingale. This bravura aria probably contains the most coloratura out of all of the three angels’ arias, and these impressive melismatic passages and ornaments often come with words that carry significant importance or meaning. Haydn focused extensively on the composition of this aria. The original sketches show even more coloratura and the piece was originally written in 3/4 time.105

103 Landon, Haydn: The Years of ‘The Creation’ 1796-1800, 421.
104 Temperley, Haydn: The Creation, 54.
As mentioned earlier, this aria showcases some of the work’s finest word painting, as heard in the depiction of the different birds. The melodies of the soloist and various instruments contain upward motion and quick melismatic passages symbolizing a bird’s flight. The flute part often features melodies filled with grace notes, staccato notes, and ornaments that resemble chirping and tweeting of a bird, as found in mm. 19-22 (see example 3.12).


Haydn typically uses the word painting in the orchestra before the vocalist’s words. In the first two phrases the vocalist sings, “On mighty pens uplifted soars the eagle aloft, and cleaves the sky in swiftest flight to the blazing sun.” The noble character of the introduction, as well as the ascending melodies in the orchestral and vocal parts, display the ascent of the eagle towards the sun (see example 3.13). Following these two phrases the clarinet has a solo, presumably mimicking the sound of a lark. The vocalist sings, “His welcome bids to morn the merry lark,” and the clarinet interjects in mm. 57-58 with an ascending solo filled with triplets before the vocalist sings the phrase again (see example 3.14).


The following phrase states, “And cooing calls the tender dove his mate.” In mm. 63-67, the singer’s melody resembles the cooing or sighing of a dove and two bassoons mimic the turtledoves as they, and the violins, follow each statement with a fast and light bird-like call. The vocal part also contains several trills to imitate the sound of a bird, as found in mm. 68 and 70 (see example 3.15). The majestic “eagle” music returns and as the singer repeats each of the phrases the instrument(s) representing each bird plays directly before the vocalist’s words.

In the following section, the angel sings, “From every bush and grove resound the nightingale’s delightful notes. No grief affected yet her breast, nor to a mournful tale were tuned her soft enchanting lays.” Throughout this section, the flute is featured prominently, as seen in the triplets, staccato notes, and many trills found throughout the flute’s music, such as in mm. 133-38 (see example 3.16). Throughout this section, the vocalist sings extended melismas on the word *reizender* (“lovely/charming”), as seen in mm. 153-161 and 186-193 (see example 3.17). With its extensive “bird-like” coloratura, this piece is truly a virtuosic showcase for the soprano.


The Enlightenment

The ideals of the Enlightenment affected music in the classical era and particularly *The Creation*. The Enlightenment in music reacted against the baroque extravagance, as seen in overly ornamented and complex contrapuntal works. The goal for enlightened composers was to compose music that would be pleasing to all listeners, regardless of their knowledge about music. Thus, composers sought to create pleasant and attractive sounds that would attract a broad audience. In *The Creation*, Haydn finds a balance between emotion and intellect and attempts to avoid any dissention or negative impressions. Karl Geiringer claims that *The Creation* and *The Seasons* are “works that transcend all social, political, and national boundaries with their gaiety and unaffectedness, their simplicity and strength, their clarity and magnitude.”[106] Although some skepticism regarding traditional religion existed, Haydn’s work had broad appeal, partially because most people at this time still accepted the traditional idea of the creation. At this time, science and reason were still relatively consistent with Christian teachings.

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The Creation also contains characteristics of humanism, a popular movement of the time, reflecting the desire to give primary importance to man rather than spiritual matters. Although some scholars view the work as a step away from humanism, the oratorio’s celebration of man in Part III may reflect the movement. Uriel’s aria “In Native Worth” (No. 24), celebrates the creation of man and woman, describing the beauty, courage, and strength of mankind. The work turns from angels and heavenly hosts to mortals in Part III, reflecting Milton’s Paradise Lost in God’s decision to create a mortal world after the creation of his angelic world. Although Haydn alludes to it tonally, the simple omission of the Fall of Man may also reflect a desire to celebrate man and nature, withholding the part of the narrative that would reveal man’s imperfection. The Creation is optimistic and uplifting, which accounts for its popularity with many audiences then and now.

Beethoven’s Christus am Ölberge

Although The Creation faced some criticism in the nineteenth century because of its use of word painting, it quickly became one of the most-performed oratorios. Most of the oratorios from the late-eighteenth century and early-nineteenth century were performed only a few times, with the exception of Beethoven’s Christus am Ölberge.107 Up until the late eighteenth century, Vienna had a strong Italian oratorio tradition; however, in the late 1770s, the Tonkünstler-Societät (Society of Musicians) began to include German oratorios in its concerts.108 Beethoven’s only oratorio, Christus am Ölberge, written in 1803, shortly after The Creation, differed from the traditional German Passion settings, such as those by Bach. Christus am Ölberge more closely resembled the oratorios of Handel and Haydn since Beethoven intended it primarily for the concert hall and portrayed the Passion story more dramatically, focusing more

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108 In 1771, Florian Leopold Gassmann established the Tonkünstler-Societät, a Viennese concert society founded to support retired musicians and their families.
on Jesus’ agony in accepting His fate, and not on the actual story of the crucifixion. *The Creation* and *Christus am Ölberge* bear some similarities, including the dark beginnings of the orchestral introductions. Like *The Creation*, the principal tonal area of *Christus am Ölberge* is C, and at times the orchestra expressively paints words before they are sung.\(^{109}\) *Christus am Ölberge* also includes an angelic role, that of a seraph.

*Christus am Ölberge* was first performed at the Theater-an-der-Wien in Vienna on April 5, 1803, and marked Beethoven’s first appearance in Vienna as a dramatic vocal composer.\(^{110}\) The libretto for this oratorio, known in English-speaking countries as *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, narrates the agony Jesus suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane. Beethoven composed this work shortly after the completion of his Heiligenstadt Testament, a letter to his two brothers regarding his severe depression and despair due to the loss of his hearing. Beethoven’s personal suffering clearly relates to the libretto, with its themes of undeserved suffering, isolation, deprivation, and hopes and fears concerning deliverance.\(^{111}\) After the onset of his hearing loss, Beethoven wrote several pieces in addition to *Christus am Ölberge* that deal with the theme of struggle giving way to triumph, including his opera *Fidelio* and the Fifth Symphony.

The oratorio contains several arias for the Seraph. Her opening entrance is marked by descending eighth- and sixteenth-note figures, an angelic tradition in oratorio symbolizing the angel’s fluttering down from heaven.\(^{112}\) John Palmer states, “In the opening recitative of the second section, Seraph, the intermediary between Christ and God, announces to the world that Christ will die so they may live. In her aria, Seraph tries to increase humanity's guilt when she

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\(^{110}\) Ibid., 517.


informs the world that Christ will die out of love for them.”\(^{113}\) The tension increases and the tonality shifts to minor as the angel explains what will happen to those who do not honor the blood of Christ: “Verdammung ist ihr Los!” (“Damnation is their lot!”) This is typical as the majority of angel arias are in a major tonality until the topic of evil or sin arises. The Seraph’s aria leads directly into a chorus of angels, as she continues to sing above the ensemble, also a common characteristic of works containing angel roles. The chorus and Seraph repeat the text found in the second half of the Seraph’s previous aria, this time with the addition of trombones as the choir sings about the damnation of those who do not honor the blood of Christ. This retains a tradition of associating trombones with the underworld.\(^{114}\)

**Revival of Sacred Vocal Music in the Nineteenth Century**

With the exception of *The Creation* and *Christus am Ölberge*, not many sacred choral works written in the classical era contained angel roles. Choral works saw a general decline during the nineteenth century; however, Felix Mendelssohn’s performance of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* on March 11, 1829, sparked a renewed interest in Bach’s sacred vocal music and in sacred vocal music in general. Mendelssohn greatly admired and emulated the classical masters including Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and especially Bach. Many other factors ushered in this interest including German nationalism, traditionalism, romanticism, and an increased interest in historicism. These nineteenth-century movements influenced the shift of Bach’s


\(^{114}\) The tradition of associating trombones with the underworld appears as early as the late sixteenth-century *intermedi*, dramatic musical entertainment occurring between acts of plays, which became the predecessors of opera. Some early examples of musical compositions associating trombones with the underworld include the various *intermedi* performed for the wedding of Grand Duke Ferdinando I and Christine of Lorraine in 1589. Claudio Monteverdi, in his opera *L’Orfeo* (1607), used trombones in several places to depict Hades and represent spirits from the underworld. Mozart also associated trombones with the underworld in his opera *Don Giovanni*, as they accompany the music of the statue of the deceased Commendatore. For further examples, see David J. Buch’s *Magic Flutes & Enchanted Forests: The Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Musical Theater*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008.
sacred vocal music from the church to the concert hall, thus influencing and inspiring a
generation of listeners and composers.

Mendelssohn’s own oratorios also had an important influence on the sacred vocal music
classical tradition. Smither states, “Representing an early peak in the history of nineteenth-century
German oratorio, Mendelssohn’s *Paulus* (1836) and *Elias* (1846) are unparalleled for their
immense popularity in their own time and their longevity in the oratorio repertoire.”\(^{115}\) *Elias*
(*Elijah*), set originally to a German text, was translated to English for its Birmingham
performance. The work has remained a staple in oratorio repertoire in English-speaking countries
and is probably the second-most performed oratorio, after Handel’s *Messiah*. The following
chapter will focus on the nineteenth century and analyze the angel roles in Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*,
and Edward Elgar’s *The Dream of Gerontius*.

Chapter IV
The Romantic Era

The Romantic movement in music began in the post-Beethoven era, circa 1825-30, and lasted until the early twentieth century. Scholars debate the dates of the romantic period; some historians and musicologists advocate the idea of the ‘long nineteenth century,’ spanning from 1789-1914. This period, whose dates are based on important European political events, begins with the start of the French Revolution, is sub-divided by the revolutions of 1848, and ends with the onset of World War I.\textsuperscript{116} The timing for any period in music is never completely distinct, as music is continually evolving, but these specific socio-political events greatly impacted composers and their compositions.

The Enlightenment, which began in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was still affecting society in the nineteenth century, creating a continued shift towards secularism and away from traditional religion. This movement influenced the amount of sacred music being composed, causing a general decline in sacred choral composition. America and several European countries experienced growth in the creation of amateur choral societies and choral music festivals during the early-to-mid nineteenth century, but after the revolutions of 1848, the intensity and zeal of the amateur groups waned.\textsuperscript{117} In addition to the Enlightenment, scientific advances and discoveries in the nineteenth century, such as the internal combustion engine, electricity, railroads, the telephone, and even Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution, influenced society as individuals began to focus more on reason and evidence and less on faith and mysticism. Political events such the French Revolution (1789-1799) affected music in France

and in other countries, contributing to the gradual rise of the middle class. In 1848, revolutions occurred in many countries throughout Europe, calling for political reforms such as an increase in national unity and more middle-class power in government and democracy.

Additionally, movements such as nationalism and historicism gave the citizens and composers a renewed interest in their nation’s composers of the past. In Germany, the spirit of nationalism was an important catalyst for the Bach revival. The final defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in June 1815 inspired an outpouring of nationalistic sentiment that showed through various kinds of movements in art, architecture, poetry, literature, and music. To the German, Bach’s music embodied the national spirit of Germany. An increased interest in historicism, looking back to the works of the past, had also become fashionable as people formed societies for the purpose of publishing and preserving past composers’ works and music historians wrote biographies. Many composers, like Mendelssohn, saw Bach and Handel as models of inspiration. Mendelssohn’s performance of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* on March 11, 1829, also sparked a renewed interest in the composer’s sacred vocal music. These factors encouraged the shift of Bach’s sacred vocal music from the church to the concert hall, thus influencing and inspiring a generation of listeners and composers.

Mendelssohn’s own oratorios greatly influenced the sacred vocal music tradition and continue to be staples in the oratorio repertoire, achieving greater longevity than most oratorios written during the nineteenth century. His oratorio, *Elijah*, probably the most famous English-language oratorio after Handel’s *Messiah*, remains in the performance repertoire today. Mendelssohn specifically influenced the British composer, Edward Elgar, with his use of leitmotifs, and Elgar used several in his well-known oratorio, *The Dream of Gerontius*. The rest
of this chapter will include an analysis of the angel solo roles in both Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* and Elgar’s *The Dream of Gerontius*.

**Felix Mendelssohn’s *Elijah***

The year 1809 saw both the death of Haydn and the birth of Mendelssohn, who became one of the most prominent German composers of the nineteenth century. Although Mendelssohn’s music contains many romantic elements such as lush, lyrical melodies, increased chromaticism, and larger orchestras, his music is also strongly tied to the traditions of the eighteenth century. Mendelssohn harbored a great love for the music of earlier composers such as Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart. Mendelssohn’s oratorios bear similarity to Bach’s choral music in the inclusion of hymns and chorales, and his choral writing was also greatly influenced by Handel. Like Bach and Handel, Mendelssohn’s oratorios carry great importance in the history of the genre and he influenced many oratorio composers after him. Smither states, “Representing an early peak in the history of nineteenth-century German oratorio, Mendelssohn’s *Paulus* (Saint Paul, 1836) and *Elias* (Elijah, 1846) are unparalleled for their immense popularity in their own time and their longevity in the oratorio repertoire.”

**The History of *Elijah***

The organizers of the Birmingham Festival of 1846, headed by the manager Joseph Moore, invited Mendelssohn to conduct and he worked feverishly to compose a new oratorio to premiere at the festival. His oratorio *Elijah* received its premiere performance on August 26, 1846 at the Town Hall in Birmingham, England. The work was an instant success with such an

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enthusiastic response from the audience that they encored at least four choruses and four arias.\textsuperscript{119}

A critic from the London Times reported:

The last note of Elijah was drowned in a long-continued unanimous volley of plaudits, vociferous and deafening. It was as though enthusiasm, long-checked, had suddenly burst its bonds and filled the air with shouts of exultation. Mendelssohn, evidently overpowered, bowed his acknowledgments, and quickly descended from his position in the conductor’s rostrum; but he was compelled to appear again, amidst renewed cheers and huzzas. Never was there a more complete triumph – never a more thorough and speedy recognition of a great work of art.\textsuperscript{120}

The oratorio, originally set to a German text, was translated to English for the performance; the translator, William Bartholomew, took great care to follow the King James Version of the Bible.\textsuperscript{121} Although he followed the traditional model, using biblical texts, the libretto exhibits romanticism by its dramatic nature. The composer intentionally chose a dramatic biblical subject that includes exciting events such as the prophet bringing the widow’s son back to life, his calling down fire from heaven, and his departure to heaven in a fiery chariot. Some consider Elijah to be the full opera Mendelssohn never wrote. The two-part libretto derives mainly from the stories of Elijah’s life, found in the books of First and Second Kings. It also includes texts from other Old Testament passages, such as the Psalms, as well as some scriptural Messianic prophecies at the end of the work. The use of Old and New Testament texts in the oratorio may reflect the Mendelssohn family’s transition from Judaism to Christianity, and the significance of both religions in the composer’s life.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{119} Werner, Mendelssohn’s “Elijah”: A Historical and Analytical Guide to the Oratorio, 15. The numbers encored were: “If with all your hearts” (No. 4), “Baal, we cry to thee” (No. 11), “Regard Thy servant’s prayer” (changed later to “Cast thy burden”) (No. 15), “Thanks be to God” (No. 20), “He, watching over Israel” (No. 29), “O rest in the Lord” (No. 31), “For the mountains shall depart” (No. 37), and “Oh! come every one that thirsteth” (No. 41).

\textsuperscript{120} Quoted in Mendelssohn’s “Elijah:” A Historical and Analytical Guide to the Oratorio, by Jack Werner (London: Chappell & Co. Ltd., 1965), 16.

\textsuperscript{121} Smither, A History of the Oratorio, vol. 4, 168.

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 151.
The Music of *Elijah*

As noted earlier, the music of Bach and Handel greatly influenced Mendelssohn. His earlier oratorio, *Saint Paul*, included many Bachian and Handelian traits. Although not as much as in *Saint Paul*, ten years later in *Elijah* Mendelssohn continued to emulate elements of Bach and Handel’s musical styles. The choruses show this influence the most, as they resemble Handel’s style of choral writing. The use of fugues and fugal writing hearken back to the baroque period; however, Mendelssohn’s counterpoint is handled in a more modern, informal fashion.\(^{123}\) The prominent role of the chorus also reflects the Handelian oratorio as the choruses in *Elijah* occupy about half of the oratorio.\(^{124}\) Mendelssohn’s choral writing in his oratorios greatly influenced later composers such as Camille Saint-Saëns, Charles Gounod, Johannes Brahms, and Edward Elgar.

Mendelssohn used various traditional compositional procedures in *Elijah*, such as traditional forms (although modified), Handelian fugal choral writing, and the use of a standard biblical text. However, Mendelssohn’s harmonies are more romantic, containing greater chromaticism than those found in the baroque or classical periods. Mendelssohn used chromaticism to bring out the drama of the work, such as the three overlapping tritones found in the clarinet and bassoon parts during Elijah’s opening recitative, as he predicts the impending drought: “There shall not be dew nor rain these years” (see example 4.1).\(^{125}\) This recurring motif of three descending tritones becomes a symbol throughout the oratorio, representing the curse of the drought.

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At this time, Mendelssohn also began to follow the new trend of the dramatic oratorio. Although *Elijah* does not contain a plot like an opera, the drama comes from the various personages interacting with each other in the scenes of Elijah’s life. Mendelssohn had the opportunity to include dramatic elements within the oratorio because of the dramatic scenes found in the biblical story of Elijah, such as the widow’s desperate pleading for him to heal her son, the prophet calling down fire from heaven, and the various catastrophes that happened before the occurrence of the still, small voice of the Lord. Another romantic characteristic of the oratorio is Mendelssohn’s use of motifs signifying characters, concepts, and feelings. Throughout the work a four-chord motif precedes Elijah’s recitatives and signifies Elijah’s presence. Mendelssohn utilized the motif of an ascending triad to refer to a deity, whether it be God or Baal. Both of these are found in the opening of the oratorio (see example 4.2).

**Angels in *Elijah***

*Elijah* contains many angels throughout the work in the forms of soloists, ensembles, and chorus. Two solo angels, an alto and soprano, act as messengers, giving the word of the Lord to Elijah. Throughout the work, the chorus functions as different characters including the People of Israel, Priests of Baal, and an Angelic Host. Mendelssohn also includes ensembles of angels as a

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126 The following occurrences happened before Elijah witnessed the still, small voice of the Lord: a mighty wind that rent the mountains, breaking the rocks in pieces; the upheaval of the sea; and a fire that followed an earthquake. The Lord was not in any of these powerful signs, but was found in a still, small voice.

solo quartet, double solo quartet, and solo trio. The following table shows the type and total amount of angelic involvement throughout the work (see table 4.1).  

Example 4.2. Felix Mendelssohn, *Elijah*, op. 70, Part I, No. 1, mm. 1-4: motif representing Elijah’s entrance, followed by the deity motif.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Solo/Ensemble</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. 6</td>
<td>Recitative – Solo Angel (A)</td>
<td>“Elijah! Get thee hence, Elijah!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 7</td>
<td>Double Quartet of Angels (SSAATTBB) &amp; Recit. – Solo Angel (A)</td>
<td>“For He shall give his Angels charge over thee” “Now Cherith’s brook is dried up”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 15</td>
<td>Quartet of Angels (SATB)</td>
<td>“Cast thy burden upon the Lord”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART II:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 28</td>
<td>Trio of Angels (SSA)</td>
<td>“Lift thine eyes to the mountains”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 29</td>
<td>Chorus of Angels (SATB)</td>
<td>“He, watching over Israel”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 30</td>
<td>Recit. – Solo Angel (A)</td>
<td>“Arise, Elijah, for thou hast a long journey before thee”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 31</td>
<td>Aria – Solo Angel (A)</td>
<td>“Oh rest in the Lord”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 33</td>
<td>Recitative – Solo Angel ($)</td>
<td>“Arise, now! Get thee without!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 35</td>
<td>Solo Quartet (SSAA) &amp; Chorus of Angels (SATB)</td>
<td>“Holy is God the Lord Sabaoth”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1. Felix Mendelssohn, *Elijah*, Total Angel Involvement.

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The letters SATB here and throughout this chapter are abbreviations for the voice parts of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass.
Solo Angel Involvement in Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*

Although most solo angel roles up to this point were written for higher voices, Mendelssohn chose to use an alto for the primary angel role. The soprano Angel has a lesser role in the work, singing only an eighteen-measure recitative. Mendelssohn’s choice of an alto for the primary angel role may have been due to his overall lack of alto roles in his earlier works and his desire to do something different. However, he likely composed the primary angel role for alto because he wrote it specifically for Charlotte Dolby, a contralto to whom he had recently dedicated the English edition of his Six Songs (op. 57). In *Elijah*, the composer gives the small role of the Queen to the alto, but as with the elderly roles, lower voices often portray evil characters. *Elijah* seems to contain more, if not the most, alto solo involvement than many of his other vocal works. It is ironic that the alto typically sings both the role of the heavenly Angel and the evil Queen Jezebel. Dolby recalled a conversation with Mendelssohn at a dinner party:

Mendelssohn, who was also invited, came late. A vacant place had been left for him by my side. He arrived after the soup had been served, and excused himself by saying that he had been very busy with his oratorio; and then turning to me he said, “I have sketched the bass part, and now for the contralto.” “Oh!” I exclaimed, “do tell me what that will be like, because I am specially interested in that part.” “Never fear,” he answered, “it will suit you very well, for it is a true woman’s part – half an angel, half a devil!”

**No. 6, Recitative, “Elijah! Get thee hence, Elijah!”**

During Part I, the alto Angel functions as a messenger, instructing Elijah to go into the wilderness. The text of the short, nine-measure recitative comes from 1 Kings 17:3-4 and in Mendelssohn’s version, the Angel sings, “Elijah! Get thee hence; depart and turn thee eastward: thither hide thee by Cherith’s brook. There shalt thou drink its waters; and the Lord thy God hath commanded the ravens to feed thee there: so do according unto His word.” The sparse

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accompaniment, typical for a traditional accompanied recitative, consists of strings playing sustained notes. Mendelssohn’s writing for the voice appropriately fits the phrasing and inflection of the English text. The tranquil recitative with its unhurried tempo and slow harmonic movement creates the picture of the angel suspended in the sky as she gives this message to Elijah.

No. 7a, Recitative, “Now Cherith’s brook”

Directly following the double quartet of angels singing, “For He shall give His angels,” the Angel (A) gives Elijah the message: “Now Cherith’s brook is dried up, Elijah, arise and depart, and get thee to Zarephath; thither abide: for the Lord hath commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.” (1 Kings 17:7, 9) For this recitative and the previous one, the scripture from the King James Version states only that the “word of the Lord came unto him;” however, Mendelssohn chose to use an angel to deliver both texts, probably for dramatic effect since he did not include an official narrator role. Like the Angel’s earlier recitative, the accompaniment includes only stringed instruments, but instead of the sustained notes and suspended feeling of the previous recitative (No. 6), the accompaniment in the beginning of this recitative occurs between the singer’s phrases. During the second half of the recitative, the style changes from arioso to recitative to arioso, as the Angel sings: “And the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.” (1 Kings 17:14)

No. 30, Recitative, “Arise, Elijah, for thou hast a long journey before thee”

The next solo angel section occurs much later in the work, in a portion of movements including several angelic solos and choruses. In the short, six-measure recitative, the Angel (A) gives the message to Elijah: “Arise, Elijah, for thou hast a long journey before thee. Forty days and forty nights shalt thou go to Horeb, the mount of God.” (1 Kings 19:7-8) The
instrumentation for this recitative bears similarity to the first two, consisting of violins, violas, cellos, and basses. Elijah follows the Angel’s statement with his own desperate and bombastic recitative, complete with three types of trombones, ending with the words, “O that I now might die!” His recitative leads into the following aria sung by the Angel. Although the aria includes text from the Psalms and not from the actual story of Elijah, it contains a pertinent message of comfort and encouragement.

**No. 31, Aria, “O rest in the Lord”**

In 1 Kings 19, after Elijah asks the Lord to take his life, he falls asleep and the angel strengthens him by providing food for him to eat, preparing him for his forthcoming forty-day fast. Mendelssohn does not include this specific part of the story in *Elijah*, but uses the encouraging words taken from Psalm 38: 1, 4, and 7: “O rest in the Lord; wait patiently for Him, and He shall give thee thy heart’s desires. Commit thy way unto Him, and trust in Him, and fret not thyself because of evil doers.” In this number, the only aria sung by an angel, the character functions more as a comforter than a messenger.

“O rest in the Lord” is quite popular with beginning singers because of its brevity, narrow range, and melodic and rhythmic simplicity. Portions of the melody repeat several times and the melodic line and harmonies are quite predictable. Mendelssohn hearkens back to the traditional forms of the past by following a modified da capo form, with some slight harmonic and melodic changes in the return of the A section. The piece begins in C major, modulates to E minor, and back to C major with very predictable diatonic harmonies throughout. This aria, and the seven other arias in the work, tend to resemble Lieder more than operatic arias. The simple orchestration contains only stringed instruments and the flute, which doubles the voice except in

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130 Elijah, in addition to Jesus and Moses, is one of only three people in the Bible who are recorded to have fasted for forty days and nights.
the last seven measures. In the final five measures of the aria, Mendelssohn uses text painting as he gives the word “wait” a substantially longer duration than previous notes, literally depicting “waiting.” The final phrase of the vocal line includes rhythms that are twice as long as the previous ones, again giving the feeling of literally waiting patiently for the Lord. The aria was given an encore at the first performance and is one of the most popular selections from the oratorio.  

No. 33, Recitative, “Arise, now!”

After a short choral section with more encouraging words taken from Matthew 24:13: “He that shall endure to the end, shall be saved,” the soprano Angel and Elijah share a portion of recitative. This is the only appearance of the soprano solo angel, and her portion of the recitative spans only eighteen measures. At the beginning of this movement, Elijah asks the Lord to be not far from him and that his soul thirsts for Him, as a thirsty land. The Angel replies, “Arise, now! Get thee without, stand on the mount before the Lord; for there His glory will appear and shine on thee! Thy face must be veiled, for He draweth near.” (1 Kings 19:11, 13). Perhaps Mendelssohn uses the soprano voice for this recitative because the text speaks of standing on the mountain before God and seeing the Lord’s glory, which in the oratorio precedes the glory of the Lord appearing to Elijah. The use of a higher range possibly more fittingly depicts the dramatic nature of the power of God. The highest notes of the melody occur when the Angel speaks of the Lord’s glory appearing and His drawing near. The Angel’s melody, consisting primarily of arpeggiated chord tones, seems much like a trumpet, an instrument often biblically associated with angels, heaven, and the glory of God. Although the accompaniment contains only

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131 Werner, Mendelssohn’s “Elijah”: A Historical and Analytical Guide to the Oratorio, 68.
132 Several associations between trumpets and God and His angels are found throughout the Bible. One Old Testament example is located in Psalm 47:5, which states, “God has ascended amid shouts of joy, the LORD amid the sounding of trumpets.” The Book of Revelation, which includes the author’s account of the Apocalypse and his
clarinets and stringed instruments, its majestic character reflects our stereotypical version of the sound of God and the trumpeting of a heavenly angel (see example 4.3).

Example 4.3. Felix Mendelssohn, Elijah, op. 70, Part II, No. 33, mm. 9-27: arpeggiation in the Angel’s melody suggesting the majestic nature of God.

vision of Heaven, contains several references to angels and trumpets. One is found in chapter 8, verse 2: “And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.” One last example occurs in Matthew 24:30-31 where Jesus states, “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.” (All translations are taken from the New International Version.)
The character of the music changes drastically in the second half of the recitative before the Angel sings, “Thy face must be veiled, for He draweth near.” Mendelssohn’s change of tempo to lento\textsuperscript{133} and the dynamic to pianissimo possibly portrays musically the breathtaking glory of God. The final phrase, which speaks of God drawing near, is another example of the ascending triad deity motif. The Angel’s sustained F#5 in m. 27 leads into the following chorus “Behold, God the Lord” (no. 34), which describes the various earthly catastrophes that occur before the glory of the Lord being revealed in a still, small voice. In addition to the analysis of solo angel involvement in the work, the vital role of the angelic ensembles and choruses in Mendelssohn’s \textit{Elijah}, as well as their musical characteristics, will now be discussed.

\textbf{Angelic Ensembles and Choruses in Mendelssohn’s \textit{Elijah}}

The texts of the first four angel ensembles and choruses come from the Psalms, each symbolizing a message of encouragement for Elijah – the Lord’s angels will protect him; the Lord will sustain him; the Lord will provide help; and the Lord will revive him. The final angel chorus contains text from Isaiah 6:2-3, which speaks of the vision of angelic seraphim praising God around His throne. Many of the choruses include angelic musical characteristics such as echoing, parallel thirds or sixths, and a major tonality.

\textbf{No. 7, Double Quartet, “For He shall give his Angels charge over thee”}

This number contains a double quartet of angels singing text from Psalm 91:11-12, which states, “For He shall give His angels charge over thee; that they shall protect thee in all the ways thou goest; that their hands shall uphold and guide thee, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.” Mendelssohn writes the movement for a female quartet and male quartet that sing in antiphonal style. Like Schütz’s use of echoing mentioned in Chapter 2, this style of writing resembles the late sixteenth-century Italian polychoral music of Giovanni Gabrieli. The ethereal effect of the

\textsuperscript{133} An Italian musical term meaning “slow”
two choirs echoing back and forth recalls the image of the seraphim calling to one another in Isaiah 6.

**No. 15, Quartet, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord”**

The text of this movement includes references from several scriptures found in the Psalms. The angels sing: “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee. He never will suffer the righteous to fall: He is at thy right hand. Thy mercy, Lord, is great; and far above the heavens. Let none be made ashamed that wait upon Thee.” (Psalms 55:22, 16:8, 108:4, 25:3)

For this chorale-like movement, Mendelssohn adapted the melody from the hymn “O Gott, du frommer Gott” (“O God, You Righteous God”), found in the “Meiningen Gesangbuch” (Meiningen Hymnbook), published in Meiningen, Germany in 1693. Much of the movement is sung *a cappella*, with the exceptions of arpeggiated chords on bar two of each four-bar phrase. Mendelssohn often included *a cappella* sections within his choral writing. Smither writes about Mendelssohn’s use of *a cappella* settings:

> The revival of Renaissance polyphony, particularly that of Palestrina, and the enshrinement of *a cappella* singing as a symbol of holiness in church music had their effect on oratorio. Groups of holy personages and texts particularly important for their religious significance began to be characterized by the *a cappella* sound. Among the myriad instances that might be mentioned are Friedrich Schneider’s settings of angelic voices and occasionally of texts sung by other spiritual figures in his Weltgericht (1819), Pharao (1828), and Christus das Kind (1829). Mendelssohn followed the same procedure for the well known *a cappella* trio in his Elias (1846), “Hebe deine Augen auf” (Lift thine eyes), sung by the Angels watching over Elijah. Several times in Paulus (1836) and Elias Mendelssohn makes effective use of *a cappella* setting to emphasize texts of religious importance.

This gentle chorale provides a stark contrast to the violent chorus (No. 28) about fire falling from heaven and consuming the Lord’s offering.

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135 An Italian term literally meaning “in the church style,” sung without accompaniment
No. 28, Solo Trio of Angels, “Lift thine eyes to the mountains”

Shortly before the trio, “Lift thine eyes,” Elijah sings his famous solo “It is enough,” where the prophet begs the Lord to take his life. The trio, found well into Part II, is prefaced by a tenor recitative speaking about Elijah sleeping beneath a juniper tree in the wilderness and how the angels encamp around those who fear the Lord. The text for “Lift thine eyes” comes from Psalm 121:1-3, and states, “Lift thine eyes to the mountains from whence thy help cometh. Thy help cometh from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He hath said: ‘Thy foot shall not be moved; thy Keeper will never slumber.’” This short trio, sung by soprano I, soprano II, and alto, is the only movement in Elijah that is sung completely *a cappella*. It also features common angelic musical traits such as continual parallel thirds and sixths and a major tonality. Mendelssohn brings out the meaning of the text in several places, such as the final repeat of “Lift thine eyes, O lift thine eyes to the mountains,” where the first soprano has an ascending line up to G5 in mm. 30-31 (see example 4.4).

Example 4.4. Felix Mendelssohn, *Elijah*, op. 70, Part II, No. 28, mm. 30-31: text painting in first soprano’s ascending line during the words “to the mountains.”

Also, in the last repetition of “He will never slumber,” Mendelssohn writes descending lines in all three parts, spanning three measures. Irony is found in this section, as descending figures
often symbolize falling asleep. The following chorus continues the message from Psalm 121, even remaining in the same key, reaffirming that the Lord never slumbers or sleeps.

**No. 29, Chorus, “He, watching over Israel”**

In this fourth chorus of comfort and encouragement, the angels sing text taken from Psalms 121:4 and 138:7: “He, watching over Israel, slumbers not, nor sleeps. Shouldst thou, walking in grief, languish, He will quicken thee.” The chorus portrays the angels camping around Elijah while he sleeps beneath the juniper tree, attending to him and giving him rest and strength. The large majority of the movement contains continual triplets in the violins, and also in the violas at times, giving a feeling of constant motion, possibly symbolizing the Lord not stopping to slumber. The smooth, lyrical melodies reflect the sweetness of the piece, as well as Mendelssohn’s romantic style. Smither suggests that this chorus has a gentle, almost lullaby effect.¹³⁷

This chorus also displays Handel’s influence on Mendelssohn, evident in its sections of counterpoint. The sopranos introduce the opening subject with the words, “He, watching over Israel, slumbers not, nor sleeps” (mm. 2-5), which is immediately repeated by the tenors in mm. 6-9. The altos introduce another short motive in mm. 9-11, which the basses restate in mm. 11-13. The voices sing portions of these motives throughout the A section (mm. 1-19). In contrast with the key of D major in the A section, Mendelssohn modulates to F-sharp minor for the B section (mm. 19-43). As is typical of angelic music, a major modality reflects positive text and a minor modality reflects negative text. During the B section, Mendelssohn sets the words which mention grief, “Shouldst thou, walking in grief, languish, He will quicken thee,” in a minor key. It contains a new musical subject first introduced by the tenors (mm. 19-23), which the altos, sopranos, and basses individually repeat in succession. The counterpoint continues as fragments

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of the theme move from voice to voice until the two final homophonic statements of “He will quicken thee” (mm. 40-43). In the return of the A section (mm. 43-79), the tenors begin with the B subject, now presented in a major key. The sopranos sing the introductory subject of the A section and the four voice parts imitate motives of both themes. Starting in m. 51, the sopranos introduce a new subject, consisting of a melody that gradually descends over an octave, to the words, “He, watching over Israel, slumbers not, nor sleeps,” possibly musically depicting falling asleep (mm. 51-59). As the melody descends, the dynamic also decreases from forte to piano. As the new subject repeats once again, all of the voices sing together in a relatively low register for a pianissimo “Sleeps not” (mm. 68-69). Mendelssohn includes a small a cappella portion at the end of the chorus, giving a particularly touching effect.

**No. 35, Recitative, “Above Him stood the Seraphim”; Quartet and Chorus – “Holy is God the Lord Sabaoth”**

This movement begins with a three-measure recitative sung by an alto soloist, stating the text from Isaiah 6:2-3: “Above Him stood the Seraphim, and one cried to another.” The recitative is mostly a cappella with one long chord that separates the two phrases. Symbolism may be found in Mendelssohn’s scoring for six different instruments for the chord after the word “Seraphim,” (flute, oboe, clarinet, horns, and first and second violins). As observed earlier in Chapter 2, the number six contains special significance with seraphim as they have six wings, which is described in the second half of verse two in Isaiah 6. The recitative leads directly into the angel solo quartet and angelic chorus singing: “Holy, holy, holy is God the Lord, the Lord God of Sabaoth! Earth is full of the glory of the Lord!” As in No. 7, the quartet of women’s voices alternates and combines with the chorus.
After the soloist’s recitative, the solo women’s quartet (SSAA) begins to sing, “Holy, holy, holy is God the Lord, the Lord Sabaoth.” The chorus (SATB) repeats their words, and the two ensembles echo each other for the first twelve measures. The orchestration also reflects this, as only the flute, oboe, and clarinet play softly with the solo quartet, and all of the instruments, including trombones and ophicleide,\(^\text{138}\) play loudly with the full chorus. Mendelssohn uses all the brass instruments in this chorus, most likely to display and suggest the majesty of heaven and of the Lord. Much of the chorus includes polyphonic treatment of the words, “Now His glory hath filled all the earth.” At times the phrase begins with only one or two voices, then Mendelssohn gradually adds more voices and instruments, giving the effect of the Lord’s glory filling the earth. Often the instruments and voices echo each other’s melodies, giving the effect of the seraphim crying back and forth to one another.

This choral selection shares several similarities with Bach’s *Sanctus* from his B Minor Mass, discussed briefly in Chapter 2. As in the *Sanctus*, the chorus resides mostly in C major, which commonly occurs in pieces portraying heaven. In both movements, the choirs often echo and imitate each other, symbolizing the angels crying to one another. In *Sanctus*, which contains a total of six vocal parts, it is often the top three parts (Soprano I, II, and Alto I) that sing separately from the bottom three (Alto II, Tenor, Bass). Mendelssohn’s version bears similarity as he separates the ensemble of women’s voices and the SATB chorus. Finally, both versions are filled with parallel thirds and sixths, suggesting the sweet and pure sounds of heaven. As a great admirer of Bach’s music, this may have been Mendelssohn’s way of emulating his role model in *Elijah*.

\(^{138}\) The ophicleide, invented in 1817, is a now obsolete keyed brass instrument of conical bore, played with a cup mouthpiece. It was replaced by the modern orchestral tuba. Romantic composers who included it in their scores include Mendelssohn, Berlioz, Schumann, Verdi, and Wagner.
Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* is a central oratorio in the nineteenth century, as it looks back to previous oratorios, but also forges ahead in creating a new model for future oratorio composers. His musical language and use of leitmotifs influenced British composer, Edward Elgar. Although Elgar’s oratorios bear strong similarity to the music dramas of Richard Wagner, he claims he learned the leitmotif technique from Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*.\(^{139}\) French composer Maurice Ravel even labeled Elgar “tout à fait Mendelssohn” (“exactly Mendelssohn”) because of the similarities between the music of the two composers.\(^{140}\) From *Elijah*, we will now turn to one of the most important oratorios of the late-romantic era, Elgar’s *The Dream of Gerontius*.

**Sir Edward Elgar’s *The Dream of Gerontius***

Handel’s *Messiah*, Haydn’s *The Creation*, and Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* are three of the most-performed English-language oratorios. Elgar’s choral work, *The Dream of Gerontius*, follows closely behind as one of the most popular and regularly performed English oratorios. Smither calls it “the most creative English oratorio since Handel.”\(^{141}\) *The Dream of Gerontius* does not fit neatly into the category of oratorio and Elgar despised the labels of oratorio or cantata. He reluctantly agreed to let Novello list it as an oratorio in its catalogue, even though it was significantly different from preceding oratorios.\(^{142}\) Many aspects of the work that make it unique stem from Wagnerian musical influences, including its chromatic harmonic language, seamless flow of music, importance of the orchestra, use of leitmotifs, and arioso vocal writing.

The Birmingham Triennial Festival commissioned *The Dream of Gerontius* and the work had its premiere on October 3, 1900 in Birmingham Town Hall. Although it suffered a poor

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\(^{139}\) Diana McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 44.


\(^{142}\) From our twenty-first century viewpoint, the label oratorio is appropriate, and I will refer to it as such throughout this paper.
premiere for various reasons, later performances in Germany would prove its success. In an area that was predominantly Anglican, Elgar took a risk by using a non-biblical Roman Catholic poem for the text. The libretto, an abridgement of John Henry Cardinal Newman’s poem The Dream of Gerontius, centers around the final hours, death, and afterlife of an old man named Gerontius, sung by a tenor.\textsuperscript{143} Elgar intended for the lead character to be “a man like us and not a priest or a saint.”\textsuperscript{144} Part I of the two-part oratorio reveals Gerontius on his deathbed, surrounded by a Priest, sung by a bass, and a group of friends (“Assistants”) praying for him. After his death at the end of Part I, Part II consists of Gerontius’ journey through the afterlife, traveling past choirs of demons and angels, as the Angel leads him to the judgment throne and eventually into the lake of Purgatory, promising Gerontius’ eventual return to heaven.

**The Angels of The Dream of Gerontius**

The Angel functions as Gerontius’ guardian angel, guiding and assisting Gerontius, who in Part II is now simply referred to as “The Soul.” As they travel through the afterlife, the Angel speaks with him and answers his questions. In the poem, Newman refers to the Angel as male, however Elgar chooses to use a mezzo-soprano for the role. Eva Maria Jensen suggests that Elgar may have written the role for a mezzo-soprano simply for the sake of using a contrasting voice.\textsuperscript{145} For the most part, Elgar uses text not referring to the Angel’s gender; however, he retains two references to the Angel’s male gender, with the words “him” and “Lord,” found when Gerontius sings: “I will address him. Mighty One, my Lord, My Guardian Spirit, all hail!” (cues 17-18)\textsuperscript{146} The instance of a male angel played by a female is also found in Messiaen’s opera, *Saint François d’Assise* (1983), which will be discussed in Chapter Five. Byron Adams

\textsuperscript{143} The name Gerontius comes from the Greek word *geron*, literally meaning “old man.”
\textsuperscript{144} From Edward Elgar, Quoted in *Celestial Music?: Some Masterpieces of European Religious Music*, by Wilfrid Mellers (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), 175.
\textsuperscript{146} Instead of standard measure numbers, Elgar uses cue numbers in various places throughout the work.
has likened the musical interaction between Gerontius and the Angel to the operatic love duets of Massenet and Puccini, even going so far as to suggest they display homoeroticism.\footnote{Byron Adams, “Elgar’s Later Oratorios: Roman Catholicism, Decadence, and the Wagnerian Dialectic of Shame and Grace,” in The Cambridge Companion to Elgar, eds. Daniel Grimley and Julian Rushton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 91.} Although the Angel has a major role in this work, the Angel in Newman’s poem actually has a much larger role. Elgar cut 470 lines of the 900-line poem, most of which contained the Angel’s descriptions of heaven.\footnote{Charles Edward McGuire, Elgar’s Oratorios: The Creation of an Epic Narrative (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 135.} In addition to Gerontius’ Angel, the Angel of the Agony, sung by a bass, has a short role in which he pleads with God for “all Tormented souls, the dying and the dead.”

**Use of Leitmotifs**

As stated earlier, Mendelssohn and Wagner influenced Elgar in his use of recurring leitmotifs throughout the work, symbolizing various characters and concepts. As in Wagner’s music dramas, the orchestra in Elgar’s oratorio gained a more prominent role, as it transformed from mere accompaniment to being an equally expressive partner with the voice. Jensen speaks of the various motifs found in the work, including the three-note “Angel” motif, which first occurs in the third measure after cue 9 (see example 4.5).\footnote{Jensen, “Eschatological Aspects in Music: The Dream of Gerontius by Edward Elgar,” 146.}

The motif consists of a minor third followed by a major sixth. It may not have been intentional on Elgar’s part, but as seen before, the use of multiples of three may display some spiritual numerological significance. The Angel motif occurs several times throughout Part II, but mostly during the Angel’s solos. The motif’s first occurrence in the first violin part, echoed by a second group of first violins (see example 4.5), precedes the Soul singing that he feels someone is holding him within his palm.

The words of the libretto state:

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Another marvel: someone has me fast
Within his ample palm; . . .
. . . A uniform
And gentle pressure tells me I am not
Self-moving, but borne forward on my way.\(^{150}\)
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During the words “within his ample palm,” Gerontius’ vocal line also includes the Angel motif (see example 4.6). It occurs again as an echo in the two groups of first violins as the Angel begins to sing for the first time at six measures after cue 11 (see example 4.7). Elgar used this motif later in his oratorio, *The Apostles* (1903), where it accompanies the watching Angel Gabriel.\(^{151}\)


\(^{150}\) The musical score and several sources keep the original capitalization and indentation of Newman’s poem, so I will do likewise.

The Angel’s total involvement in this work is somewhat difficult to organize, since unlike previous oratorios, the music is continuous and seamless, much like Wagner’s music dramas. A few of the Angel’s sections resemble arias, including “My work is done,” “There was a mortal, who is now above,” and “Softly and gently, dearly-ransomed soul,” but most of the Angel’s musical involvement consists of continuous recitative with the Soul. Although the Angel and the Soul converse constantly throughout Part II, there is only one short nine-measure section where the two sing a brief duet, albeit with different text and separate melodies (cue 27-28).

**Analysis of the Angel’s Music**

**“My work is done”**

At the beginning of Part II, Gerontius describes his feelings as he has now entered into the afterlife. He sings of the feeling that someone is holding him fast within his palm and that he
is not alone. After he mentions hearing music and a heart-subduing melody, the Angel begins to sing her first solo section, “My work is done” (starting six measures after cue 11). In the five measures preceding her entrance, the first violins play the Angel motif, followed by a long descending line, possibly representing the tradition of musically depicting the Angel’s descent from heaven to meet Gerontius (see example 4.7). These descending lines also occur in the violins and woodwinds during the first seven measures of the Angel’s solo. In a gentle, steady triple meter, she sings:

My work is done,
   My task is o’er,
      And so I come,
         Taking it home,
For the crown is won,
    Alleluia,
   For evermore.

My Father gave
   In charge to me
      This child of earth
         E’en from its birth,
To serve and save,
    Alleluia,
   And saved is he.

This child of clay
   To me was giv’n,
      To rear and train
         By sorrow and pain
In the narrow way,
    Alleluia,
   From earth to heaven.

This section more closely resembles an aria because of its length and relative simplicity to extract.

The form of the Angel’s first solo seems to consist of three distinct verses, each ending in an “Alleluia,” followed by a four-syllable phrase. The solo revolves around E minor, except for a
slight modal sound at times because of the use of F-natural, suggesting the Phrygian mode. This modal sound occurs mostly during the Alleluia phrases. Throughout the work Elgar used musical quotations and partial quotations of Catholic chants. In this case, Elgar sets the “Alleluia…” phrases to the Gregorian chant tune “Ite, missa est,” the Catholic chant typically used at the end of the Mass as a word of departure (roughly translated: “Go, the dismissal is made”) (see example 4.8).


In this case, the Angel is singing about the ending of the Soul’s time on earth and his transition from earth to heaven; the use of the “Ite, missa est” chant possibly represents Gerontius’ dismissal from earth. After each Alleluia statement, two horns play a very short duet, containing sweet-sounding parallel thirds. Typically in the Catholic Mass, after the singing of “Ite, missa est,” the people respond, “Deo Gratias” (“Thanks be to God”), so perhaps the horn soli are an audible representation of this response. Although the oratorio is through-composed with mostly seamless music, this solo is separated from following section by a long pause before the Soul begins to sing again.

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152 “Alleluia, For evermore” (Starting 5 bars before cue 13), “Alleluia, And saved is he;” (starting 3 bars before cue 14) and “Alleluia, From earth to heaven” (5 bars before cue 16)

“It is because then thou didst fear”

Starting at cue 17, the Angel and Soul begin to converse with each other for the first time. The Angel’s parts consist of mostly 2-4 measure responses to the Soul’s comments and questions. Another relatively large section for the Angel begins at cue 24, where the Angel sings:

It is because
Then thou didst fear, that now thou dost not fear.
Thou hast forestalled the agony, and so
For thee the bitterness of death is past.
Also, because already in thy soul
The judgment is begun…

A presage falls upon thee, as a ray
Straight from the Judge, expressive of thy lot.
That calm and joy uprising in thy soul
Is first fruit to thee of thy recompense,
And heav’n begun.

Within this sixteen-measure recitative, Elgar inserts several leitmotifs in the orchestra. During the Angel’s words, “It is because Then thou didst fear,” the cellos play the “Fear” motive, first introduced in the Prelude at the beginning of the work at cue 2 (see example 4.9). During the words, “The judgment is begun,” the first two measures of the “Judgment” motif is played in the horns, harp, and second violins (see example 4.10).

Beginning at cue 26, the music changes in character, reflecting the “calm and joy uprising” in the Soul. Before this, the large majority of the music has included recitative with changing tempos and keys, but at cue 26, it settles into a steady rhythm and a major key. The melody becomes much more lyrical and Elgar directs the orchestra to play *dolce e legato*. After
this, the Angel and the Soul sing the only duet in the work, as the Soul sings that his fear has fled and that he “can forward look with a serenest joy.” At the same time, the Angel sings a separate melody to the words, “First fruit to thee of thy recompense, / And heaven begun.” From the start of the duet, Elgar creates more motion with running triplets in the first and second violins and harp. Directly following the duet, the violins play an expressive *cantabile* melody and the other stringed instruments play running sixteenth notes symbolizing the joy and peacefulness of heaven.

“We are now arrived close on the judgment court” and “It is the restless panting of their being”

The character of the music changes again at cue 29, as the Angel and the Soul approach the chorus of Demons. After the sweet, diatonic music of heaven, the music grows more chromatic and dissonant with eerie orchestral effects such as low staccato notes in the bassoon, contrabassoon, and string bass, as well as the timpanist playing with the stick. The Angel tells the Soul, “We are now arrived / Close on the judgment court; that sullen howl / Is from the demons who assemble there. / Hungry and wild, to claim their property, / And gather souls for hell. / Hist to their cry.” During the text, “that sullen howl / Is from the demons who assemble there,” Elgar writes a *col legno* section for the violins, giving a special eerie effect similar to Berlioz’s “Dream of a Witches’ Sabbath.”

Between the Demons’ choruses, the Angel sings a nine-measure recitative describing them: “It is the restless panting of their being, / Like beasts of prey, who, caged within their bars, / In a deep hideous purring have their life, / And an incessant pacing to and fro.” The music portrays the text in several ways. Starting at cue 41, two measures before the Angel enters, the “panting” begins in the bassoons, timpani, and cellos as they play repeated staccato eighth notes.
The vocal line depicts the text about the demons of hell as it descends, sinking into a low tessitura on the words “deep hideous purring” (see example 4.11). This nine-measure recitative contains constant eighth-note movement, possibly suggesting the panting or “incessant pacing to and fro.” The Angel’s music for this section is quite different from her other sections because of the dissonance and chromatic nature of the vocal line.


“**There was a mortal, who is now above**”

After the final Demons’ chorus, the Soul asks if he will see his dearest Master when he reaches His throne. The violas and second violins play the Angel motif before the Angel replies, “Yes, for one moment thou shalt see thy Lord. / One moment; but thou knowest not, my child, / What thou dost ask: that sight of the Most Fair / Will gladden thee, but it will pierce thee too.” The Angel goes on to tell the Soul the story of Saint Francis of Assisi and how he received the stigmata. During the short eight-measure phrase, “that sight of the Most Fair / Will gladden thee, but it will pierce thee too,” the Angel is accompanied only by three solo cellos and three solo violas. In the actual story about Saint Francis receiving the stigmata, a six-winged angel who had been crucified appeared to him. When the angel departed, Saint Francis found wounds in his hands, feet, and side, resembling Christ’s crucifixion wounds. As a Catholic, Elgar most

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154 In the Christian tradition, the stigmata are the marks corresponding to those left on Jesus’ body by the Crucifixion; St. Francis of Assisi was one who carried these marks that were impressed by divine favor.
likely knew the story, so perhaps this sextet symbolizes the six-winged angel that appeared to Francis before he received the stigmata. Elgar gives directions that this section should be quasi recitative, *parlando* and *sotto voce*. The sparse accompaniment begins with only violas and cellos playing *pianississimo* and *mistico*. During the quiet and mysterious-sounding recitative, the dissonant and chromatic harmonies reflect the pain of the experience. At the end of the final phrase: “Learn that the flame of the Everlasting Love / Doth burn ere it transform,” Elgar writes a Picardy third for the final note of the vocal melody, possibly symbolizing the positive transformation that happens after the initial pain. The E minor key, prevalent throughout the story, modulates to B Major and the Chorus of Angelicals begins to sing, “Praise to the Holiest in the height,” which will be discussed briefly in the section below regarding choral angels in *The Dream of Gerontius*.

Immediately after this, at cue 60, the orchestral accompaniment becomes thick with arpeggios in the harp and stringed instruments. Elgar also adds the organ, representative of religious music, as they approach the Judgment Room and begin to hear the singing of the Angelicals. During the chorus, the Angel interjects several times, either singing alone or above the choir, as she explains to the Soul the various happenings.

**“And now the threshold, as we traverse it”**

Between the choral sections the Angel sings, “And now the threshold, as we traverse it, / Utters aloud its glad responsive chant” (cue 73). At this point, the orchestration changes again, with running arpeggios in the three violin parts and two harps. The music modulates to C major, where it will basically remain until the end of the chorus. As we have seen in previous compositions, C major often carries a connotation of heavenly music because of its white, or pure, nature. This climax leads to a homophonic SATB choir singing, “Praise to the Holiest in
the height,” with all of the instruments playing fortissimo or fortississimo, that expands to another double chorus. The choruses echo with each other until all of the voices and instruments come together for the final boisterous fortississimo chord.

**“Thy judgment now is near”**

After the majestic chorus, the music becomes subdued and foreboding, as the following instrumental interlude acts as a premonition of what is to come. The muted, but expressive, section gives the feeling of trepidation that stems from coming closer to the face of God. At cue 102 Elgar gives the instruction for the Angel to sing solenne (“solemnly”), as in her low register she sings, “Thy judgment now is near, for we are come / Into the veiled presence of our God.” The Angel tells the Soul that the Angel of the Agony, who strengthened Jesus during his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, can best plead with God for “all Tormented souls, the dying and the dead.” After this, the Angel of the Agony pleads: “Jesu! by that shudd’ring dread which fell on Thee; / Jesu! by that cold dismay which sickened Thee; / Jesu! by that pang of heart which thrill’d in Thee; / Jesu! by that mount of sins which crippled Thee…Jesu! spare these souls which are so dear to Thee.” In the German version, translated for a performance in Düsseldorf, the character’s name is translated to Der Todesengel (The Angel of Death). Although the Angel of the Agony is not evil, the use of the bass voice would be typical for a character associated with death. During this aria Elgar uses more brass, including three trombones, which, as seen earlier in Chapters 2 and 3, are often associated with the underworld. The dissonance, minor key, agonizing melody, and difference in instrumentation show a striking difference between the music of the Angel of the Agony and the Soul’s Angel.

After a very short double chorus representing the earthly voices praying for Gerontius, the Angel sings: “Praise to His Name! / O happy, suff’ring soul! For it is safe, / Consumed, yet
quicken’d by the glance of God. / Alleluia! Praise to His Name!” This statement of “Alleluia! Praise to His Name!” is a musical restatement of the “Alleluia” phrases in the Angel’s first solo section (beginning six measures after cue 11). This new “Alleluia” may represent another stage in Gerontius’ travels from earth to heaven. The Angel’s musical restatement of the “Ite missa est” (“Go, the dismissal is made”) chant tune, may be dismissing Gerontius from his journey through the afterlife to the place where he will see the face of God. In several places throughout the work, Elgar gives the option for the mezzo-soprano to sing higher pitches. If the soloist chooses to use the higher notes at this place, this “Alleluia” features an A5, the highest note of the Angel’s range in this work. This is the Angel’s climax before the Soul sees the face of God, represented by the instrumental climax at cue 120, where every instrument plays and, as the score directs, “exerts its fullest force.”

“Softly and gently, dearly ransomed soul”

After the Soul’s solo “Take me away” and another brief chorus, the Angel sings a beautiful lullaby, as she drops the Soul into the lake of Purgatory. She sings the words:

Softly and gently, dearly ransomed soul,
In my most loving arms I now enfold thee,
And, o’er the penal waters, o’er the penal waters, as they roll,
I poise thee, and I lower thee, and hold thee.
And carefully I dip thee in the lake,
And thou, without a sob, without a sob or a resistance,
Dost thro’ the flood thy rapid passage take,
Sinking deep, deeper, into the dim distance.

Angels, to whom the willing task is giv’n,
Shall tend, and nurse, and lull thee, as thou liest;
And Masses on the earth, and pray’rs in heaven
Shall aid thee at the Throne of the Most Highest…

The solo begins with a simple stringed accompaniment, with only a few woodwind and horn interjections, but the instrumentation becomes fuller when the Souls of Purgatory begin to
Elgar’s music reflects the text in several ways. At cue 130, when the Angel sings, “sinking deep, deeper, into the dim distance,” the vocal line begins a gradual descent to the B below middle C, and many of the other instruments’ lines descend as well (see example 4.12). At cue 131, when the Angel sings of those angels who will tend and nurse him, the first violins play the Angel motif with the descending line as found just before the Angel’s first entrance at cue 11.


The Angel’s tender aria ends with the words, “Farewell, but not forever! brother dear, / Be brave and patient on thy bed of sorrow; / Swiftly shall pass thy night of trial here, / And I will come and wake thee on the morrow. / Farewell, farewell. / Be brave and patient, brother dear.”

During these words, which also close Newman’s poem, the Souls in Purgatory (ATB or TB) sing the text from Psalm 90, “Lord, Thou hast been our refuge,” and a distant Choir of Angelicals sings a reprise of “Praise to the Holiest in the height.” The work then ends with several statements of “Amen.”

**Choral Angels**

In the angelic chorus, “Praise to the Holiest in the Height” (cue 60), Elgar gives the effect of the Angel and The Soul approaching closer to the Judgment Room as it begins with a semi-chorus (SA), adds another chorus (SSAA), and later expands to a SATB semi-chorus with full SATB chorus. The voicing then expands to an SATB chorus and an SSSATB chorus. As the music grows closer to the end of this section, the texture thickens and the instrumentation
increases until the end when all of the instruments play at a fortississimo dynamic level. At five measures before cue 89, Elgar uses a double chorus, which may portray the effect of heavenly angels crying out to each other, as we have seen in previous pieces containing angelic choirs. The common angelic characteristic of symbolism with multiples of three occurs in this chorus as the time signature changes from 3/4 to 6/4 to 9/4, and eventually back to 3/4. This may reflect Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite’s angelic hierarchy, organized according to the angels’ closeness to God in three sets of three.

The large majority of the sections for the Chorus of Angelicals are in major keys, with a few portions in minor keys, such as the “O generous love” section, which speaks of the sacrifice of Christ and His suffering. Throughout the chorus, the key signature changes from A-flat major to E-flat major, and eventually to C major, often considered the pure key of heaven. Although Elgar’s music contains greater amounts of chromaticism and his musical language is more advanced, the music of the solo and choral angels in The Dream of Gerontius still bears a similarity to the angelic music found in earlier works containing angels.

**Transition to the Twentieth Century**

After the relative decline in works with angel roles in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the twentieth century saw a resurgence of compositions containing angels. Society in general became fascinated with angels, as even those who are ambivalent about established religion tend to find the topic of angels fascinating. At the turn of the century a musical shift began to occur, as composers began to experiment with melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic elements in ways never experienced before. Arnold Schoenberg, one of the composers instrumental in the rejection of tradition, included a significant angel role in his unfinished oratorio, *Die Jakobsleiter* (Jacob’s Ladder). This work is one of the first pieces in the evolution
towards his famous twelve-tone method, which would become revolutionary in the twentieth century. Another twentieth-century work containing a solo angel role, written much later in the century, is Olivier Messiaen’s opera *Saint François d’Assise*. This work displays many innovative features such as transcribed birdecalls as musical themes for certain characters and creative orchestration including unique instruments such as the ondes martenot.\(^{155}\) Both of these aspects of the work have significant connections with the Angel role. Although several twentieth-century works contain angels, Schoenberg’s *Die Jakobsleiter* and Messiaen’s *Saint François d’Assise* will be analyzed in the following chapter because of their significance and large amount of angel involvement.

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\(^{155}\) The ondes martenot is an early electronic musical instrument invented by Maurice Martenot, which produces sound by varying the frequency of oscillation in vacuum tubes.
Chapter V

The Modern Era

The twentieth century marked a time of enormous growth and change in all aspects of life. More scientific and technological advances occurred during this century than any of the previous centuries combined. Developments in transportation and communication brought about a truly global economy and tied the world together like never before. The two world wars created great economic, political, and social changes in many countries, affecting people around the globe. Many of these changes also influenced the arts, as well as people’s views about religion and their interest in the spiritual and supernatural. Interest in angels remained strong, even as participation in organized religion waned. The number of musical works containing angels experienced another renewal, especially towards the latter part of the century. A major work from the first half of the twentieth century that contains a significant angel role is Schoenberg’s unfinished oratorio Die Jakobsleiter (Jacob’s Ladder). The following discussion includes information about the general background of the oratorio and gives an analysis of the role and music of the archangel Gabriel.

Arnold Schoenberg’s Die Jakobsleiter

As early as 1911, Schoenberg considered writing a vocal work inspired by August Strindberg’s autobiographical fragment Jakob ringt (Jacob Wrestles), based on the biblical story of Jacob wrestling with an angel. Schoenberg wrote the libretto for his unfinished oratorio, Die Jakobsleiter, using a blend of religious and philosophical sources. Inspired by biblical passages and writings by Strindberg and Honoré de Balzac, he strove to write an oratorio loosely based on the biblical story of Jacob’s dream as found in Genesis 28:10-19. The story tells of Jacob’s vision of a ladder extending from heaven to earth, containing many ascending and descending
angels of God. Schoenberg worked on the oratorio at various times in his career (1914-15, 1917-18, 1922, 1944), with several interruptions due to his military service in World War I. Although he attempted to return to it several times, his work on the oratorio seemed hampered and he never finished the composition. At his death, he left a manuscript of only seven hundred measures, including an orchestral score of only forty-four measures. At the request of the late composer’s wife, his student Winfried Zillig eventually completed the orchestration and its first performance as a whole was in 1961.156

Between 1914 and 1922, Die Jakobsleiter was Schoenberg’s only large-scale work. Although he wrote no major compositions, it was probably one of the most productive times in his career it allowed the creation of his revolutionary twelve-tone system.157 Although it is not officially a twelve-tone work, the oratorio would become one of the stepping-stones for this method. Musically, Die Jakobsleiter displays Schoenberg’s innovation in several ways. During the twentieth century, most oratorios avoided avant-garde techniques such as Sprechstimme, serialism, and atonality.158 In this work, Schoenberg uses great amounts of Sprechstimme, for both soloists and chorus, making it the first oratorio to do so. As one of the central figures of the expressionist movement in music, Schoenberg uses this device as a way to greater display the emotional meaning in the texts of the different groups of souls on the ladder.

157 The twelve-tone system is a compositional method in which a composer creates a tone row, or melody, containing all twelve notes of the chromatic scale. In strict twelve-tone music, no note is repeated until every note of the chromatic scale is used.
158 Avant-garde techniques represent those that make a radical departure from traditional composition. The German term Sprechstimme (or Sprechgesang) literally means “speech-song” and is a vocal technique that uses a sound ranging between speech and song. Serialism is a twentieth-century compositional movement where a structural series of notes provides the organization of the piece, an example being Schoenberg’s twelve-tone system. Atonality denotes music that does not contain a specific key or mode.
The Libretto

In addition to the Bible, various literary and religious sources inspired Schoenberg, who wrote the oratorio’s libretto himself. Although he never finished the music, he started writing the libretto in 1914-15 and published it in 1917. The oratorio contains biblical texts from the account of Jacob’s ladder in Genesis 28 and allusions to the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5-7. Schoenberg was also strongly influenced by August Strindberg’s Jakob ringt (Jacob Wrestles) from his book Legenden (Legends) and Honoré de Balzac’s philosophical novel Séraphîta. Both works reflect the influence of Emanuel Swedenborg’s mystical theosophy.\(^\text{159}\) One of Swedenborg’s views that directly affects Die Jakobsleiter is the idea that the souls of men and women can become asexual angels reintegrated with God after passing through three steps on a ladder – love of self, love of humanity, and love of God.\(^\text{160}\) Strindberg’s Jakob ringt inspired Schoenberg as it reflected the general struggle between man and God.\(^\text{161}\) Die Jakobsleiter shows the various characters striving to come closer to God, which may also reflect Schoenberg’s personal struggle during this time as he vacillated between Judaism and Christianity.

The other major literary source that inspired the composer, Balzac’s novel Séraphîta, contains an androgynous being who has transcended humanity. The title character, Séraphîta, whose name derives from the biblical angelic seraphim, is an asexual angel who appears as a man to women and as a woman to men.\(^\text{162}\) One way the libretto shows Balzac’s influence occurs at the end of the work, in the portrayal of the transformation of the Sprechstimme role of der Sterbende (The Dying One) to the singing role of die Seele (The Soul). Schoenberg portrays the dual character with the female voice, although representing both male and female. Connections

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\(^{161}\) Schroeder, “Arnold Schoenberg as Poet and Librettist: Dualism, Epiphany, and Die Jakobsleiter,” 47.
\(^{162}\) Shaw, “Androgyny and the Eternal Feminine in Schoenberg’s Oratorio Die Jakobsleiter,” 63.
may also be made between the angelic seraphim with their six wings and Schoenberg’s various uses of the number six throughout the oratorio, which will be discussed in greater detail in the section regarding harmony. Looking at the libretto as a whole, Alan Lessem summarizes the text of the oratorio:

Schoenberg’s text can be described as a vision of spiritual struggle in which all mankind is involved as it passes through the cycle of dying, death, and rebirth. Individuals in various stages of personal and ethical development describe and defend their ambitions, tribulations, and attainments, and are prepared by their counselor and judge, archangel Gabriel, for death and re-incarnation, each according to his dues. The major theme of the text…is the complex of ideas associated with the individual’s relationship to his own destiny.”163

Organization

Although the libretto is officially divided into two parts, I prefer Lessem’s organization, dividing the work into four principal sections: The choruses, representing collective voices, singing primarily in Sprechstimme; individuals appearing before Gabriel with Gabriel answering each one; a heavenly scene represented by The Soul and Gabriel, with choruses, and orchestras, on- and off-stage; and a large symphonic interlude the precedes the final duet for soprano souls.164 Instead of angels on the ladder, as described in the biblical story of Jacob’s dream, Schoenberg uses soloists and choruses to represent human beings at various spiritual levels. Throughout the work, the choruses are comprised of different combinations of voices from the twelve-part chorus, which include Soprano I and II, Mezzo-soprano I and II, Alto I and II, Tenor I and II, Baritone I and II, and Bass I and II. The first part consists of general choral sections, as well as several choruses representing characters such as The Unsatisfied, Doubters, Rejoicers, The Indifferent, and The Quietly Resigned. The second part contains additional combinations of choral voices representing Submerged Souls (Lazy Ones, Sceptics, Cynics, Cunning Ones,

164 Ibid., 187.
Journalists, and Impure Ones), Vacillating Souls (Helpless Ones, Needy Ones, Unhappy Lovers, Unlucky Ones, and Deceived Lovers), Imperfect Souls (Enslaved Ones, Good-Natured Ones, Satisfied Ones, and Indecisive Ones), Limited Souls (Arrogant Ones, Weaklings, Misguided Ones, Conventional Ones, Compromisers, and Pliant Ones), Half-knowers (Scientists, Successful Ones, Disbelievers, Fortunate Lovers, Upstarts, Intolerant Ones, and Climbers), and Lost Souls (Inconsiderate Ones, Don Juan, Disloyal Ones, Hypocrites, and Criminals). In the heavenly scene, The Dying One, portrayed by a soprano, sings in *Sprechstimme* during his transition from death to life in heaven. As the character is transformed into The Soul, she now sings, but without words.

Throughout the oratorio, the main character, the archangel Gabriel, mediates between the persons and groups, counseling and judging them. The second part consists of Gabriel’s interactions with six soloists: The Called One, The Protester, The Struggling One, The Chosen One, The Monk, and The Dying One. The six characters, who have come to the end of their lives and seek to be reunited with God, describe to Gabriel how they have individually sought God. The archangel comments after each statement, criticizing their chosen paths and telling them they need to be reincarnated in human form in order to be united with God. Because Schoenberg never finished setting the entire libretto, we miss the final message revealed by Gabriel, that integration with God is only attained through faith and prayer.\(^{165}\) This mirrors the final chapter of Balzac’s *Séraphîta*, titled “The Assumption,” which includes the general theme that prayer leads the soul to heaven. Although the biblical story tells of angels ascending and descending on the ladder, Max Stern believes that Schoenberg envisioned the angels as human souls striving for redemption. He states, “His oratorio is a magnified portrayal of humankind seen under the microscope of divine judgment; and struggling to overcome the endless cycles of pleasure and

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pain, illusion and disillusionment, which governed the emotional upheavals of their earthly existence—as they strive for a truth beyond pleasure and pain."

The Music of *Die Jakobsleiter*

Schoenberg had initially intended this work to be the last movement of a large four-movement symphony, written in the style of Mahler’s Eighth Symphony. In his initial plans, Schoenberg wrote for a gigantic orchestra consisting of 20 flutes (including 10 piccolos), 20 oboes (including 10 English horns), 24 clarinets (6 in E-flat, 12 in B-flat, 6 bass clarinets), 20 bassoons (including 10 contrabassoons), 12 horns, 10 trumpets (including 2 bass trumpets), 8 trombones (including 2 alto and 2 bass trombones), 4 to 6 contrabass tubas, 8 harps, celesta, percussion, 50 violins, 30 violas, 30 cellos, and 30 basses. The vocal parts included 13 soloists, and a 12-part double chorus of 720 voices on the stage, plus off-stage choruses from on high and from below, and 4 off-stage orchestras. He later changed his plans and decided to use a typical large late-Romantic orchestra.

*Die Jakobsleiter* marks an important step on Schoenberg’s journey towards his famous twelve-tone method of composition. Although the atonal composition is not strictly twelve-tone, it closely approximates the method. The opening notes of the work contain a simple monophonic ostinato of a six-note tone row played by the cellos (see example 5.1).


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As the other instruments join one by one, the accompanying sustained chord includes the other six notes of the chromatic scale. In an article written in 1948, the composer talks about the oratorio’s importance in the development of his twelve-tone technique:

Ever since 1906-08, when I had started writing compositions which led to the abandonment of tonality, I had been busy finding methods to replace the structural functions of harmony. Nevertheless, my first distinct step toward this goal occurred only in 1915. I had made plans for a great symphony of which _Die Jakobsleiter_ should be the last movement. I had sketched many themes, among them one for a scherzo which consisted of all the twelve tones...My next step in this direction—in the meantime I had been in the Austrian army—occurred in 1917, when I started to compose _Die Jakobsleiter_. I had contrived the plan to provide for unity—which was always my main motive: to build all the main themes of the whole oratorio from a row of six tones...When after my retirement from the University of California I wanted to finish _Die Jakobsleiter_, I discovered to my greatest pleasure that this beginning was a real twelve-tone composition. To an ostinato (which I changed a little) the remaining six tones entered gradually, one in every measure.\(^{168}\)

The six-note opening _basso ostinato_ is likely a musical representation of Gabriel’s opening text containing six directions: “Ob rechts, ob links, vorwärts oder rückwärts, bergauf oder bergab” (Whether to right, left, forward or backward, uphill or downhill). This text, taken from Swedenborg’s description of heaven found in Balzac’s _Séraphîta_, shows the beginnings of the twelve-tone method forming in Schoenberg’s mind. In a separate essay entitled “Composition with Twelve Tones,” he states, “...the unity of musical space demands an absolute and unitary perception. In this space, as in Swedenborg’s heaven (described in Balzac’s _Séraphîta_) there is no absolute down, no right or left, forward or backward. Every musical configuration, every movement of tones has to be comprehended primarily as a mutual relation of sounds, of oscillatory vibrations, appearing at different places and times.”\(^{169}\)


\(^{169}\) Ibid., 223.
Some elements of *Die Jakobsleiter* associated with the number six may show numerological connections with the six-winged angelic seraphim. The opening six-note *basso ostinato* repeats six times until m. 6, when the other six notes of the chromatic scale have also been sounded in the accompanying chord. The chorus following Gabriel’s opening text consists of two groups of six parts each. In addition to the various choruses throughout the work, Gabriel interacts with six individual characters on the ladder. It may be presumptuous, but the possibility exists that Schoenberg was making these connections. Musicologists have also suggested a connection exists between Schoenberg and the character The Chosen One. Lessem states:

High up on the ladder, the ‘Chosen One,’ one of the privileged beings also described by Balzac, is presented as a prophet and visionary, and may possibly be interpreted as one who also speaks for the composer himself. Gabriel, using a metaphor drawn from the music, announces him as a more evolved being, closer to God than the less-evolved, just as the distant overtones are ‘closer’ to the fundamental than nearer overtones. This, the evolutionism so intrinsic to Schoenberg’s thought, proclaims the newly conquered as a progressive revelation of a divine essence. It explains his conviction as to the authenticity of his own new music, as representing a legitimate assimilation of earlier forms of expression and as moving towards a more highly evolved language which would speak for the greater spiritual consciousness of future generations.\(^{171}\)

Along with a new harmonic system, Schoenberg introduced the vocal technique of *Sprechstimme*. The composer used it in several vocal compositions preceding *Die Jakobsleiter* including the part of the Speaker in *Gurre-Lieder* (1911) and also exclusively in his melodrama *Pierrot lunaire* (1912). Expressionist composers often used this technique to express disturbing emotions or the portrayal of characters in extreme or psychotic states, such as *Pierrot lunaire*. Schoenberg makes great use of *Sprechstimme* for the soloists and chorus in *Die Jakobsleiter*, which aids in portraying certain negative characters or messages. The One Who Is Called and He Who Is Chosen sing their selections; however, The One Who is Rebellious, The One Who Is

\(^{170}\) Schroeder, “Arnold Schoenberg as Poet and Librettist: Dualism, Epiphany, and *Die Jakobsleiter*,” 51.

Struggling, and The Monk give their accounts completely in Sprechstimme. Towards the end of the oratorio, the final, and only female soloist, The Dying One, sings in Sprechstimme until the character travels to heaven and is transformed into The Soul. Gabriel, being a mediator and a bridge between heaven and earth, switches back and forth between styles.

**The Angel Gabriel**

The angel Gabriel is never specifically mentioned in the biblical story of Jacob’s dream and the literary sources that inspired Schoenberg do not include Gabriel. Although the work contains some possible references to seraphim, according to the angelic hierarchy Gabriel is not classified as one of the angels closest to God. Even in the account of Jacob wrestling with an angel given later in Genesis 32, no name is given, although some theologists believe it was Christ in human form. Schroeder speculates that the composer’s choice of Gabriel, an angel found in both the Old Testament in his appearance to Daniel (Daniel 8:16-19; 9:22), and in the New Testament in his appearance to Zacharias and Joseph (Luke 1:11-20, 26-38), represents the duality of Schoenberg’s faith, wavering between his Jewish heritage and conversion to Protestantism.\(^{172}\) The angel Gabriel bridges the Old and New Testaments, as well as the gap between God and humanity.

Schoenberg chose to use a baritone for the role of Gabriel, one of the rare occurrences of a low male voice singing an angel role.\(^{173}\) As mentioned in the section regarding Haydn’s *The Creation*, the Bible refers to the archangel Gabriel as male. Balzac’s character, *Séraphîta*, was an asexual angel, appearing as a male to women and as a woman to men.\(^{174}\) The use of a male voice, particularly a low male voice, may represent the darker text and character of the oratorio. Unlike

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\(^{172}\) Schroeder, “Arnold Schoenberg as Poet and Librettist: Dualism, Epiphany, and *Die Jakobsleiter,*” 45-46.

\(^{173}\) The only other occurrence of a baritone/bass angel role I have found that precedes this work is the role of Raphael in Haydn’s *The Creation*.

the biblical joyful messages to Zechariah and Joseph, in *Die Jakobsleiter* Gabriel often gives words of chastisement and judgment. Perhaps Schoenberg, in his expressionist style, just wanted to break away from tradition. At the end of the work Gabriel sings a duet with The Soul, a soprano, accompanied by a chorus of *Hohe Frauenstimmen* (High Female Voices), again showing a possible connection between heavenly voices and a high tessitura.

**Gabriel’s Music**

At the end of the short eleven-measure orchestral introduction at the beginning of the oratorio, the violins play an extended descending line and ascending line. This appears directly before Gabriel’s first entrance, which may reflect the typical convention of the use of ascending and/or descending scales preceding an angel’s entrance. It often symbolizes some sort of movement, typically the angel descending from heaven to earth. In this case, it may also have symbolical significance with the idea of Gabriel, or the angels in general, ascending and descending Jacob’s ladder. Gabriel’s opening excerpt, which consists of only nine measures, contains one of the most important quotations in the oratorio. Schoenberg directs the singer to sing *streng im Takt, scharf und trocken* (strictly in time, sharp and dry), as he speaks to the souls in *Sprechstimme*: “Whether to the right or left, forward or back, uphill or down, one must go on, without asking what lies ahead or behind. It shall be hidden: you were allowed to forget it – you had to – so as to fulfill your task.” His words symbolize and become a premonition of the ideals behind the composer’s twelve-tone method. Although the first three measures of the vocal line already contain almost every note of the chromatic scale, it is not a strict tone row since two notes (E and F) are not included, and a few notes are repeated before all of the tones in the chromatic scale would have been sounded (see example 5.2).

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175 All translations for *Die Jakobsleiter* are taken from Arnold Schoenberg, *Die Jakobsleiter*, Sony Classical SMK 48 462, 1993, compact disc.
Example 5.2. Arnold Schoenberg, *Die Jakobsleiter*, mm. 11-13: first three measures of Gabriel’s vocal line displaying chromaticism.

In addition to its chromaticism, the extremely disjointed vocal line exhibits large intervals, often constantly varying in direction. An ironic example of this is found in the aforementioned quotation on the word *bergab* (downhill), where Schoenberg gives the vocalist a large upward interval of a major ninth (see example 5.2). During this march-like section, only three contrabass parts accompany Gabriel as, like a military commander, he encourages the souls to keep moving forward. Gabriel’s vocal lines also heavily feature the tritone, or *diabolum in musica* (devil in music), atypical for an angelic role since composers have traditionally used the tritone to suggest evil.\(^{176}\) Schroeder suggests that the use of the tritone may reflect Schoenberg’s use of symbolism with seraphim and the number six, since the interval lies symmetrically in the middle of the twelve-note chromatic scale.\(^{177}\)

After Gabriel’s brief opening section, a long choral section ensues from mm. 19-131, featuring various divisions of the choir, often representing different groups of people at various stations on the ladder including Malcontents, Doubters, Rejoicers, the Indifferent, and the Quietly Resigned. During this choral section, Gabriel sings only one short interjection in mm. 91-92, where the archangel gives the souls a declamatory *Sprechstimme* command: “Gleichviel! Weiter!” (No matter! Onward!) Although several instruments accompany the choral sections,

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\(^{176}\) Beginning as far back as the 9\(^{th}\) or 10\(^{th}\) century, theorists prohibited the use of the tritone, the interval perceived either as an augmented fourth or diminished fifth, largely because of its instability and dissonance. These attitudes have changed drastically and its use became more popular, especially in the twentieth century.

\(^{177}\) Schroeder, “Arnold Schoenberg as Poet and Librettist: Dualism, Epiphany, and *Die Jakobsleiter*,” 51.
again only three contrabass parts accompany stark Gabriel’s solo line. Schoenberg gives the declamatory word “onward” an interval of a descending minor seventh, to which the chorus responds with large ascending intervals, “Onward?” Gabriel’s next short solo appears at the end of the choral section, in mm. 168-175, where he slowly “mutters as in sleep” these words: “No matter! Onward!” Perhaps the pianississimo sung words of the chorus of the Quietly Resigned lulled him to sleep, but then Schoenberg gives the directions for the singer to resume the original tempo and sing frischer (fresh), and wieder im Ton, wie zu Anfang (Again in tone, like the beginning). Gabriel quickly snaps back into his Sprechstimme commands: “Ah, the air is pure again – Onward, without pause! Come here, those of you who believe you have been brought nearer by your deeds.”

After a short instrumental interlude, the following section features the soloists, as they sing one by one, informing Gabriel about how they have sought God. The style of singing seems to represent each character as the One Who Is Called and He Who Is Chosen completely sing their selections; but the negative accounts of The One Who is Rebellious, The One Who Is Struggling, and The Monk are given in Sprechstimme. As mentioned earlier, The Dying One, the final and only female soloist, uses Sprechstimme until transformed into the character The Soul, where she finally sings, although without words. Gabriel’s solos throughout this section are basically responses to the various soloists’ soliloquys. The positive or negative content of Gabriel’s responses also seem to dictate whether or not he sings or uses Sprechstimme.

The first character, The One Who Is Called, sings his excerpt, as he explains his situation to the angel. His positive words speak of beauty, joy, and lack of suffering, which Schoenberg portrays in song. In mm. 241-49, Gabriel replies to him: “Nevertheless you are self-satisfied: your idol grants you fulfillment before you, like those who seek, have tasted the torments of
longing. Self-sufficiency (too simple a formula, for every continuation is torment) keeps you warm. Heathen, you have beheld nothing.” As Gabriel responds, his words are at first subdued and quiet, but then become loud and the orchestration accented, when he speaks the final chastising words, “Heathen you have beheld nothing.” His negative response remains in disjunct *Sprechstimme*, as he chides the character. During Gabriel’s excerpt, an ensemble of woodwinds and horns alternates with the stringed instruments several times, possibly reflecting the lack of suffering in the life of The One Who Is Called, contrasted with his false idol of self-sufficiency.

Gabriel responds next to One Who Is Rebellious, where in mm. 278-86, he states in *Sprechstimme*: “This Either and this Or, one and two, like shortsightedness and arrogance, each contingent on the other and for that very reason neither valid: the lever for your rebellion! To listen open-mouthed, in wonderment, but not to contradict!” Only woodwinds accompany Gabriel until just after the word “rebellion,” when the trumpets, trombones, and tuba enter and Schoenberg gives the singer the simple direction *grob* (rough). As we have seen in previous works, the use of brass accompaniment with angel music is often associated with judgment.

In his next brief appearance in mm. 303-306, Gabriel speaks in response to The One Who Is Struggling. Only accompanied by stringed instruments, he states in *Sprechstimme*: “You are wrong: the more occasions are capable of making you unhappy, the more sensitive you prove to be, the nearer you are.” After further comments from The One Who Is Struggling, Gabriel’s second response is one of his longest excerpts in the work, as he sings solemnly above a three-part choir in mm. 332-56. This is also one of the few instances where instead of performing in *Sprechstimme*, Gabriel sings throughout the entire excerpt, possibly because part of his excerpt describes the “One far higher,” likely God or Christ.
He sings:

Against his will and yours, one is there to guide you. Come closer – one who on a middle level is a likeness and possesses radiance, who resembles One far higher, as the distant overtone the fundamental; while others, deeper, almost fundamentals themselves, are further remote from Him, as bright rock crystal is further from diamond than carbon! Come closer, so that they can see you!

Only the choir and woodwind instruments first accompany Gabriel, but the orchestration becomes thicker, adding brass instruments as he sings: “Come closer, - one who on a middle level is a likeness...” Possibly this suggests drawing closer to God, with the brass instruments suggesting God’s majesty. With the words “and possesses radiance,” the orchestration features rolling arpeggios in the clarinet, glockenspiel, celesta, and harp, as Gabriel crescendos on a high D4 on the word “radiance.” On the word “diamond,” the composer writes for violins and violas only, and actually writes literal diamond note-heads in their parts, directing them to add artificial harmonics (see example 5.3).

The following lengthy excerpt, sung by He Who Is Chosen, features an all-sung solo totaling approximately sixty measures. Gabriel responds in mm. 419-43, where he sings:

Here you have eye and ear. But he will be far away when the waves that raged through him lap against you. Meanwhile nibble at the word: both at the same time would cause confusion. Let each choose the small part he can preserve: it is not too small, for he is accorded the wonderful gift – in which he resembles the Highest – of revealing himself in his slightest manifestation. Let the form remain remote from you; that will come to you later; one day you will be at one with it, when the next will repel you. So long as he is unclean, he must create, create himself from himself! When it is over, he will no longer be moved.

Schoenberg includes instances of word painting in this selection. One example of this is on the phrase “when the waves that raged through him lap against you,” where the harp, clarinets, and violins have wave-like figures. Underneath this is a long trill played by the cellos and double
basses until a wave-like ascending line travels up from the cellos through the violas, and into the second and first violin parts. On the word “highest,” Schoenberg gives Gabriel a high D4.

Example 5.3. Arnold Schoenberg, *Die Jakobsleiter*, mm. 352-54: diamond figures in stringed instruments.

The final part of this section involving the soloists includes the words of The Monk and Gabriel’s *Sprechstimme* response, found in mm. 482-510.
Gabriel sings:

But how you falter, how uncertain you are! Many whom pleasure and grief still move stand firmer than you, who are assailed only more in thought: you alone search your heart! Such things are already, not still, unknown to you. And do you still think the Lord desires your sacrifice? Do you not know that it is what you yourself desire? Do you not also remember the greater sacrifice you made? You were richer before you became nearer to perfection. Now you have given up all brightness for the melancholy knowledge – that you are inadequate! Learn yet more: You will still often fall into sin: your sins are punishments that cleanse. However, since you now already recognize as sins the deeds in which you earlier still felt yourself guiltless, that makes you more mature. Go, spread the word, and suffer: be prophet and martyr.

Like Gabriel’s response to The One Who Is Called, the instrumentation for his solo constantly alternates back and forth between stringed instruments and woodwind instruments, possibly reflecting the Monk’s spiritual immaturity and maturity. The Monk took sacrifices upon himself for the Lord, but did not bear them gladly. As Gabriel sings, “you were richer…,” Schoenberg adds to the four string parts (violin I and II, viola, and cello), seven more string parts, including three cellos and two string basses, literally making the sound richer and fuller. Towards the end of the solo in m. 507, Gabriel sings, “that makes you more mature,” and after the word “mature,” an ascending flute travels up to a high C7; the note C may symbolize the purity that comes with maturity. In this measure, the trumpets enter as well, possibly as a symbol of heavenly music (see example 5.4).

The section with the six soloists ends with a Sprechstimme solo from The Dying One. The character is male, but Schoenberg gives the direction: Von einer hohen Frauenstimme in tiefer Lage gesprochen (For a high woman’s voice in low speaking location). The solo is extremely low in the vocalist’s range, reaching down as far as an E3. In the last measure of the solo, Schoenberg gives the singer the directions, halb schmerzlich, halb freudig erstaunt (half painful, half joyfully amazed), as she sings a long descending glissando on the word “oh.” The
music changes as Schoenberg prefaces the heavenly section with an orchestral interlude consisting of harp and string glissandos and arpeggios, conventional instruments and figures for heavenly music. He also includes several keyboard and mallet percussion instruments including the glockenspiel, xylophone, and celesta.


In the final heavenly scene, The Dying One is transformed into The Soul, who now sings, but without words. This extremely virtuosic role features a melody with large intervals sometimes reaching over two octaves, and a range spanning from G3 to F6. In a passage for the Soul, Schoenberg writes a melody that extends from B3 to D6 within only three measures (see example 5.5).

Example 5.5. Arnold Schoenberg, *Die Jakobsleiter*, m. 583-84: wide melodic range for The Soul.
In some productions, this dual role is actually portrayed by one soprano. Gabriel sings a duet with The Soul and states:

You approach the light again, to heal the wings that darkness burned? In white, however, you will always go forth from here! I know your sufferings and your future sins. Now you no longer complain: you begin to grasp what you soon must forget again. When you return, leave your complaints behind you. When you no longer complain, you will be nearer. Then your ego will be eradicated…

At this point, Schoenberg did not compose any further music, although the text continued. The unfinished oratorio excludes Gabriel’s message from the end of the libretto, stating that through faith and prayer, one can be reintegrated with God.

Accompanying the duet is a three-part ensemble of high female voices with additional voices singing in Sprechstimme at various points throughout the duet, representing lower souls on the ladder. The use of a high soprano to represent The Soul, and the use of a chorus of high female voices, bears a resemblance with the traditional connection between heaven and a high tessitura. The work ends with a duet between The Soul and another soprano voice, both singing virtuosic vocalises, and finishes with The Soul singing a single unaccompanied high C (C6). Although Schoenberg’s musical language was anything but traditional, this may display the traditional convention of connecting C major with heaven. Schoenberg strayed from some of the traditional musical conventions for portraying angels, but there are still some ties to the past. In the new harmonic language and unique vocal techniques in Die Jakobsleiter, he vividly portrays the struggle one faces on his journey towards God.

As the First World War impacted many composers like Schoenberg, the Second World War also greatly affected composers and society in general. Immediately after World War II, church attendance rose, but in the following decades, attitudes toward institutionalized Christianity changed. Although the latter part of the twentieth century saw a general decline in
church attendance and in institutionalized religion in general, interest in the supernatural remained strong. General interest and belief in angels did not wane throughout the twentieth century. David Albert Jones states, “Angels remain attractive because they appeal to the imagination and to personal experience. They are a non-threatening element from established religion.”\(^{178}\) Composers continued to include angels in their works and one of the most important later twentieth-century works to contain a solo angel role is Messiaen’s opera *Saint François d’Assise* (Saint Francis of Assisi). The amount of involvement of the solo angel role in this work, as well as its beautiful music, costuming, and staging make it one of the greatest angel roles of the twentieth century.

**Olivier Messiaen’s *Saint François d’Assise***

Messiaen, a devout Roman Catholic, had always desired to compose a Passion or Resurrection of Christ; however, he felt representing Christ on stage did not seem appropriate. He never felt gifted enough to write a musical drama, but after being pressured to compose an opera, he finally agreed. He chose to base his opera on the life of Saint Francis, the character who in his mind most resembled Christ because of his poverty, chastity, and humility.\(^{179}\) Through his opera, Messiaen wanted to show the connection between the celestial and terrestrial, as well as the progress of grace in Saint Francis.\(^{180}\)

*Saint François d’Assise* contains eight tableaux, or scenes, showing Saint Francis’s progression through divine grace from humanity to sainthood. It does not contain a dramatic plot per se, but consists of selective stations in the saint’s life. The composer wrote the libretto himself, inspired by biblical scriptures; biographies and legends of the saint; as well as Francis’s


\(^{179}\) Samuel, *Olivier Messiaen Music and Color: Conversations with Claude Samuel*, 27.

original writings. Messiaen took some quotations directly from the writings of philosopher and theologian Thomas Aquinas, particularly his Summa theologica, which focuses on the connection between humanity and the divine.\textsuperscript{181} It took Messiaen eight years to write the opera, working year-round, day and night, with the first four years (1975-79) devoted to the libretto and components of the music, and the final four years (1980-1983) spent on completing the orchestration.\textsuperscript{182} The large size of the manuscript score made it necessary for the aging composer to lean over to write, causing him to have health issues, and subsequently periods of dejection.\textsuperscript{183} At times Messiaen thought he would not be able to finish the work; however, he completed the opera in early 1983 and it premiered at the Opéra de Paris on November 28 of the same year.

\textbf{Messiaen’s Musical Language}

Before specifically analyzing the music in Saint François d’Assise, it is necessary to understand some of Messiaen’s general compositional characteristics. His music does not fit into a clear compositional style, such as those works influenced by expressionism, serialism, or minimalism, to name a few. His unique style of composition includes a harmonic procedure he invented that uses seven “modes,” and his rhythms show ancient-Greek and Hindu influences, at times giving his music a nonmetrical character. Many of Messiaen’s compositions also feature birdsong, as the composer sought to transcribe the sounds of various birds and include them in his music.\textsuperscript{184} A final important aspect of Messiaen’s compositions is sound-color connection, since the composer viewed specific color associations in his mind’s eye whenever he heard music. Messiaen included all of these traits in the music of Saint François d’Assise.

\textsuperscript{181} The Summa theologica, written between 1265-1274, is Thomas Aquinas’s best-known work. The work, originally written as a guide for theology students, contains all of the main theological teachings of the Catholic Church at that time.
\textsuperscript{182} Bruhn, Messiaen’s Interpretations of Holiness and Trinity: Echoes of Medieval Theology in the Oratorio, Organ Meditations, and Opera, 149.
\textsuperscript{183} The manuscript score includes approximately 2,500 pages and weighs about twenty-five pounds.
\textsuperscript{184} Smither, A History of the Oratorio, vol. 4, 671.
Messiaen’s unique harmonic language stems largely from his system of ‘modes of limited transpositions,’ as described in his treatise *La technique de mon language musical* (“The Technique of my Musical Language,” 1944). Major and minor scales can be transposed twelve times before duplicating the same notes. Messiaen’s modes or scales, unrelated to church modes, can be transposed by a semitone fewer than eleven times before the original set of notes reappears. Although the modes use some chords from tonal harmony, the vertical sonorities do not follow traditional functional harmonic procedures, making for music that can sound static, complex, and dissonant.

Messiaen possessed a special interest in rhythm because of its primordial and essential role in music, and believed that the element distinguished his entry into contemporary music. Although the modes use some chords from tonal harmony, the vertical sonorities do not follow traditional functional harmonic procedures, making for music that can sound static, complex, and dissonant.

Messiaen possessed a special interest in rhythm because of its primordial and essential role in music, and believed that the element distinguished his entry into contemporary music. As mentioned earlier, he used ancient-Greek and Hindu rhythms as well as several other elements in his rhythmic language. Messiaen states:

> My rhythmic language is precisely a combination of all these elements: note-values distributed in irregular numbers, the absence of equal times, the love of prime numbers, the presence of nonretrogradable rhythms, and the action of rhythmic characters. All are brought into play in my rhythmic language; all become part of it, are blended and superimposed.”

This rhythmic complexity is one of the reasons why Messiaen wrote the majority of the lyrics for his vocal works. An example of ancient-Greek rhythmic influence in *Saint François d’Assise* will be discussed in more detail in the section regarding the fourth tableau.

### Sound-Color Association

Messiaen claimed that sound-color was the most important characteristic of his musical language. He possessed a type of synesthesia that allowed him to view colors in his mind’s

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186 Ibid., 79. Nonretrogradable rhythms are those that can be read from left to right or from right to left and remain the same.
187 Ibid., 20.
eye when hearing and reading music.\textsuperscript{188} He tried to translate these colors into his music, at times even notating them into his scores, and four of his modes of limited transpositions (2, 3, 4, and 6) were connected with specific colors.\textsuperscript{189} Even as a child, the composer admired the colors of the stained-glass windows in magnificent buildings such as the Sainte-Chapelle and the Chartres Cathedral. The eight tableaux in \textit{Saint François d’Assise} have often been likened to separate scenes in stained-glass windows.

\textbf{Birdsong}

Messiaen loved nature and had a great fondness for birds. Starting approximately in the 1950s, he began to frequently use birdsong in his compositions, although he included them as early as 1941 in his chamber work \textit{Quatuor pour la fin du temps} (Quartet for the End of Time).\textsuperscript{190} As an amateur ornithologist, the composer actually went into the wilderness, transcribing the exact calls and songs, and writing them into his music. His attempt to make these sounds as lifelike as possible proved to be challenging due to the limits of rhythm, temperament, and instrument range and timbre. His choice of Saint Francis was fitting, as the brother is also known for his love of nature and affinity for birds. While in the process of composing the opera, Messiaen traveled to the area where Saint Francis lived in order to transcribe the local birdcalls and then included them as motifs for each character. Within the opera, Messiaen includes transcriptions of forty-one different types of birds, whose passages include over one third of the score.\textsuperscript{191} He considered birds the greatest musicians on the planet and felt that they represented

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{188}{The term synesthesia represents a connection between the senses, in which stimuli applied to one of the five senses produce responses in another.}
\footnote{189}{For more information about Messiaen’s sound-color associations, see Jonathan W. Bernard, “Messiaen’s Synaesthesia: The Correspondence Between Color and Sound Structure in His Music,” \textit{Music Perception} 4, no. 1 (Fall 1986): 41-68.}
\footnote{191}{Bruhn, \textit{Messiaen’s Interpretations of Holiness and Trinity: Echoes of Medieval Theology in the Oratorio, Organ Meditations, and Opera}, 175.}
\end{footnotes}
the manifest realization of the marriage between the celestial and terrestrial realms; he even likened bird song to angelic communication.¹⁹² In Francis’s Sermon to the Birds in Tableau 6, he states, “He allowed you to sing so marvelously that you speak without words, like the speech of the angels, by music alone.”

**The Angel in *Saint François d'Assise***

The Angel appears at four points in the opera—in the third, fourth, fifth, and eighth tableaux; each one will be discussed in more detail below. The character is second in importance only to Saint Francis, and the scenes that feature the Angel most prominently are tableaux four and five. Although he speaks in the third and eighth tableaux, his appearances are brief. In the opera, the Angel is referred to as masculine, but is portrayed by a female soprano.¹⁹³ Messiaen desired a pure timbre for the role and, although he thought a child’s voice would be the purest, like many composers before him, he chose to use a lyric soprano, “a Mozartean voice, close to the voice of Pamina in *The Magic Flute*.“¹⁹⁴

In keeping with symbolic conventions used in religious paintings and stained glass windows, Messiaen adopted the typical iconographic characteristics for the Angel in *Saint François*, using a magnificent, androgynous being, dressed in a long robe with wings.¹⁹⁵ Although he believed real angels to be noncorporal and invisible, his vision of the character’s magnificent costume and five-colored wings was inspired specifically by Renaissance painter Fra Angelico’s fresco depicting the Annunciation, located in the monastery of San Marco in

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¹⁹² Bruhn, *Messiaen’s Interpretations of Holiness and Trinity: Echoes of Medieval Theology in the Oratorio, Organ Meditations, and Opera*, 175.
¹⁹³ Although a female portrays the character, I will refer to Messiaen’s Angel with the pronoun corresponding to the masculine gender of the French word.
¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 228.
Florence (see figure 5.1).¹⁹⁶

The angel in this painting wears a robe of a pinkish mauve color with a gold breastplate, a halo of gold capping the top of the head, and two five-colored wings striped blue, black, green, and yellow, with hanging red fringe. The costume worn by the Angel in the premiere reflected this image. The angels in much of Fra Angelico’s artwork seem to hover just above the ground and Messiaen initially wanted the Angel in Saint François to be suspended on a type of flying carpet. This sense of the angel being suspended or still was also inspired by Messiaen’s interest in Japanese theater.

Noh, the oldest surviving form of classical Japanese music drama, features movement and gestures that are typically slow. They often follow the pattern of a swift or slow movement followed by a long or short stillness, and then another movement. The flexible changes in rhythm and tempo in Noh music are reflected in the Angel’s slow, sung sections, alternating with quick

¹⁹⁶ Samuel, Olivier Messiaen Music and Color: Conversations with Claude Samuel, 44.
and lively instrumental sections. The smooth and free-flowing dancing demonstrates the objective of appearing to dance without moving. This inspired Messiaen’s stage directions, which instruct the Angel to appear to dance without touching the ground. This stillness can be seen, not only in the Angel’s physical gestures, but also in Messiaen’s musical writing for the Angel.

The Music of the Angel

Tableau Three: Le Baiser au Lépreux

In the third tableau entitled Le Baiser au Lépreux (The Kissing of the Leper), the Angel first appears in the darkness behind the window of the leprosarium. He is visible to the audience, but not to Saint Francis or the Leper since they have their backs turned towards him. The Angel gives this message to the Leper: “Leper, thy heart accuses thee. But God is greater than thy heart. He is Love. He is greater than thy heart. He knows all. But God is all Love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.”197 The statement, “Your heart accuses you, but God is greater than your heart,” taken from First John 3:20, is one of the most important themes in the opera, as the Angel speaks these words again in part to Francis at his death in the final tableau. In this scene, the Leper cannot identify the character or understand what the Angel is saying, but Saint Francis suggests that it was an angel sent to comfort him and then translates the Angel’s words.

Throughout this scene, Saint Francis and the Leper sing with accompaniment, but the Angel sings above soft, sustained chords. Almost every phrase sung by the Angel in this tableau

197 All translations for Saint François d’Assise are taken from: Olivier Messiaen, Saint François d’Assise, Deutsche Grammophon 445 176-2, 1999, compact disc.
begins and ends in A major, a tonality which Messiaen considered to be heavenly or associated with the color blue. An example of this is found at number 62 (see example 5.6).  


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This work does not contain traditional measure numbers, so the reference is to the rehearsal numbers included in the score.
The Angel’s sung sections are mostly soft and slow, with an accompaniment that includes mostly soft, sustained notes, suggesting the feeling of floating or being suspended, which matches the physical appearance Messiaen desired. The suspended feeling created by the stringed instruments and ondes martenot,\(^{199}\) contrasts with the Leper’s fast and loud staccato theme played by woodwinds and horns. The climax of this excerpt occurs in the Angel’s penultimate phrase, *demeure en Dieu* (dwells in God), where the melody reaches an A5 on the word “God,” possibly portraying the excitement of dwelling in God, and God in him.

Directly before the Angel’s first entrance at number 62, Messiaen writes a short section that features the birdsong of the gerygone, a yellow-bellied warbler from the Isle of Pines in New Caledonia, who serves as the specific bird associated with the Angel’s every action. Messiaen used birdcalls from the earthly paradise of New Caledonia to represent the heavenly paradise of Saint Francis’s dreams.\(^ {200}\) In each of the Angel’s appearances throughout the opera, the composer includes some form of the gerygone theme. The name “gerygone” literally means “born of sound,” and these birds are known for their sweet and beautiful calls and songs.\(^ {201}\) Perhaps the composer chose to associate this particular bird with the Angel because of its beautiful music and generally descending call, symbolizing the descent of the Angel to earth. The gerygone melody is typically played by either the piccolo or xylophone because of their similar timbres and ease in performing staccato figures, echoed by the glockenspiel, and accompanied by solo strings and triangle.\(^ {202}\) These animated gerygone sections, which imitate

\(^ {199}\) The ondes martenot (Fr. ‘martenot waves’) is a monophonic, electronic instrument invented by Maurice Martenot in approximately 1922. It resembles a keyboard with five octaves, and the player controls the pitch with either the keyboard or by manipulating the ruban, a horizontal ribbon controller. The other hand controls volume and timbre.
\(^ {202}\) An example of the gerygone melody is included in the section regarding the fourth tableau.
the quick tempo of the birdsong, contrast with the Angel’s slow and sustained solos, demonstrating Messiaen’s concept of the Angel being still. This also reflects the influence of Noh theater, with its slow action, followed by rapid movement. The Angel’s appearance in the third tableau is relatively short; the fourth and fifth tableaux contain the greatest amount of the Angel’s involvement.

**Tableau Four: L’Ange voyageur**

In the fourth tableau entitled *L’Ange voyageur* (The Journeying Angel), the Angel appears like a traveler and visits the monks’ monastery in La Verna to test the friars, probing them about their thoughts regarding predestination. As the Angel advances on the path towards the monastery, Messiaen instructs him to move very slowly, giving the impression of dancing without touching the ground. The two monks give very different replies to the Angel’s question about predestination. Brother Elias answers angrily, pushing the Angel back outside and closing the door. The Angel knocks again and, after being allowed entrance by Brother Masseo, asks Brother Bernard what he thinks about predestination. After he answers, and the Angel remarks that he answered well, Brother Bernard questions the Angel about his identity. After a great orchestral glissando, the Angel turns around, spreads its wings, and says, “I cannot tell you; my name is Wonderful.” Then he gestures to the door and it opens by itself; he leaves the way he came, exiting very slowly, appearing to dance above the ground. After this encounter, brothers Masseo and Bernard wonder if the being was an angel, and the gerygone theme follows, perhaps somewhat mocking the friars. The monks did not recognize the Angel’s status because of their lack of holiness; however, in the following tableau, Francis, because of his saintliness, identifies
his angelic status immediately. Messiaen describes the scene: “The Angel appears humbly among mortal men, like a beautiful, enigmatic butterfly, but the men don’t recognize it.”

Directly before the Angel’s entrance in Tableau 4, an additional theme symbolizing the Angel’s appearance occurs at number 31, which includes three instances of a twelve-tone piccolo melody homorhythmically accompanied by six additional flutes, and a triangle trill. Bruhn suggests that the twelve-tone row and the number of flutes – seven – hint at fullness and perfection. The triangle trill and high register give a feeling of angelic loftiness, a typical compositional convention used to symbolize heaven (see example 5.7).

Example 5.7. Olivier Messiaen, Saint François d’Assise, I/52, Tableau 4, no. 31: Angel motif including twelve-tone piccolo melody homorhythmically accompanied by six additional flutes.

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203 Samuel, Olivier Messiaen Music and Color: Conversations with Claude Samuel, 214.
204 Bruhn, Messiaen’s Interpretations of Holiness and Trinity: Echoes of Medieval Theology in the Oratorio, Organ Meditations, and Opera, 188.
Directly after the three-measure flute excerpt, another motif symbolizing the Angel’s grand appearance follows, featuring a large fortissimo cluster glissandi played by the strings and three ondes martenot, a crescendo on the suspended cymbal, and ending with a crack of the claves and whip. Bruhn suggests that the gesture seems inspired by the sound one might expect from a mighty winged creature’s landing or takeoff (see example 5.8). Shortly after these two motifs, the gerygone motif appears again, preceding the Angel’s knocking on the monastery door.

Example 5.8. Olivier Messiaen, Saint François d’Assise, I/52, Tableau 4, no. 32: Angel motif with fortissimo cluster glissandi.

The Angel’s knocking on the door demonstrates an example of one of Messiaen’s Greek rhythmic influences. The Angel knocks gently on the door of the monastery, but a long and exaggerated pounding of loud repeated chords follows, played by bass clarinet, contrabass clarinet, contrabassoon, two tubas, string bass, bass drum, and tambourine. The “knocking”

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205 Bruhn, Messiaen’s Interpretations of Holiness and Trinity: Echoes of Medieval Theology in the Oratorio, Organ Meditations, and Opera, 187-188.
rhythm (short-long-short-long) derives from the ancient-Greek dochmiac poetic meter, typically used in Greek tragedy to express agitation or distress (see example 5.9).

Example 5.9. Olivier Messiaen, *Saint François d’Assise, I/52*, Tableau 4, no. 39: Angel’s knocking on the monastery door showing ancient-Greek dochmiac rhythm.

\[\text{Example 5.9} \quad \text{Olivier Messiaen, *Saint François d’Assise, I/52*, Tableau 4, no. 39: Angel’s knocking on the monastery door showing ancient-Greek dochmiac rhythm.}\]

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Messiaen explained that the dochmiac rhythm symbolizes the “irresistible entry of grace, coming to question the Friars Minor.” Shortly after the Angel’s knocking on the door, the melody of the gerygone reappears and is played repeatedly by the piccolos, crotales, or xylophone (see example 5.10). The following tableau, involving the Angel’s interaction with Saint Francis, proves to be the Angel’s most significant appearance, as well as one of the most important moments in the opera.

Example 5.10. Olivier Messiaen, *Saint François d’Assise*, I/52, Tableau 4, starting two measures after no. 34: melody of the gerygone.

![Example 5.10.](image)

Tableau Five: *L’Ange musicien*

The fifth tableau entitled *L’Ange musicien* (The Angel-Musician) is the central scene of the central act, and as Bruhn suggests, the very center of the operatic body as a whole. At the beginning of this tableau, Francis kneels alone, praying for God to show him the joy of the Blessed and His abundant tenderness. Before the Angel’s appearance, we hear the same A major six-five chord found heard in the angelic music in Tableau 3, now in the humming of the chorus, vibraphone, and bells. While the A major chord is hummed by the chorus, the glockenspiel plays the gerygone motif. The humming continues, and the seven flutes play the twelve-tone motif, followed by the cluster glissando motif. The Angel calls twice to Francis, and a 32-measure

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207 Samuel, *Olivier Messiaen Music and Color: Conversations with Claude Samuel*, 229. This same knocking theme is used again when Francis receives the stigmata in Tableau 7.

section follows in which Messiaen composed an orchestral cacophony of birds including the black-headed warbler (2 clarinets, 1 oboe), song thrush (3 clarinets, crotales, claves, temple block, and chimes), the white-eye (piccolo 1), grey-headed sparrow (piccolos 2 and 3), and the garden warbler (4 flutes). The Angel then dominates the rest of the scene, appearing in sparkling light, holding a viol in his left hand and a curved bow in the right.

At this point the Angel speaks some of the most important words in the entire opera, as he explains the role of music in carrying us to God and allowing us to access Truth. He states: “God dazzles us through excess of Truth. Music carries us to God through default of Truth. You speak to God in music: He will answer you in music. Know the joy of the Blessed by the sweetness of color and melody. And may the secrets of glory open for you! Hear this music, which suspends life from the ladders of heaven, hear the music of the invisible.” The Angel’s song for Francis, beginning at number 70, bears very close similarity to his solo to the brothers in Tableau 4, with some modifications. The statement, “God dazzles us by an excess of truth; music transports us to God by an absence of truth,” is a paraphrase taken from Thomas Aquinas’ Summa theologica. In general, Messiaen liked the idea of the state of being “dazzled” or “blinded,” which relates to his love of the color and light of stained-glass windows. This scene reflects that ideal as the Angel’s music dazzles Saint Francis into an unconscious state in which he understands the mysteries of heaven.

As the Angel prepares to play his celestial viol solo, several glissandos are sounded, using natural harmonics on the strings of the violins and violas. During this section, Messiaen includes another interesting compositional technique, directing the solo double bass to play on two strings with either the metal screw button of the bow or a triangle rod. The composer likened
the combination of these high-pitched sounds to water droplets. Perhaps this contains some symbolism with depicting the Angel descending from heaven, or the celestial mysteries of heaven raining down onto Saint Francis. The Angel slowly draws the bow across the viol and the forest begins to resound. Messiaen describes the sound:

Roused by the music of the Angel, the forest reverberates; one notices some trombone pedal-sounds with the true chord of resonance, which is to say a very complex chord comprising the fundamental, octave, fifth, third, seventh, ninth, and also my cherished augmented fourth, a minor sixth, major seventh, and minor third – these last two scarcely audible. Joined to this harmonic layout is an orchestration in vertical diminuendo where trombone pedal-sounds first assert themselves, fortissimo, followed by relatively sustained harmonics played by horns and bassoons, and finally the weaker harmonics entrusted to the flutes. To this whole orchestra are added the eoliphone, \(^{210}\) which imitates the sound of wind, and the geophone, \(^{211}\) imitating that of sand. Only truly has the impression that the Angel’s viol has awakened the whole earth.\(^{212}\)

Messiaen strove to create special colors in the orchestra, stressing the importance of the instrumental ensemble as an additional role in the opera.\(^ {213}\)

Messiaen represents the Angel’s playing of the viol, not with a violin or viola, but with three ondes martenot arranged in separate locations to create an effect of space. The eerie and supernatural sound of the electronic instrument makes for a particularly supernatural effect, especially as Messiaen writes for it in its highest register. Jacques Tchamkerten states that Messiaen gives the ondes the key role in this scene, that it is through this instrument that Francis “receives God’s grace; it is by the intermediary of the ondes that he opens himself to communion with the Lord, to the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ, a communion that finds its

\(^{209}\) Samuel, *Olivier Messiaen Music and Color: Conversations with Claude Samuel*, 234.

\(^{210}\) The eoliphone, or wind machine, is a friction idiophone that imitates the sound of the wind. As the barrel is rotated, the silk or coarse canvas covering the barrel rubs against the slats, causing a rise and fall in volume and pitch, dependent upon the speed of rotation.

\(^{211}\) The geophone is a rotating drum containing sand, which imitates the sound of sand.

\(^{212}\) Samuel, *Olivier Messiaen Music and Color: Conversations with Claude Samuel*, 235.

\(^{213}\) Ibid., 250.
ultimate realization in the receipt of the stigmata.”

Accompanying the ondes solo, the violins, violas, and cellos play a C-major fourth and sixth. The use of the C major six-five chord in this celestial excerpt once again demonstrates Messiaen’s portrayal of heavenly music by the use of the key of C. Messiaen claimed that in his sound-color associations, C was connected with the color bright white, which is associated with purity and heaven. The Angel proceeds to play celestial music for Francis, allowing him a foretaste of heavenly joy, which renders the saint unconscious. After the Angel disappears, Francis remains unconscious until the music changes abruptly with the entrance of Brother Leo and his subsequent return to earth. Francis’s final words of the tableau state, “If the Angel had played the violin a little longer, because of its unbearable sweetness my soul might have left my body.”

**Tableau Eight: La Mort et la Nouvelle Vie**

After Francis’s Sermon to the Birds in Tableau 6 and his receipt of the stigmata in Tableau 7, the final tableau, entitled La Mort et la Nouvelle Vie (Death and the New Life), shows Saint Francis dying, laying on the ground in a small church, and surrounded by all of the brothers. The gerygone theme sounds once again, announcing the arrival of the Angel. As the Angel suddenly appears, all luminous, Saint Francis sees him, but the other brothers do not. The Angel sings: “Francis! Francis! Remember…Francis! Francis! the singing behind the window…But God is greater than thy heart. He knows all.” The Leper appears beside the Angel, beautiful and richly attired. The Angel reminds Francis: “’Tis he, ‘tis the Leper whom thou hast embraced! He died holy and returns with me to help thee. Both of us will encircle thee for thy entry into Paradise, in the light and glory! Today, in a few moments, thou wilt hear the music of

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the invisible…and thou wilt hear it forever…” The Angel’s text and melody in this excerpt bear much similarity to the music sung to the Leper in the third tableau, only now sung to Francis.

Before he dies, the saint repeats the Angel’s words from the fifth tableau: “Lord! Lord! Music and poetry have led me to Thee: by image, by symbol, and in default of Truth. Lord! Lord, illumine me with Thy Presence! Deliver me, enrapture me, dazzle me forever by Thy excess of Truth…” Although, like most operas, the work ends with a physical death, in his opera Messiaen wanted to show Francis attaining new life.216 After Francis has been transported to heaven, the opera ends with an extended, joyous fortississimo C major six-five chord. Again, we see the connection of C major with purity, whiteness, and heaven, as Francis is transported there. The opera shows Messiaen at his finest and many consider this to be his magnum opus. In several ways, the work is unique; the composer claims that Saint François d’Assise is neither opera nor oratorio, but a “musical spectacle in which the movements of the characters and their costumes are essential.”217 His superb physical and musical depiction of the Angel, as well as its importance in the opera, makes it one of the most engaging angel roles found in western classical music from the past four centuries.

Transition to the Twenty-First Century

Since Messiaen’s opera premiered in 1983, composers have written many additional works containing solo angel roles, directly reflecting society’s increased fascination with the supernatural. The 1990s and early 2000s saw a special resurgence of interest in spiritual warfare and angelic subjects. This can be seen in the popularity of books about angels such as Frank Peretti’s “This Present Darkness” trilogy and Francesca Lia Block’s “Dangerous Angels” young adult fiction series, television series such as “Touched by an Angel” and “Fallen;” and movies

216 Samuel, Olivier Messiaen Music and Color: Conversations with Claude Samuel, 214.
217 Ibid., 250.
such as “City of Angels,” “Angels in the Outfield,” “Wings of Desire,” and “The Prophecy.” As the amount of western classical musical works including angels increased, a trend began in the 1990s with composers writing angel roles for the countertenor voice. This could be partially because of the renewed interest in historically-informed performance and an increase in the amount of countertenor soloists. Composers may have wanted to be more biblically accurate with the representation of the angel as a male, while still using a voice with a pure, high tessitura, or perhaps they just wanted to do something different. Some of the works from the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries containing angel roles for countertenors include John Tavener’s choral work, *The Apocalypse* (1991-92), Arne Nordheim’s opera, *Draumkvedet* (1993), Jonathan Dove’s church opera, *Tobias and the Angel* (1999), John Adams’s opera-oratorio, *El Niño* (2000), and George Benjamin’s opera, *Written on Skin* (2012). Composers of the modern era continue to write works with roles for angels, demonstrating their unceasing relevance, popularity, and significance, even today.
Chapter VI

Conclusion

In the various works containing angel roles mentioned throughout this study, certain compositional conventions tend to be associated with angels. Across over three hundred years of music, several commonalities can be found within angel music such as major tonalities, specific key associations, ascending and descending motives, similar instrumentation, echoing techniques, the use of voices possessing a high tessitura, and instances of possible numerological significance. The following conclusion gives an overview and comparison of the common angelic musical elements found in the specific pieces analyzed in this study.

Harmony & Key Associations

A large majority of angelic music tends to be in a major modality. In every work in this study, with the exception of the atonal Die Jakobsleiter, the music of the Angel has been predominantly major unless it is speaking about evil, sin, or judgment. In Schütz’s Weihnachtshistorie, the Angel’s music resides in a mostly major modality except in Intermedium VII when the Angel tells Joseph to flee to Egypt because Herod is seeking the Christ child to destroy him. In this section, the harmony becomes more unstable and dissonant, reflecting the negative message. The Angel’s opening aria in Handel’s La Resurrezione, “Disserratevi, oh porte d’averno” (Be unbarred, ye gates of Avernus), speaks about the majestic power and radiance of the eternal God, and resides in a major key. His following aria, “D’amor fu consiglio” (By love’s inspiration), which speaks of Christ’s painful sacrifice, remains mostly in minor and contains dissonant harmonies and disjunct intervals. A major key reflects the joyful, pastoral text of “Risorga il mondo lieto e giocondo” (Let all the world arise and rejoice), while the following recitative that describes Hell’s monsters, “Di rabbia indarno freme coi mostri suoi
l’incatenato Averno” (In vain doth fettered Hell with all its monsters rage), is disjunct and dissonant. Handel sets the Angel’s final aria, “Se per colpa di donna infelice” (As through the fault of an unhappy woman), mostly in minor as the Angel states, “As through the fault of an unhappy woman death discharged its bitter poison into the breast of man.” However, in the B section, the modality turns to major as the Angel sings, “Then let women bear the joyful news that He who died and rose again has thereby vanquished death, rekindled life.”

The opening orchestral movement of Haydn’s The Creation resides in C minor, reflecting the darkness before God created the earth, and suddenly modulates to C major as the chorus sings, “And there was light!” In Beethoven’s Christus am Ölberge, the Seraph sings primarily in a major key until the tonality shifts to minor as the angel explains what will happen to those who do not honor the blood of Christ: “Verdammung ist ihr Los!” (Damnation is their lot!) Mendelssohn’s Elijah features many angelic soloists and ensembles, most of them singing in major keys as their messages contain comforting and encouraging topics. In Elgar’s The Dream of Gerontius, the textual major key associations are not as strong; however he uses dissonance and chromaticism in places for special effect, such as the Guardian Angel’s account of the painful stigmata of Saint Francis. A noticeable difference also exists between the music of the Guardian Angel and the Angel of the Agony. The music of the Angel of the Agony, who pleads with God for all souls, is considerably more dissonant than the music of the Guardian Angel. Most of Schoenberg’s Die Jakobsleiter is atonal and dissonant, so the associations between tonality and the text are not as clear. Connections with the text occur more prominently in the use of song or Sprechstimme and the force of Gabriel’s statements.

Sweet-sounding harmonies containing intervals of thirds or sixths are common in the music of angels. Examples of excerpts with these intervals are found in the angelic sections of
Weihnachtshistorie as the Angel and two violette sing and play in thirds and sixths. The B section of the aria, “Disserratevi, oh porte d’averno,” in La Resurrezione which speaks about yielding to the King of Glory features a solo oboe that plays in thirds or sixths with the vocal line, possibly symbolizing the sweetness that comes with yielding to God. Bach often used parallel thirds and sixths in his music representing heaven. In the Sanctus of his B Minor Mass, the chorus sings the text of the seraphim’s song taken from Isaiah 6:3: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory.” In this movement and in his Christmas cantatas, Bach writes vocal and instrumental parts filled with parallel thirds and sixths. Much of the angelic music in Mendelssohn’s Elijah contains parallel thirds and sixths, especially in the choruses such as “For He shall give his Angels charge over thee” (No. 7), “Lift thine eyes to the mountains” (No. 28), and “He, watching over Israel” (No. 29).

In several of the pieces mentioned in this study, a common connection also exists between angelic music and the key of C major. Haydn’s The Creation as a whole resides in C major with specific examples including the opening movement and Gabriel’s first aria. The principal tonal area of Beethoven’s Christus am Ölberge is C. Bach’s Sanctus mentioned above, as well as Mendelssohn’s chorus “Holy is God the Lord Sabaoth” (No. 35), both using the angelic text from Isaiah 6, reside in C major. In The Dream of Gerontius, Elgar’s grand chorus, “Praise to the Holiest,” begins in A-flat major, modulates to E-flat major, and ends in C major as The Soul and Guardian Angel draw closer to God. Messiaen in his sound-color associations connected the key of C with bright white, a color associated with purity and heaven. During the Angel’s heavenly viol solo in Tableau 5, the violins, violas, and cellos accompany the three ondes martenots with a C major six-five chord, and at the conclusion of the work, after Francis is

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218 In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the term violett commonly denoted the viola or small bass violin.
219 Leahy, J. S. Bach’s “Leipzig” Chorale Preludes: Music, Text, Theology, 86.
transported to heaven, the orchestra plays an extended fortississimo C major six-five chord. Although *Die Jakobsleiter*, Schoenberg’s atonal oratorio, contains no references to the key of C major, it ends with The Soul singing a single, unaccompanied high C.

**Tessitura/Voice Part/Gender**

In the large majority of angel solo roles, composers have set the angel’s music in a high register. In their analysis of Schütz’s *Weihnachtshistorie*, mentioned in the second chapter, Vaccaro and Fineman give the principle shown as far back as the 1600s that high pitch equals whiteness and goodness, and low pitch equals blackness and wickedness. The role of the Angel in *Weihnachtshistorie* was likely sung by a boy soprano since women were not allowed to sing in church during that time. In *La Resurrezione*, the part of the Angel is played by a castrato soprano, also because of the fact that women were not allowed to sing in the church in Rome during that time. In Bach’s *Christmas Oratorio*, he gave the small seven-measure angel role to a female soprano. Haydn’s *Creation* features three angel soloists, with two of them, Gabriel (S) and Uriel (T), set in a high tessitura. Chapter three discusses speculations why Haydn may have chosen those voice parts for the specific roles. Although the bible refers to him as a male, the role of Gabriel typically tends to be set for a high voice. The part is typically sung by a soprano or by a countertenor, especially in works from the latter half of the twentieth century (see the Appendix which contains the roles and their corresponding voice parts).

In Beethoven’s *Christus am Ölberge*, the role of the Seraph is written for a female soprano, and in *Elijah*, Mendelssohn gives the primary angel role to an alto and the secondary angel role to a soprano. Although this is one of the first instances of a lower voice portraying an angel, with the exception of Raphael in Haydn’s *Creation*, Mendelssohn also uses two females for the parts. Elgar uses a mezzo soprano for the Guardian Angel in *The Dream of Gerontius*,

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although he refers to the angel as male. This also occurs in Messiaen’s *Saint François d’Assise* as the Angel is referred to as a male in the libretto, yet is sung by a lyric soprano. Elgar writes the role of the Angel of the Agony in *The Dream of Gerontius* for a bass; although he is not evil, the character is associated with the solemn topic of death. Schoenberg chose a baritone for the role of the angel Gabriel in *Die Jakobsleiter* possibly because of the darker nature of the oratorio and his desire to break away from tradition. Finally, in *Saint François d’Assise*, Messiaen wanted a pure timbre for his angel and thought a child’s voice would be the purest, but chose to use a lyric soprano.\(^{221}\) Several of the angel roles written in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are written for countertenors, possibly reflecting an increased interest in early music and historically accurate performance.

**Descending/Ascending Motives**

Similar to the idea of high pitch being equated with goodness and low pitch with wickedness, high pitches are also typically associated with the heights of heaven and low pitches with the depths of hell. Most of the works mentioned in this study contain some form of this principle. The continual descending lines in the Angel’s first *Intermedium* in *Weihnachtshistorie* may represent either the Angel’s, or Christ’s, descent to earth as the Angel gives the Shepherds the news of Christ’s birth. In *La Resurrezione*, a descending line in the vocal melody in the Angel’s opening aria, “Disserratevi, oh porte d’averno,” occurs as the Angel sings about the underworld. His next aria, “D’amor fu consiglio,” contains an angular melody, with its wide leaps and dissonant intervals, possibly symbolizing Christ’s descent to Hell and ascent to Heaven. In the opening variation of Bach’s Canonic Variations on *Vom Himmel hoch da komm’ ich her* (“From Heaven above to Earth I come”) (BWV 769a/769), the music reflects Martin Luther’s Christmas text describing the angels’ message about Christ’s birth. Bach uses a

descending line for the opening motive, which symbolizes the descending gift from heaven as the angel brings his message to earth.

In Haydn’s *Creation*, Gabriel’s first aria, “The marv’lous work beholds amaz’d,” shows an example of high pitches equaling heaven as in the English version she sings the lyrics “and from th’ethereal vaults.” While she sings about heaven Gabriel has an ascending scale up to a high C6. In *Christus am Ölberge*, Beethoven writes descending eighth- and sixteenth-note figures directly preceding the Seraph’s opening entrance, symbolizing her descent to earth. Mendelssohn uses the soprano Angel in *Elijah* in only one eighteen-measure recitative that speaks of standing on the mountain before God. Perhaps he chose to use the soprano for this section because of the lyrics’ reference to the high location and God’s glory. In *The Dream of Gerontius*, Elgar precedes the Guardian Angel’s opening entrance with the Angel motif, followed by a long descending line, possibly symbolizing a descent to earth. When the Angel sings of dropping The Soul into the waters of Purgatory, the vocal line and several of the instruments’ lines descend during the words, “sinking deep, deeper, into the dim distance.”

Violins play ascending and descending lines directly preceding Gabriel’s first entrance in *Die Jakobsleiter*. This could either represent Gabriel’s movement, or the souls’ movement, up and down Jacob’s ladder. Another connection between physical location and musical elements can be found in Gabriel’s commentary to the various persons and groups on the ladder. Gabriel sings when addressing individuals or groups higher on the ladder, but uses *Sprechstimme* when speaking to those lower on the ladder. The ending of the work, which contains The Soul singing a single unaccompanied high C, may also be symbolic of The Soul reaching the heights of heaven.
Finally, in Saint François d’Assise, Messiaen desired a feeling of the Angel floating or being suspended above the ground. In the large majority of the Angel’s excerpts, her vocal lines are high and sustained, giving the feeling of being suspended above the earth. Messiaen’s choice of the gerygone birdcall for the Angel may be because of its generally descending call, symbolic of the Angel’s descent to earth. In the Angel’s viol solo, Messiaen wrote for the ondes martenot in its highest register and in one of the Angel’s motifs the piccolo melody, accompanied by six other flutes and a triangle trill, suggests a feeling of angelic loftiness because of the high register of the instruments. The type of instrumentation in the angel excerpts of many additional works also share these similarities.

**Instrumentation**

Commonalities between angels and specific instrumentation exist in many of the pieces mentioned in the study. Connections between angels and stringed instruments, as well as brass instruments, appear not only in music, but also in artwork. In every appearance of the Angel in Weihnachtshistorie, Schütz includes two violette that interweave with each other and echo the Angel’s melodic motives. The instrumentation in this work is symbolic as pastoral recorders portray the shepherds, trumpets announce Herod, and alto and tenor trombones accompany the High Priests. In the opening aria of La Resurrezione, trumpets accompany the Angel as he sings about the radiance and the might of God. Trumpets are often associated with angels and the power of God, such as the destructive power found in the Final Judgment. In this case, the trumpets in the Angel’s aria also signify the power of Jesus Christ over Lucifer and the underworld. In his following aria, “D’amor fu consiglio,” a solo violin accompanies and echoes the voice.

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222 Samuel, Olivier Messiaen Music and Color: Conversations with Claude Samuel, 227.
223 Bruhn, Messiaen’s Interpretations of Holiness and Trinity: Echoes of Medieval Theology in the Oratorio, Organ Meditations, and Opera, 188.
In *The Dream of Gerontius*, the Angel motif is most commonly played by the violins. Running triplets in the violins and harp played during the Angel’s words, “And heaven begun,” (cue 26) display another possible association between stringed instruments and heaven. The oratorio’s final Choir of Angelicals’ chorus, “Praise to the Holiest,” also features the harp and stringed instruments. In *Die Jakobsleiter* the violins play ascending and descending lines before Gabriel’s first entrance, possibly symbolic of his travel on the ladder. Finally, in Tableau 5 of *Saint François d’Assise*, the Angel holds a viol and curved bow and plays a solo for Saint Francis, which allows him to understand the mysteries of heaven. The instrument is actually represented in the orchestra by the electronic ondes martenot, but this shows another example of an association between angels and stringed instruments.

In a similar manner to the association of stringed instruments with angels and heavenly music, several of the works mentioned in this study feature trombones in association with evil or the underworld. Records from the first performance of Handel’s *La Resurrezione* show that a trombone-player was paid for his services, although Handel does not include a trombone part in the score.²²⁴ Trombone parts were rare during this time; however, it may have been used to double the bass part of the basso continuo during Lucifer’s arias. Beethoven uses trombones in *Christus am Ölberge* to accompany the Seraph and chorus as they repeat the text from the Seraph’s previous aria about the damnation of those who do not honor the blood of Christ. In *The Dream of Gerontius*, the Angel of the Agony is accompanied by brass instruments, including three trombones, as he pleads with God for “all Tormented souls, the dying and the dead.” Finally, Gabriel’s message to The One Who Is Rebellious in *Die Jakobsleiter* begins softly, accompanied by woodwinds alone, as he states “This Either and this Or, one and two, like shortsightedness and arrogance, each contingent on the other and for that very reason neither

²²⁴ Ewerhart, “New Sources for Handel’s ‘La Resurrezione,’” 127.
valid: the lever for your rebellion!” After the word “rebellion” Schoenberg adds trumpets, trombones, and tubas as Gabriel says, “To listen open-mouthed, in wonderment, but not to contradict!”

Echoing

Echoing is a common characteristic of angel music, especially with choral angels. In Weihnachtshistorie, two violette echo each other, as well as the Angel’s melody. Similarly, in the Angel’s aria “D’amor fu consiglio” in La Resurrezione, a solo violin echoes the voice. The use of echo in heavenly choral music is common, which may be traced to Isaiah 6:3, where it states that the seraphim around God’s throne were calling to each other: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” Bach’s Sanctus quotes this text from Isaiah 6:3. In this movement, Bach uses six vocal parts and composes several passages where the upper and lower voices are echoing each other. In the angelic choral movements of Mendelssohn’s Elijah, echoing often occurs between different choruses. “For He Shall Give His Angels” (No. 15) is in an antiphonal style with a double quartet of angels. His “Holy is God the Lord Sabaoth” (No. 35) which also includes the text from Isaiah 6:3, includes a quartet of women’s voices alternating and combining with the chorus. The two ensembles echo each other for the first twelve measures and often the instruments and voices echo each other’s melodies, giving the effect of the seraphim crying back and forth to one another. Elgar’s The Dream of Gerontius includes angelic echoing before and during the Angel’s first appearance. The two first violin parts echo the Angel motif before she enters. In the same work, the choral movement “Praise to the Holiest in the height,” sung by the Chorus of Angelicals, contains double choruses that echo each other.
Numerological Significance

Whether it was intended by the composers or not, a large amount of the angel music in this study appears to contain some numerological significance. The use of the number three and multiples of three seem to be a recurring trend throughout angelic music. Not only does the number three contain biblical significance, often symbolizing the divine perfection of the Trinity, but it contains significance in angelology as Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite’s angelic hierarchy is organized according to the angels’ closeness to God in three sets of three. In *Weihnachtshistorie*, the Angel appears three times, his excerpts include three voices (the Angel and two *violette*), and the Angel and chorus of angels are the only ones who sing in triple meter, with the exception of a short excerpt sung by the Evangelist and the final chorus with an angelic text.

Multiples of three also commonly appear in angelic music. The number six has significance in angelology because the Seraphim, the highest rank of angels, have six wings. Bach’s *Sanctus* with its seraphic text contains six vocal parts and Mendelssohn’s version in *Elijah* contains six different instrumental parts. The Angel motif in *The Dream of Gerontius* is composed of a minor third followed by a major sixth and, in the Guardian Angel’s retelling of the story of Saint Francis, three solo cellos and three solo violas accompany her during the section about the stigmata. This reflects the actual story about Saint Francis, in which a six-winged angel appeared to him as he received the stigmata. In the same work, during the final chorus of the Choir of Angelicals, the meter changes from 3/4 to 6/4 to 9/4 as more voices are added.

Schoenberg’s *Die Jakobsleiter* contains many instances of the number six, which appear in several ways. The oratorio is partially based on Honoré de Balzac’s philosophical novel
Séraphîta, in which the name of the title character derives from the biblical angelic seraphim. A six-note tone row opens the work, accompanied by six chordal notes that include the other notes of the chromatic scale. The opening six-note basso ostinato repeats six times until m. 6, when the other six notes of the chromatic scale have been sounded. The chorus following Gabriel’s six directions contains two groups of six parts each, and six solo characters exist on the ladder.

In a final possible case of numerological significance, there are three instances of a twelve-tone piccolo melody accompanied by six flutes before the Angel’s entrance in Tableau 4 of Messiaen’s Saint François d’Assise. Although this is not connected with the number three, Siglind Bruhn suggests that the twelve-tone row and the seven flutes hint at fullness and perfection.²²⁵

The angel music described in the various works in this study contain many commonalities and, although they span over three hundred years, their angelic music shows significant similarities. As society and religion have changed over the past three hundred years, the role of angels in vocal music has also evolved.

**Solo Angel Roles: A Reflection of Society and Religion**

Over the past four hundred years, the amount and type of solo angel roles reflected the current culture. As all of the arts of the baroque era displayed some fascination with the spiritual and supernatural forces, many musical works contained angels. The Reformation affected the use of angels, as some Lutherans possibly shied away from using the supernatural beings because of their fear of elevating angels to an inappropriate height. The church’s ruling that denied women the right to sing in church also caused many angel roles to be written for boys or men, although still in a high tessitura.

²²⁵ Bruhn, Messiaen’s Interpretations of Holiness and Trinity: Echoes of Medieval Theology in the Oratorio, Organ Meditations, and Opera, 188.
After the baroque era’s time of religious renewal, the Enlightenment spread across Europe in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As people began to question traditional religious beliefs in the search for rational and scientific thought, the amount of sacred vocal music composed suffered a decline, therefore causing a decline in the number of angels in vocal works. Haydn’s *Creation*, one of a few choral works from the classical period that has achieved lasting fame, contained three angels, although it was filled with Enlightenment messages. Some of these possible references to the Enlightenment include the transition from darkness to light in the instrumental introduction; the celebration of the beauty, courage, and strength of mankind in Uriel’s aria “In Native Worth” (No. 24); and the turn from angels to mortals in Part III. The omission of the Fall of Man may also reflect a desire to celebrate man and nature, withholding the part of the narrative that would reveal man’s imperfection.

In the nineteenth century, sacred vocal music saw another renewal, partly because of Felix Mendelssohn’s performance of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* on March 11, 1829, which sparked a renewed interest in Bach’s sacred vocal music. The movements of nationalism and historicism also influenced the German people’s interest in their composers and music of the past. As more sacred choral works were written, the number of angel solo roles began to increase. In the following century, the amount of growth and change in science, technology, transportation, and communication greatly affected the arts, as well as people’s views about religion. Movements in the arts such as expressionism affected angel roles, as Arnold Schoenberg chose to use a baritone singing in *Sprechstimme* for the role of Gabriel in *Die Jakobsleiter*, hardly something that was conventional for angel music. Interest in angels remained strong, even as participation in organized religion waned. The end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century saw a marked increase in the number of angel
roles, which reflected society’s renewed fascination with the supernatural. A large majority of these roles were also written for countertenor, which possibly reflects a general interest in the later twentieth century in historically accurate performance as well as in music with countertenor roles.

**Further Study**

This study adds to current literature that ties together the themes of religion and music and adds to the relatively small body of literature regarding the connection between angels and music. Future study in this area could include analyzing the connections between angel music and artwork containing angels from the same time period. A similar study could also be made regarding angel music and literature, such as John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and the many vocal works containing angels that have been inspired by this epic poem. In this study, only works with the largest angel roles were analyzed, but one could compare the angel roles in several works by one composer, such as Giacomo Carissimi or Marc-Antoine Charpentier. Finally, a study could be done comparing the music of demonic angels and that of heavenly angels. Studying the commonalities between angel solo roles and how they relate to the society and culture of their time is also important for further understanding for those preparing to sing one of these roles.

The fact that well over seventy-five works composed since 1600 contain solo angel roles (not including roles for demonic angels) demonstrates their historical and musical importance to composers, performers, and audiences alike, and indicates that angel roles will continue to be composed in the classical vocal music of the future. Tracing the use of solo angel roles from 1600 to the present gives one a greater view of how society has shaped the role of the angel in vocal music and displays the common characteristics found throughout their music.
### Appendix: List of Selected Angel Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Title of Work</th>
<th>Name of Character</th>
<th>Voice</th>
<th>Part</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>Emilio de' Cavalieri</td>
<td>Rappresentatione di anima et di corpo</td>
<td>Angelo custode</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1602</td>
<td>Rogier Michael</td>
<td>*Die Empfängnis unseres Herrn Jesu Christi</td>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>Spoken</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>Heinrich Schütz</td>
<td>Historia der fröhlichen und siegreichen Aufferstehung unsers einigen Erlösers und Seligmachers Jesu Christi</td>
<td>Die zweene Männer im Grabe</td>
<td>T, T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1632</td>
<td>Stefano Landi</td>
<td>Sant' Alessio</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>CMS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1649</td>
<td>Andreas Fromm</td>
<td>Actus musicus de Divite et Lazaro</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1650s</td>
<td>Giacomo Carissimi</td>
<td>Ezechias</td>
<td>2 Angels</td>
<td>S, S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1650s</td>
<td>Giacomo Carissimi</td>
<td>Abraham et Isaac</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1650s</td>
<td>Giacomo Carissimi</td>
<td>Judicium extremum</td>
<td>2 Angels</td>
<td>S, S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1664</td>
<td>Heinrich Schütz</td>
<td>*Historia von der Geburt Jesu Christi</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>BS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1669</td>
<td>Giacomo Carissimi</td>
<td>Judicium Salomonis</td>
<td>2 Angels</td>
<td>S, S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1673</td>
<td>Giovanni Legrenzi</td>
<td>La vendita del core humano (IL cuor umano all'incanto)</td>
<td>Guardian Angel</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1675</td>
<td>Alessandro Stradella</td>
<td>*Ah! Troppo è ver - Cantata per il Santissimo Natale</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1678</td>
<td>Dietrich Buxtehude</td>
<td>Die Hochzeit des Lammes</td>
<td>Angels</td>
<td>S, S, S, A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marc Antoine</td>
<td>Le sacrifice d'Abraham (Sacrificium Abrahae)</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1683</td>
<td>Johann Schelle</td>
<td>*Actus musicus auf Weihnachten</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1683-85</td>
<td>M. A. Charpentier</td>
<td>Le massacre des Saints Innocents</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>1684</td>
<td>M. A. Charpentier</td>
<td>*In nativitatem Domini Nostri Jesu Christi Canticum</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1684-85</td>
<td>M. A. Charpentier</td>
<td>*Pastorale sur la naissance de notre Seigneur Jésus Christ</td>
<td>2 Angels</td>
<td>S, A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1686</td>
<td>M. A. Charpentier</td>
<td>Caecilia, virgo et martyr</td>
<td>Two Angels</td>
<td>S, A</td>
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<tr>
<td>1701</td>
<td>Jacques-François</td>
<td>*Oratorio pour la naissance de l’enfant Jesus, entre l’ange &amp; les pasteurs</td>
<td>L’Ange</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charpentier</td>
<td>Lochon</td>
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<tr>
<td>1709</td>
<td>George Frideric</td>
<td>La Resurrezione</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>CS</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1732-34 or 1738</td>
<td>Leonardo Leo</td>
<td>La morte d’Abel</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1734</td>
<td>Johann Adolph Hasse</td>
<td>Il Cantic De’Tre Fanciulli</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>MS</td>
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<tr>
<td>1734</td>
<td>Johann Sebastian</td>
<td>*Christmas Oratorio</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 1735-1739</td>
<td>Johann Adolph Hasse</td>
<td>Serpentes ignei in deserto</td>
<td>Angelus</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>1747</td>
<td>Baldassare Galuppi</td>
<td>Adamo ed Eva (Adamo caduto)</td>
<td>Angel of Justice</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Angel of Mercy</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>1747</td>
<td>George Frideric</td>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>BS</td>
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<tr>
<td>1751</td>
<td>George Frideric</td>
<td>Jephtha</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>(orig. BS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1761</td>
<td>Georg Philipp</td>
<td>*Weihachtsoratorium</td>
<td>Angel</td>
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<tr>
<td>1762</td>
<td>Georg Philipp</td>
<td>Der Tag des Gerichts</td>
<td>Archangel</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>1769</td>
<td>J. C. F. Bach</td>
<td>Die Pilgrime auf Golgatha</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>1769</td>
<td>John Christopher</td>
<td>Gideon (oratorio pastiche largely from the works of Handel)</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>1773</td>
<td>J. C. F. Bach</td>
<td>*Die Kindheit Jesu</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>1774</td>
<td>François-Joseph</td>
<td>*La Nativité</td>
<td>Voice from heaven</td>
<td>S</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gossec</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1775</td>
<td>Franz Joseph Haydn</td>
<td>Il ritorno di Tobia</td>
<td>Raffaello</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>1775</td>
<td>Ferdinando Bertonii</td>
<td>David poenitens</td>
<td>Angel of the Lord</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>1796-98</td>
<td>Franz Joseph Haydn</td>
<td>The Creation</td>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>S</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uriel</td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raphael</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Composers</td>
<td>Titles and Details</td>
<td>Angel Names(s)</td>
<td>Gender(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>Ludwig van Beethoven</td>
<td>Christus am Ölberge</td>
<td>Seraph</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>Rodolphe Kreutzer</td>
<td>La mort d'Abel</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>Friedrich Schneider</td>
<td>Das Weltgericht</td>
<td>Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Uriel</td>
<td>S, A, T, B</td>
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<td>1826</td>
<td>Paolo Bonfichi</td>
<td>La Genesi, o sia Le opera di Dio nei sei primi giorni del mondo</td>
<td>Michele, Gabriele, Raffaele</td>
<td>B, T, S</td>
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<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>Robert Schumann</td>
<td>Das Paradies un die Peri</td>
<td>Engel</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>1846</td>
<td>Felix Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Elijah</td>
<td>2 Angels</td>
<td>A, S</td>
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<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>Camille Saint-Saëns</td>
<td>*Oratorio de Noël</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>George F. Bristow</td>
<td>The Oratorio of Daniel</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>Anton Rubinstein</td>
<td>The Demon</td>
<td>Angel</td>
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<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>César Franck</td>
<td>Les béatitudes</td>
<td>Angel of Mercy</td>
<td>S</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Jules Massenet</td>
<td>*La Vierge</td>
<td>L'Archange Gabriel, Un Archange, Un Archange</td>
<td>S, S, MS</td>
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<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Charles Gounod</td>
<td>La rédemption</td>
<td>Angel</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Josef Gabriel</td>
<td>*Der Stern von Bethlehem</td>
<td>Engel</td>
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<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Max Bruch</td>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Angel of the Lord</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Edward Elgar</td>
<td>The Dream of Gerontius</td>
<td>Guardian angel</td>
<td>MS</td>
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<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Edward Elgar</td>
<td>The Apostles</td>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Marco Enrico Bossi</td>
<td>Paradise Lost</td>
<td>Uriel</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Horatio Parker</td>
<td>*The Shepherd's Vision: A Christmas Cantata</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>S or T</td>
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<tr>
<td>1917-44</td>
<td>Arnold Schoenberg</td>
<td>Die Jakobsleiter</td>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>BB</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Ottorino Respighi</td>
<td>*Lauda per la Natività del Signore</td>
<td>Angelo</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Ottorino Respighi</td>
<td>Maria egiziaica</td>
<td>Voice of an angel</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Elizabeth Poston</td>
<td>*The Nativity: A Sequence for Christmas</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>CT</td>
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<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Benjamin Britten</td>
<td>The Burning Fiery Furnace</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>BS</td>
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<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Patric Standford</td>
<td>*A Ceremony for Christmas</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>CT</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975-83</td>
<td>Olivier Messiaen</td>
<td>Saint François d'Assise</td>
<td>Angel</td>
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<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Krzysztof Penderecki</td>
<td>Paradise Lost</td>
<td>Ithuriel, Gabriel, Raphael, Michael</td>
<td>CT, T, CT</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991-92</td>
<td>John Tavener</td>
<td>The Apocalypse</td>
<td>Angel 1, Angel 2, Angel 3, Angel 4, Angel 5, Angel 6, Angel 7</td>
<td>CT, CT, CT</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Arne Nordheim</td>
<td>Draumkvvedet</td>
<td>Young Angel</td>
<td>CT</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Jonathan Dove</td>
<td>Tobias and the Angel</td>
<td>Raphael</td>
<td>CT</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>John Adams</td>
<td>*El Niño</td>
<td>Trio</td>
<td>CT, CT, CT</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Dominick Argento</td>
<td>Evensong: Of Love and Angels</td>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>BS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Angels</td>
<td>Voice Parts</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009-11</td>
<td>Luke Bedford</td>
<td><em>Seven Angels</em></td>
<td>Angel 1</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Angel 2</td>
<td>MS</td>
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<td>Angel 3</td>
<td>MS</td>
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<td>Angel 4</td>
<td>T</td>
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<td>Angel 5</td>
<td>T</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Angel 6</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Angel 7</td>
<td>BB</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>George Benjamin</td>
<td><em>Written on Skin</em></td>
<td>First Angel</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Second Angel</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Third Angel</td>
<td>T</td>
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</table>

* = Christmas-related works

**Abbreviations for Voice Parts:**

- BS: Boy Soprano
- S: Soprano
- MS: Mezzo Soprano
- A: Alto
- CS: Castrato Soprano
- CMS: Castrato Mezzo Soprano
- CA: Castrato Alto
- CT: Countertenor
- T: Tenor
- Bar: Baritone
- BB: Bass-baritone
- B: Bass
Bibliography


