

VOICE OF THE FORGOTTEN AMERICAN: THE ORATORIOS OF HORATIO PARKER

BY

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I. The Cultural Context of Horatio Parker's Life and His Music

Horatio Parker is an enigma. To modern musicians and audiences, he is largely unknown and relegated to obscurity, even in his native country. Given that he was the first American composer to achieve some modicum of international fame, culminating with him becoming the first American to ever receive an honorary doctorate from Cambridge, this is highly puzzling. That he was highly prominent during his time period, there is a little doubt. His student, Charles Ives, while eventually distancing himself from his instructor, initially used the relationship to further his career. Ives' cantata, "The Celestial Country," was modeled on Parker's oratorio, *Hora Novissima*, and he made it a point to identify himself prominently as Parker's student at the premiere.¹ With the success of *Hora Novissima* both in the United States and England, and the later achievements of winning both the Metropolitan Opera's composition contest with his opera *Mona* and the National Federation of Music Clubs' opera composition contest with his *Fairyland*, there is little doubt that he reached a level of distinction unmatched at the time by his American contemporaries.

Parker's work was largely noted as conservative. As time went by, the taste in American classical music shifted to a much more modern, experimental approach, such as that championed by his former student. In a parallel fashion, other American composers became renowned for their work with popular music elements. Over time, American music became recognized for both this spirit of innovation and the cultural impact imparted by genres in the popular stream. Given that Parker did not cultivate either approach, his work was largely forgotten. Ironically, Parker's own position on the nature of classical music in America may have in fact contributed to his own music's demise. As he took over the music program at Yale, he worked to build up the social perception of musicians in America. Parker did not want himself or other musicians to be

¹ J. P. Burkholder, "Ives and Yale: The enduring influence of a college experience." *College Music Symposium* 39 (1999): 35.

classified as bohemians, so he himself had a very dignified, aloof manner that he also worked to impart to his students. Parker's approach became a symbol of elitism, creating a clear separation between "classical" and popular styles."² In fact, he wrote:

There are humbler levels of popular taste which are surely significant. It is indeed stirring to hear a great mass of people, including a seven foot policemen singing... The policeman's eyes and attitude show sincerity and devotion... He is moved by his vocal efforts and enjoys his emotion and singing. So do I, but I wish the music were such as I could swallow without gagging.³

By largely ignoring the vernacular music of his day, Parker failed to appeal to a larger audience and to use the strength of the more native music of his country to separate himself and achieve a more lasting prominence.

Youth and Student Years

Given Parker's humble beginnings, it is somewhat surprising that he so readily shunned music in the popular realm. On the other hand, perhaps it is that history that drove Parker so hard to seek a higher place in society. Parker was born on September 15, 1863 in Auburndale, Massachusetts, which was a largely rural environment at the time. His father, Charles, was a distinguished architect.⁴ His mother was noted as being well educated with a good command of classical and modern languages, and she had a strong poetic sense. Despite this, his formal education appears haphazard, with the only record of his studies appearing at Williams Grade School in Auburndale.⁵ However, given the strong education of both his parents, it is plausible that he was well tutored at home.

Throughout his younger years, Parker showed no interest in musical study. His father was a naturalist and frequently took the children on walks through the fields and woods. As a youth, Parker inherited the love for the outdoors. He spent a good deal of time outside and was also

² Alan Howard Levy, "The Search for Identity in American Music." *American Music* 2, no. 2 (1984): p. 73-74.

³ Ibid., 73.

⁴ Louis Charles Elson, *The History of American Music* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1904), 176.

⁵ William Kearns, *Horatio Parker, 1863-1919: His Life, Music, and Ideas* (Metuchan, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1990), 3-4.

noted for his fondness for snakes and for spending hours stargazing.⁶ It was only after he reached the age of 14 that he took an interest in music. His mother gave music lessons to many children in the neighborhood, and one day, upon hearing another student's lesson, it apparently sparked his competitive interest.⁷ He began taking lessons with his mother and he evidently worked tirelessly to make up for his late start. His mother worked to support his interest as much as possible and had organ pedals installed in the back room so he could practice on them.⁸

Parker attempted his first composition shortly afterwards at the age of 15, in the form of a setting of 50 nursery rhymes by Kate Greenway. This was followed by his first professional position at the age of 16 as an organist at St. Paul's, a small, Episcopal church in nearby Bedham.⁹ However, it was noted that given how recently he had started instruction, his skills were somewhat lacking, requiring him to memorize all the hymns ahead of time for the services.¹⁰ At around the same time he began more formal musical instruction with George Chadwick in Boston. Parker was noted as being impatient with the restrictions of musical form and rebellious of the discipline of counterpoint, a surprising fact given that later as a professor at Yale, he became a strict disciplinarian in those areas, contributing to his reputation as a conservative composer. Nevertheless Chadwick noted in Parker a "remarkable facility in harmony and modulation," and "a very fertile vein of lyric melody."¹¹

Parker's late start at studying music casts an interesting light on some of his later comments. In the introduction to the text *Music and Drama*, he wrote, "The years of early youth and adolescence are invaluable to budding musicians, especially to composers or players. A major part of the inevitable drudgery of mind and muscle training must be done before twenty or renounced forever." He later continues, "Knowledge and command of music literature must begin

⁶ Isabel Parker Semler, *Horatio Parker; a Memoir for His Grandchildren* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1942), 37.

⁷ Ibid., 33.

⁸ Ibid., 33.

⁹ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 5-6.

¹⁰ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 34.

¹¹ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 6.

in early youth. For anyone to begin the study of harmony at 20 and hope to be successful is futile. Unless talent is shown long before this, another vocation should be chosen.”¹²

At the suggestion of Chadwick, Parker traveled to Germany in 1882, at the age of 18, to study with Rheinberger. The esteemed composer accepted Parker into his Hochschule in Munich upon Chadwick’s introduction and recommendation. Prior to his departure, Parker had already made a lot of progress in his development as a composer, having his first work, *Three Songs*, accepted for publication by Arthur Schmidt.¹³ Not surprisingly, given his family’s modest income, money while at the Hochschule was a constant issue. The family saved and sacrificed to afford to pay for his schooling, and a generous donation from a family friend help pay for the trip there. Still, Parker was frequently late with his conservatory dues.¹⁴

Interestingly, upon his arrival at the Hochschule, Parker was recognized as a student of great ability, with a very independent mindset. He often questioned the theories and rules provided to him in compositional training.¹⁵ Rheinberger was extremely authoritarian and conservative, and Parker would challenge him by introducing musical elements in his works that would go against his ideas.¹⁶ As time went on, his challenges to Rheinberger became less frequent and Parker was noted as one of his best students. However, this particular behavior once again brings to mind Parker’s later relationship with his student Charles Ives. Ives would frequently bring examples of composition that would go against the conservative teaching of Parker, most notably his use of unresolved dissonance and a fugue in 4 keys that Parker openly poked fun at.¹⁷ Perhaps Parker’s relationship with Ives was a reflection of Parker’s own youth and he was attempting to rein Ives in as Rheinberger had done with him.

¹² Horatio Parker, Foreword to *Music and Drama*, by Horatio Parker, ed. (Boston: Hall and Locke Company, 1911), xiii, xv.

¹³ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 6-7.

¹⁴ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 43, 57.

¹⁵ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 60.

¹⁶ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 8-9.

¹⁷ J. P. Burkholder, *Charles Ives: The ideas behind the music*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 61.

During his time at the Hochschule, Parker would regularly attend services at an old Catholic church. Through this, he became familiar with the old masses and choral music of Palestrina, Lassus, Bach, and Handel, among others. The music had a tremendous impact on him, and led him to exclaim that, “No instrument ever approximated the sound of the human voice.”¹⁸ In fact, it cannot be overstated how greatly affected he was by listening to that music, as while there was almost no indication of interest in choral writing prior to his arrival in Munich, it became a dominant interest for the rest of his life.¹⁹ While at the Hochschule, Parker composed several part songs as well as three extensive choral works: *The Ballad of a Knight and His Daughter*, *King Trojan*, and a setting of *Psalm 23*.

Both *The Ballad of a Knight and His Daughter* and *King Trojan* were quite advanced given Parker’s relative youth and inexperience. They were later published and performed with some regularity, rather than remaining mere student works. The *Ballad of a Knight and his Daughter* features a tripartite arrangement, with each of three sections further subdivided into three parts. The narrative text was sung entirely by the chorus, but Parker managed to achieve variety by alternating the use of mixed, male, and female choruses. The work really establishes Parker’s predominant choral style as mostly homophonic in texture while interspersing a few points of imitation, in this case, in the beginning of the second stanza of the opening chorus and a canon between the men’s chorus and orchestra.²⁰

His graduation work of 1885, *King Trojan*, foreshadowed his eventual work with larger vocal forms, approaching his second oratorio, *The Legend of St. Christopher*, in terms of scope and ambition, though lacking that later work’s advanced dramatic techniques. However, the use of tense dialogue between Trojan and his page, dramatic orchestral interludes, and fluctuating tonal schemes in Part II, became staples of his dramatic writing.²¹ William Kearns criticized the

¹⁸ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 61.

¹⁹ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

story as being ponderous. Part I moves slowly with several expository narrative threads, and is somewhat sectionalized, with each of the three main dramatic points remaining fairly independent of each other musically. Part II moves much faster in comparison with the music strongly moving forward towards climax.²²

New York and the Emerging Composer

After three years in Munich, during which Parker met and became engaged to his future wife, Anna Plössl, he moved to New York. As a young, unproven composer, finding work was difficult, but he did accept a job as a teacher at St Paul's School in Garden City, Long Island, and an organist position at St Luke Church in Brooklyn. Upon marrying Anna in 1886, Parker took a new job as organist at St. Andrew's Church in Harlem, which gave Parker more opportunity to compose, particularly for the church services.²³ However, a more lucrative position opened up at Church of the Holy Trinity, a year later so Parker quickly moved on. During this period, he became associated with Frank Van der Stucken, who was the leading conductor of German singing societies in New York. This association gave Parker many opportunities to have his choral works performed.²⁴

Despite rapidly improving his position, the years in New York proved to be difficult financially as well as domestically. The period of 1890-1891 was particularly trying as Parker suffered the loss of his father, infant son, grandmother, and youngest sister. The strain probably contributed to Parker's health problems, and he already showed the physical deterioration that would eventually lead to his early death.²⁵ Isabel Semler notes that Parker was an emotional wreck who only functioned through the support of his wife and mother.²⁶ Despite this, the period would still prove to be quite productive for him and perhaps the most important in establishing his career. Besides writing several cantatas, he also began work on his first oratorio, *Hora*

²² Ibid., 83.

²³ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 70-72.

²⁴ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 14-15.

²⁵ Ibid., 16.

²⁶ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 79.

Novissima, during the period of 1891-1892. His father's death no doubt was a huge influence on its composition. Besides being dedicated to his father, the poem "Hora Novissima," by the 12th century monk Bernard of Cluny, was a favorite of his father's and he had his mother provide an English translation to the work.²⁷ The poor health and emotional trouble did not slow down his other professional endeavors, as he began a very prestigious job as a teacher at the National Conservatory of Music in 1892.

The year of 1893 proved to be the breakthrough moment for Parker. He submitted his cantata, *Dream King and His Love*, as well as *Hora Novissima* into a prize competition sponsored by the National Conservatory in honor of Dvorak. *Dream King and His Love* ended up winning, and it received good reviews. Later that year, on May 3rd, the Church Choral Society of New York premiered *Hora Novissima* and several other performances quickly followed. Also in 1893, he composed the rhapsody for baritone and orchestra titled, *Cahal Mór and the Wine-Red Hand*, which he regarded as his finest composition at the time.²⁸

Parker realized the significance to his career of the premiere of *Hora Novissima* well ahead of time and spent a good deal of time in its preparation. By all accounts it was a tremendous success and one of great historical importance, as it was the first major effort in the field of American oratorio up to that time.²⁹

Meanwhile, *Cahal Mór*, after finally premiering in 1895, was met with some of the best reviews of any Parker composition. Musical America called it, "one of the landmarks in the progress of American vocal composition." Kearns summed it up by saying, "The significance of *Cahal Mór* lies in its opulent orchestration, its advanced tonal and harmonic writing, and its imaginative portrayal of the poem's dramatic incidents."³⁰ Chadwick declared that the score had

²⁷ Ibid., 80.

²⁸ David Stanley Smith and W. Oliver Strunk, "A Study of Horatio Parker." *The Musical Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1930): 156.

²⁹ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 18-19.

³⁰ Ibid., 188-190

seldom been surpassed by any American composer in terms of dramatic power, poetic suggestion, and vivid orchestral coloring.³¹

Cáhal Mór is a story taken from Irish history about the ruler of the same name. Ireland enjoyed great prosperity during this period of Cáhal Mor's reign, but his downfall was very forceful and dramatic, and left the land in desolation. The work sprung from an earlier desire to write a cantata on the subject, and thus shares many structural elements with his cantatas overall. For instance, there is a recapitulation of the opening stanza music during the final stanza. Foreshadowing his later work on *The Legend of St. Christopher*, Parker makes use of Wagner-like motivic techniques. In *Cáhal Mor*, the motives take on a structural function, with the principal motive being first heard in the long, florid introduction.³²

One particular technique that Parker uses that also recurs in later works is the interruption of one harmonic progression with another in a different key. The work consists of six stanzas and the musical material for each is quite varied. The introduction, the first stanza and the last stanza are all based upon the principal motive. The second stanza concerns military might, so Parker uses a martial orchestral theme. The third stanza introduces a new ascending motive that represents the dome of a palace. The fourth stanza describes a change from light to darkness which Parker represents by shifting to a minor mode with irregular rhythmic accompaniment, alternating duple and triple eighth notes. He also reintroduces the dome theme. In the climactic fifth stanza, he uses text painting extensively with fragmented, contrasting phrases to represent the destruction of the kingdom.³³

In the fall of 1893, Parker moved to Boston to accept a position at Trinity Church on Copley Square, with a salary offer that reportedly was the largest ever offered to a musician in Boston. Parker enthusiastically made the decision to move, as he felt that serious musicians were

³¹ George Chadwick, *Horatio Parker, 1863-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), 3.

³² Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 186.

³³ *Ibid.*, 187.

treated as mere entertainers in New York and Boston had a better cultural appreciation.³⁴ Parker's feeling proved to be correct, as life reportedly became much happier for the family. In Boston, Parker had a strong support and social network with his family nearby and his musical friends, George Chadwick, Arthur Foote, Philip Hale and William Blake all residing there.³⁵

Yale and Music Education

The stay in Boston, however, turned out to be a short one. In 1894, no doubt because of the growing success of *Hora Novissima*, Parker was offered a position at Yale. Despite reluctance from his wife and children to leave Boston, the small town of New Haven was appealing and the job was very desirable.³⁶ Parker settled in at New Haven quickly, organizing a local symphony and a women's chorus, while also finding time to write music regularly. He reportedly was very fond of the academic environment and working with the older scholars there.³⁷

At the time he accepted the position, music education was in its infancy not only at Yale, but throughout most of the country. As Parker was hired to build the Yale music program, shepherding the department into becoming a school and being named its first dean in 1904, Parker had a large impact on Yale as well as music education throughout the country. Prior to his arrival, Yale only had one other full time faculty member in music. Parker quickly expanded the course offerings in music to seven, adding courses in Music History, Composition, Orchestration, and Conducting. In addition, he created a music library, and expanded the number of applied instruments from one to eight.³⁸ Parker's manner of instruction was heavily based on music theory and composition, which was a change from what was typically seen in colleges at the time. While other schools focused on music in relation to other arts and other areas of education to provide an overall general education experience, Parker mostly focused on music itself.³⁹ His

³⁴ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 20-21.

³⁵ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 83.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 92.

³⁸ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 24-25, 34.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

approach can be summed up briefly in his quote, “The best way to appreciate music is to make it.”⁴⁰

Parker also impacted music education at the elementary school level. He served as the editor for the school music song set, “The Progressive Music Series,” in which he personally reviewed every piece of music, and as the editor to the vocational series, “Music and Drama.” He was noted as deploring the idea of “singing-school,” and the idea of essentially just rote learning in music instruction. He fought against the treatment of music as an extra-curricular activity and felt that children should be taught how to read and write music as an academic subject.⁴¹ His overall approach to music education is best summed up by his statement, “There are three functions which are essential to the practice of music: that of the composer, who is a producer; that of the performer, who is a reproducer; and that of the listener, who receives the results of the composer and the performer.”⁴²

Despite enjoying it immensely, Parker kept a very busy schedule, between teaching, conducting and composing. The workload did not help his rheumatism which began to grow more acute.⁴³ Nevertheless, Parker remained very productive. In 1895, he wrote the cantata, *Ode for Commencement Day at Yale University, 1895*, which has a self-explanatory title. The text was written by a Yale colleague, Edmund Clarence Stedman, and Parker reportedly completed it in only a month.⁴⁴ A more significant work came in 1897, when he completed his second oratorio, *The Legend of Saint Christopher*. While *Hora Novissima* was not yet performed outside of the United States, it had been widely successful domestically. With his second oratorio, Parker took a much more dramatic and progressive approach, using an original text written by his mother. The

⁴⁰ Smith, “A Study of Horatio Parker,” 158.

⁴¹ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 31.

⁴² Parker, *Music and Drama*, xiii-xiv.

⁴³ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 96.

⁴⁴ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 40.

end result was a work that blended the traditional structure of *Hora Novissima* with dramatic elements, such as leit-motives and fluid orchestral connections between sections.⁴⁵

The oratorio was premiered at Carnegie Hall in 1898 by the New York Oratorio Society under the direction of Walter Damrosch. While generally praised, it was not as popular as his earlier work, perhaps due to an American audience unprepared to hear Wagnerian style motive work in a religious oratorio. Still the piece was an important one in Parker's output. Isabel Semler stated that many considered the unaccompanied chorus from the oratorio, "Jam sol recedit," to be his single most perfect achievement,⁴⁶ while Kearns declared that it was one of his most imaginative compositions.⁴⁷ Louis Charles Elson also praises it as one of Parker's most fluent and attractive works, drawing attention to the fugue, "Quoniam tu solus" as being one of the best examples of his contrapuntal writing.⁴⁸

International Recognition

In 1899, Parker was invited to England to conduct *Hora Novissima* at the Three Choirs Festival of Gloucester, Worcester, and Hereford. While the piece was known in England with a review of the score done in the publication, the *Musical Times*, as early as 1893, it had not yet been performed there. With the invitation, he became the first American composer ever to be invited to conduct a choral work in England.⁴⁹ The performance generated much interest in England and was one of the principal attractions of the Festival with the attendance of that event only exceeded by performances of *Elijah* and *Messiah*. Reviews of the performance were generally positive, but few were enthusiastic.⁵⁰ Parker enjoyed his time in England, feeling at

⁴⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁴⁶ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 100.

⁴⁷ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 40.

⁴⁸ Elson, *History of American Music*, 180.

⁴⁹ William Kearns, "Horatio Parker and the English Choral Societies," *American Music* 4, no. 1 (1986): 21.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 23.

home and particularly impressed by the quality of the choruses and by the general hospitality and frankness of his hosts.⁵¹

The feeling was apparently shared by his British colleagues. After the success of the *Hora Novissima* performance, Parker was commissioned to write *A Wanderer's Psalm* for the 1900 Three Choirs Festival, but the half hour long cantata was generally not as well received. In many ways, it was a step back for Parker, since he basically reworked many of the techniques and ideas of *Hora Novissima*, instead of showing the progressive and more dramatic techniques of his more recent *Legend of St. Christopher*. Critical reviews dismissed *A Wanderer's Psalm* as being too conservative and bland, lacking ingenuity, but also admired its orchestral writing and skillful contrapuntal manipulation.⁵² David Stanley Smith, however, disagreed on the quality of the work. While he admitted that some critics did not like the cantata's resemblance to *Hora Novissima* or its extensive use of the Tonus Peregrinus, he insisted that as a simple, beautifully written piece for singers and orchestra, it should rank among the best of all American compositions.⁵³

During the period of 1901-1902, Parker took a sabbatical in Europe, with most of his time spent in England. He had earlier received a commission to write a choral work for the 1902 Norwich Festival. The piece he responded with was *A Star Song*, which he completed in 1901 and labeled a "rhapsody." It subsequently won the Paderewski Prize in the category of choral composition.⁵⁴ *A Star Song* signaled that Parker was fully in his middle period. While his earlier period consisted mostly of looking to the past and integrating it with a more contemporary harmonic language, beginning with his work in the oratorio *The Legend of Saint Christopher*, Parker begins to expand his progressive style. While *A Wanderer's Psalm* was a step back from the oratorio, in *A Star Song* Parker picks up where he left off, fully embracing and expanding upon the newer ideas presented in *The Legend of Saint Christopher*. While not dramatically

⁵¹ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 109.

⁵² Kearns, "Horatio Parker and the English Choral Societies," 24-25, 27.

⁵³ Smith, "A Study of Horatio Parker," 157.

⁵⁴ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 45.

driven like that oratorio, Parker broke new ground with his expansiveness of melodic line, a more subtle harmonic conception, and a greater freedom in phrase structure. Upon its premiere, however, it was a critical failure. Its poem was considered quite weak and critics dismissed it as a failed attempt to be modern.⁵⁵ It was never performed again and perhaps Parker took to heart the criticism; while some of the concepts were later utilized in the opera *Mona* and other solo oriented works, no other later choral composition was nearly as experimental.

The year 1902 proved to be the peak of Parker's time in England. Besides the premiere of *A Star Song*, *The Legend of St. Christopher* finally received its first performance in England. The performance was very well received. The London times commented on the strong dramatic writing, declaring that it appeared to be operatically conceived and noting Parker's potential as an operatic composer. Overall, the work seemed to receive more enthusiasm in England than when it was performed in the United States.⁵⁶ Also, in June of 1902, Parker became the first American to be awarded an honorary doctorate by Cambridge, an honor that made him particularly proud.

His sabbatical leave was not all for composition and performance, however, as he also studied the state of composing and musical taste throughout Europe at the time. Some of his observations came via a presentation to his Yale Colleagues upon his return, from which we can gain insight on his own views of composition:

On the whole, I am inclined to think that music among the Anglo-Saxons is built upon a more solid foundation, one better calculated to sustain the weight of an imposing superstructure, than the music of the Germans. The music of the Germans is now so colored by externals that it has hardly a separate existence. That of the French seems not to come from deep enough, not to go deep enough – superficial. That of the Italians is opera – a form with such manifest limitations that one may almost regard it as outside the sphere of reasonable activity among Anglo-Saxons. For the present English and American music is surely as a whole more impersonal, more abstract than thin, and if it remains untainted by these (qualities) seems sure to bring forth results of great beauty and value. German, French, and Italians unite in one grand scramble to dodge the obvious ways of putting things.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Kearns, "Horatio Parker and the English Choral Societies," 27-28.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 27.

⁵⁷ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 164-165.

From this quote, Parker's belief of music as an absolute, existing for its own sake, becomes apparent. This viewpoint would seem conservative for this period of time, and recalls the beliefs of Beethoven and his contemporaries. His idea of a more "solid foundation" refers to form, which he believes should be the core to building and creating a piece of music and not some other influence. In a speech he wrote for a 1909 meeting of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, he stated "Total absence of form is inconceivable in music, and form implies inevitably some degree of formality."⁵⁸ He rejects the idea of music as purely sensual or hedonistic. He thought of musical "substance" as being abstract, pure, and concerned with form, while rejecting extramusical association. Therefore, music had "substance" in its own right without having to be written for a specific purpose.⁵⁹

In 1904, the music department of Yale at last expanded to become a school, of which Parker was named the first dean. He also received the exclusive and highly distinguished honor of being elected to the previously mentioned American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1905, becoming only the second musician to receive election after Edward McDowell.⁶⁰ Not all went well for Parker, however, as his mother also died that same year. With the death of his mother, Parker's ties to Boston began to wane, and he instead began more frequent trips to New York.⁶¹ The period was also marked by increasingly frequent illness. Parker would often have to use crutches and he sometimes could only use one leg for his organ playing.⁶²

Stage Music and Opera

Despite the incredibly busy schedule, Parker still found plenty of time to compose. He began work on the concert aria for mezzo-soprano and orchestra, *Crépuscule*, in 1904, although he did not finish the work until 1907 and it was not performed until 1911. Parker's growing interest in works for the stage began to take a more concrete form as he chose in 1905 to write

⁵⁸ Horatio Parker, "Contemporary Music." *The North American Review* 191, no. 653 (1910): 526.

⁵⁹ Burkholder, *Ives: The Ideas Behind the Music*, 61-63.

⁶⁰ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 54.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 53-54.

⁶² Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 170.

incidental music for two plays, to be staged in New York. The first was titled *The Eternal Feminine*, a play by Frances Nathan, which was set on an island in the Aegean Sea in 400 BC. The plot centered on the idea of women controlling the destiny of men. The work now appears to be lost but records show that Parker completed 14 orchestral pieces and a number of female choruses.⁶³ The second play was *The Prince of India*, which premiered on Broadway in 1906 and was based on the Lew Wallace historical novel.⁶⁴

Parker began making regular trips to the Norfolk Festival, an annual choral event, in 1905.⁶⁵ Out of that relationship, he was commissioned to write three works over the span of 10 years, the first of which was performed in 1908. This work, *King Gorm the Grim*, was a ballad for chorus and orchestra which was based upon Norse and Celtic legends and told the story of a Danish monarch who lost his son in battle. It was Parker's first secular cantata in 15 years, the previous one being *Dream-King and His Love* of 1893.⁶⁶ Given the success of those early cantatas and the fact that he had not written in the form for quite some time, he naturally turned to them for a model for basic concepts. However, Parker had advanced greatly as a dramatic writer in that time. Leaning heavily on what he learned through his work on *The Legend of St. Christopher* and *A Star Song*, he produced a work that would once again preview *Mona* with his use of colorful orchestral writing and motivic association, and in portraying a tragic theme by recreating an atmosphere of dramatic intensity.⁶⁷

Parker's implementation of the leading motives of both King Gorm and his son, Harold, is an interesting feature of the work. Parker succeeds at integrating the motives repeatedly and effectively throughout the work after introducing them as the basis of the orchestral opening. He also shapes the motives as a representation of the characters themselves, with Gorm's motive identified by a disjunctive rhythm to characterize him as the gruff, older, wizened ruler. Harold's

⁶³ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 55.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 55-56.

⁶⁵ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 196-198.

⁶⁶ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 56-57, 88-89.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 89.

motive provides a strong contrast by using a smooth rhythm and texture, with a chromatic harmony, to represent the 15 year-old frail, much loved youth. Oddly, most of the story is told in the third person as is it sung entirely by a chorus. However, this does allow the focus to remain on Gorm and his reactions to the events of the story, allowing the tragedy to be strongly realized.⁶⁸

The timing of *King Gorm the Grim* as a preview of *Mona* is particularly fitting given that it was also in 1908 that the Metropolitan Opera announced a competition for a new opera to be written in English by an American composer. The contest would provide not only performances of the winning work, but a very hefty prize for the period of \$10,000. Parker had already considered writing an opera prior to the announcement. In fact, he had already asked Yale colleague Brian Hooker, and English professor, about providing a text for an opera. Hooker seemed non-committal at first, but shortly afterwards generated an outline based upon their discussion, which Parker described as fairly dull. Hooker then provided the first few verses which evidently quickly inspired Parker. However, there is the question of whether the announcement of the competition did not also add to Parker's suddenly favorable view.⁶⁹

Hooker did, however, provide the libretto for Parker's *Mona* a mere two months after the prize announcement. The next three years of 1909-1912 saw Parker's time dominated by the composition and production of *Mona*. He completed the work in August 1910, and he was announced the winner in May of 1911. Critics generally praised the decision, though some expressed surprise, and yet others openly criticized that the process as unfair, since three of the four judges--George Chadwick, Charles Loeffler, and Walter Damrosch--were personal acquaintances of Parker.⁷⁰ Parker's reputation was built upon being a choral and religious composer, which no doubt contributed to the surprise for some critics. The score itself was unusual in that it contained only one single chorus, a major change for someone whose main

⁶⁸ Ibid., 89-90.

⁶⁹ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 224-225.

⁷⁰ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 61-62.

output, other than art song and some organ works, was generally choral. The production schedule from 1911-1912 was extremely taxing, with weekly rehearsals and several revisions to the score.

Mona received its premiere on March 14, 1912. The audience's reception of the premiere was particularly enthusiastic, with twelve reported curtain calls. However, critical response was less glowing, with general complaints of a libretto that was not dramatic enough and a score that did not feature enough melodies.⁷¹ The problem with the libretto hinged on the fact that Hooker was a poet and not a librettist. Early reviews of the libretto were positive, because as a poem, it was well written. However, it lacked action and dramatic situations and was too literary. His use of Elizabethan English, while fine in a poetic sense, made the text harder to sing intelligibly.⁷²

The opera is set in Roman occupied England and revolves around the young girl, Mona. She is by blood the descendant of the great warrior and leader Bodicea and she is expected to fulfill her destiny leading the Britons to defeat the occupying Romans. She falls in love with a young Briton by the name of Gwynn, but he is actually the son of the Roman governor from a British mother. It has been his goal to bring peace between the Romans and Britons, but is caught up in the rebellion because of his own love for Mona, who along with the other rebels does not know that he is actually Roman. The Britons are defeated and when she eventually learns who he is, she turns against him believing him to be a traitor and a spy, despite her love and despite that he actually wants peace for all sides of the conflict. In the end, she kills Gwynn and upon being taken prisoner by the Romans, is told by the Governor that Gwynn told the truth about wanting to bring peace to all, and that had she listened to him and not killed him, she would still have her lover and they would have left the Britons alone.

Parker's setting is heavily influenced by Wagnerian concepts. One of the more striking features is how closely Parker had the vocal parts follow natural speech rhythm. In fact, it is argued that Parker went perhaps too far in his use of declamatory voice writing. A major criticism

⁷¹ Ibid., 64.

⁷² Ibid., 150.

of *Mona* is its lack of soaring melody. A case in point is the monologue in Act 1, in which Mona's voice line is almost completely in normal speech-rhythm, with the important emotive words being emphasized by higher pitches. Mona joins the orchestra in singing one of the motives only in the first measure.⁷³ By taking this approach, Parker did not allow enough chances for singers to really sing lyrically.

However, this does not mean that the work was totally devoid of lyric melodic writing. Sections like Gwynn's solo and the following love duet in Act 2, Mona's Act 3 monologue, and the oath scene in Act 1 provide a very lyrical, melodic style.⁷⁴ Overall, the vocal parts in the opera are technically challenging, particularly for the roles of Mona and Gwynn. There are several instances of unprepared entries in the high registers, and the speech-like portions sometime utilize sudden leaps for the particularly dramatic passages.

Another major characteristic of *Mona*, previously alluded to and again derived from Wagner, is the heavy use of leitmotif as a dramatic and structural technique. According to Parker, the opera contained fifty to sixty leading motives, perhaps indicating that he went too far in this regard. The main characters have groups of themes, with Mona having the largest number. There is a motive to indicate her destiny to lead the druids, another for her attachment to her half-brother Gloom. There are themes to show her feminine nature, her love for Gwynn, and her role as successor to Boadicea.⁷⁵ However, perhaps as a result of incorporating too many motives, *Mona* is lacking in the development of those themes, which is a departure from what was seen in the earlier *King Gorm the Grim* and *The Legend of St. Christopher*, among other works in Parker's output. It seems that Parker was reluctant to break from the stage action long enough to allow the orchestra to elaborate upon some of the more important motives.⁷⁶

⁷³ Ibid., 150-151.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 154.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 155-156.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 159.

Despite the lack of motive development, one notable strength of the opera was Parker's orchestral writing. The work calls for a large orchestra of 100 players, perhaps contributing to the perceived difficulty in vocal performance. Still, Kearns declared that the finest parts of the work occurred when the singers departed from plain declamation to join the orchestra in performing lyrical motives, particularly noting the expressiveness of the orchestration.⁷⁷ Likewise, in a congratulatory note, Charles Loeffler declared that the orchestral score surpassed anything Parker had previously written.⁷⁸

It could be argued that the lack of success of *Mona* may have been partially due to it being too progressive. For a composer that was considered conservative, and at a time when American audiences shared that conservatism, Parker pushed the envelope with his strong continuous music, endless motives, declamatory vocal writing, with not a chorus in sight. A letter by the critic and composer Arthur Walter Kramer from 1929, nearly 20 years after its performance, lends credence to that viewpoint as he wrote:

From the beginning I was impressed with the unusual beauty of this music, which to be sure, was advanced in utterance at that day and a far cry from some of the operatic novelties which the Metropolitan Opera House was offering 20 years ago... That the music of *Mona* was far in advance of its day and that is perfectly understandable today, I have proved on more than one occasion, when I have played parts of the score for friends of mine without any information as to what music I was performing.⁷⁹

The opera experience, evidently, was at least somewhat enjoyable for Parker, as he began work on his next opera in a rudimentary capacity the following winter of 1912-1913. He again asked Brian Hooker to write the libretto, and Parker's notes and letters from the time indicate a general attempt to make the new opera, *Fairyland*, less gloomy, sweeter and more cheerful than *Mona*.⁸⁰ Virtually everything in Parker's output was written for a specific purpose or event, whether it be commissioned or for a contest. While *Fairyland* was started seemingly on its own and without a specific event in mind, that quickly changed as the National Federation of Music

⁷⁷ Ibid., 155.

⁷⁸ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 230.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 253.

⁸⁰ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 64-65.

Clubs announced a \$10,000 cash prize contest for an American opera in May of 1913. The opera was to be performed on the West Coast in 1915, with Los Angeles providing the chorus, ballet corps, and orchestra. Parker wrote most of the music for *Fairyland* during a sabbatical leave in Germany, and he submitted the score to the contest on July 29th, 1914.⁸¹ Parker was declared the winner out of 56 entrants in October 1914, and unlike the controversy with *Mona*, none of the judges knew Parker and none were from the eastern United States.⁸²

The performance set-up provided by the National Federation of Music Clubs was more consistent with a festival event, rather than a formal opera house production. Most likely, the contest rules provided some guidelines to that effect and Parker complied with an opera in *Fairyland* that was far less dramatically driven than *Mona*. While *Mona* provided only a single chorus and continuous, unsegmented music, *Fairyland* provided numerous choruses and clear sectionalization, replete with closed-form arias, marches, and ballets. The structure of the work provided ample opportunity to utilize the somewhat amateur 180-voice chorus and 100 piece orchestra at the premiere.⁸³

With *Fairyland*, Parker's shift to a new style becomes apparent. Kearns posits that the shift in style was due to Parker's belief in the "empirical process." Perhaps due to the negativity towards earlier works such as *Mona* and *The Legend of St. Christopher*, Parker's fairly strict view of music changed to a wider tolerance for all types of musical activity and styles, becoming more accepting of popular styles.⁸⁴ *Fairyland* seems to be a concession to American tastes, which strongly tended towards operetta and musical comedy, and most of his works after this time moved away from the dramatic middle period characterized by *Mona*.⁸⁵ *Fairyland* also was

⁸¹ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 245, 267.

⁸² Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 65-66.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

composed to overcome the negative perceptions about *Mona*, such as the lack of choruses, the dramatically weak libretto and the inadequate melodic writing.⁸⁶

As the title suggests, *Fairyland* is based more on fairy tales rather than the semi-historical context and tragedy of *Mona*. It is set in a hill country of medieval Europe and revolves around the love story of the young King Auburn and of Rosamund, a novice in the abbey. Fairyland is actually a peaceful, happy country that appears in the dreams of both Auburn and Rosamund, where they are together crowned King and Queen although they have not met in real life. The land is a heightened representation of the actual kingdom. Auburn, disillusioned with his role as King, decides to go on a pilgrimage and makes the decision to leave the care of the Kingdom to the abbess Myriel, rather than his own brother Corvain. Corvain seizes the Kingdom upon Auburn's departure and both Corvain and Myriel oppress the people and demand tribute. Eventually, Auburn returns but is not recognized as King and is imprisoned, while Rosamund is sentenced to death as a witch because of her belief in her fairy lover. The work concludes happily as Auburn and Rosamund recognize each other from their dreams. Auburn then defeats Corvain, and the kingdom is essentially magically transformed into Fairyland.

Fairyland represents a blending of styles. Despite a compositional approach leaning towards simplicity, the opera is still full of Wagnerian style leitmotif technique (although not to the extent of that seen in *Mona*), a modulating harmonic structure, and colorful orchestration. This is contrasted with sentimental arias reminiscent of operetta, weak dramatic situations, and frequent pageantry, befitting of a large festival work. The diverse styles did allow Parker to give the orchestra a varied expressive scope, with Parker taking advantage of the large instrumentation, which included organ, steel chimes, and a wind machine, to create a rich palate of colors.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Ibid, 163.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 162, 167, 172.

Like *Mona* before it, audience reaction to the premiere was outstanding, with the original schedule of four shows being expanded by two more. However, after those initial performances, interest quickly waned.⁸⁸ Critical response appeared slightly warmer than with *Mona*, but despite Parker's efforts to broaden the appeal of the music, critics still thought of it as being too scholarly and complex. Kearns mentions that part of the problem may have been simply a preconceived notion of Parker and his music on the part of critics, rather than a reflection of the music contained in *Fairyland* itself.⁸⁹

Final Years

Another major work also premiered in 1915, Parker's third oratorio, *Morven and the Grail*. Like *Fairyland*, it signals a shift away from the progressive, technical approach of Parker's middle period, although not veering quite as far in the direction of simplicity. With its conservative choruses, easily recognizable recurring themes, and features such as the choral drinking song in the Valhalla scene of Part 2, there is an obvious attempt to appeal to a broad audience. While there is a dramatic context to the work, it is presented tableaux style, and is not nearly as dramatically driven as the earlier *Legend of St. Christopher* or his two operas. *Morven and the Grail* is also more sectionalized, but preserves the pretense of continuous music through the use of basic chords or held notes as connecting devices. However, Parker is unable to break away from the varied and complex harmonic progressions that dominate a vast majority of his works, and the use of motives as pieces of the compositional structure continues to be a key feature. Unfortunately, the work received disappointing reviews.

Even though *Fairyland* and *Morven and the Grail* proved to be the last of the truly large works in Parker's output, he was far from done composing. It is clear that by this time Parker's health had become an even greater issue and therefore, his general workload was reduced. However, his activity as a composer never stopped. In 1916, he provided music for the John Jay

⁸⁸ Ibid., 67.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 173.

Chapman play, *Cupid and Psyche*, which he wrote on commission for the Yale School of Fine Arts. This was Parker's last true stage work and with it, Parker tried to invoke a baroque style and clarity fitting the context of the play.⁹⁰ Representative of his late period, *Cupid and Psyche* is perhaps one of the simpler works of his output, with the pseudo-baroque style featuring easily singable melodies, non-chromatic harmonies, and steady rhythmic pulsing. The work remained unpublished but consisted of 24 musical sections for a chamber group and women's chorus.⁹¹

Parker's last major religious composition came a short time later in 1918. The work was titled, *The Dream of Mary*, and was labeled as a "Morality." The libretto was likewise written by John Jay Chapman and consisted of selected biblical passages that were added to and arranged by Chapman. As the title suggests, the plot follows a dream that Mary had that foretells the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.⁹² While not nearly extensive enough to be an oratorio, it is somewhat more expansive than the typical cantata. Harkening back to his early work, it is clearly sectionalized, consisting of 10 parts that include solos, hymns, choruses, ensembles, and orchestral interludes. Some of the parts are further sectionalized. For instance, part IV could be broken down into three separate short movements, with two choral sections providing bookends to a middle bass solo and dialogue interspersed between them.⁹³

Like *Morven and the Grail*, the work unveils its story through a series of tableaux lacking a continuous dramatic flow. The tableaux do not follow a set pattern within the structuring of the musical parts, with some scenes crossing multiple movements, while others are contained within a single part, as in part IV. With a regular use of dialogue interspersed in the work, it has the general feel of a congregational Christmas pageant. This is confirmed by its unusually heavy use of audience participation, with several choruses specifically calling for congregational singing.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 69-70.

⁹¹ Ibid., 175.

⁹² Ibid., 140.

⁹³ Horatio Parker, *The Dream of Mary: A morality for solo voices, chorus, children's chorus, and congregation, with organ or orchestral accompaniment*. Words by John Jay Chapman. (New York: H.W. Gray, 1918), Vocal score, 47-66.

This also brings to mind a Baroque cantata, and as one would expect, those particular sections tend to be somewhat simpler and hymn like in construction.

In general, the years of World War I were difficult for Parker. Besides his declining health, the fact that he had lived in and visited many of the countries on both sides of the war brought him mental anguish. He was troubled by the discrimination against all things German.⁹⁴ Parker did support the war effort by diverting royalties from his compositions to relief efforts.⁹⁵ Three of his works were specifically tied to the war: *Hymn for the Victorious Dead*, *The Red Cross Spirit Speaks*, and *A.D. 1919*. Of these, *A.D. 1919* was the most significant. It was written in the spring of 1919 as a memorial to the Yale men who gave their life in the war. It was Parker's last composition and is often referred to as his own requiem. He returned to Brian Hooker for the libretto, and the poem that Hooker produced deeply moved him, inciting Parker to declare that he was not sure how he could write music for it, since everything was already in the poem.⁹⁶ However, he did manage to write the music with the comment that, "every man Jack in the audience might understand it."⁹⁷ The finished work was scored for mixed chorus, soprano and orchestra. It was highly regarded and the audience was evidently deeply moved at its premiere in June 1919. However, the work never became known outside Yale, where it was often frequently performed at official ceremonies and became known as, "The Ode."⁹⁸ George Chadwick wrote:

Parker has written his own requiem. To this noble poem he has given an impressive setting, elegiac in spirit but with some thrilling dramatic touches, as for instance at the words "One shall have sweet sleep" – the trumpet is heard in the distance sounding taps. It is an heroic tribute to heroic men, some of whom were his own students.⁹⁹

Parker fell ill in September of 1919 and passed away on December 18, 1919. He left behind a wide collection of music and was largely responsible for building the Yale School of

⁹⁴ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 279.

⁹⁵ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 72.

⁹⁶ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 299.

⁹⁷ Smith, "A Study of Horatio Parker," 161.

⁹⁸ Smith, "A Study of Horatio Parker," 160-161.

⁹⁹ Chadwick, *Horatio Parker*, 19-20.

Music, one of the earliest such schools in the United States. Parker's work as an educator had a lasting impact on music education. Many of the ideas regarding elementary music teaching are still present today, and his method of building the curriculum at Yale for instruction of musicians is now fairly commonplace at universities across the country.

With his large and varied output, it is somewhat surprising that his music is not better known today. While he is generally viewed as a conservative composer, and that reputation of conservatism no doubt contributed to the lack of interest in his music after his time, his middle period in particular showed that he was capable of a modern and progressive technique. Further, his later period showed a willingness to evolve his style to try to match the more popular compositional ideas of his day. Chadwick defined Parker's musical style as being founded on beauty of design, melodic breadth, and logical structure. But he points out that Parker was also interested in modern developments in harmony and instrumentation. He had an open mind for modern composition but he "had not patience for what he considered pretense and shams as he saw in experiments of polyharmony or polycacophony."¹⁰⁰ In contrast, despite Parker's late period effort to affect the masses, Elson asserts that much of his work was music for musicians with a rather ascetic, somewhat undramatic style that did not appeal to those masses.¹⁰¹

Perhaps the reason for the lack of lasting influence was a result of falling in a musical crack. Most music that has stood the test of time either appealed to a broad public or appealed to academicians and historians for its genuine inventiveness and groundbreaking techniques. Parker's general dislike of many of the popular musical genres prevented him from composing in a style that would truly gain public popularity. Those very same popular styles are those that are identified as "American" music. Meanwhile, while he no doubt composed in a modern and progressive style for the day, the techniques he employed were already known and used in contemporary European music. Despite breaking ground in the use of those techniques in

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 24.

¹⁰¹ Elson, *History of American Music*, 180.

American music, the fact that it was not original failed to capture the minds of academicians, cognoscenti, and historians. Further, from a nationalistic view, by not incorporating the popular styles of his day, Parker's music is often considered to be a rehash of the music of Europe rather than as a truly indigenous American music. One can argue that this is unfair to Parker as he did borrow melodic and dramatic contours from popular songs and hymns from time to time in his works, but he perceived nationalism as that which connects to the character and emotional traits of a nation, and not as music that had to use plantation songs, spirituals, or folk songs.¹⁰² Nevertheless, he was one of the most dominant American composers of his time. That fact alone makes his music historically significant and worthy of further research and preservation.

¹⁰² Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 241-243.

II. Hora Novissima

Overview

After writing a few cantatas and some other religious choral works before 1893, Parker set his sights on the task of writing a full oratorio. As is the case with almost of all of his works, Parker wrote *Hora Novissima* with a specific purpose in mind. In this case, he wished to submit it for a composition prize offered by the National Conservatory of America. However, it did not win the competition, losing out to Parker's own *Dream King and His Love*, which he had also submitted.¹⁰³ Parker composed the work during the period of 1891 and 1892 and it received its first performance in 1893 by the Church Choral Society of New York. *Hora Novissima* was Parker's most significant composition to date and it is generally credited with catapulting him to prominence in American music. A review of the score appeared in the London publication, *The Musical Times*, in 1893 and was mostly favorable, a rarity for an American composer at that time period.

In a break from the typical Victorian oratorio usually based on a biblical story, *Hora Novissima* lacks any semblance of drama. In structure and approach, it is closer to a Requiem. That is not surprising considering the text. Parker chose to use a lesser known, contemplative, Medieval Latin poem by the French monk Bernard de Cluny, entitled "De Contemptu Mundi." The complete poem is a discourse on the sinfulness of the world and originally consisted of three volumes. *Hora Novissima* was the title given to the first volume and it consisted of approximately 1100 lines. The excerpts chosen by Parker primarily describe the joys of eternal life in the Celestial City.¹⁰⁴ The 19th century theologian Rev. J.M. Neale had previously translated several portions of the text that proved to be the basis of several hymns, but Parker was the first to set a portion of the text as a full length oratorio. Parker's selection consisted of thirty-five rhyming

¹⁰³ Smith, "A Study of Horatio Parker," 156.

¹⁰⁴ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 106.

stanzas of two lines each. As a church composer, Parker was no doubt familiar with the earlier J.M Neale translations, which perhaps influenced his own choice of excerpts, given that there is some similarity between Parker's and Neale's selections. If there were a criticism to be made about the poem selection, it would be that the character of the stanzas is too similar. There is limited contrast in mood, emotion, or content throughout the poem.¹⁰⁵

However, the selection held some significance to Parker. "Hora Novissima" was a favorite of Parker's father. During the time of the composition of the work, Parker had several personal losses, his father being one of them. He also lost his sister and a newborn baby.¹⁰⁶ It was likely an emotionally trying period, and the promise of eternal life in the celestial city represented in the poem was no doubt a comfort to a man of strong Christian faith. Though the poem was chosen before his father's death, it is probable Parker was aware that his father would die soon, and he no doubt chose it in honor of him, an assertion reflected by Parker's decision to dedicate the oratorio to his father.

Parker's plan for the piece also appears to be heavily influenced by Dvorak's *Stabat Mater* cantata of 1877. Beginning in the latter half of the 1880s, Dvorak had become very popular in the United States, where he was regularly visiting, conducting, and composing. As a burgeoning young composer looking to advance himself, Parker would have reason to emulate the style of the highly popular figure. That Dvorak's compositional style was rooted in the same conservative Romanticism as Parker's no doubt made it more appealing. Further, Dvorak was also the director of the National Conservatory that sponsored the prize that *Hora Novissima* was entered for. *Hora Novissima* consists of eleven sections and the overall length is about the same as the *Stabat Mater*. It also shares the characteristic of clearly defined, individual pieces. In the case of Dvorak's piece, only the first and last of the ten individual parts were thematically connected. In contrast, while the eleven sections of *Hora Novissima* are independent, there is

¹⁰⁵ "A New American Composer." Review of *Hora Novissima*, by Horatio Parker. *The Musical Times* 34, no. 608 (1893): 586.

¹⁰⁶ Semler, *Horatio Parker*, 80.

much more unification through the use of recurring themes and intervallic and rhythmic relationships.¹⁰⁷ The clear sectionalization, alternating structure, and lack of dramatic text are also reminiscent of Bach cantatas, which typically followed a structure of Chorus-Recitative-Aria-Recitative/Arioso-Aria-Chorus.

As with most oratorios, the work is dominated by choruses, with six of the eleven sections being choruses, and the remainder consisting of four solos and one quartet. The solos are evenly distributed with one for each voice type of soprano, alto, tenor and bass. Obviously, since the oratorio text is simply a poem without dramatic content, all parts are labeled generically by voice type and not by any character name. Parker arranges the eleven sections into two larger portions labeled Part 1 and Part 2. The overall arrangement is based upon alternation and contrast for the music primarily, with textual concerns being secondary. The seventy lines of the poem that make up the text to *Hora Novissima* do not occur contiguously and sometimes, as in the case of the bass aria, not even in the same order as within the original poem. Balance seemed to be a primary consideration when developing his structure. Part 1 has six pieces, while part 2 has five. Both parts include two solos each. Parker took care to have a choral movement to end both parts and to have a chorus to open the work, thus choruses provide the bookends to the piece much as you would see in a traditional Bach cantata. To balance the quartet of part I, which occurs immediately after the opening chorus, he uses an unaccompanied chorus as the penultimate section in part 2. In doing so he accomplishes symmetry individually within Parts 1 and 2, but also symmetry within the work as a whole. Thus the overall structure is seen below (Fig. 1).

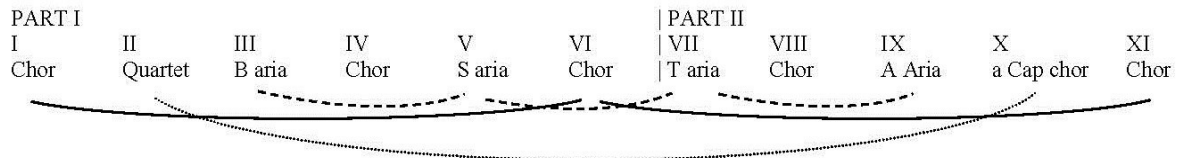


Figure 1

¹⁰⁷ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 124.

The instrumentation chosen for the work is fairly typical of a Romantic period orchestral piece. While *Hora Novissima* is written for a concert hall, rather than a more intimate or religious setting such as a church congregation, it is also not necessarily intended as an enormous festival work requiring overly large, or exotic forces. With that said, the instrumentation is much too vast for anything other than a typical modern symphony orchestra, requiring a full complement of strings to balance the significant brass sections, which includes four trumpet parts, three trombone parts, horns, as well as tuba. As one would expect in such a religious work, Parker also uses an organ as the keyboard instrument, significantly enlarging the scope of the soundscape. While Parker wisely refrains from using the full force of the orchestra except at climactic moments in the choral movements, the sheer size of the orchestra does necessitate the need for a similarly scaled chorus.

Movement I – Chorus

Hora novissima, tempora pessima sunt, vigilemus!¹⁰⁸
Ecce minaciter imminet arbiter ille supremus:

Imminet, imminet, ut mala terminet, equa coronet,
Recta remuneret, anxia liberat, aethera donet.

Auferat aspera duraque pondera mentis onustae,
Sobria muniat, improba puniat, utraque iuste.

The first movement is a fairly substantial chorus. The text consists of the first six lines of the poem in three stanzas. However, while it is built in three main parts plus an introduction and a coda, Parker does not use the stanzas as the basis of the division. For instance, the first section after the introduction contains a full two stanzas of text and then repeats the opening line to close the section and bridge to the middle section. However, this should not be surprising given that

¹⁰⁸ Most modern printings of Bernard der Cluny's *De contempt mundi* arrange the lines of the poem in this manner, but without separation into stanzas. However, printed scores of Parker's *Hora Novissima* print the poem with further subdivision of each line into three separate lines, thus emphasizing the rhyming scheme of the dactylic hexameter. I have chosen to keep the lines in their original format but still break the lines into stanzas.

Bernard de Cluny's text is not truly divided into stanzas. The stanza division seems to be a product of Romantic style editorializing and the English translation furnished by Parker's mother.

The movement is roughly modeled on sonata form with the exposition and recapitulation following standard sonata key relationships.¹⁰⁹ However, there are several differences. The middle section does not really offer a true development, but serves more as a unit of contrast, and the coda essentially introduces new melodic material in a quiet, serene, almost pastoral sounding legato section to close the work.¹¹⁰ The text is overall fairly dark, with the first stanza essentially meaning that the last days are here and that judgment is upon the Earth, a reference to the biblical book of Revelations. The second stanza carries this theme by saying that the Lord is coming, but becomes more hopeful, because he is not just coming to end evil, but also to reward the righteous. The final stanza expands on this declaring that He will justly lighten the load of the faithful and punish the wicked.

The introduction and exposition of the work stretch about 60 bars and begin in e minor, an appropriate key given the fairly dark image portrayed by the opening two lines of text. They are significant in introducing key themes that serve as the basis for the rest of the movement. The first theme of note is one that occurs during the orchestral introduction which consists of a figure of a half note, dotted quarter, eighth, half, and. This theme oddly focuses on the dominant rather than the tonic and while it is written to suggest a resolution to tonic, that resolution does not occur. The melodic quality of this figure led the *Musical Times* to refer to it as "Brahms like."¹¹¹ The second theme of note is the principal theme which occurs with the opening of the chorus using the rhythm of half, quarter, quarter, dotted quarter, eighth, half, and half. This exposition section is mostly a homophonic texture which sets up some extended counterpoint in the development section which prominently features the key of Db major. The principal theme also proves to be a primary component in the development. This section begins with a fugue like

¹⁰⁹ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 107.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ "A New American Composer," 586.

portion that uses the rhythm of the principal theme as its subject in the guise of an entirely new melody. The theme then does reappear later in the development section but in the key of c minor. The reappearance of the theme leads directly into an extended modulatory section which takes the piece back to the tonic key of e minor for the recapitulation. An unusual feature of this modulatory section is a noted quote of the “love” motive from Wagner’s “die Wälküre,” which drew a negative response from the *Musical Times* reviewer.¹¹²

Finally, the piece moves to the aforementioned coda section. While the primary theme of the coda is loosely based on the principal theme, it really comes across as new melodic material, an effect reinforced by the change from e minor to the relative key of E major. The legato, lyrical lines and serene feel mark a sharp contrast to all the material introduced until that moment.

Vocally, the movement proves to be fairly straightforward, lacking any overly difficult sections. Overall range and tessitura are within the means of experienced choral singers. The orchestration will require a choir of reasonable size and that choir must be prepared to further split into as many as eight vocal lines to fill out chords at certain moments, although the movement clearly conforms to typical SATB divisi writing. Given the requirement of a larger choir, special care must be given to the written dynamics, which Parker uses extensively as a point of contrast, that range fully between *pp* and *ff*. That same dynamic contrast does create a danger of oversinging on the louder portions, which is critical to avoid given that this is only the first piece in a fairly long and demanding choral work. This is particularly dangerous for the sopranos as they do have a line or two of extended singing in the upper range with a fairly loud dynamic marking.

Movement II – Quartet

Hic breve vivitur, hic breve plangitur, hic breve fletur:
Non breve vivere, non breve plangere, retribuetur.

¹¹² Ibid.

O retributio! Stat brevis actio, vita perennis;
O retributio! Coelica mansio stat lue plenis;

Quid datur et quibus aether? Egentibus, et cruce dignis,
Sidera vermibus, optima sontibus, astra malignis.

Sunt modo praelia, postmodo praemia. Qualia? Plena:
Plena refectio, nullaue passio, nullaue poena.

The second movement is the lone solo quartet of the oratorio, though the quartet does appear again as part of one of the other chorus movements. This movement covers the next four stanzas of text which Parker chooses to write in a somewhat sectionalized form that could be presented as ABA'C. The A&B sections together cover the first two stanzas, although the text is divided unevenly between them. After the B section there is an orchestral break which is basically a repeat of the orchestral introduction. The text addresses the subject of eternal life in heaven. There are repeated references to the end of grief and suffering, equating life on earth with struggle or battle.

The movement begins with a highly contrapuntal segment against a basic block chord accompaniment. The contrapuntal writing is reminiscent of Handel's oratorios but with a much more contemporary sounding harmonic progression, utilizing several fugato sections that occasionally resolve into homophonic writing. This is placed over a repeated, steady rhythmic element in the orchestration through various portions of the work. The harmony and the choice of instruments in the orchestration belong clearly to the Romantic period, but this movement is another example of Parker's blending of styles across time periods. The end result lead the Musical Times to liken this section to Dvorak,¹¹³ another indication of the likely influence the work of Dvorak had on Parker during its composition. This contrapuntal opening eventually morphs to a more homophonic style towards the end of the section, shortly after an unusual key signature change from a minor to A major. In contrast to the baroque influence of the earlier material, it sounds almost classical period in construction and style.

¹¹³ Ibid.

The A' section does begin with a statement of the opening counterpoint, once again back in a minor, but the return to counterpoint is fleeting as it then returns to the homophonic style seen in B on the text "aether egentibus." However, in this case it serves a modulatory function as Parker uses it to set up a fairly complicated sequence to once again take the work back to A major for the final C section, where it remains through the end of the movement. The sequence takes us through the keys of Bb major and then g minor, which ends on a deceptive cadence using an E7 chord, that serves as the dominant to transition to the A major return. The moment of resolution to A major serves as the climactic point of the movement and Parker emphasizes it by having a mostly half-note descending passage on the held word of "plena," which means "full" or "complete." Textually it is an answer to the question "Qualia?" or "what kind," which within the text is referring to rewards, with those rewards being the focal point of the previous modulatory segment. In the text, it is paired with "refectio" which would mean "restoration" which is followed by text referring to no suffering or pain. Thus, the answer to the question of "what reward" is eternal life in heaven.

The A major key signature and homophonic texture remain constant through the final section of the work. The answer of "plena" becomes the focal point throughout the final segment. An interesting characteristic of it is the extended cadence that he uses to close the movement. We get a clear sense that the cadence is arriving at bar 72-73, but then the cadential movement is extended 19 more bars, repeating the final line of text "praemia plena," thus emphasizing the idea of eternal life being the ultimate, complete reward. This final closing serves an interesting contrast. Through the previous segments of the work, we have a fairly fast harmonic tempo with changes that are sometimes jarring and unexpected, which is in opposition to the harmonically slow, extended cadential figure to close the work after the revealing of "plena." It is somewhat unusual to see use of such a device given the position of this movement in the overall oratorio. Generally, you expect to see extended cadences on the final movements of large sections, but here he uses it in the second movement of the work and on a piece that only utilizes a quartet,

thus providing a further emphasis on “plena.” It becomes a tool Parker uses to emphasize the “full” and final reward of life in heaven, which in the Christian faith would be seen as the climax of life. In that context, the extended treatment is an appropriate choice.

As in the first movement, there is nothing particularly troublesome in terms of vocal range and tessitura in the work. In fact, range tends to be slightly safer and more restricted in this particular movement. There is also little to create problems in terms of rhythm. However, there are a couple of segments that the vocalists must be careful because of the dense harmonic elements and a few dissonances. The piece actually is constructed like a choral piece rather than a solo quartet, because though there is some counterpoint, there is a distinct lack of any solo lines. The soloists need to think and perform more as choral voices rather than as soloists. Each vocal part is still part of the whole throughout the length of the piece. As such, vocalists need to be confident and secure of their own part and thus not pulled off by the other vocal parts. In addition, they must be willing to listen well to the other parts so that the harmonies are clear and without a particular part overshadowing another.

Movement III – Bass Aria

Spe modo vivitur, et Syon angitur a Babylone;
Nunc tribulatio; tunc recreatio, sceptrum, coronae.

Tunc nova gloria pectora sobria clarificabit,
Solvat enigmata, veraque Sabbata continuabit.

Patria splendida terraque florida, libera spinis,
Danda fidelibus est ibi civibus, hic peregrinis.

The third movement is one of most well-known and analyzed movements of *Hora Novissima*. The text for this particular movement does not appear contiguously in the original poem. Each of the two line stanzas occurs at a different point in the poem, so here we see Parker making his own particular selections to fill a specific theme he had in mind. His selection basically amounts to a continuation of the thematic idea of the reward of eternal life that was

emphasized in the previous movement. The opening stanza states that Zion is in anguish and that, while man lives in struggle, he also has hope. The second stanza then follows by stating that we receive fresh glories from within our hearts and that all troubles will be solved at the time of the eternal Sabbath. The final stanza describes heaven as having fadeless splendor, thornless flowers, and that those who mourn on Earth will instead be like children. This last stanza is significant as it adds detail about what eternal life will entail. While previously the text stated that our reward was eternal life, with the text of this movement, we receive an initial description of what that reward actually is.

As the first solo movement of the oratorio, it does set up a few characteristics that carry over to the other arias in the work, most notably the rhythmic basis of the principal theme, although each aria is still a unique work. The principal theme also uses a pentatonic outline, which was a common device of the Boston composers.¹¹⁴ The orchestral opening starts immediately with a partial statement of the principal theme in d minor which is then sung by the vocalist twice in the opening section. However, Parker gives us a slight twist by changing a C natural of the theme into a C#, thus providing a raised 7th leading tone on its repeat (Ex. 1, 2).

¹¹⁴ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 112.

8161.

Example 1 – First statement of theme. *Hora Novissima*. Vocal score, p. 29 mm. 9-19.¹¹⁵

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Example 2 – Restatement with raised 7th. *Hora Novissima*. Vocal score, p. 30 mm. 1-8.

¹¹⁵ Unless otherwise noted, this and all subsequent examples excerpted from Horatio Parker. *Hora Novissima: The Rhythm of Bernard De Morlaix on the Celestial Country*. (New York: H.W. Gray Co., 1893), Vocal score.

Despite having a basic ABA'Coda structure and having a straightforward three stanzas of text that would seemingly fit into that structure naturally, Parker chose to make some major changes to the ordering of the text. The opening section covers the first stanza and a half of the work which consists of basically the aforementioned two statements of the principal theme and some brief fragmentary development. For the middle section, Parker goes directly to the third stanza without finishing the second. For the return of the principal theme at A', Parker chooses to return to the first stanza to reinforce the relationship of the sections and to give it a more traditional da capo feel. However, he abbreviates A' so that it only covers the first stanza of the text. He does still repeat the first half of the second stanza, but does so to open the coda section with new musical material based on a fragment of the principal theme. After the restatement of the first half of the second stanza, he finally goes directly to the second half of the stanza to close out the work. Then in an afterthought to help set-up the final cadence, he restates the second half of the first stanza to close the work.

Dramatically, it has an interesting effect as Parker really sets up the transition to the coda as the climax of the piece. To open the coda, Parker gives us a clear shift from the d minor key that had so far been carried throughout the piece. He sets it out in the score by a key signature change to the parallel of D major. The restatement of the first half of the second stanza text is set musically by using an ascending figure accompanied by a crescendo. The ascending figure leads us to the vocal high point of the piece of an E natural marked *ff* dynamically. It then follows with a descending scale figure on the word "clarificabit" which he uses to take us to the second half of the stanza which is stated at a piano dynamic marking. Parker seems to be communicating to the audience to pay attention, that there is more left to be said by emphasizing the first half of the stanza and thereby bringing the new text of the second half of the stanza to the forefront. He is disrupting the da capo aria convention that the piece appeared to convey up to that point.

Of particular interest in this movement is the aforementioned middle section of the work. Unlike a conventional da capo form, the B section does not clearly establish a different key in

opposition to A. It opens with a very simple, short thematic statement that seems to indicate C major, but Parker then immediately develops that short theme and uses it as a basis of a sort of harmonic sequence, taking us through several tonicizations before setting us clearly back in d minor for the return to A'. However, what is of even more interest is Parker's use of alternating meter. Through 20 of the 24 bars, Parker is constantly alternating meters every measure, mostly changing between 3/4 and 4/4, but also inserting bars of 5/4 and 2/4, before giving us a few measures of 3/2 to close out the section. For a composer that is often criticized as being conservative, here we see Parker being extraordinarily progressive and forward thinking. Such use of multi-meter is a rarity for the time period of 1892, as Parker is a full 21 years ahead of Stravinsky's use of the device as the basis of *The Rite of Spring*.¹¹⁶

The multi-meter section is very distinctive and served as one of the bases for Ives' scholars to point out that Ives closely modeled his *The Celestial Country* of 1902 on *Hora Novissima*. The third movement of Ives' work is also a moderato tempo work with a 3/4 meter beginning in d minor. The melodies are very similar, sharing similar pitch and rhythmic structures, but most notably, both middle sections use the same alternating meter structure of mostly 3/4 and 4/4 bars.¹¹⁷ (Ex. 3, 4)

¹¹⁶ Harold Dart, "An Introduction to Selected New England Composer of the Late 19th Century." *Music Educators Journal* 60, no. 3 (1973): 53.

¹¹⁷ J.P Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the uses of musical borrowing*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 35

B 81

A tempo giusto ma con espressione.

Pa - tri - a splen-di-da, Ter - ra-que flo - ri - da,
O coun - try glo - ri-ous, Love hath pre - pared for us,

p espress.

poco cres.

Li - be-ra spi - nis, li - be - ra spi - nis,
Thorn - less thy flow - ers, thorn - less thy flow - ers,

poco cres.

Pa tri - a splen - di - da
O coun - try glo - ri - ous.

f

C

p

Dan - da fi - de - li - bus Est i - bi ci - vi - bus,
Giv - en to faith-ful ones, There to be ci - ti - zens,

cres.

cres.

Example 3 – Passage from Parker’s “Spe modo vivitur” *Hora Novissima*. Vocal score, p. 31, mm. 1-15.

The image displays a musical score for Example 4, an excerpt from Charles Ives's *The Celestial Country*. The score is written for piano and voice. The piano part consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 4/4. The music features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, and dynamic markings such as *cresc.*, *f*, *sim.*, and *mf*. The vocal part is shown for the Alto, with a key signature of one flat and a time signature of 4/4. The vocal line begins at measure 50, marked **50 Più mosso** and *f risoluto*, with the lyrics "For - ward through the". The score includes measure numbers 40, 45, and 50.

Example 4 – Excerpt taken from Charles Ives, *The Celestial Country* (*Tenebris vitae in lucem coeli*) cantata for two solo quartets and chorus, string quartet or string orchestra, trumpet, euphonium, timpani, and organ, (New York: Peer International Corporation, 1973), Vocal Score, p. 28.

Whether or not he intended it, Parker succeeds in making an aria that is suitable and easily singable by either bass or baritone. In fact, despite a couple of A_2 pitches, a few extended passages that fall in the $A_3 - E_4$ range tend to make the range slightly more comfortable for a baritone or higher bass. This is especially true given that these higher passages frequently use *piano* or softer dynamic markings. Dynamics and variation of tonal color are of the utmost importance in the work. The principal theme and its variations occur repeatedly throughout the aria and Parker differentiates those repetitions with the use of dynamics. There's a simplicity in

the vocal line, but that simplicity belies a requirement for a high degree of expressiveness on the part of the vocalist.

Movement IV – Chorus

Pars mea, Rex Meus, in proprio Deus ipse decore
Visus amabitur, atque videbitur auctor in ore.

Tunc Jacob Israel, et Lia tunc Rachel efficietur,
Tunc Syon atria, pulcraque patria perficietur.

The fourth movement, “Pars mea, Rex meus,” is the second choral movement of the oratorio. It is given the subtitle, “Introduction and fugue,” which is an apt description. The construction of the work as a fugue means that the text is relatively brief despite the significant length of the work. Parker’s selection of the first stanza of poetry again makes logical sense in the continuation of the piece which comes before it, despite once again not occurring contiguously in the original Bernard de Cluny poem in relation to those excerpts used for the third movement. The third movement ends with a stanza describing Heaven, and here the first stanza declares that once in heaven we will find ourselves before the face of God, in all his glory. This first stanza serves as the entire text of the introduction of the work, but then is repeated as the primary text of the fugue. Throughout the fugue, each voice part repeats the text several times and the text appears again for the conclusion of the movement. In comparison, the second stanza is used only briefly in a homophonic section towards the end of the work, and in some regards seems de-emphasized. However, given the homophonic treatment of the text in the midst of a contrapuntal fugue, the treatment does enable it to stand out rather than becoming buried in the overall scheme of the work. Contextually, the second stanza feels somewhat out of place. Essentially, it says that through the accomplishments of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel (or perhaps through their offspring who build the kingdom of Israel), Zion’s heart becomes the beautiful fatherland. While this does continue the theme of a description of heaven, it lacks any strong connection to the previous lines.

But, as will be described later, this stanza does prove to be a suitable introduction to the text of the next movement.

The piece almost seems like a moment out of time, reminiscent of Bach and a high baroque fugue. Even Parker's orchestration seems simpler and more in line with Baroque music, although clearly modern in use of instrumentation. This chorus is of particular interest given it is one of the few instances in Parker's choral output that makes such extended use of polyphony.

The subject of the fugue is an inversion of the principal theme from the opening movement and it is first presented in the homophonic introduction. This use of the principal theme can be interpreted as Parker using this chorus as a development section in the overall structure of the oratorio.¹¹⁸ The introduction of the chorus also provides material that is used in subsequent fugue episodes. The other role of the introduction is to serve as a modulatory section that moves the oratorio from the d minor of the preceding bass aria (though it ends in D major) to the Eb major of the fugue.¹¹⁹

Parker moves the fugue through three separate tonal areas. It begins clearly in Eb major and then moves to the relative c minor before returning to Eb major, thus the overall harmonic structure is very conservative. The subject is heard a total of 12 times, four times in each of the tonal sections. The first two sections maintain the conventional structure focusing on the subject and its answer. The third section in comparison is quite lengthy and develops the subject along the lines of sonata form.¹²⁰

This third section is really about the only time in the movement where Parker moves beyond just mimicking Baroque style. Parker presents an interesting harmonic sequence beginning at bar 87 which delves into clearly Romantic ideas of harmony and we then see the orchestra assert itself independently of the chorus to move the piece into a more homophonic texture at bar 99. This new homophonic section has a clearly more modern sound in opposition of

¹¹⁸ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 108.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

the baroque fugue heard thus far, although the melodic line is clearly derived from material in the fugue. Parker further sets it apart by using the chorus and orchestra in a call and response fashion, with the orchestra repeating the unaccompanied chorus line in alternation (Ex. 5). I mentioned previously that the second stanza of text seemed out of place in relation to the first. While the first stanza dominates the majority of the movement, within this particular contrasting section lies the only time that the second stanza is used. Parker recognized the difference in the text between the stanzas and made a compositional decision to reflect that musically. He then provides a brief return of the fugue at bar 118 before providing the choral climax and subsequent ending. The latter is once again presented homophonically, beginning at bar 127.

The short polyphonic section at 109 is meant to serve as a build-up to the climax. The vocal parts are added one at a time using a *forte* dynamic, and build up to the climactic moment with a brief *ritardando*, followed by a new tempo of *Maestoso* and a dynamic marking of *fff*. The climax is a restatement of the fugue subject, this time in augmentation while the orchestra presents it in its original form below. The overall effect is quite triumphal and again merges both baroque and romantic ideas stylistically. The climax leads directly to the end with a rather dramatic cadence on the tonic key of Eb major.

This particular movement has easily the most festive, celebratory mood of any in the oratorio up to this point. One could easily imagine this as being the closing chorus of Part I, but that is not how the work was arranged. As in the first movement, the biggest danger is oversinging, which is even more of an issue here given the finale like feeling. Another area of performance concern, as with most baroque choral works, is maintaining the integrity of each individual part. Mental concentration is required in terms of counting and not being distracted by the other parts that are moving in counterpoint. While Parker's text setting is generally strong, there is an issue with the setting in this piece. In the subject of the fugue, on the word "meus," he sets the word so that the "-us" is set on an ascending leap of a fourth. This also occurs as part of an ascending movement that began a full octave lower with the first note of the fugue subject.

(Ex. 6) The result is that the “-us” becomes naturally over-emphasized, despite being a weak syllable. As such, it is up to the singers to overcome this issue in their approach and phrasing.

The musical score is for a vocal piece titled "Hora Novissima". It consists of two pages, 44 and 45. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is written for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are in Latin and English. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ff*, *dim.*, *tranquillo.*, and *cres.*. The lyrics are as follows:

Page 44:

Rex me-us, me-us, in pro-pri-o De-us
Most Ho-ly, Ho-ly, How great is the glo-ry

me-us, Rex me-us, in pro-pri-o De-us
Ho-ly, most Ho-ly, How great is the glo-ry

Rex me-us, in pro-pri-o De-us
most Ho-ly, How great is the glo-ry

me-us, in pro-pri-o De-us
Ho-ly, How great is the glo-ry

Page 45:

dim. Ip-se de-co re... *tranquillo.* Tunc Ja-cob Is-ra-el, et Li-a,
dim. Thy throne en-fold ing... All the long his-to-ry through a- ges,

dim. Ip-se de-co re... *tranquillo.* Tunc Ja-cob Is-ra-el, et Li-a,
dim. Thy throne en-fold ing... All the long his-to-ry through a- ges,

dim. Ip-se de-co re... *tranquillo.* Tunc Ja-cob Is-ra-el, et Li-a,
dim. Thy throne en-fold ing... All the long his-to-ry through a- ges,

dim. Ip-se de-co re... *tranquillo.* Tunc Ja-cob Is-ra-el, et Li-a,
dim. Thy throne en-fold ing... All the long his-to-ry through a- ges,

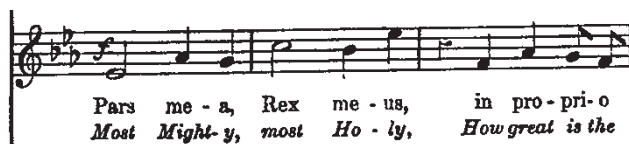
dim. tunc Ra-chel, Ef-fi-ci-e-tur, *cres.* Tunc Sy-on
dim. Mys-te-ry through a- ges hid-den, *cres.* When shall our

dim. tunc Ra-chel, Ef-fi-ci-e-tur, *cres.* Tunc Sy-on
dim. Mys-te-ry through a- ges hid-den, *cres.* When shall our

dim. tunc Ra-chel, Ef-fi-ci-e-tur, *cres.* Tunc Sy-on
dim. Mys-te-ry through a- ges hid-den, *cres.* When shall our

dim. tunc Ra-chel, Ef-fi-ci-e-tur, *cres.* Tunc Sy-on
dim. Mys-te-ry through a- ges hid-den, *cres.* When shall our

Example 5 - *Hora Novissima*. Vocal score, p. 44, m. 6 - p. 45, m. 14.



Example 6 - *Hora Novissima*. Vocal score, p. 37, mm. 9-10.

Movement V – Soprano Aria

O bona patria, lumina sobria te speculantur:
Ad tua nomina sobria lumina collacrymantur:

Est tua mentio pectoris unction, cura doloris,
Concipientibus aethera mentibus ignis amoris.

Tu locus unicus, illeque coelicus es paradisus:
Non ibi lacryma. Sed placidissima gaudia, risus.

The fifth movement is the soprano aria “O bona patria” which is the most straightforward and simplest of the solo movements. In the last stanza of the previous movement, the text makes mention of the fatherland (heaven), and that reference is continued in the first stanza here, which roughly means, “O beautiful fatherland, your name and love make me weep.” The second stanza states that the mere mention of its glory is like ointment on the chest, lovingly curing all ills. The last stanza refers to heaven as paradise where all tears are gone.

The piece seems to blend both art song and operatic tendencies, with elements of a Romantic period love aria but in a much more restrained manner, having a similar feeling to a piece such as, for example, Schubert’s *Ellens dritter Gesang*. This is perhaps enforced by the persistent 9/8 triple meter and andantino tempo marking of the work, not to mention the gently flowing accompaniment dominated by fairly steady eighth notes through the first portion and then by 16th notes later on. From a harmonic perspective, it is one of the most conservative pieces of the oratorio and in Parker’s oeuvre as a whole, staying fairly close to its early Romantic Schubertian model. Harmonic movement away from the tonic Ab major is fairly predictable and basic, with no surprises and at a much slower pace than what is present in other movements.

The text extols the comfort of being in heaven and in God's presence, and the net effect of Parker's setting is essentially a love song to God. The fairly light, sustained phrases of the vocal line over the flowing accompaniment present almost an angelic effect, as if the singer were floating in air singing praises to Him (Ex. 7).

The image displays a musical score for a vocal and piano setting. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system shows a vocal line (soprano) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a fermata, followed by the lyrics "Ad tu - a no - mi - na" and "Thy name brings joy - ful tears". The piano accompaniment features a flowing, arpeggiated texture. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "So - bri - a lu - mi - na . . . Col - la - cri - man - tur :". The piano accompaniment continues with similar arpeggiated figures. The score includes dynamic markings such as "cres." and "dim.".

Example 7 - *Hora Novissima*. Vocal score, p. 50, mm. 5-12.

The simplicity and beauty of the vocal line are reinforced in the formal plan, a rather basic ABA' with an orchestral introduction. The introduction stretches nearly a minute in length with a substantial clarinet solo playing an interesting counter melody to the subsequent soprano solo. The B section is notably much more agitated with a slightly quicker tempo. Given that the text is still singing of divine comfort through blessings at the time, this is a strange choice and it seems that Parker is ignoring the text in favor of structure and contrast. Unfortunately, in light of the text the contrast seems too disparate, disrupting somewhat the overall flow and feel of the aria. The return to A' is met with the violin doubling the soprano solo initially and the effect is highly reminiscent of Puccini.

In their review, the *Musical Times* felt that the movement was close to greatness but too derivative. They found the sections appeared too separate and noted that the piece was very similar to the soprano aria in the Dvorak cantata, *The Spectre's Bride*. They also noted that the love motive from “die Walküre” appeared once again.¹²¹

During performance, the singer must use the love aria feel of the piece to their advantage. Beauty of tone and connection of line take priority. Parker does an excellent job in the writing of the vocal line to aid in this endeavor. The range sits nicely in the middle of the soprano register, and dynamics tend to follow the natural tendency of the voice, although it does require a nice sotto voce on an Ab₅ at the end of the piece. The agitated B section provides the peak both dramatically and dynamically for the singer. Overall, a gentle and loving approach is the key to making the vocal performance work, and fortunately, the well written flow of the line is such that the singer should be able to accomplish this without feeling restrained.

Movement VI – Chorus

Tu sine littore, tu sine tempore, fons, modo rivus,
Dulce bonis sapis, estque tibi lapis undique vivius.

Est tibi laurea, dos datur aurea, sponsa decora,
Primaque Principis oscula suscipis, inspicias ora.

Candida lilia, vivia monilia, sunt tibi, sponsa,
Agnus adest tibi, sponsus adest tibi, lux speciosa.

Tota negotia, cantica dulcia dulce tonare,
Tam mala debita, quam bona praebita conjubilare.

Continuing the theme of the text thus far, the four stanzas of the sixth movement, which is the closing chorus of Part I, provide further description of eternal life in heaven. The first stanza describes oceans without shore and days without time, a fountain of eternal refreshment as a beacon to the faithful. Then the second stanza refers to the heavenly bride who has been crowned with a beautiful laurel by the Prince. In the traditional Christian view at the time the

¹²¹ “A New American Composer,” 587.

poem was written, the bride would be the people who make up the church, with the Prince or Bridegroom referring to Jesus. Thus with this stanza we move away from the more emotional, description of feeling of the previous movement, to a physical, yet somewhat allegorical description of what one would see visually. The third and fourth stanzas continue on this path, describing the flowers and garlands adorning the bride, the shining light of the bridegroom, and the praising and singing saints.

This particular chorus largely serves as an extended recap to the first movement, tying Part I together structurally. The melodic material is largely recycled with the principal theme from the first movement clearly presented. But, Parker also expands upon a hymn-like melody that originally served as a countersubject to this theme, now presented in half notes.¹²² Parker does develop and expand upon those themes a bit differently in this chorus. In typical finale fashion, he uses all available performing forces, thus also including the soloists as a quartet integrated within the larger texture and structure of the movement.

“Tu sine littore” begins with a 36 bar orchestral opening that is largely a slightly abbreviated repeat of the opening of the first movement, albeit now in the key of G# minor. However, there are some significant differences. There is a brief descending half note passage from the opening movement that is greatly expanded here and further emphasized by a slow diminuendo. It creates the interesting dramatic effect, not present in the first movement, of a great descent, but what is intended by that descent is unclear. Is it a sunset or a descent to hell? The descent is followed by a brief modulatory phrase that moves the piece to the relative B major for the entrance of the chorus. It is a strong moment dramatically as it seems to represent the breaking of a new dawn, a clear end of the descent and a sign of hope or redemption. However, Parker’s intent or goal is never clear and the text and coming choral part does not assist in the establishment of a clear dramatic definition. The entrance of the chorus, therefore, is quite different from the first movement as there is a complete contrast of dynamics from the fortissimo

¹²² Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 108.

of the first movement to the pianissimo of the sixth movement. The chorus also sings a new melody, albeit rhythmically similar to the principal theme.

The chorus gives a brief opening statement of the melody across eight bars before the solo quartet takes over. At the moment where the quartet takes over briefly as the dominant musical force in the movement, the chorus provides a sort of echo effect to the material presented by the quartet. This relationship continues over the next sixteen bars. Then we get an intriguing texture where the chorus again becomes dominant with the primary musical theme sung homophonically, while the quartet sings fragments contrapuntally against them. This section ends abruptly and a new theme is introduced in the tenor and then continued in the other vocal parts. This is not really a contrapuntal section, but rather the choral parts simply hand off the melody to one another. The melody is quite fascinating within the context of the piece, given a clearly American sound with similarities to early 20th century musical theatre. The chorus then closes this new section homophonically, while the soprano soloist again creates a sort of echo against it.

An orchestral interlude follows immediately, largely copying the opening orchestral section but with some modification as it also takes the piece back to the tonic key. The chorus thus repeats the B major theme from the beginning section but this time with much different voice writing in the choral parts. After the opening eight-bar statement, Parker does not repeat the introduction of the quartet, but rather continues the theme via a blend of both contrapuntal and homophonic writing that leads directly to the closing, where the solo quartet is reintroduced for the final cadential passage.

Balance and dynamics are the major concerns for the singers in this work. The SATB choral parts frequently split, utilizing up to a full 8-part SSAATTBB at times. In addition, there is the utilization of a solo quartet, which does have some parts occurring simultaneous to that of the chorus, and fairly heavy orchestration. These forces combined require the singers to be particularly sensitive to balancing with the other parts. The soloists must be careful to try not to push too hard and trust the conductor and other performers to balance appropriately. While there

is nothing that could be considered extreme or unusual in vocal range, there are a few sections where the alto chorus part is in a rather low tessitura while the other chorus parts are in a more middle to upper register, for instance with their opening section beginning at bar 37. Fortunately, on most of these the overall dynamic is fairly quiet, but it is imperative that the other parts sing softer so that the altos can be heard without pushing.

The end result of this particular movement is rather disjointed. It is not a clean recap of the opening movement, nor is it a summary of material presented in other movements thus far. It lacks any sort of clear direction, choosing to introduce an interesting new idea, but then meandering on to another without any sort of attempt to develop those ideas further or to connect the ideas together in a definable manner.

Part II

Movement VII – Tenor Aria

Urbs Syon aurea, patria lactea, cive decora,
Omne cor obruis, omnibus obstruis et cor et ora.

Nescio, nescio, quae jubilato, lux tibi quails,
Quam sociala gaudia, gloria quam specialis:

Laude studens ea tollere, mens mea victa fatiscit;
O bona gloria, vincor; in Omnia laus tua vicit.

Part II of *Hora Novissima* begins with the tenor aria “Urbs Syon aurea.” Because it starts with this solo, Part II lacks the big opening that Part I contained, but by doing so it allows the alternating structural scheme of solos and chorus of the entire oratorio to be maintained. With a new section of the oratorio, we do see a shift in the poetry once again. While the opening stanza calls to Zion again, essentially naming it the land of milk and honey, the text then makes the remark that the mere thought of it oppresses both heart and voice. This is probably a reference to the idea of heaven is overwhelming to the mind of mortal man. This is borne out by the next stanza, which essentially says that “I cannot know what joys and glory are waiting for us there.”

In other words, heaven is beyond our comprehension and knowledge. This is further reinforced by the third stanza which states that when the author desires to sing, the overwhelming glory makes his spirit fail and faint.

The tenor solo is one of the most forward looking movements of the work, and like the soprano aria before it, shows the influence of operatic ideas, having the same feel of being an Italian love aria. Kearns states that Parker admired the sensuous religious writing of composers like Pergolesi, Rossini, and Verdi. That admiration provided an obvious inspiration for this piece.¹²³ Verdi in particular seemed the primary inspiration for Parker, as the piece seems to mimic the more forceful style of his later work. The long connected passages, with swelling phrases present a near verismo quality to the work, but without appearing nearly as melodramatic. As a result, the aria will require a fairly strong, athletic voice type for performance, more typical of Romantic period opera, despite only reaching A₄ in terms of range. Stylistically, Parker made a great choice for the setting given the text. A common theme of a love aria is one where the hero claims the object of desire is so beautiful that it brings him to his knees and he is overwhelmed by the thought of her. Here the object of desire is heaven and it has the similar effect on the singer.

Unlike the soprano aria, the tenor aria is clearly through composed and while the soprano aria comes across with an angelic, motherly tone, the tenor seems clearly set in full serenade form. The text describes the beautiful, “golden Jerusalem,” and the Parker’s style seems well-suited for this passage. Rather than the tenor wooing a woman by describing her beauty as in a typical serenade, the tenor is instead describing how the very thought of her (heaven) overwhelms his heart and voice (Ex. 8).

¹²³ Ibid., 115.

Urbs Sy-on
Gold-en Je-

dim. p

au-re-a, Pa-tri-a lac-te-a, Ci-vi-de-co-ra,
-ru-sa-lem, Bride with her di-a-dem, Ra-dia-t and glo-rious,

Example 8 - *Hora Novissima*. Vocal score, p. 75, mm. 6-14.

The accompaniment of the piece is also clearly inspired by late Verdi, and it provides a much richer textural palette than what we see in the otherwise choral dominated oratorio. The orchestral opening is reasonably brief at eight bars, but succeeds nicely in creating a very soft and sweet mood, with the melody floating nicely in the strings. The lilting 3/2 meter helps to establish the serenade quality as does the choice of G major for the key. Throughout the piece, one can find counter melodies floating in the upper octaves of the orchestration. As in many of Parker's works and in other movements of the oratorio, Parker uses a harmonic sequence as a primary compositional device. In this case it is an ascending sequence that occurs in the middle of the aria from bars 42 to 50 (Ex. 9).

Quam so-ci-a-li-a Gau-di-a,
What dear de-lights are thine, Glo-ri-ous,

glo-ri-a Quam spe-ci-mo-st di-vine, What light in

a-lis. Lau-de stu-dens
mor-tal. Long-ing thy praise.

f poco animato.

poco animato.

mf sf

Example 9- *Hora Novissima*. Vocal score, p. 77, m 1-9.

Movement VIII – Double Chorus

Stant Syon atria conjubilantia, martyre plena
Cive micantia, principe stantia, luce serena;

Est ibi Pascua mitibus afflua, praestita sanctis;
Regis ibi thronus, agminis et sonus est epulantis.

Parker chooses to use an elaborate double chorus as the first choral movement of Part II, “Stant Syon Sion atria.” As a scherzo movement, it uses a fairly quick tempo and opens in a $\frac{3}{4}$ meter. Parker works hard to create a playful, dance-like feel immediately from the start. However, as a double chorus, Parker’s attempts to keep it lighter are betrayed by the dense 8-part choral

writing. The text lends itself well for a double chorus setting as the first stanza states the halls of Zion are filled with the full assembly of martyrs, and the brightness of the angels, jubilously rejoicing. The second stanza continues that theme of rejoicing, indicating that in a green field near the throne, an army of saints is heard joyously shouting and feasting.

There is no shortage of choral textures in the work as Parker works with both homophonic and polyphonic techniques in his writing for the double chorus. At times, the piece uses straightforward eight-part choral writing. Other times he treats it as a true double chorus, with the two separate choruses providing contrast to one another independently. A recurring technique is using one chorus to echo the other or just having the two choruses alternate brief phrases with one another. Most of the time when he uses contrapuntal techniques, he doubles voice parts between the two choirs so with exception of a brief moment at the end, he rarely goes beyond four part counterpoint. However, Parker also occasionally blends both styles at times by having multiple voice parts sing one contrapuntal line homophonically against another (Ex. 10)

1st & 2nd Choirs.
Maestoso.

Re - gis i - bi thro - nus,
The King's throne is near . . them,

Stant Sy - on a - tri - a, con - ju - bi - lan - ti - a, mar - ty - re ple - na,
There stand those halls on high, There sound the songs of joy, In no - blest mea - sure,

Stant Sy - on a - tri - a, con - ju - bi - lan - ti - a, mar - ty - re ple - na,
There stand those halls on high, There sound the songs of joy, In no - blest mea - sure,

Re - gis i - bi thro - nus,
King - ly throne is near them,

Maestoso.

ag - mi - nis et so - nus,
Joy - ful shouts we hear . . them,

stant Sy - on a - tri - a, con - ju - bi - lan - ti - a, mar - ty - re ple - na,
There stand those halls on high, There sound the songs of joy, In no - blest mea - sure,

stant Sy - on a - tri - a, con - ju - bi - lan - ti - a, mar - ty - re ple - na,
There stand those halls on high, There sound the songs of joy, In no - blest mea - sure,

ag - mi - nis et so - nus,
Joy - ful shouts we hear them,

Example 10 - *Hora Novissima*. Vocal score, p. 95.

To add more rhythmic interest to the piece, Parker uses hemiolas and irregular phrase lengths, particularly in the first and third sections of Part A. In the second and fourth sections, Parker once again uses the principal theme from the opening movement to unify further the construction of the oratorio. In this instance, he sets it in opposition to the rhythmic motive of the scherzo.¹²⁴

One of the more interesting moments in the piece occurs in section 3 of Part A. At bar 89, we get a very strong return to the scherzo motive and the text of the first stanza, but instead of being in the tonic key of E major, Parker moves it to the relative C# minor. The result is an effective contrast to the rather bright, playful feel that the piece opened with. The C# minor creates a much darker, more ominous mood. Despite being relatively simple, this technique grabs the listener's attention.

Sequences appear again as a major construction feature as Parker uses this method to modulate to different keys regularly throughout. One of the notable instances occurs in Part B. After modulating to C major for the start of the section at bar 151, Parker uses an extended, descending sequence to take the piece eventually back to the tonic key of E major.

The overall impact of the piece is mixed. Despite some nice moments, at other times, the texture is simply too thick. The chorus and orchestra are challenged to maintain the lightness of the scherzo and also to provide clarity of sound, particularly with the eight-part writing that comes with the double chorus. The text is sometimes muddled and buried within the contrapuntal writing. The blending of the homophonic and polyphonic textures also can create an effect where it seems like one is listening to the same piece from two different sources with a 1-2 second delay between them. At times, the orchestra mostly doubles the chorus, however, at moments the doubling does nothing but create more noise and the chorus would be better served to go unaccompanied. While the movement may not be the weakest in the oratorio, the overall

¹²⁴ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 108.

construction makes it very difficult for the chorus and orchestra to feel unified in a musical whole.

For the vocalist, while there is nothing in any individual vocal line that is particularly challenging, the dense texture in combination with the other parts, makes it extremely difficult to perform without getting off timing wise or becoming lost. Concentration and watching the conductor is critical as a missed or late entrance can lead to disaster.

Movement IX – Alto Aria

Gens duce splendida, concio candida, vestibus albis,
Sunt sine fletibus in Syon aedibus, aedibus almis;

Sunt sine crimine, sunt sine turbine, sunt sine lite
In Syon aedibus editioribus Israelitae.

The last solo, cast for alto, appears as the ninth movement, entitled “Gens duce splendid.” The text continues on the previous theme at first, but it does so only to close that line of thought and move in a new direction. As such the first stanza communicates that the victorious leader and people are seen clad in white garments and will live without tears, nourished in Zion forever. The second stanza moves on by stating that God’s people will be risen in Zion and be without crime, turmoil, or war.

The movement has a somewhat lengthy orchestral introduction of about 20 bars, but otherwise is basically in an ABA’ form. A feature that stands out about this particular aria is the variety of moods presented. The orchestral introduction has a very martial quality while the A section presents a joyous feel in contrast to the sentimentality of the B section.¹²⁵ This seems to be a reflection of the text. The A section goes through only the first stanza and thus continues the festive mood of the previous movement. The leader and people are described as victorious in battle. It is possible that the martial quality of the introduction was intentional, reflecting the idea of an army marching as they return from battle. The second stanza changes tact, with the

¹²⁵ Ibid., 114.

statement that the people will be free of all war and strife, a somewhat sentimental concept, thus Parker changes the texture accordingly. The introduction is well orchestrated but presents a somewhat dark affect, using a c minor key. The military impression arises from the opening fanfare figure, reflecting a military bugel call, presented by the cornets and the woodwinds. This represents the image of God's army returning from battle. The vocal entrance establishes a sudden contrast by starting in the relative Eb major, although Parker subsequently returns to the c minor key. The melody is a complete change from anything in the introduction, instead based upon the second subject presented in the opening movement. The orchestra equally changes gears by basically doubling the vocal line. The abrupt changes led to criticism of the introductory portion as being out of place and somewhat aimless.¹²⁶ However, as the A section continues, you feel some of that same martial quality in the way in which Parker manages the phrasing, with short two bar phrases that strongly reinforce the beat with frequent use of marcato. The end of the A section uses an obvious transition for the B section, reminiscent of the early classical period. The B section provides another clear contrast to A. Parker changes the meter from 3/4 to 4/4 and instead of the short marcato based lines of the A section, it presents very long, legato vocal lines which Parker reinforces by using the same approach in the accompaniment. The classical period form is again seen within the key scheme as Parker opens the B section in the dominant key of G major.

The return of A comes quite suddenly with little preparation. On the surface, it is quite similar to the first time it is heard, however, Parker makes subtle adjustments to the accompaniment that emphasizes more of the mood of the orchestral introduction. Therefore, the more joyous nature of the vocal line is underscored by a strong ominous quality in the orchestra. However, that ominous impression gradually melts away and Parker closes the piece by transitioning to a cadence in the parallel C major. Interestingly, he uses pieces of both the first and second stanza texts in this final section. The melting away of the darker mood of the

¹²⁶ "A New American Composer," 587.

orchestra occurs with the use of the second stanza text fragments, “Sunt sine crimine, sunt sine turbine,” which means, “To be without crime, to be without turmoil.” Thus, Parker provides an element of text painting within the confines of the ABA’ structure.

Despite the abrupt changes in mood, the piece is very straightforward. Harmonically it is one of the more conservative movements in the piece, lacking any major surprises. The piece comes across overall as fairly simple and predictable. In addition, in a piece that would be expected to emphasize the singer, the vocal part is instead rather non-descript and bland. The singer’s biggest challenge is to try to find some way to make the part expressive and interesting. The range is somewhat conservative and lacks any sort of “fireworks,” or areas where the singer’s voice is allowed to shine. Several vocal phrases seem overly truncated and the overall feeling is that the vocal part never builds to any sort of climax. It is the orchestra that actually provides the most interesting and memorable material with excellent mood and atmosphere, while the fanfare-like motive immediately grabs the attention of the listener.

Movement X – a Capella Chorus

Urbs Syon unica, mansio mystica, condit coelo,
Nunc tibi gaudeo, nunc mihi lugeo, tristor, anhelor:

Te quia corpore non queo, pecore saepe penetro;
Sed, caro terrea, terraque carnea, mox cado retro.

For the tenth movement Parker uses an unaccompanied chorus. As the penultimate movement, Parker chooses a deliberately serene setting, providing a point of contrast to the strong, powerful nature of the closing. The piece is clearly meant to imitate a Renaissance motet. Besides the obvious contrapuntal writing with independent vocal lines, Parker incorporates motet features such as open fifths and octaves, a steady rhythmic flow, and successive points of imitation.¹²⁷ He also reinforces the emulation of the Renaissance period by basing the opening subject on a lydian mode with a tonic of C, which he also uses to close the movement. Parker

¹²⁷ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 109-110.

leaves no doubt about his intent by setting the piece in 4/2, which was the typical meter used by editors in late 19th century printed editions of Renaissance period motets. In fact, in print, it is generally scored in the exact same manner as those editions, which creates a sort of visual mimicry for the performers.

While the text is editorially presented as two stanzas, modern printings of the original Latin poem do not show such a division, and indeed in this case, the two stanzas present a single line of thought. What is curious is that though both these stanzas are presented in the libretto, Parker only sets the first one, essentially presenting the first half of the thought. It should be noted as well that the poetic English translation provided by Parker's mother has little to do with what was written in the Latin beyond the first line for this segment. The first line that Parker sets means, "Renowned city of Zion, beautiful heaven, mystical home of the saints, rejoice and be glad, now give me grieving, breathless mourning." The part that Parker chose not to set was the resolution of this thought that is essentially, "Because your physical body cannot enter the heart, but soon, earthly flesh will die." This speaks to the Christian belief that the spiritual body will enter heaven after the physical body dies. It also plays on the theme that suffering on earth leads to rejoicing in heaven. A poetic desire of death is frequently a subject of medieval works and that is what is being expressed here. The serene setting is thus a good choice, not just for contrast, but also for the text Parker sets. However, other than that the correlation between text and music appears weak. Why he chose to set only the first part is unclear. Perhaps it is partly a result of a fairly bright feel of the work as a whole. Up until the end of the first stanza, the text seems mostly joyous. It only shifts to mentioning mourning at the end. The second stanza is rather dark with its talk of death and mourning, though it is intended in a joyous way.

Despite clearly modeling a Renaissance motet, upon closer examination, the similarities go only so far. The harmonic language is clearly 19th century. Its chord progression and tonal scheme show a very advanced vertical construction that is in sharp contrast to the more linear style of the Renaissance, not to mention a variety of chords used that would be nearly unthinkable

prior to the Romantic period. The speed of the harmonic changes is also clearly along the lines of 19th century. It could be argued when considering the overall style of the piece that the harmonic tempo is too fast, not allowing the listener to fully comprehend and enjoy each successive movement. At times, the typical long melodic lines of a motet become almost lost to the listener because the harmonic changes do not allow them to fully blossom (Ex. 11).

musical score for "Hora Novissima" vocal score, p. 122. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features four vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are in Latin and English. The score includes dynamic markings such as *f*, *pp subito*, and *sempre pp*.

Lyrics (English):

Home . . . of the saints . . . a - lone, Ci - ty of
 - lone, Built in the hea - ven, built . . in the hea - ven, Ci - ty of
 blest Ci - ty, blest Ci - ty, Home of the saints a - lone,
 hea - ven, Ci - ty of high re - nown, Blest,
 high re - nown, Home . . . of the saints a - lone, Ci -
 high re - nown, Home . . . of the saints a - lone, Ci -
 high re - nown, . . . high re - nown, . . . high, of
 blest . . . Ci - ty of high re - nown, Home

Lyrics (Latin):

ma - ni - si - o mys - ti - ca, Urbs Sy - on
 coe - lo, con - di - ta coe - lo, con - di - ta coe - lo, urbs Sy - on
 urbs Sy - on, urbs Sy - on, ma - ni - si - o mys - ti - ca,
 coe - lo, urbs Sy - on u - ni - ca, urbs,
 hea - ven, Ci - ty of high re - nown,
 u - ni - ca, man si - o mys - ti - ca, urbs
 high re - nown, Home . . . of the saints a - lone, Ci -
 urbs Sy - on u - ni - ca, . . urbs Sy - on, Sy - on
 Ci - ty of high re - nown, . . Ci - ty of high, of
 urbs, . . . urbs Sy - on u - ni - ca, man -
 blest . . . Ci - ty of high re - nown, Home

Example 11 - *Hora Novissima*. Vocal score, p. 122.

In terms of form, the work seems to be sectionalized into an ABCD type structure. The A section is easily the most straightforward and sounds most similar to a typical contrapuntal motet. In the B section, we begin to see more unusual harmonic ideas, often going in unexpected directions. Parker's fondness for ascending chromatic patterns once again shows up in the C section (Ex. 12), while the D section is introduced by a brief call and response effect with the full chorus responding to a short call of the tenors and basses.

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f dim.

mi - hi lu - ge - o, lu - ge - o, . . . tris - tor an - he - lo, . . .
 - dore the match - less grace, match-less grace, . . . To mor - tals giv - en, . . .

f dim.

hi lu - ge - o, lu - ge - o, . . . tris - tor an - he - lo,
 the match-less grace, match-less grace, . . . To mor - tals giv - en,

f dim.

lu - ge - o, lu - ge - o, lu - ge - o, . . . tris - tor, tris - tor an -
 match - less grace, match-less grace, match-less grace, . . . giv - en, To mor - tals

f dim.

Nunc mi - hi lu - ge - o, tris - tor,
 A - dore the match - less grace, giv - en,

Example 12 - *Hora Novissima*. Vocal score, p. 124, mm. 6-10.

Being an unaccompanied chorus, this is no doubt a somewhat troublesome piece to perform well. The steady contrapuntal writing, with each vocal line performing independently, leaves fewer reference points for the singers to find, leaving a greater likelihood of getting lost in the texture. The issue is greatly exacerbated by the rapidly changing harmonic progression that also frequently moves in unexpected directions, thus making it more difficult for the singers to hear and maintain their place within the harmonic structure. It is important for performers to be very sure of their part and to be well rehearsed so that they understand fully how their part fits in with the texture.

Movement XI – Quartet and Chorus

Urbs Syon inclyta, turris et edita littore tuto,
Te peto, te colo, te flagro, te volo canto, saluto:

Nec meritis peto; nam meritis meto morte perire:
Nec reticens tego quod meritis ego filius irae.

Vita quidem mea, vita nimis rea, mortua vita,
Quippe reatibus exitiabilis obruta, trita.

Spe tamen ambulo, praemia postulo speque fideque;
Illa perennia postula praemia nocte dieque:

Me Pater optimus atque piissimus ille creavit,
In lue pertulit, ex lue sustulit, a lue lavit.

O bona patria, nunc tua gaudia teque videbo?
O bona patria, nunc tua premia plena tenebo?

O sacer, O pius, O ter et amplius ille beatus,
Cui sua pars Deus: O miser, O reus, hac viduatus.

The finale of the piece is, fittingly, the most expansive movement of *Hora Novissima*. It uses both the chorus and the quartet and stretches nearly twice as long as most other movements. This holds true of the text as well, covering a much more expansive seven stanzas. The text for this movement is a clear break in thought from what came in the previous sections. In fact, the seven stanzas of this poem seem more complete as a poem, seemingly able to stand on their own. The first stanza is an opening hail and salute to Zion, the second and third declare how unworthy the poet (man) is of such a reward. The fourth continues by stating that despite being unworthy, the poet will continue his pursuit of that reward, because, as the fifth stanza states, God is the ultimate power and a light in the darkness. The sixth stanza asks rhetorically if man is able to enjoy such a beautiful treasure as Heaven, with the final stanza declaring what a blessing it will be to receive such a gift from God.

The orchestra is featured prominently, being given an extended introduction and two substantial interludes. Once again, Parker is inspired by a Romantic symphony, and in the manner of a cyclical symphony's finale, the movement is a culmination of all the important themes used

throughout the work. Notably, the principal theme is based on the descending 4th theme of the opening, only now inverted and stretching a 5th.¹²⁸ (Ex. 13, 14) Similarly, the closing movement also follows sonata form even more clearly than the opening movement.



Example 13 – Principal theme from Movement I orchestral opening. *Hora Novissima*. Vocal Score, p. 1 m 11-15.¹²⁹



Example 14 – Principal theme from Movement XI. *Hora Novissima*. Vocal Score, p. 28 m 13-16.¹³⁰

The orchestral introduction uses the brass initially in a large fanfare with the organ providing a large, broad gesture. The chorus enters for the exposition with a strong twelve-bar principal subject in a fugato setting. The subject of the fugato is rhythmically based on the theme of the bass aria, “Spe modo vivitur,” but melodically is clearly in E major and uses the aforementioned ascending fifth figure (Ex. 14). Other than the modern orchestration, the fugato section is clearly baroque sounding to the extent that the harmonic progression and speed also conforms to typical baroque practice. Only in his resolution of the fugato section does it depart from the expected.

After the chorus gives their opening statement via the fugato, Parker transitions to a new episode that begins in the relative c minor, providing the second subject of the movement. It initially features only the quartet, again using contrapuntal technique, although the section is not written as a fugue. This change to a new section aligns with the text very well. As mentioned, the

¹²⁸ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 110.

¹²⁹ Excerpt taken from Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 107.

¹³⁰ Excerpt taken from Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 111.

first stanza is a praise to Zion and the second and third stanza are an expression of unworthiness. The opening choral fugato covers only that first stanza. The change to the new quartet section marks the beginning of the second stanza and it covers both of the next two stanzas. The theme of the new episode is based upon the melody that first appeared in the coda of the first movement. After the quartet establishes the new theme, it is repeated by the chorus, which gives way to another brief statement by the quartet. From there, Parker uses a fragment of the theme to build an ascending sequence using the chorus, leading to a section ending moment of the quartet and chorus together. The section is notably darker than the triumphant previous section, reflective of the darker text, and the alternating chorus and quartet, combined with the contrapuntal style, is successful in creating a very palpable tension.

Parker uses the first orchestral interlude to change the mood from the stormy tension that concludes the second subject to a much more loving, serene quality that serves as the basis of his development. This choice is again reflective of the text with the fourth stanza indicating the yearning for the celestial reward. The new section uses both the quartet and chorus and represents some of Parker's finest vocal writing. The quartet presents another theme that is contrasted by the chorus softly singing the original fugue subject homophonically underneath, providing a clever text setting. The quartet is singing about pursuing the ultimate reward. The chorus, meanwhile, is singing the fugato theme on the actual opening line of text, "Urbs Syon inclyta," or "Glorious city of Zion." Thus, while the quartet sings of their yearning, the chorus exclaims what they are yearning for. As the section continues, the chorus takes over briefly and completes the thematic statement, but now moving on to the text of the fifth stanza, a declaration of God's righteousness. Parker then presents some thematic development with the quartet soloists handing off melodic fragments to one another while the chorus provides texture and harmony underneath.

The second orchestral interlude follows and returns the movement to the triumphal feel of the opening, providing the transition to the recapitulation and coda to end the work. The recapitulation begins with a large restatement of the opening fugue subject by the chorus, but this

time the chorus sings it together in unison and Parker has them repeat the opening stanza of text. It gives way to fragmentary restatements of the material in the other sections alternately again using both the quartet and chorus and covering the last two stanzas of the text. The piece then closes grandly with the coda, using all available performing forces in a very broad, extended drive to the final cadence, using an *fff* dynamic.

While the final movement is clearly sectionalized, it is one of the strongest movements in the entire work. Parker's use of transitions is much more logical and better realized here than at any other moment of the oratorio. Harmonically, the piece tends to stick to the expected and is more conservative than most other movements, but that conservatism seems to allow Parker to better translate mood and intent to the audience. By restraining complexity, Parker seems to be able to better negotiate the synthesis of the choral writing and the orchestration as a whole. As in a few other movements, balance is a major challenge given the number of parts involved. One must contend not only with a chorus and a quartet, but a fairly thick orchestration as well. It needs to be noted that the quartet bass solo part does sit fairly high in the range. While not ever exceeding E₄, it reads much more like a baritone part than a bass part. Parker also uses a rather full range of dynamics with a wide selection of moods so attention must be paid to provide these elements for performance.

Concluding Comments

The strength of the final movement brings to light both the overall strengths and weaknesses of the oratorio. *Hora Novissima* is an early period piece and seems to suffer somewhat from Parker's attempts to find himself as a composer. It is interesting to note that this was the work that catapulted him to fame when he was still very young, even though it reveals someone who is still unsure of his compositional voice. That lack of direction results in many different ideas thrown into various moments of the oratorio, without fully developing or realizing any of them to their full potential. The end result is somewhat disjunct and uneven. The arias appear to be the most consistent components in their approach and style. It is surprising that given

Parker's reputation as a choral writer, he had varying success when attempting to blend various styles. Parker tends to not let an idea bloom before he jumps to the next idea. This is most obvious in the first and sixth movements which bookend part 1 of the oratorio.

Table 1 - Vocal Ranges for *Hora Novissima*

Movement	Type	Voices	Range
I. <i>Hora Novissima</i>	Chorus	Soprano Alto Tenor Bass	B ₃ – A ₅ A ₃ – E ₅ Eb ₃ – A ₄ (E ₂)A ₂ – Eb ₄
II. <i>Hic breve vivitur</i>	Solo Quartet	Soprano Alto Tenor Bass	C ₄ – A ₅ A ₃ – D ₅ E ₃ – G ₄ G ₂ – D ₂
III. <i>Spe modo vivitur</i>	Aria	Bass	A ₂ – E ₄
IV. <i>Pars mea, Rex meus</i>	Chorus	Soprano Alto Tenor Bass	Eb ₄ – A ₅ Bb ₃ – Eb ₅ Eb ₃ – G ₄ G ₂ – Eb ₄
V. <i>O bona patria</i>	Aria	Soprano	Eb ₄ – Ab ₅
VI. <i>Tu sine littore</i>	Quartet & Chorus	Solo Soprano Solo Alto Solo Tenor Solo Bass Chorus Soprano Chorus Alto Chorus Tenor Chorus Bass	E ₄ – B ₅ B ₃ – D ₅ E ₃ – F ₄ B ₂ – D ₄ Eb ₄ – A ₅ G ₃ – D ₅ F ₃ – G ₄ G ₂ – D ₄
VII. <i>Urbs syon atria</i>	Aria	Tenor	D ₃ – A ₄
VIII. <i>Stant syon atria</i>	Double Chorus	Soprano Choir 1 Alto Choir 1 Tenor Choir 1 Bass Choir 1 Soprano Choir 2 Alto Choir 2 Tenor Choir 2 Bass Choir 2	C ₄ – B ₅ B ₃ – E ₅ C ₃ – A ₄ F ₂ – E ₄ C ₄ – A ₅ G ₃ – E ₅ C ₃ – A ₄ F ₂ – E ₄
IX. <i>Gens duce splendida</i>	Aria	Alto	C ₄ – E ₅
X. <i>Urbs syon unica</i>	a capella Chorus	Soprano Alto Tenor Bass	C ₄ – A ₅ A ₃ – D ₅ E ₃ – G ₄ G ₂ – D ₄
XI. <i>Urbs syon inclyta</i>	Quartet & Chorus	Solo Soprano Solo Alto Solo Tenor Solo Bass Chorus Soprano Chorus Alto Chorus Tenor Chorus Bass	D ₄ – B ₅ B ₃ – D ₅ Eb ₃ – Bb ₄ A ₂ – E ₄ C ₄ – A ₅ A ₃ – E ₅ D ₃ – G ₄ Ab ₂ – E ₄

III. The Legend of Saint Christopher

Introduction

As time went on, Parker became increasingly interested in dramatic writing. Throughout his early career, he expressed his dislike for opera and the pretentiousness that frequently came with it. Despite coming only five years after *Hora Novissima*, premiering in 1898, Parker's second attempt at an oratorio really signals the start of his middle period. He eschews the older, sectionalized style and the frequent attempts to recreate past periods that typified most of his works up to that date, replacing them with a much more progressive approach that culminates a decade later with the opera *Mona*.

The Legend of Saint Christopher makes no attempt to hide its dramatic nature. The text was actually written by Parker's mother, Isabella Parker, who reportedly worked closely with Horatio throughout the oratorio's composition. The style of the work is clearly inspired by opera and 19th century dramatic oratorios such as Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. The dramatic nature of the text works to determine the overall structure of the work rather than an abstract concept of overall structural scheme as in *Hora Novissima*. In this case, numerous sections are written in more fluid dramatic forms such as dialogues, ariosos, and orchestral interludes.¹³¹ Numbering and clear breaks between sections have been eliminated in favor of the late 19th century operatic format of continuous music. Parker conventionally divides the oratorio into three acts, subdivided into two to four scenes each. He chooses to loosely connect the scenes to form one continuous whole for each act. The continuous music format means that there are no clearly labeled recitatives, conforming to the practice of late 19th -century opera and providing further separation from the Baroque oratorio model. Dialogue and action are communicated through the natural unfolding of the music. However, a few moments of that dialogue seem to be modeled on a *recitativo accompagnato* style which Parker then blends into the natural flow of the music.

¹³¹ Kearns, "Horatio Parker and the English Choral Societies," 26.

Kearns points out that one of the most striking features of *The Legend of Saint Christopher* is the use of a highly developed leitmotif technique. Parker borrows a page from Wagnerian music drama by providing each character with a leitmotif that is then used as premonitory, associative, or reminiscent device. The various motives also head the opening of arias and form the basis of the symphonic interludes used to begin or end the different scenes.

As in Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, dramatic action drives *The Legend of Saint Christopher*. Unlike most oratorios, it generally lacks any narrative element with the exception of some passages in Act 3. Instead, dramatic events unfold naturally in a continuous story. Parker goes as far as to actually include descriptive scene information at the start of each new scene and he also provides physical actions similar to stage directions throughout the work. The various directions and descriptions seem to indicate an intent for a fully staged performance of the work, again crossing over into operatic territory.

The operatic approximation extends to the characters, in that each has a well-designed role interacting fully with each other. Throughout much of the work, the chorus also serves as a variable collective character in the drama, assuming communal roles as soldiers, villagers, demons, etc. Parker mostly avoids the earlier oratorio practice of having the chorus remain a separate entity from the action that provides only narrative or descriptive information. Only in the prologue and at the end of Act 3 does the chorus take such narrative function. All characters, including the chorus, interact fully within the drama, providing dialogues and furthering the story.

There are a few elements that prevent *The Legend of Saint Christopher* from being considered a true opera. First, the use of chorus is quite extensive, as it sings frequently long passages and it appears in most scenes. Second, the movement from scene to scene is exceptionally fast, with most scenes only lasting five to ten minutes. This of course reflects on the third issue, which is the pacing of the action and its presentation. The quick scene changes actually respond to the rapid advancement of the story. The basic plot revolves around the Syrian giant Offerus. As a very strong and powerful creature, he roams the earth searching for the most

powerful master he can find to serve. He first comes across the most powerful king he can find, but he subsequently leaves to serve Satan, and finally decides that God is the most powerful being of all. After helping the Christ child to ford a flooded stream, he is given the name Saint Christopher. A journey tale of this sort is suitable for a tableau style of presentation, as the listener follows the journey of Offerus while he meets and then departs each new master.

As mentioned, the chorus assumes the collective role of the servants, an army of demons, and a church congregation. There are actually very few solo roles:

Offerus - Bass. The aforementioned principal character

The King/The Hermit – Tenor. This is not a double role; the Hermit, who appears in Act 3, is revealed to be the former King.

The Queen – Soprano. A fairly small role, she appears only in Act 1.

Satan – High baritone. While he appears only in Act 2, he essentially guides and is the primary driving force throughout the oratorio.

The Angel – Soprano. This is also a smaller role that appears only Act 3. However, if necessary, it is entirely possible that both the role of the Queen and the Angel can be performed by the same singer, although there is no dramatic connection between the two parts.

The Child – Soprano, but a boy soprano if possible. A very small part, but very pivotal. This is the child that Offerus helps across the stream and is revealed to be Christ.

Prologue and Act 1

Rather than the use of an overture to begin the work, as one would see with an opera, *The Legend of St Christopher* begins with a prologue in the form of a fairly traditional choral movement. There is a brief eight- bar orchestral introduction and then the chorus enters with an anthem-like homophonic statement. Despite its brevity, the orchestral opening does have some significance in that it begins with a fanfare that recurs later in the work. Most significantly it reappears in Act II to represent Offerus' conversion to Christianity.¹³²

Functionally, this choral movement is really the only instance where the chorus is entirely removed from any dramatic role in the oratorio. Nothing in its text is part of the forthcoming drama or otherwise serves to advance the story. The text is a straightforward statement on the

¹³² Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 118.

building of the Church. The intent of the movement is simply to set the tone and the stage for the upcoming story in terms of its theological significance.

The Prologue is quite conventional overall with no surprises. The meter is set in 4/4 with a moderato tempo. However, despite a full stop before the start of Act 1, it serves to set-up musically the upcoming movement. Notably, the key of A major, established by the Prologue, is retained and continued through a substantial portion of Act 1, scene 1. The piece is also fairly brief at around 48 bars and two minutes in length. The choral writing is rather straightforward, perhaps emulating the idea of a congregational hymn as you would see in traditional cantata writing. However, Parker does add some complexity by using some antiphonal writing in the otherwise homophonic texture and he does subdivide the voice parts at times to briefly present seven-part chords. As such, it would be beyond the level of a congregational chorus. The orchestra does provide reasonable support to the vocal line, providing a strong harmonic base and frequently following the chorus parts closely without truly doubling. However, at times the overall texture is thick enough that the singers must have a strong grasp of their individual vocal line. While most of the vocal parts do utilize a rather wide range, it does not push to any extremes. As such it is suitable for a chorus with many amateur singers as one would expect given the festival type chorus one would typically see performing this work.

Contextually, the piece almost feels like an unnecessary accessory, particularly given that Act 1 begins with the first of several rather long orchestral passages. From a libretto standpoint, there is no dramatic need for the text presented by the chorus. Superficially, it seems that Parker is trying to retain some degree of conservatism in an otherwise quite progressive work by providing the audience an expected choral movement opening. However, the true function is more conceptual. Parker uses it to introduce an important motive immediately to the audience. This motive represents the triumph of Christianity, which is not only the theme of the Prologue, but also of the entire oratorio.

The orchestral opening of Act 1 stretches 76 bars and is approximately two and half minutes in length. As mentioned, it continues the A major key, 4/4 meter, and moderato tempo of the Prologue. The length of the introduction and the way in which it eventually leads directly into the action is again reminiscent of Wagnerian music dramas such as *Der fliegende Holländer* and *Das Rheingold*, and other late Romantic operas. In summary, the orchestral prologue has a self-contained identity rather than being a mere prelude to the whole drama. As in Wagnerian works, the orchestral introduction plays a role in introducing important themes. In *St. Christopher*, this introduction develops a fanfare theme that represents King Oriens. The motive recurs in various forms throughout the opening scene and then reappears in Act 3 as the Hermit reveals himself to be in fact the former King.¹³³ (Ex. 15) The very beginning of the act also includes one of the aforementioned scene descriptions that read almost like stage directions and that appear throughout the work. In this case the given description is, “An open space before the palace of King Oriens. A dense wood is on the left, and a road in the distance upon which the King is seen approaching in a chariot, with soldiers, and trumpeters.”¹³⁴



Example 15 – King Oriens’ theme as it appears in its first occurrence. *The Legend of Saint Christopher*. Act 1, Scene 1, mm. 23-26.

The orchestral introduction gives way to the entrance of a few of the chorus basses, who serve the role of the heralds of the army, announcing the return of the King from battle and calling everyone forth to worship and greet him. In response, the women of the chorus, providing the role of the maidens of the court and described in the stage notes of having laurel wreaths and garlands of flowers, welcome the King and his soldiers and sing the King’s praises. The women’s chorus sings in four-part SSAA harmony, in straight homophonic writing, somewhat hymn-like

¹³³ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 119

¹³⁴ Horatio Parker, *The Legend of St. Christopher: A dramatic oratorio for solo voices, chorus, orchestra, and organ*, op. 4, Words by Isabella Parker, (New York: Novello, Ewer, and Co., 1898) Vocal Score, 6.

in compositional technique, but with the orchestra providing some additional texture rather than purely doubling the choral parts.

After the maidens complete their welcome, Parker at last shifts away from the A major key that dominated the earlier material, signaling the start of a new musical section and idea. Parker provides a modulatory orchestral passage to prevent the change from being abrupt and has it settle into the key of d minor for the entrance of the men's chorus, who are meant to serve the role of the soldiers. The men's chorus begins with a unison cry of victory before breaking into four parts and demanding that the King be crowned for his achievement in battle. Parker then brings the piece back to the opening A major and the full chorus sings together to hail and to welcome the King, breaking into an eight-part double chorus, with some introduction of antiphonal writing. Parker's treatment of the transitions between the chorus sections are representative of his progressive and operatic approach to the oratorio. Despite providing a men's chorus, a women' chorus, and a double chorus, the music is continuous and free flowing. In his early period works, Parker likely would have sectionalized these parts rather than having them flow as one continuous dramatic passage. Parker further unifies the segments by including a processional motive that is used as the principal theme in both the maiden's chorus and double chorus. Like the King's fanfare, this motive is first heard in the orchestral introduction, furthering the connection of the introduction to the oratorio as a whole.¹³⁵

Upon conclusion of the chorus's declaration, Parker provides a 24 bar orchestral interlude that strongly closes the section but also provides modulatory material to transition the scene into the key of Bb minor with a meter change to 3/4. The last six bars of the orchestral break actually serve as the direct introduction to the entrance of the giant Offerus. This provides the first opportunity of direct dialogue, which occurs between Offerus and the King. The entrance of Offerus is again described in text notes within the score, stating that he emerges from the woods and kneels before the King.

¹³⁵ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 121.

The dialogue begins with Offerus introducing himself and offering his service to the King. He declares that he has searched long and in poverty for the mightiest King on earth to serve. The King responds that he willingly accepts Offerus' offer. This section again shows Parker's use of leitmotif as an important part of his compositional approach in *St. Christopher*. A descending figure using augmented, minor, and diminished chords along with a suspension is used to represent his search for the greatest master and it recurs through various points in the work.¹³⁶ After the initial statement by Offerus, the entire sequence takes the form of a duet in which Offerus states that he now belongs to the King and the King agrees. However, there is the undercurrent of disagreement between them as the King states, "Thou art mine alone until life be ended," while Offerus states, "I am thine alone till I find a mightier." The duet serves to close out the scene and which is then accompanied by a lengthy orchestral interlude that both closes Scene 1 and introduces Scene 2.

Vocally, there is little in Scene 1 that is particularly challenging. The choral voices are subdivided where the men and women each must be broken into four parts, for a total of eight, however, a majority of the choral writing is homophonic with reinforcement provided by the orchestra. The requested few chorus basses/baritones used to open the singing in the movement should probably consist of a few tenors and the section does not only split in two, but utilizes a high F# in the upper voice. Phrasing throughout the choral sections is logical and effective. An area to watch is the full entrance of the men's chorus, where they play the role of soldiers. (p. 13, m. 8).¹³⁷ This cry of victory, must be strong and forceful without becoming overly shouty. Parker also adds a sostenuto piano moment in the middle of it that should be exaggerated and emphasized as an effect which then crescendos into their exclamation of, "The conquerer." The closing of the choral section, where the eight parts are present at once and are no longer following a homophonic texture, is the most challenging section for the chorus in the scene.

¹³⁶ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 120.

¹³⁷ Parker, *St. Christopher*, Vocal Score.

The duet section between the King and Offerus is not particularly difficult. The singers must portray a strong, forceful feeling, yet also must maintain a clear regal air appropriate for the pomp one would expect at a royal court. This will be somewhat more difficult for the role of Offerus. Parker repeatedly alternates the dynamic between *forte* and *piano* in the vocal line. The singer must maintain the atmosphere as he alternates between the two dynamics. However, Parker uses the two dynamic levels to provide two different emotions. The *forte* dynamic is used to indicate the strength and pride of Offerus, while the *piano* is used to express humility. Therefore, the *forte*, “Immortal gods have giv’n me strength and stature to excel,” is followed by the *piano*, “And long in poverty have I sought the mightiest earthly monarch, that my service might be his.” It is up to the singer to use the dynamics as a tool to show the different emotions, while maintaining the overall regal, maestoso feel. The other area of concern in the scene is the final closing section where the tempo switches to allegro and the two soloists sing together at a *fortissimo* marking (p. 23, m. 4)¹³⁸. The singers must maintain balance between them and also be careful not to oversing and push. Offerus, in particular, has only started his role and has a lot more to sing. The conductor can help here by keeping the orchestra in check as they too have a *fortissimo* dynamic marking.

While the orchestral music is continuous between the scenes, there is a clear sense of transition and of an end of one musical section and the beginning of another. After a clear cadential moment on Eb minor to close Scene 1, Parker begins the new scene with a shift to the compound triple meter of 9/8 with a new key signature of B major. This change is accompanied by a double bar and a change in tempo to andante. Parker also begins a new motive in the orchestra to make clear that it is the start of a new idea and section.

The change from scene 1 to 2 is a true scene change in that it involves an entirely new setting and a shift in unfolding action. Parker’s scene notes state, “A hall in the palace. The Queen and her attendants wait while the King enters with his retinue, followed by Offerus.” The

¹³⁸ Parker, *St. Christopher*, Vocal Score.

orchestral interlude between the closing of Scene 1 and the opening of Scene 2 stretches a combined 46 bars, which is a fairly substantial episode. This interlude is hardly an oddity.

Orchestral interludes are an essential part of the structure with Parker using them as transitional devices at almost every scene change when there is a break in the action. The use of the interlude in this manner lends further credence to the idea that he seriously considered the idea of possibly staging the work, although little has been written on the possibility. Nevertheless, the long interludes would provide ample time for rudimentary set changes and/or a curtain drop.

Unlike, the choral dominated first scene, the second scene is focused on the soloists, with the role of the Queen taking the dominant role. It begins with a solo from the Queen which by itself is far too brief to be considered an aria. It actually forms the beginning of a dialogue with the King. The Queen's initial statement essentially welcomes the King home stating that she is no longer in sorrow from waiting for his return and that she is proud of his accomplishments. Her last sentence, "Proud I am thy noble deeds to hear, And willing tribute to thy courage bear," is then repeated by the chorus, now playing the role of the court and attendants, as a sort of tag ending. This is followed by an immediate change to a $\frac{3}{4}$ meter, an acceleration of the tempo, and a new key signature. The change reveals the motivic development techniques used by Parker in the King's response to the Queen's greeting. A modified fragment of the King's motive is heard upon his entrance in the accompaniment and he expresses his happiness to see his wife again (Ex. 16). Immediately after his statement, the music switches back to a modified version of the music heard from the beginning of the scene, which is in essence the Queen's motive (Ex. 17). The Queen responds in turn, with a new melodic line that is roughly based upon the passage she sang earlier, encouraging the King to rest. As before, the chorus repeats her last line of text. Kearns states that the entire sequence is in fact just one extended aria in ABA'C form. It can be divided into two parts of AB and AC with the King's response being an interjection in the middle of it.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 122.



Example 16 – King Oriens’ theme introduced 3 bars before his entrance. *The Legend of St Christopher*. Vocal score, p. 27, mm. 4-10.¹⁴⁰



Example 17 – The Queen’s theme. *The Legend of St Christopher*. Vocal score, p. 28, mm. 14-17.

The Queen’s solo sections are for the most part easily singable, with logical phrasing and flowing lines. The range utilized is somewhat wide, but it does not push the extremes either in the lower or upper registers. However, there are several moments of two against three hemiola. While those segments are largely supported by the orchestra, the singer must still be cautious and clearly delineate the opposing rhythms. The King’s parts are largely interjectory and are likewise not particularly demanding. The one mildly difficult spot is when it calls for a sudden Ab_5 on an eighth note without preparation (p. 28 m. 3).¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Unless otherwise noted, this and all subsequent examples excerpted from Horatio Parker. *The Legend of St. Christopher: A dramatic oratorio for solo voices, chorus, orchestra, and organ, op. 43*. Words by Isabella Parker. (New York: H.W. Gray Co., 1898). Vocal Score.

¹⁴¹ Parker, *St. Christopher*, Vocal Score.

A twelve-bar orchestral break follows to close the moment and to bring the next dramatic event, namely the King's presentation of Offerus. The King's announcement essentially serves as a transitional fragment of five bars, followed by a repeat of much of the same musical material from Scene 1 where Offerus presents himself to the King. As in the previous scene, after Offerus' statement of service he is joined in duet, this time by the Queen rather than the King. The music at this moment is based upon what was sung previously, but has been modified to reflect the different characters and text.

The duet between Offerus and the Queen is perhaps the most vocally interesting section of the scene, utilizing a nice interplay between the two voices, albeit somewhat brief. Offerus' part is the most vocally demanding of any in the scene, utilizing a tessitura that spends the majority of the time in the $A\flat_3$ to $E\flat_4$ range. It then ends with an F_4 , albeit with an optional dropped octave. While this would be fine for a baritone, a bass could find it slightly more tiring. By placing the voice in that range, it does make a lower voice more powerful sounding. The singer needs to make sure their singing matches the text as despite the higher range and fairly loud dynamic marking, the text is mostly one of submission to the Queen. Utilization of a connected legato style would help to keep the character from sounding angry or shouty sounding. The mostly stepwise nature of the vocal line will undoubtedly help the singer in that regard.

Upon the completion of the duet, all characters exit except the King and Queen, who close the scene with another dialogue. This particular section foreshadows not only the succeeding Scene 3, but the entire plot of the oratorio. The King expresses his admiration of Offerus and states that he hopes it will be some time before Offerus finds a mightier master. When the Queen states that there is no ruler on earth mightier than King Oriens, he replies that there are powers before whom even he must bow. To communicate a sense of despair and Offerus' upcoming journey through darkness, the passage is highly chromaticized. Significantly, the section marks the first appearance of Satan's motive which furthers the premonitory effect. (Ex. 18) This motive is noted as being the most varied and frequently used in the work, appearing

in several permutations.¹⁴² This orchestral color is used to close the scene with a brief passage that fades away and ends with a held chord to signal the start of the final scene of Act 1.



Example 18 – Initial appearance of Satan’s theme. *The Legend of St. Chistopher*, Vocal Score. p. 37, mm. 10-12¹⁴³

The singers should approach this final conversation between the Queen and King like a recitative. While this is somewhat challenging given the *lento* tempo and fully realized orchestration, the text, the construction of the vocal line, and the chromaticism all lend themselves to this approach. The singers should focus on text and characterization, rather than beauty, connection, and line. The King is even given an opportunity for minor improvisation as the orchestra drops out and Parker provides the note of *espress. ad lib.* for the final line of text (p. 37 mm. 5-7)¹⁴⁴.

The fermata that ends Scene 2 gives way to another extended orchestral opening, forming the second of the ten lengthy orchestral interludes present in the work. This opening provides a sharp contrast to the closing material of the previous scene as it switches to a 6/8 meter with a tempo of *Allegro molto vivace*. A steady stream of eighth notes creates a feel of constant motion and of driving forward. The introduction lasts 123 bars, but the quick tempo and meter allows it to move by rather quickly.

The scene description states, “An open glade in the forest. The King and his followers are resting after the hunt. A deer starts from the wood and Offerus draws his bow. The King trembles and crosses himself.” The described action would be taking place throughout the orchestral opening. The constant, undulating eighth notes is meant to represent the hunt and several hunting

¹⁴² Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 119.

¹⁴³ Excerpt taken from Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 120.

¹⁴⁴ Parker, *St. Christopher*, Vocal Score.

calls reoccur throughout. As Offerus plays out his action of pursuing the deer, the tension and intensity of the accompaniment builds, reaching fortissimo at roughly three fourths of the way through. The growing intensity perhaps is the growing intensity of the hunt, but could also reflect the growing restlessness of the King as he watches Offerus pursue the deer towards the enchanted woods. At four bars before the King's vocal entrance, the tempo increases to *presto* leading to his opening cry of "Hold, Offerus, send not the shaft!" out of fear of Offerus' action. When questioned by Offerus, the King states that the wood where he is shooting the arrow belongs to the "fiend," which refers to Satan.

Offerus then has a brief aria type passage in which he declares that he has found a master mightier than the King and that he now must leave. With that statement, he lets the arrow fly and heads into the woods. The orchestra responds with a very ominous passage characterized with a constant tremolo in the strings and held chords descending by half steps. It is a fitting representation of a descent into darkness and it is meant to also represent the dark woods where flashes of fire are seen in the distance. The vocal line of Offerus is similarly fitting, starting on a high Eb₄ and then following a primarily descending figure. The characterization is pretty simple for the singer. It is intended to be a strong and forceful declaration and at no point does Parker deviate from that emotional stance. The bombastic nature of the section will appeal to most low male voices and should be relatively easy as the approach is simply, "loud and forceful," although care should be taken not to push too much.

The grim fate presented by the orchestra gives way to the entrance of the chorus, which is now playing the role of the hunting party. The rest of the scene is in fact a large choral movement to close the act, so at that moment Parker chose to follow convention to signal the end of a large section. The first half of the chorus consists of the hunting party insisting that Offerus stay with them. They are joined by the King and Queen as they each also make an individual call for Offerus to stay. The chorus continues by then describing the terror of the woods, mentioning the

demons and phantoms that occupy it. The continuous, almost chant-like pounding rhythm of the vocal writing works to drive home the sense of fear and darkness.

However, before embarking on the final section of the chorus, Parker chooses to interrupt it by inserting another response by Offerus in the form of a short aria. In contrast to the urgent cry and steady rhythm of the chorus, the aria presents a slow, legato passage, sung sweetly, in the dark tonality of F minor. Within this texture, Offerus declares that though he sees the dark path ahead of him, he is compelled to obey. The effect seems to indicate some degree of reluctance for Offerus as if he had some amount of contentment serving the King which he now leaves behind. This solo section really is a strong contrast to Offerus' previous solo in the scene. Whereas the earlier solo was simply strong and forceful, the latest section must convey a spooky quality and tension. However, in creating that color of tone, the singer must not come across as fearful, as fear would undermine the nature of Offerus' strength. The writing of the vocal line sets up connected, legato singing and the singing should take advantage of that aspect to shape each line of text. For instance, a strong emphasis on the consonants will help to add shape within the context of an otherwise legato line in this case. This particular segment is also the first of any for Offerus that seems to favor a bass rather than a baritone for performance. As if to verify that point, Parker at last utilizes a low range, ending the piece with a low E₂ and F₂, although providing an out with an optional octave up marking.

After Offerus' aria, the scene is then completed by the return of the chorus, who now states their farewell to Offerus with the resignation that they cannot convince him to stay. The King and Queen join once again as the chorus approaches the final cadence to add their own statement of farewell, done through a brief passage of contrapuntal writing leading directly to the cadence and the end of the act. Both sections of chorus are again fairly straightforward. They do utilize eight-part writing, but maintain a mostly homophonic texture throughout with strong support from the orchestra. Clearly the two sections must portray very different emotional states as the earlier section is begging for Offerus, providing a sense of foreboding. The latter section

then bids Offerus farewell and is generally fonder in expression, although clearly not intended to be cheerful. From a range perspective there is little of concern for the chorus or for the King and Queen for those brief segment where they join the chorus. There is one moment where the 1st sopranos and the basses are required to sing in an upper tessitura for a more extended time. This is purely for dramatic reasons, representing a cry of fear and warning given the text of, “Wings of demons hover round thy path and over; dost thy not discover horrid phantoms in the way?” The *fortissimo* dynamic allows the chorus to just sing out, easing the strain versus trying to maintain those upper notes in a more controlled soft dynamic, provided the singers stay relaxed and not try to overpower as a result of the marked loudness.

Act 2

As in Act 1, Act 2’s opening scene starts with another extended orchestral section. The scene description this time states, “A desert plain. Offerus meets Satan at the head of an armed legion.” The orchestral section seems to want to emulate darkness and a concept of the underworld. However, the texture, which for the first half relies heavily on atmospherics and held notes, also seems to convey the image of Offerus trudging across the lifeless desert. Both impressions are aided by the A minor key signature and some highly chromatic passages.

As one would expect, the role of Satan’s armed legion is taken by the chorus, but in this case only the men. Parker makes substantial use of the men’s chorus in the scene and in fact, through the entire second act. The structure of the scene is quite simple. After the orchestral introduction, it basically consists of an aria for Satan, with a brief introductory section involving both Satan and Offerus, and a men’s chorus.

It was mentioned earlier how some of the dialogues seemed to be modeled on *accompagnato* recitative and the introduction to Satan’s aria is an excellent example of this (Ex. 19).¹⁴⁵ Within this brief passage Satan states that he sees Offerus arriving. He then asks Offerus who and what he seeks, to which Offerus replies that he seeks the fiend that makes kings tremble.

¹⁴⁵ Parker, *St. Christopher*, Vocal Score, 58.

Satan's response then is in the form of a classic "furious" bass aria in modified strophic form, reminiscent of the Polyphemus aria from Handel's *Acis and Galatea*. However, as is seen in *Hora Novissima*, while Parker models the rhythm, melody, and style on an older technique, his use of harmony is contemporary to his time.¹⁴⁶

61 SATAN (BARITONE, HIGH).
 See where comes bold
 Of-fer-us, He hath learned no e - vil. Fears nor man nor
 dev-il, He shall come and dwell with us.
 8269.

Example 19 – *The Legend of St. Christopher*. Vocal Score, p. 58, mm. 9-20.

Dramatically, Satan's aria is "furious" only in the sense of him being the prince of darkness. It is meant as a statement of his power, not of anger. Satan, through the aria, both tells Offerus to be his servant and goes on an ego trip, naming all that he controls and declaring that none on earth can defeat him. Satan appears to be taking the tack of a salesman to convince

¹⁴⁶ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 123.

Offerus that he is the mightiest and that Offerus would make a good decision by joining him. To drive the point home further, with the conclusion of the aria Parker has the men's chorus respond with a brief statement of obedience, which serves as both a closing for the aria and a sort of introduction to the coming men's chorus. Upon completion of the chorus's statement, Offerus has his own statement where he pledges his loyalty to Satan.

The role of Satan is marked for high baritone and it is clear that a baritone is required through this first recit/aria portion. While the highest note of F#₄ is not particularly challenging, the tessitura stays mostly above A₃ in this section with the inclusion of a multitude of E₄ pitches. A double dotted quarter with a sixteenth is a dominant rhythmic figure in the vocal line so the singer must make sure to emphasize it as the obvious tendency would be to over extend the sixteenth note to an eighth. To make it more difficult, the orchestra does not help in establishing this rhythm and Parker also uses a dotted quarter with an eighth figure throughout the aria as well. The aria stays at a loud dynamic throughout and in typical baroque style, really only conveys a single emotion. This does simplify characterization, as being "furious" or "powerful" with an aria in a high range and a loud dynamic tends to be one of the easiest portrayals for most baritones. The singer should feel little need to hold back with this aria, except for the aspects of not oversinging and to leave enough room to provide some dynamic contrast.

The next section has the men's chorus beginning in earnest, preceded by a twenty-bar orchestral introduction. The chorus is march-like as necessitated by the text, which plainly states "Thus we march, a mighty legion with confusion, rage and war." It has a basic ABA'C structure. The text suggests that at this point the legion would be marching through the night, perhaps looking to perform evil deeds. This march is continued through the end of the scene.

This chorus provides the most extended men only piece of the oratorio. As such it is their primary showcase. It runs the gamut of voice part division covering everything from unison to four-part writing, but does maintain a homophonic texture throughout. Orchestral support varies, sometimes providing doubling, but other times providing contrasting material, however,

harmonic support for the voice parts is maintained throughout. The division to up to four parts with orchestra obviously necessitates the need for a fairly large men's section for performance. The multiple divisi moments and sometimes limited orchestral support would make the chorus difficult for a group made up solely of amateur singers. The construction would once again lend credence to the thought that this is designed for a festival type chorus, which would be of a larger size and would utilize both amateur and more experienced vocalists. While like the aria, the piece focuses on a single emotion, here Parker utilizes the aspect of contrast to provide variation. There are numerous sudden changes of dynamic, going from *forte* to *piano* or vice versa. There are also moments where he provides staccato markings, but then follows immediately with legato. The chorus must portray these moments clearly. For both the staccato and legato portions, enunciation is key so some extra time should be focused on the text and how the text lines up rhythmically so that the chorus is together. The overall mood, however, should always be one of power. The vocal approach should be much like one for a drinking song or an opera chorus. Beauty of line is of minimum concern and there is no need to try to restrain vibrato, but diction, rhythmic accuracy, and drive should be the focus.

Unlike the first act, the second act has a more continuous flow. Parker divides it into Scenes 1 and 2, however, dramatically, there is no true break as the action continues straight on. It is the march of the legion that leads to the new location where the action continues. Parker, therefore, accomplishes this by cleverly merging the men's chorus that ends scene 1 and the women's chorus that opens scene 2. This merging begins at the end of the A' section in the men's chorus as Parker suddenly and completely interrupts the flow of the men by inserting the women's chorus for four bars, completely unaccompanied, singing the beginning of the Latin antiphon, "Asperges me, Domine." (Ex. 20), another foreshadowing of what is to come. It presents a stark and shocking contrast to the march of the men and is an excellent example of Parker's move towards more progressive, dramatic techniques. At this point, the men seem

oblivious to this first call of God and immediately pick up and continue the march to the end of the scene.

The image displays a musical score for a vocal and piano ensemble. The top system features a vocal line with lyrics: "fiends, . . . But con - fu - sion, but con - fu - sion, rage, and war, . . .". Below this is a piano accompaniment marked *fff*. The middle section is titled "SOLO VOICES IN THE CHORUS. 1st & 2nd SOPRANOS." and includes parts for "1st & 2nd ALTOS." with lyrics: "As - per - ges me, Do - mi - ne." and "and war." The bottom system continues the piano accompaniment, marked *Andante* and *Tempo lmo.* with a measure number of 73. The score is numbered 8209 at the bottom.

Example 20 – *The Legend of St. Christopher*. Vocal Score, p. 70. mm. 9-22.

Scene 2 then begins with the next interruption by the women with the same statement of “Asperges me, Domine.” The scene notes state, “They arrive at a cross. Satan trembles and turns away.” With the return of the women’s chorus, they begin to wrench control of the situation from the legion of demons. Instead of only four bars of the antiphon, it continues without a break, but Parker utilized held notes at the end of each line and then juxtaposes fragments of the men’s

chorus against those held notes. Dramatically, it is as if the demons are trying to overcome the angels with a shout of “With confusion, rage, and war.” By fragmenting the men’s chorus to a few short bars and alternating with the women at that point, you get a sense that it is the demons falling victim to confusion, thus making the text of the men very poignant. The men make their fragmentary statement four times in opposition to the women’s antiphon. The last time uses only the basses and puts them in a rather low vocal range that seems to be a signal of resignation. After that last time, the men fall silent and we get a full uninterrupted statement of the antiphon by the women’s chorus, now with orchestral accompaniment. Dramatic contrast between the men’s chorus and women’s chorus is of paramount importance throughout this segment. The men should continue to provide the powerful, opera chorus like sound suitable for a raucous party, while the women should approach their part more as a renaissance motet as if they were performing in a cathedral.

The “Asperges me Domine” is scored for SSAA ensemble and uses both contrapuntal and homophonic textures. The contrapuntal beginning section uses an e minor key signature, with a meter of 4/4 and an andante tempo to reinforce the tie to traditional church music. The chorus then shifts to a homophonic texture with a key signature change to A major. The A major tonality is barely heard, however, as it quickly shifts into a series of modulations before finally closing in the relative f# minor. Again, the approach of the singers should somewhat mirror that of a renaissance style motet. Purity of tone, blending of voices, and restrained vibrato should be the primary considerations in performance. The 1st sopranos will have the most difficult problems with this piece as they are in a higher tessitura for a somewhat extended period. When coupled with the requirement for a more restrained sound, this could be troublesome for less experienced singers. While the section does utilize some unusual chromaticism, the four part vocal writing is largely doubled by the orchestra. Therefore, like the preceding men’s chorus, it will require a reasonable number of singers, however, it does not otherwise present any major challenges.

The conclusion of the chorus at rehearsal 77 gives way to a brief twenty-two bar solo for Offerus. In the same manner that Offerus previously questioned the King, he now questions Satan, asking why he would be trembling at the cross. Functionally, this passage once again works very much like a recitative, but is clearly not composed in the same manner. In a way, the solo is almost transitional as it is setting up a larger sequence of musical events that follows, yet it is quite dramatically significant.

The predictable dramatic sequence would have Satan providing his response to Offerus immediately following his inquiry. Parker makes the strong dramatic choice to delay Satan's answer and instead we have another strong orchestral interlude which serves as an introduction to a new, full chorus section. However, only the last twelve bars of the 44 bar interlude are a direct introduction to the chorus, the first 32 bars continue the themes and tone of Offerus' solo. These 32 bars are an extension of Offerus' challenge to Satan and he awaits the answer, to which Satan initially remains silent. It is possible that Parker's dramatic choice was founded through his strong Christian faith. Christian tradition sees Satan as the ultimate evil power. Only God has authority over him and therefore, Offerus would not have the ability to demand any answer from him. To have Satan answer would undermine and weaken the idea of Satan as a powerful force. Furthermore, as a figure of evil, Satan would never admit the source of his weakness. Any explanation he would give would have to be the complete opposite of the truth and would delay the unfolding of the larger story.

Interestingly, the chorus seems to drop the portrayal of any clear dramatic character upon their entrance. If the men were the demons and the women were the angels, they would seem to have temporarily dropped their fight to answer Offerus in a single defined voice. But by apparently answering Offerus directly, they are still part of the dramatic action, rather than becoming a commentator separate from the story. Their answer to Offerus is an exclamation that the cross is where the Lord of heaven died and they explain the story of Christ's sacrifice of his own life to save man.

The chorus is a very conservative SATB oratorio chorus, making extensive use of counterpoint. Despite the counterpoint, the chorus is one of the simpler ones in the oratorio. It is one of the few chorus sections where Parker does not ever subdivide the vocal parts, never utilizing anything beyond four part writing. Furthermore, parts are often doubled and there is frequent use of parallel motion. The vocal range used largely stays in the middle for all parts without any particularly high or low passages, however, the basses are presented with several low F#₂ pitches. A key aspect of the piece that will need some work is a repeated two against three pattern that puts the choral voices in duple over the triple of the orchestra (Ex. 21). Upon the conclusion of the chorus, Offerus responds with another arioso. Now he declares that he will no longer serve Satan, but will instead serve the Lord. He states his intention to leave by restating the theme from the preceding chorus, which represents the idea of “seeking God.”

Example 21 – *The Legend of St. Christopher*. Vocal Score, p. 80, mm. 1-4.

At that moment, Satan finally provides a response with his second aria. Parker uses Satan’s leitmotif as a key component in the aria, but this time transformed into a waltz rhythm.¹⁴⁷ (Ex. 22). From a dramatic perspective Satan avoids admitting his fear and answering Offerus’ inquiry about it. The aria represents instead a response to Offerus’ stated intention to leave.

¹⁴⁷ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 119.

Therefore, Satan sets out to convince him to stay as forcefully as possible. The waltz meter provides a slinking quality to the aria, representative of Satan's conniving and slippery tongue, but also temptation. The text and aria design models a public political speech, with Satan becoming the orator.



Example 22 – Satan's motive modified into Waltz rhythm. *The Legend of St. Christopher*. Vocal Score. p. 87, mm. 26-31.

The aria shows a clear AB format. In the first half, Satan presents a sly posture. The tempo is marked *più lento* with a clear b minor tonality. Satan warns Offerus to beware, stating that if he pursues the Lord, he will have to endure constant fasting, vigil, and prayer. In comparison, Satan would provide him with all the worldly pleasures he could want. The A section concludes with a 24 bar orchestral interlude to set up the next section. The B section takes on a much more desperate tone, which Parker accomplishes by using a much faster tempo, marked as *presto*, and by having the accompanying orchestration become more jagged and abrupt. Satan takes here a different tactic with Offerus, perhaps realizing his speech of the first half was not having the desired effect, or because he wanted to make a much more forceful impression on him. The conniving tone is gone in favor of pure threat, warning that if Offerus leaves, he will incur Satan's full wrath. However, as in a speech, he comes full circle and reminds Offerus of all the advantages of staying before making one final command to stay to close the aria.

The B section is somewhat less stable tonally, providing an initial A minor key in the key signature, but quickly moving down a half step to G# minor respelled as Ab minor. It finally

modulates to Db minor which is the key of its final cadence. The changing key once again reinforces the desperation, but also the seriousness of Satan's speech and the changing mood from threatening to then promised pleasures for Offerus. The plea to stay at the end of the aria is very reminiscent of the same plea provided by the chorus in the final scene of Act I. The word "stay" becomes a prominent feature in both sections, providing another point of continuity between the parts of the oratorio. We hear the cry, "stay" clearly repeated multiple times with strong intent.

The need for a higher baritone voice is clearly evident with this aria. The overall tessitura sits fairly high in the baritone range with a good proportion of the notes above C₄. While the highest note of G₄ is within the range of many baritones, the multiple sustained E₄ pitches, in addition to a few F₄ and Gb₄ notes, can prove to be taxing for many singers. While the majority of the piece receives a fairly loud dynamic marking, the slow tempo and connected legato line of the A section requires a lighter approach. The A section should not be shouty, but connected, with a strong feeling of maintaining complete control of the situation. The tendency for many baritones when presented with high tessitura material would be to bring too much weight up and that would be highly detrimental to performing this part well, in addition to overly straining the voice.

The B section provides a point of contrast and Parker helps the transition with a change of tempo to *presto*. While the A section needed strong connection and control, the B section can be more forceful and choppy. However, the same danger of bringing too much weight still applies. The B section provides two largely unprepared F₄ moments for the singer which can be a significant challenge. Preparation for those pitches is the key. The singer should work to feel the required oral space, before trying to attack the pitch. In addition, they need to prepare their support beforehand. While this is true at all times in singing, learning to find the correct space and support for pitches at or above the passaggio is a significant challenge for most singers. Again, caution must be taken to not approach these parts with too much weight and that is distinctly important in the process of preparation. Too much force or pressure in this case will

lead to a strained or pinched sound and frequently an inability to even hit the pitch correctly when working in this range.

After the clear and strong conclusion to Satan's aria, the orchestra returns to the slow tempo to provide an introduction to the next solo of Offerus, a response to Satan. In his solo, Offerus states that he has made up his mind and that he will seek to serve the Lord of heaven. Once again we hear a prominent descending scale motive that dominates the passage and signifies Offerus' pursuit of God. As has occurred in previous solos for Offerus, the range again sits in a tessitura that is perhaps more suitable for a baritone rather than a bass. However, the range is not particularly difficult and within the regular scope of what a bass is expected to handle. As a transitional solo, the section, while brief, is marked by a few tempo and meter changes. Therefore, coordination with the orchestra and conductor will be important through this section.

The solo gives way to the final section of the act, which in the manner of a typical opera finale uses all available performing forces, but also provides a summary of what has occurred. A strong orchestral introduction gives way to a brief restatement of the previous SATB chorus that relayed the story of Jesus to Offerus. This is interrupted by a duet between Offerus and Satan, a juxtaposition of Satan's second aria and Offerus' final statement that he would pursue the Lord. Satan is making one last effort to convince him to stay. Finally, the full chorus supports Offerus and urges him to move onward. The act then concludes by returning to the same "farewell" chorus that was used at the end of Act 1. By returning to that chorus, Parker is providing another strong parallel between Act 1 and 2 and unifying the overall oratorio through the use of repeated music, taking advantage of the dramatic similarities between the two acts.

Act 3

Like in the first two acts, the first scene of the third act begins with a long orchestral introduction, this one measuring 82 bars and a little over three minutes. This scene provides easily the most intimate setting of any segment of the oratorio. The scene description states, "A hermit's cottage in a dense forest. The Hermit opens his door to Offerus who is clad in worn

garments.” The worn garments suggest that Offerus has evidently spent a long time in his search for his new master. The intimate setting conveys a period of rest for Offerus, and Parker uses only Offerus and the Hermit in the entire scene, keeping it fairly tight musically and dramatically. As such, this is the only scene in the entire work not to utilize the chorus in any way.

The entrance of Offerus marks the beginning of a short dialogue between Offerus and the Hermit presented as a brief duet, which continues the b minor key presented by the orchestral introduction. In the duet, Offerus asks the Hermit where he can find the Lord. The Hermit’s response is to invite him to rest, which Offerus gladly accepts. The Hermit then agrees to tell Offerus where to find the Lord. As in the case of previous segments like this one, this duet reads much more like a recitative, particularly though the earlier portions. The text is largely conversational and Parker responds by leaving the voices unaccompanied at times. This then evolves into the two voices signing together with the orchestra supporting below. The vocal parts are basic for the most part, with ranges that fall in the middle of the voice and really lack any difficult passages. However, the singers should make sure to transition between a very recitative like approach for the beginning portion into a more legato, expressive, and blended tone as the two voices begin to sing together. While the two voices may be singing together, they are also singing two very different texts and the singers must present those two different characterizations. Offerus expresses weariness and fatigue, while the Hermit expresses kindness.

The story provided by the Hermit, which follows, comes in the form of an aria with a 30 bar orchestral interlude/introduction that moves the key to Eb major and changes the tempo to *maestoso*. Within the aria, the Hermit relays an abbreviated story of Christ, how he came to be upon earth, how he sacrificed himself for men, and finally ascended to heaven as conqueror of all. This aria marks the first time where the tenor soloist can really let loose. Where most other passages calling for the tenor (i.e., the King) have been brief and controlled, here the tenor can let his voice soar to a large degree. The vocal range and phrasing is mostly conducive to creating a nice, free, open sound. Higher notes are given adequate preparation throughout, including for the

climactic Bb₄. While most of the work is marked with a loud dynamic, Parker provides a couple of moments of contrast with a *piano* marking. Those moments are a reflection of the text as both times are when the text becomes directed specifically towards men and the comfort provided by Jesus rather than of the story of Jesus itself. The first is on the text “And lead us to rest” and the second is on, “And soothing every pain.” The singer must make sure to provide an emotional contrast in their singing to provide additional distinction for these parts. While the dynamic is listed at *piano* in contrast to the *forte* and *fortissimo* of the rest of the work, one should refrain from reducing the dynamic to that extreme. Instead the singer should focus more on a variation in tone color to reflect a more somber, tender mood in opposition to the rather triumphal atmosphere provided by the rest of the aria.

Upon the conclusion of the story, Offerus immediately thanks the Hermit, but then after a pause, he realizes that he somehow has heard the Hermit’s voice before and inquires of the Hermit the reason. Again this portion is recitative like in nature, although largely fully accompanied and with a lengthy orchestral interruption between the two separate lines of text.

The Hermit’s response comes in the form of another solo, which begins with a sudden key shift to E major and tempo change to *allegro moderato*. The shift is forceful and intentional as the Hermit reveals himself to be King Oriens. The key and tempo change are used to make a large restatement of the King’s motive from the first half (p. 113 m. 11)¹⁴⁸. This restatement is brief, however, with the section lasting a mere eleven bars before returning to Eb major for the conclusion of the scene. The conclusion is a continuation of the Hermit’s solo, but now he is inviting Offerus to come with him to the Church where he can learn his duty and worship. The entire section from the Hermit’s first aria could actually be thought of as one large multi-sectional aria, with a brief interjection of Offerus in the middle. The key of Eb throughout this larger structure can be seen as the key of the Hermit and of his new life in pursuit of Christianity, thus the insertion of the E major section is representative of his past life as the King. The fleeting

¹⁴⁸ Parker, *St. Christopher*, Vocal Score.

nature of the section, while bold in appearance, relays that the Hermit is content with his new life. As in the earlier portion of the Hermit's aria, this passage allows the Hermit to largely sing out. The allegro Eb major concluding section does begin with an unprepared Ab₄, which is repeated a few times, requiring the singer to approach with enough caution to not hammer the pitch or make it shrill. The singer must work to preserve an inviting character to the section, reflecting the nature of the text, as the quick tempo, loud dynamic, and higher pitches are somewhat counter to that intent.

After the Hermit's invitation to Offerus to join him in going to Church, the oratorio moves directly to Scene 2. As before, the music is continuous, but there is a clear change in setting with the entrance of the women's chorus, initially unaccompanied. Unlike other scene changes, this one, similar to the transition between scene 1 and 2 in Act 2, lacks any lengthy orchestral interlude. The scene description states, "The interior of a Cathedral. Priests are seen robed in beautiful vestments. The Hermit and Offerus enter and kneel."

The women's chorus that opens the scene restates the "Asperges me domine" from Act 2 with a slight variation. The initial statement of the opening line is actually marked for a "semi-chorus" and as mentioned previously, is unaccompanied. The opening line of unaccompanied text is followed by twelve bars of an orchestral interjection, but then the vocal line is repeated, again unaccompanied, with the entire women's chorus. Another ten bars of orchestral music follows before the full women's chorus enters once again with the contrapuntal part of the antiphon from Act 2. Thus we have an alternation of voices only and orchestra only before all join together with the main antiphonal section.

While this initial chorus is for women only, its function within the layout of the overall scene could allow the perception of a cathedral chorus or of a congregation. This first chorus could almost be seen as the processional for the start of a Mass as it is traditionally sung for the ritual sprinkling of water upon the congregation. The women's chorus may actually be standing in for children at this point. The fact that only a few chorus members sing for the opening

statement reinforces this notion. It could be seen either as a typical call and response, or more likely as a staging effect meant to symbolize a processional, by the implication that only a few people are heard singing initially as they enter the sanctuary.. The segment closes with a substantial rhythmic augmentation of “Asperges me” that also reintroduces the semi-chorus echoing the main women’s chorus. This ending is accompanied by a lengthy, gradual diminuendo. Thus, as in its opening, the auditory effect of the echo and diminuendo musically replicates the idea of a processional, with the chorus moving to the end of the church. The orchestra matches the chorus with its own diminuendo, using a final held tremolo chord for the final seven bars of the chorus. Since this chorus was largely a restatement and expansion of its appearance in Act 2, Scene 2, the same approach towards the material should be used here. As before, the vocal range will likely require the 1st soprano to exercise the most caution given the somewhat extended periods in a higher tessitura.

As “Asperges me Domine” comes to a close, Offerus and the Hermit begin a new short dialogue in the form of a duet. This furthers the musical concept of the start of a church service and a processional, as they do not wait until the end to start their conversation. Instead, they have their dialogue during the normal progression of the church service. Offerus enters over the fading chorus and the murmur of the tremolo chord, clearly moved, asking the Hermit what he can for Christ, his master. The response of the Hermit signals the true start of the duet and an entirely new section, as Parker shifts the key to Eb major, introduces a new meter of 4/4, and provides a new allegro tempo. The orchestra also restarts from its tremolo chord into a regular, flowing accompaniment. The Hermit tells Offerus to worship daily in the church in order to learn his duty, to which Offerus agrees. While the duet is short, it is not without some challenge. The Hermit’s first note is a high Ab₄ completely unprepared that is to be started at a piano dynamic, sustained, and crescendoed into the *allegro* section. Characterization should remain fairly simple as it is primarily a statement of instruction and agreement rather than any sort of emotional moment for

either character. However, Offerus' opening question should still be presented with a degree of humility as he begins his submission to Jesus.

A short orchestral interlude following the duet actually introduces the next chorus. It serves as a transition to a new key of A major and slows the tempo to a *maestoso* from the *allegro* of the previous section. Despite the continuous music, the transition is quite transparent, which makes the oratorio seem much more sectionalized. The new chorus constitutes a traditional "Gloria" for a Mass divided into three clear sections. Kearns points out that the dramatic justification for this effect is that it is intended to be instruction in the lessons of the Church for Offerus.¹⁴⁹ This may be true, even if the more transparent dramatic justification is a representation of Offerus and the Hermit attending a church service, thus the Gloria follows a traditional Mass setting.

The sectionalized "Gloria" is easily the longest and most extensive choral passage in the whole oratorio. The first section initially focuses on the text "Gloria, in excelsis deo," and Parker uses the strong A major key and rather florid orchestration to create a festive atmosphere. Parker reduces the dynamics from the *fortissimo* opening towards the end of the first section and uses it to set up the middle section of the chorus, which he shifts to the relative a minor. The first section covers almost the entire first half of the "Gloria" text with Parker starting the middle section on the text "Agnus dei, qui tollis peccata mundi." Besides changing to a minor key, Parker reduces the dynamic further to *ppp* and notates a greater emphasis on legato. The result is a much more solemn quality which provides a strong contrast to the festive quality of the preceding section.

The final section begins on the ending text of "Quoniam, tu solus sanctus," as Parker continues to follow the Mass model. It returns to the A major of the opening, but rather than use a typical ABA structure, Parker merely uses the accompaniment figure from the A section and turns it into the subject of an imposing fugue.¹⁵⁰ Elson writes that it is one of the best examples of

¹⁴⁹ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 123.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

Parker's contrapuntal writing, comparing the subject to a Bach fugue, but praising it for its development, as he uses it in direct and inverted forms and also in an "ingenious stretto treatment."¹⁵¹

The chorus must be prepared to provide a different emotional feel for each of the three sections. Due to the continuous nature of the music, there is not much opportunity to break and regroup between each change in sections to help portray those moods. This is particularly true of the transition from the first to the second sections. The break between those two sections is a mere quarter rest and it occurs in tempo without any change of meter or tempo from the preceding, although Parker does begin the harmonic transition to the new key several bars beforehand (Ex. 23). The color change of the chorus becomes an essential aspect of relaying to the audience the beginning of a new section. The final section will provide the greatest challenge to the chorus overall. Not only will the contrapuntal texture require the chorus to be sure of their part and entrances in relation to the other parts, but the much faster moving vocal lines necessitate a lighter, balanced, and more flexible technique. Despite the *forte* and *fortissimo* dynamic marking of the piece, trying to provide too full of a sound will make it much more difficult to negotiate more rapid runs of notes. Amateur singers in particular need to be reminded of this fact and they should rely on the chorus as a whole to provide the louder dynamic and not try to push as an individual. Parker largely refrains from subdivision of the chorus parts in this section which will help in creating an overall louder sound without the need of the chorus trying to oversing. Overall the "Gloria," despite using the extremes of dynamics, using a variety of textures, and being of substantial length, is somewhat restrained in its composition. It is harmonically more straightforward than others of Parker's works and the vocal range generally stays in a comfortable area.

¹⁵¹ Elson, *History of American Music*, 180.

Je - su Chris - te, Do - mi - ne De - us, Ag - nus De - i,
 Chris - te, . . . Do - mi - ne De - us, Ag - nus De - i,
 Chris - te, . . . Do - mi - ne De - us, Ag - nus De - i, . . .
 Chris - te, Do - mi - ne De - us,
 p molto legato,
 Fi - li - us Pa - tris, Ag - nus De - i, Qui
 Fi - li - us Pa - tris, Ag - nus De - i, Qui
 Fi - li - us Pa - tris, Ag - nus De - i, Qui
 Fi - li - us Pa - tris, Ag - nus De - i, Qui
 pp
 pp

Example 23 – Transition between first and second section of the “Gloria.” *The Legend of St. Christopher*. Vocal Score, p. 129.

If Parker is indeed treating the entire scene as a representation of a church service, the choice of the “Gloria” is interesting, particularly given the trio that follows. Within a standard Catholic Mass, the “Gloria” occurs fairly early in the service and is followed by the Liturgy of the Word and the sermon. However, in the *Book of Common Prayer*, which was used at the time by the Church of England and also the Episcopal Church, the “Gloria” would occur at the end of the

service, as the last piece before the benediction or final blessing. Because of this, the following trio has a slightly different structural role within the scene as a whole depending on whether Parker was following the Catholic model or the Church of England.

The trio that follows begins with Offerus' call immediately after the close of the chorus, in which he repeats the last choral line. He then calls to God and asks of the Hermit to be let go to serve Him. At that point we are introduced to the role of the Angel who responds to Offerus in turn with the text, "Learn the blessedness of giving, give thy strength, thy soul, thy spirit, Claiming no reward nor merit, so in boundless liberty shalt thou walk forevermore." The Angel's entrance coincides with a key change to Bb major which remains the key through the end of the trio. After the answer of the Angel, the Hermit joins in and all three sing, based on this passage of text. Offerus provides acknowledgement of the text and his duty, while the Hermit and Angel essentially restate the original text against it. The short speech of the Angel can be interpreted dramatically in one of two ways. If the "Gloria" is seen in its traditional Catholic location of appearing before the Liturgy of the Word, the Angel's words can be seen as forming a mini sermon to Offerus, educating him on the word of the Lord. On the other hand, if one were to see the Gloria as occurring towards the end of the service as in the practice of the Church of England, the statement becomes a benediction, which typically involves providing a blessing and urging the congregation to "go and serve the Lord," which is basically what the Angel's statement is saying. It is possible that the ambiguity between the two possibilities is intentional. With both aspects supported, the overall scene becomes more universally recognized as a representation of a church service, appealing to multiple denominations of Christianity.

The trio relies heavily on counterpoint as the primary texture with the soprano line of the Angel being a little more florid than the other two parts. This is particularly noticeable with the melismatic passage of the Angel that closes the trio over the more stagnant parts of the Hermit

and Offerus (p. 148 m. 2)¹⁵². Parker provides a break from the largely contrapuntal writing by occasionally having the parts suddenly sing in unison. Overall, the vocal part of the Angel is the most challenging largely due to those melismatic passages. The vocal parts do utilize a substantial amount of range with the Angel having a few Bb₅ pitches and the Hermit having several Bb₄ pitches. While Offerus only goes up to Eb₄, the part once again does stay in a higher range for an extended period of time seeming somewhat more high bass oriented, despite also frequently asking for the pitch Ab₂. Despite the higher notes, Parker does allow for adequate preparation throughout. The contrapuntal texture will require extra rehearsal to be certain the three soloists coordinate with each other and the orchestra. At times the complex texture may lead to the singer being easily drawn off by the entrances each other and the orchestra. Complicated entrances might not be an issue in a concert setting where singers hold their scores, but in a staged version, thorough memorization would be crucial to avoid mishaps. The vocal parts largely require a connected, more legato feel. Parker's writing of the vocal lines typically makes this easily done with general stepwise motion. Sections where there are leaps are situated well with the text and vocal line, allowing for solid preparation and without awkward breaks in the text. Again, the flow of the written lines do allow the singers to easily reach the higher pitches. The use of dynamics, while suitable for the purpose of expression, also compliment the vocal lines rather than working against the natural tendency of the voice.

The trio closes with a brief orchestral interlude that leads immediately to a chorus to end the scene. As before, we get a clear sectional break as the chorus, "Jam sol recedit," is unaccompanied, although the orchestral interlude takes the responsibility to modulate the key to Gb major for the choral entrance. "Jam sol recedit" is the most well-known segment of the oratorio and is frequently excerpted and performed as a standalone chorus. In fact, it is actually among the most well-known and most performed pieces in Parker's repertoire. While mostly homophonic, it does include some contrapuntal writing. The setting is quite conservative and

¹⁵² Parker, *St. Christopher*, Vocal Score.

Parker seems to once again, as in *Hora Novissima*, channel the work of religious choral writers of earlier time periods. Kearns compares the work to Palestrina, noting its similarity to the unaccompanied chorus “Urbs Syon unica,” from Parker’s earlier oratorio.¹⁵³

Dramatically, the piece plays the role of the recessional, closing the “church service” that the scene represents. The text of the chorus is a hymn attributed to St Ambrose that was typically used for Vespers on Trinity Sunday. It celebrates the Holy Trinity, the idea of God in three persons. This allows it to make a strong tie to the previous “Gloria,” which also emphasizes the trinity, but “Jam sol recedit” allows for a much more reflective moment. The message to Offerus and the listener is clear: to worship God is to worship him in all three forms, as God the Father, as Jesus his Son, and as the Holy Spirit. This emphasis sets up the forthcoming moment of service and final redemption for Offerus, where he must be willing to help God in the form of a young and weak child.

Like “Urbs syon unica,” “Jam sol recedit” mimics an older church motet but with a more modern sense of harmony. However, “Jam sol recedit” is more fully realized and developed. While it shares the same quicker harmonic tempo of its predecessor, here it does not seem as rushed, seemingly allowed to bloom and develop with a modern sensibility rather than appearing like a modern harmonic scheme forced into a renaissance era piece. The parts are subdivided requiring an eight part chorus and the required range of voices is substantial, once again reflecting its Romantic period roots rather than truly following the more limited range required of a Renaissance period work. The a cappella setting does allow performance by a chamber group, but the wide range of voices and layout of textures could perhaps make it more suitable for a slightly larger group. The danger vocally of the piece is allowing it to sound too thin. The vast majority of the work is written in a soft dynamic in a *ppp* to *p* range before filling out to a full *fortissimo* for its climax. The renaissance period trappings would appear to beg for a more restrained vibrato, which many singers, particular less experienced singers such as those typically found in a festival

¹⁵³ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 123.

chorus, would accomplish by creating a thinner tone. The wide vocal range required in combination with the attempt to create a more restrained sound will only exacerbate this tendency. However, Parker's harmonies and voice writing for those harmonies require a fuller, warmer sound. Therefore, the chorus must work to strike a balance between these opposing tendencies.

The orchestra immediately picks up again after the close of the chorus. While Scene 3 officially does not start until four bars later when the meter changes to 3/4, the orchestral entrance presents a new idea and is the transition point to the next scene, even as it maintains the Gb major key of "Jam sol recedit." Scene 3 is by far the shortest scene in the work, spanning only 36 bars of music after the meter change. The short length means that it lacks an extended orchestral passage at any point, which differentiates it from all other scenes in the oratorio.

The scene description states simply, "The Hermit's cottage." Thus, like the first scene, the setting is meant to convey an intimate atmosphere. The role of the scene is transitional as it takes us from the lengthy Scene 2, where Offerus learns more about his new master, to the climactic moment of redemption in the coming final scene. Despite this transitional nature, it does set up the final scene, providing the key plot information to allow that drama to unfold. Offerus' vocal entrance occurs three bars after the meter change and, therefore, a mere seven bars after the conclusion of the "Jam sol recedit." Offerus asks the Hermit again what he can do for his master. The Hermit responds by telling him to go a nearby river and to build a hut. It will be his duty to help people to cross the flooded river.

With that key information relayed, another piece of descriptive text states, "Light fills the cottage. An Angel sings." The singing of the Angel is represented by a small chorus, formed of one singer out of every ten of the full chorus, which sings a short section to close out the scene. There is some divisi so a minimum of eight singers would be needed for this role. The Angel basically states that it is time for his work to begin and that he will receive the blessings of heaven for his service. The start of this choral section signals a key change to A major. The small

chorus sings for only eleven bars and it interestingly cadences by modulating to the dominant and ending on a unison E. This change leaves an unfinished quality that allows it to flow directly into the fourth and final scene.

Overall, the scene is largely transitional with its main intention merely to move the audience from the church to the climactic closing moment. Its short length works to relay the necessary text to accomplish the transition without any extraneous material. As such, the vocal parts for all singers tend to be straightforward and generally unremarkable.

The orchestra continues without stop after the cadence of the Scene 3 chorus, introducing Scene 4 with a moderate-length orchestral passage of 36 bars. The key signature remains unchanged even as the orchestra goes through several modulations. The scene description states, “A small hut on the river bank. There is night and storm.” From the description we know that Offerus has already built the hut that he was told to build, and we can assume that he has been helping people cross the river for some time. The orchestra meanwhile slowly builds from a rolling *piano* dynamic to a much more agitated texture that peaks with a *fff* tremolo chord that is broken by the sudden cry of a child’s voice, “Offerus, wilt thou not bear me across?”

The cry of the child is heard a total of three times. Each time is more urgent than the previous time. The stage notes state that the voice of the child is nearer each time. Parker uses the passage to build tension. After each of the cries, he notates a short pause, indicating the child’s wait for an answer. After the pause, the orchestra comes in for a brief passage in an agitated manner. Besides stating that the voice is nearer, Parker obviously increases the dynamic for each passage, but also raises each successive cry by a half step, heightening the urgency musically, but also relaying an element of fear given the violent storm. Slight variations in the text for each succeeding cry also works to convey the child’s increasing urgency.

After the third cry, there is a stage note of, “A little child is seen. Offerus lifts the child and enters the stream. There is great violence of the elements but a quiet light upon the child’s head.” It is somewhat strange that Parker does not actually notate any vocal response from

Offerus to the child. The stage note is our only indication in that moment that Offerus has heard the child and proceeded to help. Parker instead follows the third cry of the child with another extended orchestral interlude. This one extends for 64 bars with an agitated quality, making use of an allegro tempo to represent the raging storm and river. The agitation fades somewhat as it continues with a gradual diminuendo and a repeated orchestral figure representing the steady surge of waves as Offerus enters the water carrying the child. This texture gives way to the beginning of an aria by Offerus which is accompanied by an unwavering, rapid, and repeated arpeggiated chord pattern meant to continue the effect of the undulating waters (Ex. 24). The start of the aria is also marked by a key change to E major and a tempo change to *molto moderato*. The aria is through-composed. Offerus sings about carrying the child across the river, stating that he is carrying his burden to gain his master's approval and win his reward. The descending pattern indicating Offerus' obedience provides the basis for the vocal line, which repeats in a modified format several times.

164

Molto moderato. $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$

ppp

OFFERUS.

p

Bear - ing thus Sea... my

Example 24 – *The Legend of St. Christopher*. Vocal Score, p. 164, mm. 1-2.

The majority of the aria uses two bar phrasing with a descending vocal line. Unlike many of the solos which seem to sit higher in the range, the tessitura for this one stays largely in a

slightly lower vocal range more in line to what would be expected for a bass. Parker does break away from the descending figure when he works to build the dynamic away from the scored *piano* level that begins the piece. In performance, one should take the beginning section slightly louder than the *piano* marking. The parts that are at a higher pitch level come later in the work with a louder dynamic. The higher pitches alone will aid in creating the louder dynamic. The singer should focus more on creating the *piano* through selection of tonal color, rather than trying to sing overly soft. This will help the soloist from being buried by the orchestral accompaniment. The vocal lines through the beginning portion lend themselves to a nice legato line and the singer should take advantage of that to present a sustained counter effect to the rapidly undulating accompaniment. Towards the climactic end, there are a few bars of much more rapid rhythm and text (Ex. 25). This section also occurs lower in the vocal range and Parker wisely drops the orchestra completely to allow the text and voice to be heard cleanly. For this section, the singer should drop the emphasis on a connected vocal line and instead focus on delivery of text.

The image displays a musical score for a vocal solo and piano accompaniment. The score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system shows the vocal line (soprano clef) and piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs). The vocal line begins with a triplet of eighth notes: 'Till I win the rich re - ward,'. The piano accompaniment features a descending eighth-note figure in the right hand and a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics 'till I win the blessed guerdon Of the'. The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern, ending with a final chord. The score is marked with a 'V' (Vocal) and a 'P' (Piano) at the beginning of the first system.

Example 25 – *The Legend of St. Christopher*. Vocal Score, p. 168, mm. 1-4.

Towards the end of the aria, a text note reads, “The storm subsides. Offerus reaches the shore. The dawn appears faintly.” However, the undulating accompaniment pattern continues a while longer and the aria concludes with an entrance of the chorus. The chorus, who once again seems to take on the voice of the angels, reveals to Offerus that the child he carried was Christ, and therefore Offerus bore both Christ and the sins of the world on his back. Parker’s compositional choice for this moment is unusual, as Offerus appears to have clearly finished crossing the river, yet the undulating texture continues through the opening eight bars of the chorus. It appears that Parker intends to suggest that the storm is not quite completely over.

After the eight-bar opening statement the chorus finally begins to assert itself as a separate section with the introduction of a new choral theme. The chorus is joined by the Hermit and the Angel as they all wish peace upon Offerus. Parker employs the same alternating juxtaposition that he used successfully in Act 2 between the demons and angels. A contrast develops between the tempest and peace. The chorus provides their four-bar statement of peace and then it is immediately followed by a bar of the orchestra playing once again the undulating wave accompaniment. This alternation is then repeated. The result is that the storm appears to dissolve in the presence of the angels and it gradually fades away. The compositional technique proves to be less effective here, as not only have we heard it once before, but the timing in terms of the text is wrong. If the text were reordered so the bid for peace came before the revelation of the child as Christ, therefore giving the moment of this revelation its own unique choral statement, it would have made a stronger dramatic impact.

After the last orchestral statement of the storm, the chorus continues with the Hermit crying, “Christopher, this be thy name.” The choir repeats the words of the Hermit with an echo. The Hermit continues with the choral accompaniment proclaiming that Christopher will be the name he will have from that moment onward. The statement culminates in a climactic section where the Angel and Offerus join with the Hermit and together they sing as a trio with the chorus repeating as an echo. At that moment, the name of “Christopher” is repeated several times so that

it is heard a total of sixteen times. The moment is meant to be the climactic moment of the entire oratorio, reflecting the intent of its title. Parker writes it very conservatively and simply, but makes its importance clear by not only notating a *fortissimo* dynamic, but by utilizing a fanfare-like theme heightened by the successive repetitions of the name “Christopher.” A clear C major tonality dominates the section, and Parker opts to forgo any modulation, staying clearly and cleanly in the tonic.

At the conclusion of the naming section, a brief orchestral break occurs that transitions the key back to the A major that opened the scene. This leads directly to a new chorus that serves as the finale of the work. This final chorus becomes more narrative in function than any other chorus, save that of the opening. The drama of the oratorio came to conclusion with the naming of Offerus. Thus the final chorus has the quality of an epilogue, providing a summary of the final scene and stating that Offerus will join the saints in paradise, experiencing everlasting joy. The chorus again strikes a very traditional tone. It opens with a strong contrapuntal section and proceeds by alternating both contrapuntal and homophonic sections. While not a fugue, the extended contrapuntal writing and traditional style make the final chorus reminiscent of the oratorios of Händel. Midway through it, the Hermit, the Angel, and Offerus join as a trio in an antiphonal arrangement against the chorus. It all culminates in a final extended cadence of about fifteen bars with all voices.

Concluding Comments

The clear sectionalization of Act 3, Scene 2 and the dominance of two fairly conservative choruses is one of the more interesting aspects of the oratorio. It was previously mentioned that this work served as a bridge to Parker’s middle period, where Parker becomes more progressive and independent in his style. While the setting of the oratorio is in the manner of an opera, the occasional use of continuous music and the extensive use of leitmotifs represent Parker’s newer, more progressive style. However, the conservative choruses and sectionalized layout of the end seem to indicate that he was still reluctant to stretch too far. *Hora Novissima* was a huge success

for Parker and he was still trying to create a follow-up piece that would be similarly successful. It appears that he was trying to develop his growing dramatic interest, while maintaining the conservative chorus style that was successful and praised in *Hora Novissima*.

Parker often made comments that echoed his conservative German training and the idea of “music for its own sake.” However, the fact of the matter was that almost all of Parker’s works were written for a specific event, contest, or commission. It seems that Parker’s evolving style was highly tempered by his concern for his own reputation as a composer. As we see through a good part of his career, a lot of the choices he makes in later pieces are a reaction to criticism to earlier works. *Hora Novissima* was praised for its choruses and though Parker was trying to work in a new direction with *St. Christopher*, he appears reluctant to let go of that which he saw as making him successful.

The piece also shows both the talent and inexperience of Parker as a dramatic stage composer. He shows that he has solid feeling for dramatic writing, readily finding moments in the text where he can use the music to heighten both atmosphere and definition. However, he also misses opportunities to do more and tries to use a technique in areas where it does not work as intended, such as the case of the river crossing/reveal scene in the final act.

Vocally, the piece is largely well written. The choral parts are largely conservative, but are clearly written with a larger festival-type chorus in mind. The sometimes thick orchestral accompaniment, frequent independent lines, and use of eight-part writing favor a larger ensemble. These same factors also would make it a somewhat more difficult proposition for a group made solely of inexperienced, amateur singers. At the same time, there is nothing in the choral sections that is overly strenuous. The majority of college level choruses would find it accessible and generally within their comfort level. The typical festival chorus, which utilizes both amateur and professional vocalists, would likewise have little difficulty with it.

The solo parts are also largely accessible, but do present some challenges. The role of Offerus, as the title character, takes center stage and is by far the lengthiest solo part in the work.

As mentioned throughout the work, however, many of Offerus' vocal lines sit in a tessitura more appropriate for a higher bass or a baritone. This may actually be an advantage as it does allow the part to be sung by a wider range of singers as solid true basses are not as easy to find as baritones and bass-baritones, particularly should the piece be performed at a collegiate level without the hiring of outside singers. The role of Satan is perhaps the most interesting. While only appearing in Act 2, the role is the dominant force in that act and the two arias are perhaps the most powerful and entertaining of any in the work. The part is marked for high baritone or tenor and while it does not really use any exceptionally high pitches, its somewhat higher tessitura may prove challenging for a lower, or less experienced baritone voice. With that said, it should be performed by a baritone if possible as the baritone color would be more suited for the context and for the general construction of the vocal line than that of tenor.

The overall impression of the work-- one expressed by modern critics as well as those of the time-- is unevenness. American audiences were not very receptive to *St. Christopher*. They were not willing to accept the heavy use of Wagnerian motivic treatment in a religious oratorio at the time. Meanwhile, in England, the audience appreciated the Wagnerian dramatic style, but found the traditionally composed choruses as being too staid and conservative.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 125.

Table 2 - Vocal Ranges for *The Legend of St. Christopher*

Scene	Type/Title	Voices	Range
Prologue	Chorus “In the grey dawn of early time”	Soprano Alto Tenor Bass	B ₃ – A ₅ A ₃ – D ₅ E ₃ – G ₄ (E ₂)F ₂ – D ₄
Act 1 Scene 1	Chorus “Sing victory”	Soprano Alto Tenor Bass	E ₄ – A ₅ B ₃ – E ₅ C ₃ – A ₄ G ₂ – F ₄
	Duet “Mighty King, to thee I bend	King (tenor) Offerus (bass/baritone)	F ₃ – Ab ₄ Bb ₂ – Eb ₄
Act 1 Scene 2	Queen’s aria with interjections of chorus/king “The dear delights of home and peace”	Queen (soprano) King Soprano Alto Tenor Bass	C ₄ – B ₅ G ₃ – Ab ₄ C ₄ – F ₅ A ₃ – C ₅ B ₂ – G ₄ E ₂ – C ₄
	Duet “Most royal lady, here I kneel”	Offerus Queen	D ₃ – F ₄ Ab ₄ – Bb ₅
	Closing dialogue “There is a King”	King Queen	E ₃ – F ₄ F ₄ – F ₅
Act 1 Scene 3	Dialogue “Hold Offerus”	King Offerus	D ₃ – G ₄ C ₃ – E ₃
	Arioso “Who’s the fiend”	Offerus	Bb ₂ – Fb ₄
	Chorus + soloists part 1 “Stay, good Offerus”	Queen King Soprano Alto Tenor Bass	C ₅ – A ₅ C ₄ – A ₄ A ₃ – A ₅ A ₃ – E ₅ F ₃ – A ₄ F ₂ – Eb ₄
	Arioso “I see the dark’ning path”	Offerus	E ₂ – Eb ₄
	Chorus + soloists part 2 “Farewell, our hero”	Queen King Soprano Alto Tenor Bass	F ₄ – Ab ₅ F ₃ – Ab ₄ D ₄ – Gb ₅ G ₃ – Db ₅ Eb ₃ – F ₄ F ₂ – C ₄
Act 2 Scene 1	Dialogue/intro “See where comes bold Offerus”	Satan (baritone) Offerus	E ₃ – E ₄ A ₂ – D ₄

Act 2 Scene 1 (cont)	Satan's aria with closing by men's chorus and Offerus "Prince of all this world am I"	Satan Tenor Bass Offerus	C# ₃ – F# ₄ G ₃ – A ₄ Bb ₂ – E ₄ D ₃ – E ₄
	Men's chorus w/interjection of women's chorus "Thus we march, a mighty legion"	Tenor Bass Soprano Alto	C# ₃ – A ₄ F ₂ – E ₄ A ₄ – F ₅ F ₄ – C ₅
Act 2 Scene 2	Women's chorus with introductory interjections of men's chorus "Asperges me, Domine"	Soprano Alto Tenor Bass	D# ₄ – B ₅ G# ₃ – E ₅ E ₃ – A ₄ (C ₂) G ₂ – E ₄
	Arioso "Ha, my master, tremblest thou?"	Offerus	Bb ₂ – E ₄
	Chorus "On the cross the Lord of Heaven died"	Soprano Alto Tenor Bass	D# ₄ – G# ₅ A# ₃ – C# ₅ D ₃ – F# ₄ F# ₂ – C# ₄
	Arioso "Thou art my master no longer"	Offerus	Bb ₂ – Eb ₄
	Satan's aria with men's chorus at closing "Offerus, beware"	Satan Tenor Bass	Db ₃ – G ₄ Db ₄ Db ₄
	Arioso "Ask me not my vow to break"	Offerus	D ₃ – Eb ₄
	Finale (Chorus, Offerus, Satan) – includes reprises of "On the cross the Lord of Heaven died," "Thou art my master no longer," "Offerus, beware," and "Farewell, our hero." Also includes brief new choral section "Go forth, noble Offerus"	Satan Offerus Soprano Alto Tenor Bass	F ₃ – F ₄ Db ₃ – D ₄ D# ₄ – A ₅ B ₃ – D ₅ F# ₃ – G ₄ F# ₂ – Db ₄
Act 3 Scene 1	Dialogue and Duet "Tell me good father"	Hermit (tenor) Offerus	G ₃ – G ₄ B ₂ – D ₄
	Aria "The story thou shalt hear of Him"	Hermit	Eb ₃ – Bb ₄
	Dialogue "Thy voice, good father"	Hermit Offerus	G# ₃ – G ₄ F ₃ – Cb ₄
	Arioso "Come, and I will show thee"	Hermit	D ₃ – Bb ₄
Act 3 Scene 2	Women's chorus "Asperges me, Domine" – redux	Soprano Alto	D ₄ – Bb ₅ G ₃ – D# ₅
	Duet "Tell me good father" – begins over ending of the preceding women's chorus, uses elements of Act 3 Scene 1 material	Hermit Offerus	D ₃ – A ₄ C ₃ – Eb ₄

Act 3 Scene 2 (cont)	Chorus “Gloria in excelsis Deo	Soprano Alto Tenor Bass	C# ₄ – G# ₅ A ₃ – E ₅ C# ₃ – A ₄ G ₂ – E ₄
	Trio with intro “Now let me go, my father”	Angel (soprano) Hermit Offerus	F ₄ – Bb ₅ F ₃ – Bb ₄ A ₂ – Eb ₄
	Chorus “Jam sol recedit”	Soprano Alto Tenor Bass	Db ₄ – Bb ₅ Ab ₃ – Db ₅ Cb ₃ – Ab ₄ Db ₂ – Cb ₄
Act 3 Scene 3	Dialogue “Tell me now, father”	Hermit Offerus	D ₃ – Eb ₄ Db ₃ – Db ₄
	Chamber chorus “Blessings of Heaven” – minimum of 8 voices needed	Soprano Alto Tenor Bass	C# ₄ – F# ₅ B ₃ – C# ₅ E ₃ – E ₄ A ₂ – A ₃
Act 3 Scene 4	Child’s call “Offerus willt thou not bear me”	Child (soprano/boy soprano)	E ₄ – F# ₅
	Aria “Bearing thus my precious burden”	Offerus	A# ₂ – E ₄
	Finale – Chorus + soloists “Know, o mortal”	Angel Hermit Offerus Soprano Alto Tenor Bass	G# ₄ – B ₅ G# ₃ – B ₄ D ₃ – E ₄ B ₃ – B ₅ A ₃ – E ₅ C ₃ – A ₄ F ₂ – E ₄

Note: The chorus voices throughout are regularly subdivided into 1st and 2nd parts and therefore, require sufficient singers to accommodate 8 parts. Men’s and women’s choruses are similarly subdivided into four part groups.

IV. Morven and the Grail

Parker's third and final oratorio dates from 1915, and in addition to his opera from the same year, *Fairyland*, establishes Parker's style in his late period. By this time Parker was often crippled by illness and stung by the lack of broad critical praise for any of his more recent works. Parker made the interesting shift to decide to write more for the "common man." While his middle period was more about the abstract, his goal in the later period was to achieve more mass appeal, but without going so far as to water down his craft. His aim was to create simpler, more easily singable melodies, and reduce the amount of chromaticism.

With *Morven and the Grail*, Parker again tries to recapture the success of *Hora Novissima*, but with a more contemporary approach. Although motivic ideas are still presented, he greatly backs away from the Wagnerian motivic work that dominated *The Legend of St Christopher*. The technique was met previously with disdain by American audiences for occurring in a religious based work. *Morven and the Grail* also is far less theatrical and dramatic in construction. Parker makes clear the separation from opera by labeling the three large sections as "parts" instead of "acts". While within the parts the music is mostly continuous, it lacks the strong connection between scenes that was seen in *St. Christopher*, with the musical connection sometimes only consisting of a single held note.¹⁵⁵ There is a clear sense that each individual section has a clear, defined end, followed by brief transitory passages to prevent there being a complete break in the music.

The libretto, written by Parker's Yale colleague Brian Hooker, lacks any strong dramatic motion and any true dialogue. There is no true interaction between the characters from a dramatic perspective and is written as a poem in a prose style. The clear mention of scenes and descriptive stage text that appeared in *St. Christopher* are completely absent here. The overall presentation consists basically of a set of tableaux. There is no clear villain in the work; instead Morven's

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 135.

quest for the grail is meant to represent man's struggle to overcome evil in day to day life. Each part represents a different aspect of the journey of man, represented by Morven: Part I is sensuality, Part II is heroism and asceticism, and Part III is the realization that the grail cannot be found in any one aspect of life, but only in all of life itself.¹⁵⁶

To tie the various parts together, Hooker provides narrative segments to state what has occurred and what the next step in the journey will be. These narrative passages are written in the same manner as the rest of the libretto and they should be considered as part of the large poem. They occur between most sections of the work and not just between the larger "Parts." However, Parker does not set these sections of text musically, nor does he notate them anywhere in the score to be spoken. It is an odd choice, as they are integral towards understanding what has and will occur as the oratorio progresses. One can only assume that a printed program would be made available to the audience with the entire printed libretto. Otherwise, without any expression of these pieces of text, the oratorio loses to some degree of logical order and coherence. (Fig. 2)

The individual sections within the parts are not referred to as scenes and not referred to by a specific text, but are instead labeled by their content or by the characters singing them. They have titles such as "Angels of the Grail" or "Song of Sigurd the Volsung."

The performing forces, besides orchestra, include the traditional chorus and four soloists, who are given title as characters in the story. The soloists are:

Morven – Baritone
Sigurd – Tenor
St. Cecilia – Soprano
Our Lady – Alto

Other than Morven, whose character is obviously followed throughout the length of the oratorio, the other soloists basically sing a lone aria. Parker also utilizes a vocal quartet that appears only as an ensemble and never individually as soloists. He labels this quartet the "Angels of the Grail" and they sing a recurring motivic refrain at various points throughout the oratorio.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

MORVEN AND THE GRAIL

AN ORATORIO

The Poem by
BRIAN HOOKER

The Music by
HORATIO PARKER

PART I

*Morven, seafaring upon
the quest of the Grail,
heareth the Angels thereof
calling unto him;*

ANGELS OF THE GRAIL

Morven!... Morven!... Morven!...

Blood and Water,
Water and Wine,

World without end: three signs, one wonder—
Follow the Vision—
Follow the Grail!

*and will follow the world's
dream, even unto the end
of the world.*

MORVEN

Blood of the sunset
Adown the dark water,
Wine of the wind, sweeping
Onward, Westward,
Herding the numberless
Rush of foam-flinging
Surges homeward
Whither we follow
Over the golden
Floors of sundown:
One way together
Westward wending—
The sweep of the wind,
The weight of the wave,
The leap of the sail,
And the swing of the oar.

One way, the sun's way,
Onward, Westward,
From dawn to noonday,
From noon to even,
From darkness to darkness;
One way, the soul's way,
Out of the darkness
For one day only,
Westward, onward,
Alone down the gloaming,
Into the darkness.

One dream, the world's dream,
Alone we follow,
O my wanderers,
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My strong companions,—
Follow the holy
Angel-guarded
Vision, the golden
Grail, that shineth
Eternal, Immortal,
Onward, Westward,
Heavenward, homeward,
Follow the Vision—
Follow the Grail!

*He cometh to the island
Avalon, the heaven of
Pleasure; and there for a
time abideth in bliss.*

DWELLERS IN AVALON

CHORUS

Hither, O hither and rest! On the broad sea's
billowy bosom,
Avalon, bride of the West, smiles in the arms
of the foam;
Balm of warm noon, drowsy bird, and awakening
blossom,
Charm the tremulous air, welcome the wan-
derer home.
Here, over meadows of endless May, the drifting
clouds of a downy whiteness
Gleam, and the sunbeam follows the shadow
under the bloom of purple skies;
Here the wild moon crowns the mountains,
drowning the gloom in a bath of brightness
Perfumed with paradise.

We have forgotten your tears. Will ye feed
impossible yearning
With young years, and fight hungrily,
proud of your pain?
Come unto us, and discover the old sweet
beauty returning
Beauty, desire to delight, lover to lover
again!
Knights grown weary of hopeless honor, ladies
fain of ungathered flowers,
Saints unkissed, and sages dry of wine, and
singers barren of song—
Learn the joy ye long for, join the dance of the
rosy-footed hours,
Laughing our days along.

ii

Copyright, 1915, by Brian Hooker

Figure 2 – First page of libretto. The italicized stanzas are not set to music and do not otherwise appear in the score.¹⁵⁷

Introduction and Part I

The oratorio begins with a lengthy orchestral overture in Part I that is labeled simply as “Introduction.” In spite of its label, it functions like a traditional opera overture. It introduces

¹⁵⁷ First page of libretto as published in Horatio Parker, *Morven and the Grail: oratorio for mixed chorus, solo voices, and orchestra*, op. 79, Words by Brian Hooker, (Boston: Boston Music Co., 1915) Vocal score, ii.

some themes that occur throughout the work, but it is largely an independent work without a direct impact on what is to follow. The piece begins in Bb major, but then goes through various keys including E major, Db major, E minor, and then finally ending in F minor. The F minor proves to be its only direct correlation to the scene that follows as that is its beginning key. At seven minutes in length, the overture is quite substantial. This is the only instance in any of Parker's oratorios of a lengthy orchestral section and the only instance of one that is set mostly independently from the rest of the work. Despite this, Parker does not allow for any audience applause of the introduction, as after its cadence, he inserts a simple held chord that serves as a musical tie to the start of the first scene of the work. Thus, he ties the work together to make it continuous, but does so in a simple manner.

The first scene is titled, "Angels of the Grail," and as that title suggests, the solo quartet of the same name is its primary feature. The held chord that ends the introduction gives way to the immediate entrance of the quartet in a homophonic texture to begin the scene. This quartet section proves to be one of the most significant features of the oratorio as it becomes a refrain in various permutations that occurs repeatedly throughout the rest of work. Its primary text is, "Morven! Follow the grail," which serves as the basis for its later repetitions.

The overall nature of this quartet section is fairly simple. It uses a steady, straightforward 3/4 meter and allegro tempo. It never varies from its homophonic texture, though Parker uses some complexity in its harmonic progression. The resulting material is easily recognized and remembered as the basis of a recurring refrain. To help set up its significance, Parker makes the choice to have the quartet sing unaccompanied, but then adds a short break of a few bars between each phrase to insert some orchestral accompaniment. (Ex. 26) The effect is somewhat antiphonal in nature between the orchestra and the quartet, although the orchestral material is separate and not a repeat of that of the quartet. The quartet, here and in its reappearances, is fairly simple. The vocal range utilized is relatively narrow and tends to stay in a middle tessitura for all voices. It is rhythmically straightforward with basic, predictable phrasing. The overall basic nature of the grail

quartet music makes it accessible by singers of lesser training and experience. The primary considerations for choosing singers should be balance and blend.

[QUARTET in the background, or behind the stage.]

Allegro

Solo Soprano
Mor - ven! Mor - ven! Fol - low the Grail!

Solo Alto
Mor-ven! Mor-ven! Mor - ven! Fol - low the Grail!

Solo Tenor
Mor-ven! Mor - ven! Fol - low the Grail!

Solo Bass
Mor-ven! Mor-ven! Mor - ven! Fol - low the Grail!

Allegro (♩ = 120)

Piano

Blood and Wa-ter, Wa-ter and

Blood and Wa-ter, Wa-ter and

Blood and Wa-ter, Wa-ter and

Blood and Wa-ter, Wa-ter and

pp

Example 26 – First occurrence of Grail Quartet refrain. *Morven and the Grail*. Vocal Score, p. 12.¹⁵⁸

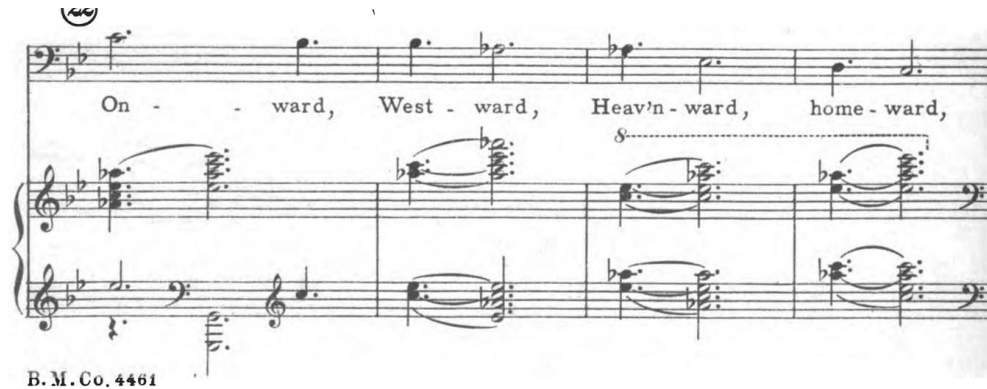
¹⁵⁸ Unless otherwise noted, this and all subsequent examples excerpted from Horatio Parker, *Morven and the Grail: oratorio for mixed chorus, solo voices, and orchestra*, op. 79, Words by Brian Hooker, (Boston: Boston Music Co., 1915) Vocal score.

Dramatically, the grail quartet serves the obvious function of being a call to Morven. Parker actually notates that the quartet should be placed off stage, providing another reason why Parker left the sung parts largely unaccompanied. From a theatrical aspect, it creates a sensation of distance between the “Angels” and Morven. They do not immediately present themselves to Morven, but are only heard calling to him from heaven. Their call lasts about 50 bars in all and is then met by Morven’s response, which is in the form of an aria. The close of the quartet includes a gradual diminuendo, thus fading away for Morven’s aria. To set up the aria, the last statement of “Follow the grail,” is built on a Db7 chord, which would be the dominant of the G minor key that begins the aria. While they are both part of the same scene, the tie between the quartet and aria is again fairly weak, with only the transitional Db7 chord that closes the quartet to really move the piece forward. The start of the aria consists of a 10 bar introduction that clearly sets up the start of new material and texture, marked by a meter change to 9/8 and the aforementioned new key of G minor.

Morven responds to the angels by confirming that he is, in fact, pursuing the grail. His journey has taken him to sea, and the aria describes his time there. Morven sings about how he is sailing westward and describes the sea itself and the images that one sees while on a boat. He describes how he and his companions are alone at sea isolated in darkness, and he encourages them and himself onward by urging them to follow the vision of the shining, eternal grail. The 9/8 meter choice is very appropriate given the setting, providing the needed lilt to represent the rocking of the boat upon the rolling waves, although Parker chooses not to overemphasize this effect in his accompaniment.

The aria stretches through the end of the scene with one final interjection by the angels for four bars where they repeat the call, “Morven, follow the grail!” which is a restatement of the primary theme of the opening. This moment sets up the recurring elements of the work. Throughout the aria, we hear a repetition of the text, “Onward, Westward.” This is a significant fragment both textually and musically. To close the aria, the fragment is expanded with the line,

“Onward, westward, Heav’nward, Homeward. Follow the vision.” This text is marked by a descending motive on the first four words (Ex. 27). Parker uses the motive to set up the recurring theme of the “Angels of the Grail,” and immediately following Morven’s words, we get the aforementioned four bar “call” of the Angels. As a finishing touch, Morven responds with a final cry of, “Follow the Grail,” which closes the aria and the scene. This sequence proves to be a major point of construction of the oratorio as a whole, with Parker using it to advance the story dramatically. At the end of each stop of Morven’s journey, it provides a recurring call for him to move forward and propels him to the next stop. It acts as an almost unwavering drumbeat that keeps both Morven and the oratorio grounded and focused.



Example 27 – *Morven and the Grail*. Vocal Score, p. 22, mm. 12-15.

While Parker's overall goal may be to devise more singable and accessible melodies, it does not apply to this particular aria. The vocal range and tessitura are easily within the comfortable reach of any baritone. It would also be suitable for bass-baritones and higher basses. However, other than the closing motivic sequence at the end, little of the melodic content is particularly distinctive. Ripe with modulatory passages and occasional chromaticism, the vocal line appears more interested in establishing mood and atmosphere and in relaying text, than creating any sort of beautiful, memorable vocal line. The performer is presented with variable and unusual phrase lengths. A careful review and planning of breathing is strongly advisable early,

with careful consideration of how those breaths may affect the line of text. Several higher sustained notes interspersed within an otherwise moving vocal line makes this suggestion particularly important, as it is easy to lose support for those sustained notes. The singer should work on connection and support through the faster moving vocal lines in conjunction with his breathing so he is not caught having to take a quick breath to reestablish the support before moving to the high sustained notes, thus breaking the melodic and textual line. The fragments with a quicker moving, more rhythmic line must not become choppy, as that will work against the singer in this case. The singer must fight a natural tendency to accomplish this as the lilting meter, somewhat dark mood, and staccato markings in the orchestra all work against creating a connected line. Again, a slight emphasis on consonants while working to maintain continuous support will create the illusion of separation while not breaking the line and leaving the singer in a strong position. Trying to create the effect of separation by breaking the sensation of air flow or support or by trying to “punch” the individual notes will only lead to difficulty and increased strain for the singer.

After Morven’s last call, the orchestra accompaniment starts to fragment, seeming to indicate a coming stillness, which is then followed up by held chords from muted horns. At this point, the aria is essentially over and Parker uses a brief succession of these held chords to transition the music for the start of the next scene. This transition is slightly more involved than the previous transitions, yet one still receives a clear sense that one scene has ended and a new one has begun.

The second scene of Part I is titled, “Dwellers in Avalon.” As the name suggests, Morven’s journey at sea has taken him to Avalon, where he continues to seek the grail. The start of the scene provides a strong new theme in the orchestra. While the meter of 9/8 is maintained, a notably slower tempo of *andante un poco lento* is used and the key has been transitioned to Ab major.

This scene marks the first full choral section of the work and as a whole is really just a large traditional choral movement with only another interjection of the “Angels of the Grail” quartet, 13 bars from the end, disrupting it. The chorus utilizes eight-part writing in typical SSAATTBB. However, through the first phrase of the piece, Parker separates the men and women in a pseudo double chorus style, with a somewhat antiphonal texture (p. 25 mm. 8 –p. 27 mm. 2)¹⁵⁹. This double chorus effect between men and women returns several times throughout the movement alongside a strong mixture of both homophonic and contrapuntal textures.

As the title of the movement suggests, the chorus is meant to represent the people of Avalon. Contextually, Morven has arrived at the island of Avalon. Representing the city dwellers, the chorus sings to describe the wonders of Avalon and to welcome the weary traveler, stating that at Avalon, he is at home and that he will find the joy and rest that he is searching for. The separation of the men and women into a double chorus proves very appropriate, as the men take lines of text that address knights and battle, while women focus on those lines that describe beauty. As mentioned earlier, this description and promise of happiness is only interrupted towards the end of the chorus with the interjection of the Angels, a reminder to Morven of his quest.

Dramatically, Parker makes some strong choices. The piece gradually builds from a pianissimo opening to a climax about three-fourths of the way. It is preceded in the text by a brief list of all the types of people who can find a home in Avalon, which includes knights, ladies, saints, and savages. The dynamics gradually build throughout this list until the climactic moment in fortissimo on the exclamation, “Laughing our days along.” To reinforce this climax, Parker sets it homophonically, with all eight vocal parts and immediately following a key signature change. Parker actually had each item in the list tonicize a different key to build up into a

¹⁵⁹ Parker, *Morven and The Grail*, Vocal Score.

dramatic return to F minor for the climax, the key in which the movement began (p. 36 mm. 3 – p. 40 mm. 6)¹⁶⁰.

Once the climax is reached, the dynamic suddenly goes to *piano* and the piece becomes much more restful. The chorus in turn calls to Morven, “Hither, o hither, and rest” One is given the sense that Morven is giving in to the temptations of Avalon and after celebrating with the people, is drifting to a state of indolence. With the world calming down around him and reaching close to a point of sleep, Parker follows with an interjection on the part of the Angels (p. 42, m 1). It comes at a moment of calm, and is accompanied only by a held chord. The strong homophonic texture contrast with the calls for rest preceding it, which makes it stand out, while the *piano* marking still keeps it distant. It is almost as if the Angels are saying, “Morven, wake up. Your journey is not over, yet.” As such, it becomes an appeal within his subconscious. Morven has been enjoying his stay and appears to be comfortable, but the call is a reminder. However, after this appeal, the dwellers of Avalon immediately reassert themselves with a final call for rest, which closes the chorus and the scene. With that, Morven momentarily gives in to rest.

As in the other oratorios, the subdivision of the parts in this chorus and the thick accompaniment are strong indicators of the need of large choral forces for performance. With independent sections for both men and women, a reasonably strong balance of both is a necessity. The tessitura stays mostly in a middle range for all parts and should not be a challenge for most singers, but at the same time, the projection is muted. Dynamic contrast should be a point of emphasis in performance. The chorus opens with the “Hither, o hither and rest,” theme and this is rightfully given a *pianissimo* dynamic. As the piece then continues with the description of Avalon, the chorus must provide a clear, audible and steady build-up of volume into the *fortissimo* climax. Finally, the chorus must return to the *pianissimo* of the beginning as it recapitulates the “Hither, o hither and rest” to conclude the piece. The dynamic variation should not just be a matter of singing loud or soft, but should also incorporate a variation of tonal color.

¹⁶⁰ Parker, *Morven and The Grail*, Vocal Score.

A whisper-like quality should be given to the opening “Hither” section, and this quality should be even more exaggerated when it returns at the end, becoming almost like an echo of the earlier part. As the women of the chorus begin their description, an emphasis on beauty of tone and line should become the focus. The women should strive for a more open sound, and yet still be slightly restrained with an emphasis on connection of line. The entrance of the men picks up the dynamic further. A more martial quality with much less restraint should take over, something men will be comfortable and happy to do. As the piece builds to its climax, a celebratory quality should be introduced. Singers should work on providing a full, open sound, but being careful not to become strained or harsh.

After the last chord of the chorus, which provided a cadence in the tonic F minor, six bars of orchestra serve as a transition to the next scene, moving the key to B minor. While this transitional music is more involved than what has been seen between scenes up to this point, there is still a strong impression of one movement ending and another beginning. The new movement is entitled, “Song of Sigurd, the Volsung.” It is the first of three traditional aria movements embedded within the framework of the oratorio. As the title states, this is sung by Sigurd, the tenor soloist. The transitional material that ended the previous scene gives way to a strong 4/4 meter in an allegro tempo, providing a clear change in character.

At this point, Morven is at rest, but in the libretto, Hooker’s prose between the movements states that he hears the voice of Sigurd, riding on the dragon, and in his heart he is reminded that sweet joy will not keep man content forever. Framed by the closing diminuendo of the previous movement and with a somewhat more continuous transition, it seems that Parker and Hooker have approached this moment by having Morven enter a dream-like state. This would be appropriate given the numerous biblical references of God communicating with prophets and other followers in their sleep. As a Grail quest poem, Hooker’s libretto can trace its roots to medieval poetry, of which the quest for the grail was a frequent topic. A commonly used device in poetry of that time was the dream vision. As a professor of English, Hooker no doubt was

aware of this aspect and he therefore uses it as a major element in the libretto at several points, with this being the first. The dreamed image of Sigurd could be seen as a communication from God or perhaps merely Morven's conscience reminding him that his quest is not complete. The text of Sigurd's song revolves around the concept of courage and never wavering from a goal. This is a clear message to Morven to not give up on his own quest for the grail. The joys of man on earth, as celebrated in Avalon, are shallow and temporary.

The aria is through composed and, fitting for the subject matter of Sigurd riding a dragon into battle, has a fairly heroic bent. The overall aria has a slight Wagnerian feel in mood and texture, although the middle section does utilize a more sustained vocal line while the accompaniment preserves a fairly quick movement underneath. The transition to this more sustained vocal line is also marked by a transition to B major from the tonic B minor. The singer should approach the aria with the sensation of being powerful and forceful. To help with this, the singer should work to feel well-grounded with the body and legs, and also work to create a sensation of space in the mouth and throat. However, though it may have a slight Wagnerian feel, the singer should not attempt to mimic singing Wagnerian music drama. The danger exists that the tone and vibrato will lack focus and control while trying to sing in a powerful way. While working to create the needed space in the mouth and throat, it is necessary to still maintain a sense of control and of focusing the sound to a point. The range and tessitura is generally in a comfortable range, perhaps sitting slightly low for some voices, but generally, most tenors should not have difficulty handling anything presented. Though not to the same extent as Morven's earlier aria, there are some longer phrase lengths at times which will require some planning on where to breathe. Expressively, the range of emotion provided by the music is limited. It does not depart very much from its main heroic bent. It lacks contrasting moments for the singer and dynamic variation. Therefore, the onus will be somewhat on the singer to discover and provide enough characterization to capture the audience.

The end of the aria is quite interesting. Sigurd delivers his last line of text, “none dare what I dare not, till one be o’erthrown.” To draw attention to it, Parker uses a fairly conventional technique of American popular music at the time, by having the accompaniment suddenly drop out, leaving Sigurd to give his statement in a powerful fortissimo. A strong cadence is provided signaling the end of the aria proper, but then Parker extends the passage further with an unusual tag. After an additional four bars of accompaniment with a diminuendo takes the dynamic to piano, Parker again uses a motivic concept to further tie the oratorio together structurally. First, the chorus enters, still playing the role of the people of Avalon and they repeat the last line of the previous scene, “Hither, o hither and rest,” to which the Angels of the Grail immediately respond with another restatement of “Morven, follow the grail!” (Ex. 28)

It is important to note that this use of repeated text to structure the oratorio is not reflected in Brian Hooker’s original libretto. This was a decision by Parker as a means to pull the piece together and add dramatic impact to the oratorio. It is no longer just a prose poem, but instead has added dramatic context. In this case, the repeated use of both the Avalon theme and the Grail theme indicates the conflict that is facing Morven. The image of a character that is not involved in the larger story (in this case Sigurd) as a part of Morven’s conscience is a concept that Parker and Hooker use again as the oratorio progresses. Meanwhile, the recurring motive utilized by Parker becomes a window into Morven’s mind, providing motivation for his continued journey.

51

None dare what I dare not, Till one be o'er - thrown!

ad libitum (36)

ff

dim.

p

ANGELS OF THE GRAIL
Solo Soprano
Mor - - ven!
Solo Alto
Mor - - ven!
Solo Tenor
Mor - - ven!
Solo Bass
Mor - - ven!

CHORUS
Soprano
p Hith - er, O hith - er and rest.
Alto
p Hith - er, O hith - er and rest.
Tenor
p Hith - er, O hith - er and rest.
Bass
p Hith - er, O hith - er and rest.

pp

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Example 28 – *Morven and the Grail*. Vocal Score, p. 51.

The murmuring conflict between the people of Avalon and the Angels of the Grail comes to a sharp end with a strong fortissimo re-entrance of Sigurd, who repeats a modified version of his last line of text. The re-entrance is sudden and unexpected. If the previous conflict represented indecision, the re-entrance of Sigurd represents a strong, forceful choice. It silences the other

voices and provides a clear moment of certitude. Within the psyche of Morven, it represents that he has made up his mind. He will choose the path of heroism and bravery, and continue his pursuit of the grail.

The piece provides a brief final orchestral close, with a cadence back in the tonic key of B minor. Unlike all previous movements, this represents a full close without any continuation and is marked by a double bar. While Part 1 is not over, Parker seems to be signaling the end of that phase of the story. We are presented the story of Morven's journey and his battle of temptation, but with his decision to move on, there is a sense of finality and a momentary pause before he resumes his journey.

The next scene is representative of the repercussions of his decision. It is simply titled, "Morven and they of Avalon," and it presents Morven in conflict with the residents of Avalon as he insists to them that he wishes to leave to continue his quest. The scene serves as a finale movement for Part 1. While it is fitting for this movement to be chorus dominated, as one would expect in traditional oratorio, Parker also takes a slightly more operatic approach by also incorporating Morven as a major independent vocal part in opposition to the chorus. This integration creates a sort of dialogue between Morven and the people of Avalon and is one of the few places in the oratorio where the setting and libretto resemble direct conversation.

After an orchestral introduction of just 24 bars, Morven opens the scene with his strong declaration to the residents, "Let me go hence... Here is no heaven. The Grail is not here!" (Ex. 29). The response by the chorus takes the same type of rhetorical approach that Satan used in his second aria in *The Legend of St. Christopher*. Not wanting him to leave, they first try to convince him to stay asking, "Is there another joy than joy?" Parker sets this conversation so that there are some moments where there is clearly a statement and answer while at other times, Morven and the chorus are singing on top of each other. It is another strong choice by Parker as it creates the effect that, while this conversation is going on, the two sides may hear each other, but they are not truly listening to what the other says. Each is so steadfast in their belief that they cannot

accept the other. In this way the conversation becomes almost like two competing monologues, a type of dramatic concept that is seen frequently in the finales of inner acts of classical and romantic period operas.

The image displays a vocal score for a character named Morven. It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are as follows:

- System 1: MORVEN. Let me go hence!
- System 2: I have hun-ger'd and thirst-ed O-ver-
- System 3: long in your Av-a-lon. Here is no heav'n, The
- System 4: 39. Grail is not here!

The piano accompaniment features complex chordal textures and melodic lines, often using arpeggiated figures and sustained chords.

Example 29 – *Morven and the Grail*. Vocal Score, p. 55.

The chorus does seem to quickly realize that what they are saying is having no effect on Morven and their attempts to convince him take on a negative tone. They state that Morven is a fool being lead astray by lies and that he will find nothing but waste if he continues. To them,

there is no home but Avalon. Morven then responds with an aria-like section which concludes the scene. This portion is of similar character and affect to Sigurd's earlier aria, although it does not share either text or music with it. Parker sets this section as a clear departure from the immediately preceding choral dialogue. He accomplishes this through not only a change of accompaniment, but with a meter change to 3/2, a new tempo of allegro, and a key change to Bb major.

Morven boldly declares that he will continue on his journey, no matter what obstacles may lie before him, until he reaches his destination. It concludes in the manner of his earlier aria, with Morven using the text theme, "Onward, Upward, Heav'nward, Homeward!" While in the previous aria this theme featured a descending pattern, Parker this time uses an ascending direction. This change may be reflective of the change in the text. The word 'Upward' replaced "Westward," from the earlier aria, and as such an ascending version of the theme seems more appropriate. As before, this "call to arms" is followed by the reappearance of the Angels of the Grail, who once again urge Morven forward. The last phrase is again Morven crying out, "Follow the vision! Follow the Grail!" (Ex. 30) While the sequence is modified from what occurs in the earlier aria, it nonetheless preserves the same spirit and, as previously mentioned, serves as the refrain that ties the whole oratorio together.

(♩ = 92)

On - ward, Up - ward, Heav'n - ward,

Home - ward.

47 *poco più mosso*

ANGELS OF THE GRAIL

poco più mosso p Solo Soprano

Mor - ven, Fol - low the

poco più mosso p Solo Alto

Mor - ven, Fol - low the

poco più mosso p Solo Tenor

Mor - ven, Fol - low the

poco più mosso p Solo Bass

Mor - ven, Fol - low the

47 *poco più mosso*

pp

p

Example 30 – *Morven and the Grail*. Vocal Score, p. 67.

With Morven's last cry, there is a very strong cadence with his last note held until the end of the movement with the accompaniment following suit. An interesting aspect is that while Morven's call of "Homeward" is the peak with a *fortissimo* dynamic marking, it is immediately reduced to *piano* with the entrance of the Angels (Ex. 30). This is not unexpected as the Angels are likely still a distant force, presumably only heard by Morven. However, Morven's cry afterwards does not reflect any change in that dynamic. He continues at the softer dynamic to

close the movement. Other than this aspect, the closing is fairly conventional with a straightforward accompaniment. The result is that while it is a clear ending, it is not the strong, powerful ending one would expect for the end of an act or part, perhaps reflecting that Morven's journey is still continuing.

The chorus sections of the scene are very much like what came earlier in the Avalon portion of the oratorio. As before, the vocal parts are all subdivided and it utilizes both men and women independently at times. Similarly, the tessitura stays largely in the middle of the vocal range for all voice parts. The chorus does need to work to maintain a strong sound but at a softer dynamic so as not to overpower the solo line of Morven. Comparatively, the solo does sit in a higher part of the tessitura. While earlier solos of Morven sat lower in the voice where they could be sung by a bass, here the part is clearly more baritone oriented. The higher range does make balance between the chorus and soloist a much easier proposition. However, the solo singer needs to allow the higher range to naturally be heard above the chorus and not try to forcibly sing against or above them. Occasional contrapuntal lines and staggered entrances thicken the texture to some degree, and the chorus and soloist must pay close attention to sing those parts cleanly and on time.

Part 2

Part 2 of the oratorio begins with the movement, "Heroes in Valhalla." Hooker's narrative lines in the libretto indicate that Morven has already arrived in Valhalla. The movement follows the pattern set by the previous visit to Avalon with "Heroes in Valhalla" playing the same role as the earlier "Dwellers in Avalon." It is essentially a large chorus movement, where the chorus represents the people in Valhalla singing to Morven, telling him the glories of the place and encouraging him to stay. Given the historical, mythical context of Valhalla as being a place of gathering for warriors, Parker utilizes only the men of the chorus for most of the movement. The women only join for added depth and volume for the final four bars. It is important to note that while it plays the same dramatic purpose as the earlier Avalon chorus, this movement is a

completely different piece. One of the most striking changes, besides the use of men, is the inclusion of an extended tenor solo. This solo is not marked in the cast list so it can likely be performed by either a soloist chosen from the chorus or by the same tenor who performed the Sigurd aria, but taking on a separate character. The published score gives no direction on who should sing it. Should the Sigurd aria and the solo be done by the same singer, it could put an interesting twist in the dramatic flow of oratorio. The role of Sigurd is of course one of heroism, while the solo is a toast and remembrance of the heroic. In essence, the Sigurd aria becomes not only an aria of Morven's conscience, but a guide that lead Morven to Valhalla. If there is a way to clearly delineate the separation of the two roles using the same singer, this connection would not exist. The elimination of the connection would also occur with the use of a different singer from the chorus. One advantage of having the a new singer emerge from the chorus is creating a sense of spontaneity and homogeneity within the context of the choral section.

The movement begins with a brief 12-bar orchestral opening before the initial statement of the chorus which lasts 44 bars. The orchestra opens with an *allegro* tempo before settling into a somewhat slow *pesante* for the entrance of the chorus. Parker once again mixes meters, frequently changing between 3/4 and 4/4. The piece starts in C major and the opening phrase of the chorus is based on a C major scale that then ascends to an E. From there, however, Parker frequently modulates, choosing to forgo the simpler harmonic structures that are seen in some of his other late period works with more complex harmonic language replete with notable chromaticism. At times the piece strongly resembles a drinking song, but the resemblance is not always entirely clear given the frequently changing harmonies and variation in meter. Nevertheless, the tenor solo in the middle and the repeat of the opening choral statement at the end seem to indicate that Parker was clearly inspired by a drinking song for its composition.

The chorus's opening 44-bar statement essentially declares to Morven that he should eat, drink, and be merry. In Valhalla, you get maidens, feasts, and hunting to your heart's content. It culminates in a repeated cry of "Waes Hael!" accompanied by an acceleration in the tempo. A

ten-bar orchestral interlude then sets up the entrance of the tenor, which maintains the character of the choral section, despite the quickened tempo. As in a classic drinking song, the text of the tenor solo represents a toast. He declares that the heroes there fought as both enemies and allies alike, fighting bravely and without fear. After death, they all gather together and unite in fellowship at Valhalla, whether friend or foe. The chorus then acknowledges his toast with another cry of “Waes Hael!”

Upon completion of the solo and acknowledgment of the chorus, another brief orchestral interlude is followed by a modified repeat of the opening choral stanza on a new text, thus creating an ABA’ structure. With the repeat, a new tempo *maestoso* is introduced with a strong dynamic of *fortissimo*. The Valhallans proudly declare that their grim gods could not break their spirits and they bravely defied them. Valhalla is their reward. This last statement is again greeted by a round of “Waes Hael!” which utilizes both tenor soloist and the men’s chorus. The cry is heard eight times, with the final time, as previously mentioned, also utilizing the women of the chorus for the first time.

Being modeled on a drinking song, characterization should be loud and boisterous. Parker enforces this by having the written dynamics varying little from *forte* and *fortissimo*. Once again, loud, muscular singing is something that men tend to like to do, but it is imperative that a modicum of control is maintained. The tendency with large choruses of men when given a *fortissimo* dynamic is to sing loud without any regard to the other parts, musicality, or the health of their own voices. The chorus parts run the gamut from unison to four-part writing throughout the movement, and it is important that when the parts divide all parts are heard. It may be wise to have the singers rehearse the piece at one or two dynamic levels lower than whatever is written, working to maintain the same energy in the sound that they would have at the louder dynamic that so typifies the typical male glee chorus. An emphasis should be placed on listening for the other parts for balance and blend. Despite the occasional chromaticism, the vocal lines overall tend towards the simple, with basic rhythm, mostly stepwise motion, and a comfortable range.

Amateur singers should have no difficulty with the work, as long as there are sufficient singers to balance the parts and the orchestration. Likewise, the tenor solo is also simple, although it does use more leaping motion, a wider range, and a more complex harmonic structure. A stronger singer from among the chorus members should be able to sing it without too much difficulty, but again it may make more sense to have the “Sigurd” soloist sing this as well.

Unlike Part 1, Parker makes little attempt, even superficially, to connect the first few movements of Part 2 together. Perhaps it is a decision based on how radically different in mood the first few movements are. He closes “Heroes in Valhalla” very clearly and provides a double bar. However, to preserve some sense of continuity he does notate “Senza pausa,” leaving only three beats of rest as the only separation between the last note of the scene and the start of the next scene, “Hymn of Saint Cecilia.” The lack of relationship between the two movements is made readily apparent by the shift to a now steady 3/4 meter in an andante tempo and the new key signature of G# minor, a sharp change from the cadence on A major that closed the preceding movement.

Following the structure provided in Part 1, the “Hymn of Saint Cecilia” provides the same function as the earlier, “Song of Sigurd.” Morven has heard the people of Valhalla and is tempted, but he once again hears a voice in his soul, this time that of Cecilia, that makes him realize that the “triumph” provided by Valhalla is not enough to content him forever. For the second time, a dream vision is presented in which Morven’s conscience seems to be speaking to him, most likely as the instrument of God, presented as a soprano aria.

Saint Cecilia’s aria takes the form of a prayer that communicates that there is only one God and that through him all suffering is relieved. God is the King and is love. The text seems to be derived on the concept of a nun being a bride of Christ, espousing purity and looking to God for comfort. As such, the mood is both sweet and solemn, a sharp contrast to the rough, brawl-like nature of the drinking song that came before it. Oboes and clarinets take the lead in the

orchestration initially and a smooth legato in a restrained pianissimo punctuates the intended atmosphere. The orchestra introduction lasts 24 bars, nearly a quarter of the aria's overall length.

The aria is largely through-composed, and despite the initial key of G# minor, the harmonic movement is highly chromaticized and quickly moving away from it, never truly returning to it. A strong key change to Ab major occurs just before the third and final stanza. This third stanza focuses particularly on the idea of God as the one true love and the one true God. Parker makes it a strong climactic section of the aria. The vocal range of the soprano through the first two stanzas had been fairly restricted, and here Parker at last utilizes the full range of the soprano, culminating in an ascending figure that takes the singer from D₄ to C₆. He marks that this figure should be *ad libitum*, giving the singer the choice to take liberty with the notated material as needed. A strong and clear cadence in Ab Major closes the aria. Despite the minor fireworks provided by the last figure, the aria is generally subdued. Parker seems to want to maintain the concept of a solitary prayer for its underlying tone. In some regards, the approach is almost lullaby like in its restraint.

The dynamic throughout is maintained in the *pianissimo* to *piano* range, and only in the ascending climax does he ever notate a *mezzo-forte*. For the singer, the dynamic markings are more or less meant to establish mood. The singer should work to establish the feeling of the *piano* and *pianissimo* without trying actually to sing at such a soft level. It simply will not cut through the orchestrated accompaniment, particularly in the type of large hall that this work would typically be performed in. Inexperienced singers, when presented with a soft dynamic, will frequently cut their support in an effort to reduce the volume. However, the opposite is true. To create the softer sound required of the aria, the singer will need to make sure they take good breaths and maintain solid foundational support in the abdominal region. For many singers, it actually feels like they are using more support in order to accomplish a softer sound. Keeping a connected line will be of the utmost importance. The restrained nature of the composition does not mean for the singer to be boring. An attempt to sing plainly without any sort of emotion in the

singing will miss the mark. The vocal line lends itself well to shaping with crescendos and decrescendos and the singer should use that to help in her performance. The general nature of the text is one of love and caring which should be reflected in the vocal quality, emphasizing the references to a lullaby.

Parker once again provides a clear ending that is completed with a double bar. There seems to be no attempt to create the appearance of continuity in this case, as there is a complete stop and then an entirely new beginning with the entrance of the next movement. Strangely, the next movement lacks any sort of title or numbering whatsoever. That it is an entirely new movement separate from what comes before and after is clear, but there is nothing to identify it. The Hooker libretto, however, does once again provide prose between this new movement and the “Hymn of Saint Cecilia.” It states, “and of the grail also, even the desire of the soul that is not in Valhalla. Wherefore, he departeth out of that heaven.” “He,” of course refers to Morven.

Setting itself apart musically, the movement begins in a new key of E major, though it never really settles on that key, and uses a 4/4 meter and allegro tempo. Continuing the pattern set previously, it involves Morven making the decision to continue his pursuit of the grail and turning down the pleasure of Valhalla. Unlike the scene in Avalon, however, the heroes of Valhalla do not attempt to sway Morven otherwise. In this case they are silent and the movement thus becomes an aria for Morven, which also provides for him the opportunity for a much more extended rebuttal than what was seen previously. The same thematic material that began Morven’s decision in Avalon recurs here in modified and extended form as the aria begins with the same cry of “Let me go hence!” (Ex. 31). The thought is then completed later in the aria as Morven, after stating that Valhalla provides no fulfillment, declares again, “The Grail is not there.”



Example 31 – Reappearance of “Let me go hence.” *Morven and the Grail*. Vocal Score, p. 90, mm. 4-7.

The text of the aria basically communicates that Morven has heard Saint Cecilia singing in his soul and is thus reminded that pride and power are empty. Since this is all Valhalla offers, there is nothing for him there. Therefore, he declares that he will continue his journey, while describing the idea of Christ and the pursuit of Christ being true heaven. Like the other arias in the work, the piece is through composed. The middle section is of particular note as it suddenly shifts into a 3/2 meter. With the meter change, Parker begins a building passage where Morven makes the statement that he will continue his journey, but now taking on the role of a pilgrim, knowing forgiveness, and becoming a “shining river of peace.” The section is brought to a climax by the unexpected entrance of the chorus' women, which here are playing no particular role. They provide a short backing chorus of five bars on the word “Hosanna,” providing extra texture to Morven’s depiction of himself as a pilgrim on a holy journey. The five bars of chorus appear as part of the building process, adding tension through their final “Hosanna,” which leads to the immediate resolution into the new key of D major and a return to 4/4.

The final section of the movement concludes with the reappearance of the grail refrain, modified once again. Morven again repeats his cry of, “Onward, Upward, Heav’nward, Homeward,” which is followed by the recurring call of the Angels of the Grail in response, and then once more by Morven providing the statement theme of the entire oratorio, “Follow the

vision, follow the grail!” As mentioned previously, there is no reply by Valhalla and thus that particular stop on his journey is complete.

Besides sharing musical material with the earlier scene, “Morven and They of Avalon,” the mood and atmosphere are also quite similar. The singer should present an air of decisiveness and strength. Morven has made his decision to continue his journey and that should be made clear in the vocal approach. The tessitura for Morven in this aria does sit in a typical baritone range. This helps the singer as it is mostly in a range where it becomes easy to project without having to strain the sound. The difficulty with this particular piece is not to have it sound angry. It is true that Parker is rejecting the temptation of Valhalla rather forcefully with several markings of *agitato*. However, within the context of the work, it is not angry, but strong and confident. A key to making this happen is to avoid “punching” the individual notes. Instead work to maintain evenness in the attacks and in the continuity of the vocal line.

Morven’s final call cadences on an F# major chord, but the moment is accompanied by a key signature change to B major. The final 10 bars of the aria are an orchestral closing that clearly establish the B major key, with the final chord being on the dominant F#7 chord, thus allowing a direct resolution and continuation for the start of the next movement, which likewise begins in B major.

The next movement is titled, “Saints in Paradise,” and is a very large, sectionalized choral movement used to close Part 2. Despite the fact that there is yet Part 3 to follow, the dramatic decision was made to have Morven reach heaven at this moment. The movement is largely a praise chorus with the text for the most part focusing on simply singing about Heaven, God, and the act of worship and seeking forgiveness.

While the start of “Saints in Paradise” is clearly set up by the ending of the previous scene, the new thematic material in the orchestra and a change in tempo clearly signal the start of a new movement. At over 300 measures long and having five stanzas, the piece leaves a lot of room for Parker to incorporate a lot of different ideas and techniques. In fact, the piece almost

serves as a summary of the various methods Parker used in the choruses in both *Hora Novissima* and *The Legend of Saint Christopher*. As in the successful opening movement of *Hora Novissima*, Parker models “Saints in Paradise” on classical sonata form. It begins with 39 measure of orchestra only serving as the introduction. The first stanza works as the exposition. Stanzas two through four work as a development section, though like in the *Hora Novissima* movement, it functions more as a point of contrast rather than a true development. Stanza five then becomes a recapitulation, to which a tag clearly functions as a coda. The coda is set apart from the preceding recapitulation by a sudden change to cut time. To reinforce the sonata form, Parker has the first stanza start in the tonic B major. At the start of stanza two, there is a key signature change to B minor that is maintained through the end of the fourth stanza, although it goes through several modulations. A change of meter to 6/4 from the 4/4 of the first stanza also occurs. The fourth stanza cadences on a F# major chord, the dominant of B major for the return of the tonic key to start the fifth stanza/recapitulation.

The opening stanza could have easily been lifted from either of the two earlier oratorios. It is somewhat hymn-like in construction with fairly straightforward phrasing and a largely homophonic texture. However, despite its fairly basic structure, the harmonic language is much more advanced and clearly in a late 19th century vein, forgoing the simpler harmonic language that permeates much of his other late period works.

The idea of summarizing several of his earlier oratorios becomes stronger with the start of the second stanza. After ending the first stanza with a strong cadence in the tonic B major, the orchestra comes to a complete stop. The second stanza starts after a clear break, providing a degree of separation between the two sections. This same type of break occurred right before “Jam sol recedit” in *The Legend of Saint Christopher*. Parker, recognizing the success of both “Jam sol recedit” and “Urbs Syon unica” in *Hora Novissima*, makes the second stanza an unaccompanied chorus. This continues without interruption through the third stanza, thus the two stanzas can be considered as a single unit. As in “Urbs Syon unica,” Parker channels a

Renaissance era motet as the model for construction. We are presented with a strong contrapuntal opening that once again is reminiscent of Palestrina. Throughout the two stanzas, the contrapuntal texture is dominant, however it also uses homophonic statements on occasion. Despite this , harmonically, it still is closer in style to “Jam sol recedit,” as it does not focus on mode in the same way the earlier work does, and while there is an occasional emphasis on the interval of a fifth, it is not present to the extent that was seen in “Urbs syon unica.” Like both of the earlier choruses, despite a stylistic basis in an earlier period, the pacing and harmonic sophistication are clearly rooted in more contemporary, late 19th century thinking.

The fourth stanza proves to be a complete hybrid, perhaps becoming a bit too disjunct both within itself and in its relationship to the rest of the movement. The musical material for the fourth stanza is clearly based on that of the previous two, but it is fragmented and often modified. Immediately after the end of the third stanza, the orchestra re-enters, providing a brief interlude that includes in its middle a short 2 bar choral phrase, where the chorus sings homophonically the first phrase of the fourth stanza, “We have dreamed:”(Ex. 32). Since it comes in the middle of the interlude, there is a decided pause before one hears the next section of text. The punctuation of the colon then becomes quite literal within the structure of the music. The separation from what follows provides an extra emphasis on those words, encouraging the audience to wonder what they may have dreamed but also humanizing the voices of the residents of heaven. The idea of dreaming is a particularly earthly concept, but also ties in to the idea that dreams are a medium through which God communicates. Thus it becomes a direct dramatic connection to Morven’s dream visions presented by the arias of Sigurd and Saint Cecilia.

After the interlude, the next few lines are sung by the sopranos alone, to which the whole chorus answers with the next line of text. The soprano lines are accompanied, but mostly with simple blocked chords, providing only basic support, which allows the texture of the voice to be quite prominent. It seems to somewhat mimic a responsorial as after the sopranos complete their

lines, the full chorus then re-enters, again unaccompanied and based on the same melodic material of the previous two stanzas.

The image displays a musical score for a vocal piece. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system features four vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a piano accompaniment. Each vocal staff has the lyrics "We have dream'd: _____" written below it. The piano accompaniment is in the key of D major and 4/4 time. The second system continues the vocal parts with the lyrics "by fit-ful flames, and" and includes a tempo marking "(♩ = 72)". The piano accompaniment continues with a more complex melodic line in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand.

Example 32 – *Morven and the Grail*. Vocal Score, p. 110.

The full chorus sings until the last line of the stanza, which reads, “Calling at the close of every song.” Parker apparently saw a perfect opportunity to play with this line, so he treats it differently than what has come before it. However, his choice of treatment is also representative of Parker incorporating past techniques into this chorus. The orchestra enters again, and he has the sopranos alone sing only the first word of the line, “Calling.” Since the “Angels of the Grail” theme recurs regularly throughout the oratorio and functions as a “call,” he once again has the Angels interject with their theme at that particular moment, thus using the same dramatic technique that he built the whole oratorio on, and also reminiscent of the recurring motives that dominated *The Legend of Saint Christopher*. (Ex. 33) He has the Angels hold the word “Grail” for several bars, having the main chorus enter and completing the last line of the fourth stanza in counterpoint. It is a clever trick on the part of Parker to interject the call at that moment. Not only does it summarize what has occurred previously in the oratorio, but it also foreshadows the unusual, anti-climactic Part 3.

ANGELS OF THE GRAIL

Solo Soprano

Mor - ven! Mor - ven!

Solo Alto

Mor - ven! Mor - ven!

Solo Tenor

Mor - ven! Mor - ven!

Solo Bass

Mor - ven! Mor - ven!

CHORUS

Soprano

- ing, Call - ing,

Alto

Call - ing,

Tenor

Call - ing,

Bass

Call - ing,

Example 33 – *Morven and the Grail*. Vocal Score. p. 113-114.

The image displays a musical score for a vocal ensemble, consisting of four staves. The first system of staves (top four) is marked with a circled '81' and contains the lyrics 'Fol - low the Grail!'. The second system (middle four) is also marked with a circled '81' and contains the lyrics 'Call - ing at the close of'. The third system (bottom four) is marked with a circled '81' and contains the lyrics 'Call - ing at the close of'. The score is written in B major (two sharps) and 4/4 time. The vocal parts are arranged in four staves, with the first three staves in treble clef and the fourth staff in bass clef. The piano accompaniment is shown in the bottom system, with the right hand in treble clef and the left hand in bass clef. The lyrics are written below the corresponding staves.

Example 33 (Cont.)

As mentioned, the final stanza largely functions as the recapitulation within the musical form of the chorus. With the ending of the fourth stanza and following brief orchestral interlude, working to re-establish the tonic key of B major, the fifth stanza is mostly a repeat of the opening stanza musically. Poetically, Hooker set up the first and fifth stanzas to follow the same structure and there are several recurring textual elements between them. It does appear that Hooker and Parker worked closely to set up this particular section of text in this manner to fit what Parker had

in mind musically for this moment, given that stanzas two through four are constructed differently than one and five.

However, the final stanza adds one extra line of text as a tag, “To Him, the kingdom and the power and the glory evermore.” The line is lifted from “The Lord’s prayer,” adding to the praise a worshipful quality presented by the movement as a whole. This extra line, along with the word, “Hosanna,” becomes the foundation of the final coda of the movement. The switch to cut time for the coda makes the transition very clear, naturally creating a much faster movement (p. 120, m. 5)¹⁶¹. To further separate it from the recapitulation, it primarily uses a highly contrapuntal texture which begins immediately. The style is highly reminiscent of the baroque era oratorios of Handel, with a clear, easily recognizable subject that each voice takes up in turn.

The momentum of the counterpoint is briefly stopped in the middle of the section by the first, “Hosanna!” (p. 125, m. 8)¹⁶². The word is also used prominently in both the first and fifth stanzas and here Parker models the setting of the word on how it was set in the two stanzas and then expands upon it briefly, thus tying the sections together. The dynamic marking at *fff* brings to the forefront that this is the climax of the coda, with the contrapuntal opening leading to that point. The “Hosanna!” calls are then followed by the setting of the text, “We have sinned, we have sorrowed, we have dreamed.” (p. 127 m. 2)¹⁶³. Parker backs the dynamic marking down suddenly to *pianissimo*, providing a sharp contrast, but also mimicking the stepped dynamics used in the Baroque period. The line of text is actually the first line of each of the three middle stanzas woven together: “We have sinned,” comes from the second stanza, “We have sorrowed,” comes from the third stanza, and the “We have dreamed,” comes from the fourth stanza. Parker models the setting of the woven text on the “We have dreamed,” music of that fourth stanza. The connections to the rest of the movement thus comes full circle as the coda provides fragments of each of the five stanzas.

¹⁶¹ Parker, *Morven and The Grail*, Vocal Score.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

The movement concludes by a return to the “To Him, the kingdom and the power and the glory evermore,” subject, but now set in a much more homophonic style and is followed by several repeats of “Hosanna!” The return to the main theme also is matched by the sudden return to *fortissimo*. The final sequence of repeated “Hosanna!” provides the final cadence of the work, which befitting of a large, finale type piece, is somewhat extended at 12 bars. Overall, the coda come across as a fairly big, festival type moment, very suitable for the occasion for which it was composed and clearly derived from Victorian oratorio tradition.

Part 3

The closing movement of Part 2 seems to make a fitting conclusion for the entire oratorio. All the action presented by the story would appear complete, since Morven had reached Heaven, presumably content. However, Hooker’s libretto continues developing a full third part. While there are many examples of works in both opera and oratorio where the main plot is resolved by the end of the second act, with the third act dealing with ramifications of what has previously occurred, the tableaux style of *Morven and the Grail* does not really suit this type of construction. It would seem logical then, that the third part of *Morven* would primarily be a shorter, contemplative section that reflects on what has occurred. However, while it does have a more contemplative direction, Hooker also makes some dramatic decisions that are very unusual and could be considered somewhat controversial given Parker’s otherwise conservative Christian views.

The first movement of Part 3 continues the same structure as has been used thus far, by following the chorus with an aria. Previously, the oratorio had Morven arriving at Avalon, signaled with a chorus followed by Sigurd’s aria, and then there was the chorus to signal his arrival at Valhalla, followed by the aria of Saint Cecilia. After the chorus signaling his arrival in Heaven that ends Part 2, Parker provides an aria written for a mezzo soprano to open Part 3. Thus, we are presented with the third and final dream vision of Morven. Given the previous events of the oratorio, it is somewhat strange to have the break between Parts 2 and 3 interrupt the

structural sequence. In conjunction with the concluding thrust of the previous chorus, it amounts to an unusual profile for Part 3.

Following the naming conventions of the rest of the oratorio, the movement is titled, “Lullaby of our Lady.” While the aria on its own is not dramatically unusual in any way, the narrative prose provided by Hooker in the libretto prior to the aria certainly attracts attention. Following the structural pattern set-up by the previous scenes, he writes, “But Morven, hearing in his spirit as it were Our Lady communing with her child new-born into the world, is aware how man may not content himself forever at rest.” It is puzzling from a theological perspective that Morven has reached Heaven, which should fill him with joy and contentment, after all it is the goal of all Christians. Yet following the structural pattern of the oratorio, it is suggested that he is not content. It could be argued that this is merely a set-up for a teaching moment, were it not for what comes later in the act.

With a clear break between the start of the aria and the end of Part 2, Part 3 begins with the completely unrelated key of Eb Major. The title makes no secret that the aria is a lullaby and it uses a suitable 6/8 meter and andantino tempo. It is fairly solemn throughout, sharing that characteristic with the earlier aria of Saint Cecilia. Parker chooses to start the piece with a quite lengthy orchestral introduction, which is fairly appropriate given that the aria is the first movement of Part 3, lasting a full 72 bars and well over two minutes. The introduction remains fairly subdued to preserve the lullaby quality, remaining mostly in the *piano* to *pianissimo* dynamic range, but rising briefly for a moment to *forte*.

After the lengthy introduction, the vocal solo takes over and continues for approximately another 130 measures, giving the aria a total length of about six minutes. As mentioned by Hooker’s introduction, the scene involves Morven hearing the song of Mary in his heart. Following the profile of the earlier two arias, it would seem that now his conscience speaks to him. However, while it could be argued that God played a role in this communication through a dream-like state, here it may be that either God is not involved or that Morven misinterprets

God's intent. Alternatively, God indeed may be speaking and Morven takes it as intended, which would put the coming theological debate in the full spotlight. Within the aria itself, Mary is seen singing to the baby Jesus. She first tells of a strange dream she had where she saw the three kings and the many other visitors of the baby Jesus. Next she tells him that although he is God, all he needs right now is for her to take care of him. She closes by declaring that there has never been a baby like him. The middle section where she acknowledges that he is God is set up as a contrasting section with increased agitation. As it reflects on some of the power that God possesses, it works fairly well. To add to the contrast and to reinforce the agitation, the vocal register sits higher throughout this section. Further contrast is achieved through a key signature shift to C major. Parker resolves it back to Eb Major for the closing section by having the middle portion close on a dominant Bb major chord.

The singer should work to create an overall loving, gentle vocal character, by emphasizing legato and working on the connection of the vocal line. However, Hooker's text and Parker's setting allow for a great deal of variation and freedom for expression. For instance, the text includes the phrase "Leaving me here alone" which Parker sets by repeating the pitch of G while momentarily dropping the accompaniment (p. 135. m. 3)¹⁶⁴. The singer is given freedom to shape that line of text as she sees fit, which could be used to depart from the loving character of the aria by giving it a quality of sadness and loneliness, or perhaps weariness depending on how one wishes to interpret it. The line here should not be so connected, but instead freely shaped to accomplish the selected mood. This feeling is resolved as it is revealed a few lines later that she is alone with her baby, Jesus. Thus there is plenty of opportunity to provide emotional contrast throughout the aria, much more so than in the two earlier arias of Sigurd and Saint Cecilia, or in any other movement. The changing and complicated emotional states that flow through this aria make it reminiscent of Parker's opera *Mona*. The aria lacks a specific dramatic climax, but flows more like a stream of consciousness. It is up to the performer to be able to vary the emotion and

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

shape the various textual lines to reflect the changing emotional state within the context of what is otherwise a serene “lullaby.”

Overall, the text used in the aria is fairly innocuous. There is nothing controversial of note and is presented simply like a statement of love. Given that, it seems that the most likely reason for Morven’s response to the aria is that he misinterprets the meaning of what he heard and saw in the vision. The libretto does nothing to clarify what the moment is intended to represent. In any case, how Morven responds would be shocking to a conservative Christian mind.

As in the previous two cases, the dream aria is followed by Morven making a statement of his decision and will. From a pure structural perspective, this makes complete sense and follows the same progression of what has been seen thus far. As in Part 2 with Saint Cecilia’s aria, Mary’s aria is followed by another solo movement featuring Morven alone and it is likewise unlabeled with any title or number. However, the start of a new movement is made clear by a clear break in the music notated with a double bar and with no indication of any continuation at the end of “Lullaby of our Lady.” The break is reinforced by Morven’s aria clearly introducing a new musical thought, set with a new tempo of *moderato* and a new meter of 4/4. The only element carried over from Mary’s aria is the key signature of Eb major.

As before, Morven begins by returning to the same theme and statement, “Let me go hence,” and explains that the Grail is not there. The aria is further set-up by the Hooker’s preceding narrative prose, “and of the grail also, even the desire of the soul that is not in Paradise, neither to be found in any place, but rather followed through all. Wherefore he will depart out of that heaven, to be born again and become as a little child.” Morven further clarifies this text by declaring that he wishes to return to Earth as a child. Given the Christian belief that Heaven is the ultimate goal and by reaching Heaven you will receive contentment and fulfillment, not to mention that desire will no longer exist there, this statement by Morven could be seen as troubling for those of traditional Christian belief

As if to create further controversy, the text clearly requests reincarnation. Traditional mainstream Christian doctrine widely repudiates the idea of reincarnation. However, there has often been debate on the subject on the fringes of Christianity. The most notable proponents of reincarnation during the time period would have been involved with the Spiritualism movement that was prevalent in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the United States and England, which reportedly had as many as eight million followers at the time.¹⁶⁵ Parker was noted as having a strong Christian background with a grandfather that was a Baptist minister.¹⁶⁶ It is unlikely, although possible as it not clear that Parker intended the oratorio to be a purely Christian work, that the idea of reincarnation would have been put forth by Parker. Less is known of Hooker's religious background, but given the popularity of Spiritualism at the time period, it is perhaps included as nothing more than an attempt to bring forth debate.

To summarize the text of Morven's aria, he declares that he never beheld the grail and therefore, he will return to the world to experience hope, hunger, adventure, and endeavor. He states that he has rested long enough and he will return to earth for love of the world. The second half of the aria has several key pieces of text that tie it together with Morven's previous arias and with other themes presented by the oratorio. Parker wisely reuses previous musical themes to reinforce this concept. The first key piece of text is, "One way, the world's way, the sun's way, the soul's way." Morven seems to have confused earthly desire with that of the soul. The reference to "one way" means he believes that that is God's directive for him. It also restates his wish for reincarnation and teases thematically the return of the "Onward, upward," text that was used in his previous arias. Later, he says, "One dream, God's dream," which clearly indicates that he believes that reincarnation is his only path, but also that he believes that this is what God's message is. Finally, the "onward" theme returns in earnest with a new twist to represent Morven's chosen path, "Outward, onward, eastward, downward." This is a complete reversal of the

¹⁶⁵ "Three Forms of Thought: M.M. Mangassarian Addresses the Society for Ethical Culture at Carnegie Music Hall," *New York Times*, 29 November 1897, 200.

¹⁶⁶ Chadwick, *Horatio Parker*, 5, 25.

direction of his journey until that moment. Parker wisely modifies the musical theme to reflect the text. It is now a great descending passage that spans a full 12th from E4 to A2. (Ex. 34)

The image shows a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The vocal line is written in a single staff with lyrics: "ward, On-ward, Earth-ward, down-ward... Fol-low the". The piano accompaniment is written in two staves. The first system of the piano part features a descending passage marked *ff* and *ad libitum*. The second system of the piano part features a section marked *Molto moderato* and *ppp*. The score is in 4/4 time and the key signature has one sharp (F#).

Example 34 – *Morven and the Grail*. Vocal Score, p. 149, mm. 5-16.

Parker finishes the aria with the restatement of, “Follow the vision! Follow the Grail!” He makes the decision to not interrupt Morven through the above sequence with the insertion of the Angels quartet. This sets this instance apart from all the previous occurrences. In the earlier appearances, the Angels served to urge Morven forward on his journey. Dramatically, by having no interjection, Parker asserts that the Angels are no longer encouraging Morven in this manner. The Angels, however, do still have their statement. To reinforce the notion that Morven is misguided, Parker waits until he says his final “Grail.” Only at the moment do the Angels make their appearance, which effectively ends Morven’s aria. Although the aria is done, the scene is not complete and is instead fed into a new choral/quartet section. With this new section, the “Angels of the Grail” are given a slightly more extended passage but are also joined by the soloists, although here they are titled by voice type and not character name.

The intent of the Angels seems unclear. The initial statement of the Angels is “Morven! Behold the Grail!” which is a modification of the earlier text. This modification seems to imply

that Morven needs to stop. His journey is complete and the grail is in front of him. By that token, there would be no need for his pursuit of reincarnation. Parker's decision to wait for Morven's last word before the Angel's response reinforces this notion. By not interrupting, they are no longer supporting his quest. The message could be interpreted as, "Wait, Morven. The grail is here already and you just need to open your eyes. There is no need for reincarnation." However, the rest of the text of the chorus does not seem to take a strong position on the matter and the narration in the libretto (again not set in Parker's music) provided by Hooker that precedes the chorus only serves to confuse the issue further.

PART III	
<p><i>But Morven, hearing in his spirit as it were Our Lady communing with her Child new-born into the world, is aware how man may not content him for- ever at rest;</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">LULLABY OF OUR LADY</p> <p>I have dreamed of strange things This night. Lo, they are gone— The voices, and great wings, And the three kneeling kings—</p>	<p>Leaving me here alone Now all is done With this that is mine own... The Man, my Son.</p> <p>Master, thy high commands!... Must we put forth to bless Unfathomed seas, far lands, These little angry hands?— Will earthquake and eclipse Claim, and confess Those little hungry lips Of helplessness?</p>

Figure 3 – Libretto as printed from the start of Part 3 through the entrance of the Grail Quartet¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Horatio Parker, *Morven and the Grail: oratorio for mixed chorus, solo voices, and orchestra*, op. 79, Words by Brian Hooker, (Boston: Boston Music Co., 1915) Vocal score, v-vi.

Ah, hush, then!... Take no heed
Of prophecy nor sign,
While I am all thy need,
Though thou be God indeed.
What matter less or more,
Human, divine?—
Never was born before
A babe like mine.

*and of the Grail also,
even the desire of the soul
that is not in Paradise,
neither to be found in any
place, but rather followed
through all. Wherefore
he will depart out of that
heaven, to be born again
and become as a little
child.*

MORVEN

Let me go hence!...
Prayer and praise
Have I proven in Paradise;
The Grail only
Beheld I never
In any heaven.

For lo, even now,
Even here, my spirit
Heard one singing
Of life new-born
Unto hope and hunger,
Adventure, endeavor;
And I said, understanding
The eyes of children,
The lips of women,
The hands of men—
I will go down
Out of rest forever
For love of the world
To the world again.

I will go as a babe
That is born, as a soul sent
Forth from before God,
Bathed in forgetfulness,
To wonder and wander
Through pain and beauty,
Laughter and labor
And shame, unendingly
Knowing and growing.
One way, the world's way,
The sun's way, the soul's way—

Day after day
From the deep rearisen—
The same, yet another,
Westward wending
From dawn to noon,
From noon to even,
From even to dawn.
One dream, God's dream
That no man knoweth—
Never to find,
Forever to follow—
The unbeholden
Glory, the gleam
Above all heavens,
Beyond all horizons—
Earthward, downward,
Outward, onward.
Follow the wonder—
Follow the Grail!

*Thereupon the heavens
are opened unto him, and
he beholdeth in a vision
the Grail and the Angels
thereof singing of the
mystery of God's creation:
how man shall not cease
but through light and
darkness, love and pain,
death and birth, live on
between Hell and Heaven
in wonder everlasting.*

ANGELS OF THE GRAIL

Morven!... Morven!... Morven!...
Blood and water,
Water and wine,
Life, death, and life, three dreams, one waking—
Behold the Vision—
Behold the Grail!

From His throne alone and afar
In the night before light began,
The Lord let fall a star
Into the heart of the sea.
And a ripple arose and ran
Spreading eternally
In glimmering rings that roll
Over the dark of the sea,
As the ripple of years that flow
Over the dark of the soul—

Figure 3 (cont.)

An alternative interpretation of what has taken place would imply that the libretto is not referring to actual reincarnation, but to the concept of Christian rebirth, in the sense that, to become a follower of Christ, one renews oneself and casts aside the past life to live in the spirit of God. The process of rebirth is often through baptism. There are many examples of this type of

directive in the New Testament, notably in the story of Nicodemus, who Jesus tells, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”¹⁶⁸ The problems with that argument, as applied in this libretto, lie in that Morven has already been following God’s will and directive in his Grail quest. Furthermore, he has already reached Heaven and eternal salvation. Finally, there is the fact that Morven clearly declares his intention to be reborn as a child, “unto hope and hunger, Adventure, endeavor... I will go down out of rest forever, For love of the world, To the World again.”¹⁶⁹ These are not the words of a Christian reborn. Yes, Christians are seen as full of hope, but adventure and endeavor are not focuses of their belief. Further, he declares that he will specifically return to Earth from heaven, which is a clear message of reincarnation.

To continue with the aforementioned narrative prose that falls between the end of Morven’s aria and the start of the Grail quartet, Hooker includes the lines, “How man shall not cease, but through light and darkness, love and pain, death and birth, live on between Hell and Heaven, in wonder everlasting.”¹⁷⁰ It is true that Christian doctrine preaches everlasting life. However, that everlasting life is supposed to come only with ascension to Heaven after death. By saying that man will live forever between Hell and Heaven, it suggests that Earth will exist forever, which is in full opposition to the Book of Revelation which describes the end of the world and the second coming of Christ. “Death and birth” clearly suggests a constant renewal of life through reincarnation.

Other than Parker’s setting up the “Angels of the Grail” section as a rebuttal, there is little in the text to clearly support or oppose reincarnation. There are mentions of rebirth, but the intent of those mentions is ambiguous. The first comes early in the text with the line, “Life, death, and life, three dreams, one waking.”¹⁷¹ While this could be a reference to reincarnation, it could also

¹⁶⁸ John 3:3 King James.

¹⁶⁹ Parker, *Morven and The Grail*, Vocal Score.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

easily be seen as a simple reference to Christian rebirth. A third line of thought would be that this is referring to awakening after a false quest or a dream into the merits of daily life. A vast majority of the text details the creation of the Grail itself, and of its meaning and purpose for the life of man. Late in the fourth and final stanza is the last possible reference to reincarnation with the line, “In the dust of his deeds he shall lie down, and deny his worth, falling from death to death – Rising from birth to birth.”¹⁷² Again, while the suggestion of reincarnation is there, it is ambiguous and not clearly stating whether it is meant to refute Morven’s request for reincarnation or support it.

The section as a whole is directed to a general audience. After the opening call to Morven, the text becomes narrative in style and is not clearly directed at him. After the section ends, we are given one last snippet of Hooker’s narration and then the oratorio launches into a final chorus which plays the role of an epilogue. The story of Morven is left incomplete. We receive no declaration of whether he is actually reborn on Earth or is still in Heaven. It is assumed that upon finally seeing the Grail with the entrance of the “Angels of the Grail,” that he would at last have contentment and that he has fulfilled his quest. The question of reincarnation is left hanging without any clear position or resolution.

As previously alluded, the “Angels of the Grail” section incorporates the use of the soloists. As it is a response to Morven, the bass soloist is not included through a vast majority of the movement. Only the soprano (Saint Cecilia), alto (Mary), and tenor (Sigurd) are used initially. However, Parker again ambiguously marks them as solos, rather than as specific characters, which provides flexibility to the conductor should they choose to utilize different soloists from within the chorus. Parker does not identify the section as a separate movement, although the libretto sets it up as such by including the narrative prose before it and by clearly providing a separate poem. While he makes no attempt to indicate a new movement, musically it does provide a clear change from the previous aria. When it overlaps with Morven’s last note, the start

¹⁷² Ibid.

of the piece is given a meter change to 3/4, a tempo change to allegretto, and a clear change in musical texture.

The opening stanza, which begins with, “Morven! Behold the Grail,” is set in a somewhat antiphonal style. The soloists form a trio that sings in alternation with the Angels quartet throughout the stanza. At its conclusion, the Angels drop out and there is another clear change in style with a meter change to 4/4 and tempo change to moderato. Hooker’s libretto suggests a continuation, and Parker does provide continuous music, but it is clearly a new and separate section, in which Parker uses all four soloists to provide a traditional quartet movement within the overall flow of the oratorio. It is within these final three stanzas that there develops a rather lengthy description of the grail and its origins in a narrative style. The text has elements of the biblical creation story of Genesis, stating that God created the grail before he created light and he was still alone in the Universe. He created it by first plunging a star into the sea, which were named Love and Pain respectively. The convention of naming is clearly modeled on that of the Genesis story and it recurs again in the text with the line, “And he called the wine Life, and the water Death.”(p. 163 mm. 15 – p. 164 mm. 5)¹⁷³ To further tie in to previous themes in the oratorio, it declares that God set the Grail as a sign in the West, which explains the repeated reference to “Westward” by Morven in the pursuit of the grail. Hooker is using the grail creation to metaphorically represent man’s life on earth. In the text, it is said that the wine was poured in hell so that the heart recognizes sin, and that the water came from the springs of Heaven, with blood representing sacrifice. By calling the wine “life,” he is referring to the classic notion of life on earth being one constant battle with sin. The water being “death” would be the act of leaving Earth and ascending to Heaven, where there is an absence of sin. Blood as sacrifice is a clear reference to Jesus, who was a blood sacrifice to allow man’s forgiveness of sins and entrance to Heaven.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

The first two of the three narrative stanzas are set primarily as a series of short solos. The first stanza (second overall in the movement) is split into a soprano solo, an alto solo, and then a duet using the same two voices. The next stanza (third overall in the movement) is likewise split between the tenor soloist and the bass soloist, but does not include a duet section. The progression through the stanzas is marked by frequent key signature changes, although it never seems to settle for long in the given keys, providing a sense of constant harmonic motion that generally takes an ascending direction. The stanza with the soprano and alto progresses initially in G major. The key signature changes to Bb with the entrance of the tenor in the next stanza, and goes briefly to B major before the bass entrance introduces an Eb key. It then moves the next half step to E major to complete the bass solo. The final stanza then marks a return to the G major.

For this fourth and final stanza, the four soloists come together as a quartet at last. Parker uses a blend of both homophonic and polyphonic textures. Despite the 4/4 meter, he also frequently incorporates triplet figures into the vocal lines. The overall texture tends to mimic that of madrigal late 15th century to early 16th century madrigal, an idea reinforced by Parker's decision to make the first half of the stanza largely unaccompanied. When the orchestra is reintroduced for the second half of the stanza, it is largely in a basic, supportive role. Textually, while the previous two stanzas delivered a narrative of the creation of the grail, this one provides further explanation of life on earth, expanding upon the metaphor of the previous two stanzas and concluding with the aforementioned reference to reincarnation.

Vocally, the movement is not particularly challenging. Attention should be paid towards balance between the Angels of the Grail quartet and the trio of soloists through the beginning portion. At times they sing together, at other times the parts overlap and are staggered. In those cases, the balance must be such that those staggered parts can be heard individually within the overall blend of the sound. The performers need to especially listen for blend as the section is more of a choral section than it is a soloist section.

The idea of singing as if you are chorus member and not a soloist should actually extend through the performance of the soloist lines of the second and third stanzas. While the parts are labeled for solo voice, the writing of the vocal line and the ranges used are consistent with a choral style. Each individual solo of the four voices is in its own clearly separate vocal range with limited overlap. It is almost as if each line was individually removed from a four-part choral movement. As such, the alto solo does tend to sit in a lower part of the range, and the bass solo (Morven) at the end of stanza three, while not particularly low, uses a fairly limited range that refrains from any note above C₄. Phrase lengths are very standard with little variation and there is a sense of steady, always moving progress. The orchestration and vocal lines allow little opportunity for individualized artistic expression. Given the narrative nature of the text, this is actually an appropriate approach and the singer should accommodate it and not try to independently create a mood or character, despite being presented as a soloist.

The movement ends with a short 12 bar orchestral section that goes directly into the finale of the oratorio, a large chorus that also incorporates the solo quartet. The final movement functions in the manner of an epilogue entitled, “On Earth.” Since that orchestral section serves as both the close of the previous movement and the introduction to “On Earth,” Parker has the start of the new movement marked as beginning on the choral entrance. The movement is a fairly traditional final chorus, incorporating most of the available performance forces and typically grand in both conception and length.

The text to the movement lacks any dramatic direction or intent. It is simply meant to represent the people on Earth singing about the creation, living on earth, and of God. As mentioned earlier, Morven’s story is left open. The last that is heard of Morven is his expressed desire to be reincarnated, but there is no answer as to whether he is or not. However, the fact that a big part of the focus of this last chorus is about life on Earth, one could argue, albeit weakly, that he was in fact reborn. Some of the themes presented by the text is that God’s will rules over

all, that what happens on Earth, both good and bad, does not matter in the end, that following the path of faith, is the path to everlasting life, and there is reference to the return of Jesus.

Hooker's libretto is not divided into stanzas for this movement, so it reads as one continuous and fairly lengthy piece of text. That leaves the text fairly open for Parker to divide as he sees fit, which he does by creating three large sections in a simple ABC form. The first, which extends for 52 bars, is a straightforward section of chorus and orchestra only. Parker incorporates the use of both polyphonic and homophonic textures after having the opening line sung in unison. The initial tempo is marked *allegro maestoso*, using a 4/4 meter. A key of Bb major is given, though the opening line suggests the relative G minor. Several modulations are observed throughout before a clear cadence on the tonic to close the section. However, the cadence is presented unaccompanied, with the final chord omitting the 3rd to create an open 5th which lacks finality.

After the a cappella cadence, the orchestra immediately re-enters, utilizing a quicker tempo, with a 13-bar interlude to set up the B section. The interlude, utilizing the material of the A section, moves the key from the Bb major cadence to the new key of A major. Like the first section, the second section opens with the chorus singing in unison initially, which, after the first line, gives way to the entrance of the solo quartet. The B section focuses in the quartet overall, but Parker sets up an antiphonal alternation between the chorus and quartet for the first 20 bars of it, with each group of singers in unison respectively. The 20 bars of alternation are followed by 22 bars of the quartet alone, at last singing in parts and largely in counterpoint. Following the pattern of alternation set up earlier, the chorus then responds with their own 30 bars in parts and in counterpoint. The key is transitioned to G major for the final twelve bars of the middle section which consists of the quartet and chorus together at last. A strong G major cadence signals the end of the B section and as before, it is met with another short orchestral passage, this time of eight bars, that takes the work to its final statement.

The C section is set apart by a transition back to Bb major and a meter change to cut time, which provides a much faster thrust to the closing. The solo quartet is absent with only the chorus and orchestra in use. Texturally, the piece is marked by segments of two part counterpoint, where Parker pairs two voices as a single line against a pairing of the two others. At times it is simply the male voices against the female voices, but at other times, he does pair mixed parts.

The overall length of the C section is 64 bars, with Parker building to climax through the first 40 bars to a statement at the end in *fortissimo* of “Life, everlasting life, World without end.” This cadences into an extended Bb chord. However, Parker does not immediately end it there. To provide a sense of finality after the main cadence, he adds a cadential tag lasting the final nine bars for an “Amen.” Parker backs off quickly from the strong climax, by not only having a sudden *ritardando*, but by also reducing the dynamic level down to piano for the close. The orchestra accompaniment fades to a faint background to allow the “Amen” statement of the chorus to cut through the sudden silence. It is a quiet and simple ending consistent with a common technique in English music at the time, particularly in works by Vaughan-Williams, although Parker does not extend the fade-out long enough to use it as effectively as he could have.

From a performer’s perspective, there is little in the piece that is overly challenging. The use of counterpoint is somewhat limited with only a few instances where attention must be paid not to be drawn off by the other parts. A vast majority of the choral parts are also well supported by the orchestra. That the oratorio is intended for a festival chorus of non-professional singers becomes clear again with this movement, as Parker refrains from any particularly difficult passages, but provides a thick texture with subdivision of parts and a full orchestration. Care must be taken for the sections that involve the solo quartet to insure that it is not overpowered by a fairly large chorus and orchestra. Also, the use of the written dynamics should be emphasized as they help to add interest and to provide some emotional depth to a piece which otherwise just plows straight ahead without hesitation.

Concluding Comments

The critical response to *Morven and the Grail*, as with Parker's operas that preceded it, was decidedly mixed. Some praised the work for its attempts to be more modern, while others praised it for its traditional choruses. However, it was also derided by many as being boring and uninspired.¹⁷⁴ The choice of libretto was likely part of the problem. While interesting, in a time period where opera was clearly a dominant form and Victorian oratorio was not of interest, Parker chose to use a largely non dramatic text. There is a general lack of dramatic action to keep the piece moving forward, leaving the music to sustain any forward momentum on its own. Parker's attempts to make his music more accessible for the audience of the time was likely a disservice to the work, given the somewhat abstract concept of the libretto. It at times feels like he gives up on accessibility given the frequent use of complex harmonic motion. It is a piece that begs to be lead forward though a more thorough use of leit motif and text painting. Through Parker's use of structure, he does accomplish a sense of unity in the work and his structural choices are well suited given the medieval basis for the libretto. In fact, the use of recurring ideas and sections proves to be the strength of the work and also its most accessible feature to a wider audience. Indeed, while no individual segment in the work stands out as particularly innovative, taken as a whole, Parker's treatment of the libretto seems ingenious and succeeds in adding dramatic interest to a largely non dramatic text.

Of the three oratorios Parker wrote, *Morven and the Grail* is by far the most ignored. The work did not even warrant a mention in George Chadwick posthumous biography of Horatio Parker.¹⁷⁵ The undercurrents of reincarnation brought forth by Part 3, that largely remain unexplained and unclarified, likely did not help the matter any. The work lacks a clear message. If it was meant to foster theological discussion in regards to this issue, it does not present the

¹⁷⁴ Kearns, *His Life, Music, and Ideas*, 138-9.

¹⁷⁵ Chadwick, *Horatio Parker*.

issue in a strong enough light to encourage that discussion. As Parker was a strong traditional Christian who likely opposed the idea, the libretto becomes more puzzling, which may have been part of the problem. It seems that Parker's musical treatment tries to sidestep the suggestion. The subject of Hooker's religious background and his possible intent for the libretto requires further research. The lack of attention at the time is unfortunate, as it stands as the most interesting of his three oratorios from a purely academic perspective.

Table 3 - Vocal Ranges for *Morven and the Grail*

Movement	Type/Title	Voices	Range
Part I “Angels of the Grail”	<p>Quartet – Angels of the Grail “Morven, Follow the Grail!”</p> <p>Aria with interjection of Grail quartet “Blood of the sunset”</p>	<p>Soprano Alto Tenor Bass</p> <p>Morven (baritone) Grail soprano Grail alto Grail tenor Grail bass</p>	<p>F#₄ – F#₅ D#₄ – D₅ B₃ – G₄ F#₃ – C#₄</p> <p>B₂ – E₄ C#₅ – F#₅ F₄ – A₄ A₃ – D₄ F#₃ – B₃</p>
Part I “Dwellers in Avalon”	Chorus with interjection of Grail quartet	<p>Soprano Alto Tenor Bass Grail soprano Grail alto Grail tenor Grail bass</p>	<p>C₄ – A₅ Bb₃ – E₅ Eb₃ – G₄ Ab₂ – Eb₄ Db₅ – Gb₅ F₄ – Bbb₄ Bb₃ – Db₄ Gb₃ – Bb₃</p>
Part I “Song of Sigurd, the Volsung”	Aria with tag ending using chorus and grail quartet	<p>Sigurd (tenor) Soprano Alto Tenor Bass Grail soprano Grail alto Grail tenor Grail bass</p>	<p>E₃ – A₄ F#₄ – F#₅ C#₄ – A₄ G#₃ – E₄ F#₃ F#₄ – F#₅ D₄ – A₄ A₃ – D#₄ E₃ – B₃</p>
Part I “Morven and They of Avalon”	Baritone solo and chorus with tag end using the grail quartet	<p>Morven Soprano Alto Tenor Bass Grail soprano Grail alto Grail tenor Grail bass</p>	<p>B₂ – F₄ C₄ – D₅ Bb₃ – D₅ E₃ – Gb₄ Db₃ – D₄ C#₅ – F#₅ F#₄ – A#₄ B₃ – D₄ F#₃ – B₃</p>
Part II “Heroes in Valhalla”	Men’s chorus with tenor soloist. Women added for last four bars only.	<p>Tenor solo Soprano Alto Tenor Bass</p>	<p>F#₃ – G#₄ (A₄) E₅ – A₅ A₄ – C#₅ C₃ – G#₄ (A₄) B₂ – E₄</p>
Part II “Hymn of Saint Cecilia”	Aria	St. Cecilia (Soprano)	Eb ₄ – C ₆
Part II Unlabeled movement	Aria with brief interjection of grail quartet and women’s chorus “Let me go hence”	<p>Morven Soprano Alto</p>	<p>A₂ – E₄ F₄ – F₅ D₄ – D₅</p>

Part II Unlabeled movement (cont)		Grail soprano Grail alto Grail tenor Grail bass	C# ₅ – F# ₅ F ₄ – A ₄ B ₃ – D ₄ F# ₃ – B ₃
Part II “Saints in Paradise”	Chorus with interjection of grail quartet	Soprano Alto Tenor Bass Grail soprano Grail alto Grail tenor Grail bass	C# ₄ – Bb ₅ G# ₃ – E ₅ F ₃ – G# ₄ D ₂ – E ₄ C# ₅ – F# ₅ F ₄ – A ₄ A ₃ – D ₄ F# ₃ – B ₃
Part III “Lullaby of Our Lady”	Aria	Mary (mezzo/alto)	Bb ₃ – F ₅
Part III Untitled Movement	Aria “Let me go hence” redux Grail quartet plus solo trio “Morven, behold the grail!” Quartet “From his throne alone”	Morven Solo soprano Solo alto Solo tenor Grail soprano Grail alto Grail tenor Grail bass Solo soprano Solo alto Solo tenor Solo bass	A ₂ – F ₄ E ₄ – Bb ₅ C ₄ – E ₅ F# ₃ – G ₄ D ₄ – G ₅ D# ₄ – D ₅ F# ₃ – G ₄ G ₂ – Bb ₃ C# ₄ – A ₅ G# ₃ – F ₅ D# ₃ – A ₄ A# ₂ – E ₄
Part III “On Earth”	Quartet and Chorus	Solo Soprano Solo Alto Solo Tenor Solo Bass Chorus Soprano Chorus Alto Chorus Tenor Chorus Bass	D ₄ – Ab ₅ B ₃ – D ₅ D ₃ – G ₄ C ₃ – E ₄ Bb ₃ – Bb ₅ G ₃ – Eb ₅ B ₂ – A ₄ D ₂ – Eb ₄

Note: The chorus voices throughout are regularly subdivided into 1st and 2nd parts and therefore, require sufficient singers to accommodate 8 parts. Men’s and women’s choruses are similarly subdivided into four part groups.

V. Conclusion

One of the main criticisms of Parker's work was that he failed to incorporate the popular music styles of his time period. Through the 20th Century, the integration of American popular music styles was seen by critics and music historians as a key component of what defined American music in the fairly young classical tradition of the United States. Thus the charge was leveled that Parker's music was a rehash of the music of Europe rather than a truly indigenous American music. Parker's cause was not helped by the fact that the strong nationalistic tendencies of the first half of the 20th Century were particularly amplified in the United States due to an ingrained culture that has always placed "classical" in a secondary position, favored only by the wealthy. It is somewhat ironic that Parker's general dislike of popular music genres, which evolved into reluctant acceptance later in life, may be a key factor in why his music was largely dismissed and ignored.

There is little doubt that Parker tended toward the conservative in both his teaching and his music. However, he also demonstrated the flexibility and willingness to evolve his style, with an exhibited progressive nature in the evolution of his music throughout the course of his career. This progressiveness is evident through an analysis of his oratorios, albeit tempered by a desire to assuage critics of previous works, perhaps to his detriment.

With *Hora Novissima*, Parker was still trying to find himself as a composer. It is clearly the most conservative of the three oratorios with each movement being a clearly separated movement. Although Parker expresses many new musical ideas, it is within the framework of a strong adhesion to form, evident both in each individual movement and in the overall structure of the oratorio itself. Surprisingly, this is the work that first catapulted Parker to fame and also remains his most enduring piece of music. It is perhaps this fact that is most detrimental to the wider acceptance of his music. Despite adapting a more progressive approach in his later career, *Hora Novissima* remains the work that is most identified with Parker as a composer and his

compositional style, ignoring the fact that his style did evolve significantly from this early period work.

In *The Legend of St. Christopher*, there is clear indication of Parker's move to a more progressive approach, albeit still flavored by the conservative nature of his previous work. The oratorio incorporates continuous music and Wagnerian motivic treatment, thus evolving beyond the static formal structure of *Hora Novissima*. Parker also breaks ground for himself by modeling dramatic stage works as the basis of *St. Christopher's* structure. Perhaps in an effort to cure his perceived issues with the medium of opera, which bordered on dislike, with *St. Christopher* there is a clear signal that Parker intends to try his hand at opera itself, an intention that reached fruition a few years later with his opera *Mona*.

However, despite the evolution in Parker's style evidenced with *St. Christopher*, it also demonstrates clear reluctance to break away from the familiar. Despite the continuous music approach, large segments of the piece are clearly sectionalized, most obvious with Act 3 scene 2. The choruses in the work retain the same conservative style and character as those of *Hora Novissima*. This reluctance was perhaps a result of Parker's concern for his reputation and a response to critical analysis of his earlier work. He was widely praised for his conservative choruses in the successful *Hora Novissima*, thus the choruses in *St. Christopher* follow the same formula. However, such reluctance kept the new work from achieving the success he desired as *St. Christopher* appears uneven, stuck between conflicting moments of progressivism and conservatism.

His third and final oratorio, *Morven and the Grail* signals the beginning of a style change that characterized his late period. Stung by the criticism of his fully progressive opera *Mona*, Parker made the decision to try to make his works more accessible for the "common man." With *Morven*, Parker once again returns to the conservative choruses that the American public expected in such a work (the absence of which in *Mona* was at least one area of criticism). He also uses obvious recurring refrains to help ground the audience. Parker's main push in this later

period was to create simpler, more easily singable melodies and to reduce the amount of chromaticism, but *Morven and the Grail*'s implementation of this later approach is somewhat lacking, continuing a use of largely complex harmonic motion more representative of his middle period. However, Parker's choice of libretto proves a detriment to the work. The non-dramatic text made it difficult to achieve forward momentum and provides little to draw in the attention of the "common man" that Parker wished to reach. While the libretto and Parker's overall treatment provides a great area for academic discussion, for an audience, the work generally appears wanting.

In the end, the oratorios provide an excellent overview of the issues that plagued Parker's reputation. The evolution of Parker's style many times seems reactionary to criticism rather than being truly innovative. To dismiss Parker as being simply too conservative is a disservice to the composer. Many of his works exhibited progressive characteristics, but also reflect a reluctance to stray too far from the familiar. When Parker did attempt to go beyond the familiar, strong criticism seemed to temper further development (most clearly seen with a return to a more reserved style after the failure of the opera *Mona*). When coupled with Parker's unwillingness to incorporate popular American music into his composition, the lack of real innovation likely has caused Parker's music to be largely ignored. However, to do so risks the chance of losing an important part of American music history. During his life, Parker was frequently seen as the premiere American composer. He was the first indigenous composer to be widely recognized outside the United States and the fact that both of his operas were judged to be above the efforts of his peers at the time was an important measure of how significant his work was. The efforts of Parker were among the first signs of the emergence of an indigenous American classical music tradition. The recognition of his work internationally laid the groundwork for the success of many of the more well-known and remembered composers that followed.

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