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A Conductor's Guide to Selected Choral Works of F. Melius Christiansen (1871-1955)

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by

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ABSTRACT

F. Melius Christiansen (1871-1955) created a pioneering American *a cappella* choral ensemble, the St. Olaf Choir, which influenced an entire philosophical school of choral performance within the United States. His body of choral literature has been utilized as a significant part of secondary and post-secondary choral education, and his music is amongst the most performed American composers of his generation. This document is a conductors' guide to selected Christiansen repertoire. The literature selected displays his diversity of genres and compositional styles, and represents his most integrous work. This document will explore eleven compositions in detail, *Beautiful Savior*, *Built on a Rock*, *Celestial Spring*, *How Fair the Church*, *Lamb of God*, *Lost in the Night*, *Lullaby on Christmas Eve*, *O Day Full of Grace*, *Praise to the Lord*, *Psalm 50*, and *Wake, Awake*. For each piece the document will include origins of source materials, structural graphs with phrase analyses, guides to obsolete words and pronunciations, employment of choral forces within divisi, issues of tempi and rubato, and other preparatory suggestions for the prospective conductor.

To Brett Scott, Earl Rivers, and Ray Wheeler

for their help, wisdom, and advice

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To Anton Armstrong, Robert Scholz, and the choirs of St. Olaf College

for instilling in me a love for this repertory

To my parents

for their strength

To my wife Laura

for her constant love

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INTRODUCTION

F. Melius Christiansen Compositions and the Choral Ensemble

F. Melius Christiansen used his own compositions to help build the St. Olaf Choir into a pristine instrument. His compositions use closely-spaced yet simple harmonies that demand excellent intonation and a generally homophonic texture that promotes clean and uniform textual accentuation. In the early years of the choir much of its repertoire was Christiansen's own compositions and arrangements. His compositions remain an accessible body of literature that aids in promoting a fine unaccompanied choral sound. Over the last century millions have sung and enjoyed his works, which remain a staple of the American *a cappella* repertoire.

Christiansen's compositions are almost exclusively unaccompanied. The performance of such works develops the choral ensemble's ability to sing in tune and independently. Individual parts are written idiomatically for the voice, both in range and contour. Because of the dominance of English hymn texts, the words of Christiansen compositions are familiar to singers and readily understood by the audience. Since the melodies are often drawn from chorales, melodic fragments may also be familiar, speeding the process of learning the works and adding to their accessibility and impact in performance. In general, Christiansen uses simple rhythms and a strong homophonic declamation that can help teach a choir to enunciate text with a clean and subtle expression.

Once a Christiansen work is mastered the singers of the choir will realize many benefits. They will be able to sing closely spaced harmonies unaccompanied, and with true independence. The choir will learn much about corporate expression, the ability to communicate with an

audience as an ensemble rather than a collection of individuals. This can be one of the most striking features of Christiansen's compositions in performance.

This Document is written to encourage all conductors to consider programming this tremendous body of literature. One way an ensemble develops is through the literature the director chooses, and this particular repertory has been the backbone of some of the most successful choirs in America. Conductors may use this Document as a resource for writing about, programming, rehearsing, and conducting these compositions.

CHAPTER I: F. Melius Christiansen (1871-1955)

A Brief Biography

Early Influences

F. Melius Christiansen was born in the small town of Berger, Norway on April 1, 1871. Music was an integral part of the Christiansen family and important to young F. Melius from his early years. His father Anders was a mechanical worker and a musician. Anders played numerous brass instruments and for a time in 1876 led the band at the local match factory in Agnes.[1] He played in local bands and in home formed trios and quartets with his sons. In 1879 he moved the family to the seaport of Larvik, Norway where he was employed by the local glass works. In Larvik, young F. Melius received his first taste of the musical offerings of a big city: orchestras, choirs, bands, and private lessons.

F. Melius' mother Oleana, though not formally trained, was a talented singer whose strong love of music drove the family dynamic and encouraged Anders and his sons to cultivate their musical interests. F. Melius began playing his first instrument, a small clarinet, at the age of three. After moving to Larvik, he played clarinet in the local band and soon began taking lessons in piano, organ, and violin. Christiansen took organ and piano lessons with Oscar Hansen, a stern Germanic man trained in the classical tradition. Hansen's personality was a mix of heavy demands and kind nurturing, and he was incredibly influential on the young Christiansen.[2] Hansen had remarkable influence in Larvik and was the city's primary producer of music, directing the band at the local glassworks and the flour mill, organizing a summer band, conducting three singing societies, organizing an amateur orchestra, and playing the organ

[1] Joseph M. Shaw, *The St. Olaf Choir: A Narrative* (Northfield, MN: St. Olaf College, 1997), 34.

[2] Leola Nelson Bergmann, *Music Master of the Middle West: The Story of F. Melius Christiansen and the St. Olaf Choir* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1944), 11.

at the principal town church, Larvik Trinity Church.[3] F. Melius practiced on the organ at Larvik Trinity, and it is a testament to his talent that when Hansen left for half a year in 1885 to study in Leipzig, the church asked the fourteen year old Christiansen to take over as organist.

Christiansen studied violin with a Professor Olsen, and violin performance quickly became his passion.[4] The money for his violin lessons came from Jørgen Christiansen, a family friend who shared a last name but not a familial relation.[5] After his confirmation at the age of 16 F. Melius felt he should be responsible to provide for himself and rented a studio in town where he gave piano lessons and copied music. It was this year that his brother Karl emigrated from Norway to America, joining an uncle who had already settled in Wisconsin.[6]

Traveling to America

In 1888 F. Melius made up his mind to come to America. Oleana's death in 1885 had a disintegrating effect on the family nucleus, as it was her strong personality that kept the family close. Christiansen's father blessed the voyage by providing money for his trip. Given modern views on parenting, it is somewhat striking that at the age of 17 F. Melius traveled alone by boat to New York City, and then by train to Oakland, California. One of Christiansen's uncles had previously immigrated to Oakland, and F. Melius was able to live with him for a short time. There he acclimated to American life and improved his English, but since Oakland was already saturated with musicians prospects for employment were dim. When his brother Karl sent him money to buy a train ticket to Washburn, Wisconsin where Karl was living, F. Melius decided he would have better chances of securing employment among Wisconsin's Norwegian immigrants.[7]

[3] Shaw, 36.
[4] Sources omit his first name.
[5] Simpson, 121.
[6] Shaw, 38.
[7] Shaw, 39.

After his arrival in Wisconsin F. Melius put out an advertisement for his services in *Scandinavian*, a Norwegian-American newspaper. He received three offers and from them chose to conduct the Scandinavian band in Marinette, Wisconsin, a small town across the river from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.[8] Though he was only 19 when he arrived in Marinette he quickly won over the band members with his skill and found himself employed as organist and choir master at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Marinette. He also gave private lessons in piano, organ, and violin. It was in the church choir at Our Savior's that he met his future wife, Edith Lindem, though she was just 14 at the time.[9]

In the 1890s, three groups of Lutheran congregations combined to form the United Norwegian Lutheran Church. They selected Augsburg Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota as their divinity school and St. Olaf School in Northfield, Minnesota as their college.[10] This created controversy within the community as Augsburg was a conservative institution designed to train men for a religious vocation while St. Olaf embraced a more humanistic, co-educational, liberal arts curriculum. The guiding voices of Augsburg were distrustful of St. Olaf, claiming its "Latin School Humanism" fostered intellectualism and elitism.[11]

Our Savior's Lutheran had participated with other Lutheran congregations in helping to establish Augsburg Seminary in Minneapolis. F. Melius was intrigued by Augsburg because it gave him the opportunity to continue his education and introduce himself to the wider musical opportunities in Minneapolis. He was accepted into the program at Augsburg in 1892, and after just two years in Marinette, Christiansen left to begin his studies.

[8] Bergmann, 34.
[9] Shaw, 43.
[10] Shaw, 47.
[11] Shaw, 48.

While at Augsburg, Christiansen earned a living by conducting the Augsburg Chorus and teaching classes in singing and music theory. His main focus during his year at Augsburg was to become a concert violinist, and he began performing almost nightly for various meetings and gatherings. The schedule was draining, and took a toll on his health. Christiansen approached a doctor with his concern who told him to "quit school for six weeks and drink beer." Because the majority of the Augsburg citizenry were part of the Temperance movement, Christiansen had to use stealth in order to follow his doctor's instructions. Somehow he found his way into the taverns, and six weeks later when he presented himself to his doctor he was declared "fat and rosy," the picture of health.[12]

Following his year at Augsburg, Christiansen enrolled in the autumn of 1893 in the Northwestern Conservatory of Music in Minneapolis, at that time associated with the University of Minnesota. He also became the music director at Trinity Lutheran Church and continued his teaching and conducting at Augsburg. Over the next few years both his church choir and his Augsburg chorus began to receive attention. Out of the Trinity Lutheran choir he created the independent choir "Nordlyset" (North-light), and in 1894 along with Hans Urseth he co-published a book of Norwegian songs arranged for church choirs.[13] After a year at Northwestern he graduated top in his class and in 1897 he wed his hometown sweetheart, Edith Lindhem.

After their wedding, Edith and F. Melius went to Leipzig so he could enroll in the Royal Conservatory of Music. Christiansen was following in the footsteps of his early mentor from Larvik, Oscar Hansen. In Leipzig F. Melius soon found a new mentor in professor Gustav Schreck, his theory and composition teacher. In an article written near the end of his life, Christiansen's long time colleague and collaborator Oscar Overby commented on the profound

[12] Bergmann, 47.
[13] Bergmann, 62-66.

influence of Schreck on Christiansen, crediting him for helping "materially in formulating his philosophy and musical style."[14]

Although they originally planned to settle in Norway after he received his diploma in 1899, F. Melius and Edith instead returned to America so he could resume his musical career in Minneapolis. Edith moved home to Marinette to raise their young son, Elmer, who was born in Leipzig in the spring of 1898. F. Melius found employment on the violin faculty of Northwestern Conservatory, eventually becoming chair of the string faculty. He also became a member of the violin section of the professional Minneapolis Philharmonic Orchestra, and resumed his work as a church musician.

The Christiansen family was quickly growing. In Marinette they were blessed with another boy, Jacobi, in 1900 and a third, Olaf Christian, in August of 1901. In a cruel blow to the family, Elmer contracted spinal meningitis and died in 1902. The only girl, Edith Signora, was born in June of 1903.[15] The youngest son Paul Joseph was born in July of 1914. Olaf and Paul would go on to become accomplished musicians in their own right. Paul founded the now famous Concordia Choir of Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, while Olaf eventually became the second conductor of the St. Olaf Choir. For the majority of the century, the Christiansen family name was ubiquitous with choral music in Minnesota.

[14] Oscar R. Overby, "Salute to a Giant," *Lutheran Herald* 35 (April 10, 1951), 359.
[15] Shaw, 54-55.

The St. Olaf Years

During this period Christiansen began working with Paul G. Schmidt, a new math professor at St. Olaf College and a remarkable low bass who could sing a low F (F1), a ninth below the bass clef.[16] Schmidt sang in the Kjerulf Male Chorus in Minneapolis, a Norwegian men's choir that F. Melius directed.

In 1903 St. Olaf College received authorization from the United Norwegian Lutheran Church to hire a new music director. The college president John Nathan Kildahl consulted Schmidt, who thought at once of Christiansen.[17] F. Melius was invited to teach part-time in the 1903-04 academic year, where he directed the band and chorus and taught violin and music theory.

His first year was so successful that in the following 1904-05 school year he was made a full professor. Christiansen decided to move Edith and their children to a home in Northfield on St. Olaf Avenue.[18] He found the quiet of Northfield to be an ideal place to raise his family, and he never moved away from its inviting confines.

Music was abundant if not quite superb at St. Olaf before Christiansen's arrival. Although the students received some musical instruction, there was no dedicated music faculty preceding F. Melius' arrival. Ensembles proliferated because music was one of the only acceptable distractions within the austere environment of a Lutheran institution. Dancing, drinking, and card playing were all discouraged.[19]

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[16] Shaw, 309.

[17] Paul G. Schmidt, *My Years at St. Olaf*, A Centennial Decade Publication (Northfield, Minnesota: St. Olaf College, 1967), 29.

[18] Shaw, 58-59.

[19] As Paul G. Schmidt notes in *My Years at St. Olaf*, "According to [an] announcement in the school catalog, the following are some of the 'habits that are forbidden':

> The use of ardent spirits.
> The use of tobacco in any form.
> Playing cards.

Christiansen first focused his energy on the band, demanding that passages be rehearsed meticulously until polished. Previous wisdom had been to repeat each composition in its entirety until it was pounded into acceptable shape, and the group had enjoyed only modest results. Christiansen's scrupulous rehearsals and severe manner put the students off at the beginning of his tenure, but they were quickly convinced by his love of music and their musical improvement.[20] In 1904-05 Christiansen organized a "School of Music," at St. Olaf. F. Melius had no formal administrative training, but under his care the program steadily grew from year to year, attracting more students and eventually additional music faculty.

In 1906 Christiansen led the St. Olaf Band on a tour to Norway. Following the tour he stayed in Europe and travelled to Leipzig where he renewed his study with Schreck for ten intensive months. During this time he studied folk music and its influence on church music, and did his own harmonization of about 70 chorale melodies.[21] It is clear that by this time Christiansen's interests were shifting away from solo violin performance into ensemble building and composition.

In 1907 Christiansen joined the congregation of St. John's Church in Northfield, and began conducting their choir that fall. At this time there was no chapel on the St. Olaf College campus, and St. John's was where the student body and faculty came to worship. The College President J. N. Kildahl was pastor there, and the trustees were made up of St. Olaf faculty. When Christiansen began at St. John's the choir was made up of 15 elderly members. He quickly sought the youthful energy of the collegiate congregation. The choir grew to include 50 young singers.

[20] Bergmann, 93-95.
[21] Bergmann, 105.

An immediate problem Christiansen encountered was the lack of good music for the choir. The church had no library, and new music was difficult and expensive to acquire. Christiansen's biographer Leola Nelson Bergmann explains,

> Here again, as had often happened in his work, Christiansen found himself face to face with a deplorable lack of suitable music. The days of substantial music libraries in the churches and colleges of this region had not yet arrived; nor were there means to secure them. Providing music had become part of Christiansen's job. Songs that he had written for men's voices he now arranged for mixed voices, and to them he added new songs in increasing numbers.[22]

While Christiansen had written arrangements in his previous church jobs, at St. John's his natural industry took over, and a great many new compositions appeared. While the exact date of the composition is unknown, we know *Lamb of God* was sung in Norwegian in Christiansen's first service with the St. John's Church Choir in 1907.[23] *Praise to the Lord* and *Beautiful Savior* were sung (in Norwegian) in a concert at St. John's Church on February 21, 1911.[24] Many other pieces followed.

In the beginning of the century touring was a vital form of recruitment and a primary means to disseminate news, ideas, philosophy, and politics. In the Midwest, where the population was largely rural, it was common for individuals or groups to tour giving speeches or performances in an effort to raise money or awareness for their institution or cause. When it was decided in 1912 that the St. John's Church Choir would undertake a concert tour to Wisconsin and Illinois, programs were printed with the name "The St. Olaf Choir," honoring the institution at which nearly the entire ensemble were students or faculty. The practice was repeated the following year for a choir tour across the Atlantic to Norway. This was the birth of the St. Olaf Choir.

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[22] Bergmann, 100. Although it is likely that this was only the chorale and not Christiansen's arrangement.
[23] Shaw, 106.
[24] Shaw, 107

The year 1912 also marked the first St. Olaf Christmas Festival, a small event that grew much like the reputation of the choir itself. The first "Christmas Programs" through the 1910s were in the small Hoyme Memorial Chapel, but they were moved to the college gymnasium in 1922 to accommodate larger crowds. The move to the gym also allowed for more decorations and the inclusion of the St. Olaf Orchestra. In 1936 the choirs and orchestra gave two performances on successive evenings with about 2,300 individuals at each concert, in 1941 three performances, and in 1949 four performances. In 1967 the program moved to the new Skoglund Athletic Center, accommodating about 15,000 people in four concerts. In 1975 the program was televised for the first time.[25] This particular holiday festival has become a model for numerous similar festivals at collegiate institutions, and represents one of Christiansen's most significant contributions to the greater American choral tradition.

The 1912 and 1913 tours were a remarkable success, and a tradition of annual tours was cemented. Touring brought St. Olaf, the Choir, and Christiansen's compositions before the public as never before. The word was spreading, and Christiansen and Schmidt became ambitious to reach the American cultural centers on the East coast.

> By far the most important tour of the St. Olaf Choir, since the memorable trip to Europe in 1913, was the spring tour of 1920. This afforded an opportunity of realizing a long-cherished desire on the part of both director and manager, namely, to bring the Choir to the larger American cities of the East.[26]

It was during this tour that Christiansen's musical contemporary John Finley Williamson first heard the St. Olaf Choir. Later, he credited F. Melius for "providing the inspiration and encouragement that led to the founding of the Westminster Choir."[27] The 1920 "Eastern" tour saw performances in Chicago, Pittsburgh, Washington D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston,

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[25] Shaw, 592-600.

[26] Paul Schmidt in the *Viking 1922-1923*, page 133. Quoted in Shaw, 127.

[27] Quoted in Anton Armstrong, "The Musical Legacy of F. Melius Christiansen," *Choral Journal* 37, no. 4 (November 1996): 14.

and in New York City's Carnegie Hall. Reviewers raved about the choir. Karleton Hackett of the Chicago *Evening Post* wrote "Now in choral affairs we shall date from the visit of the St. Olaf Choir. In my recollection there has been no a cappella choir in America which would compare with these young singers from Minnesota."[28] Six of the eleven selections performed during the tour were Christiansen compositions, bringing them to a wider audience.[29] Among them were *Built on a Rock*, *Praise to the Lord*, *Wake, Awake*, and *Beautiful Savior*.

In 1930 the choir was invited by the King of Norway to be present for the 900th anniversary of the death of the Norwegian King Olaf in 1030. The resulting tour presented the choir with an overwhelming reception from many Norwegians proud to see their cultural heritage flourishing in America.

> On its initial arrival in Trondheim, the Choir was nearly overwhelmed by the welcomes [*sic*] it received . . . A throng of 40,000 people had assembled for another welcoming program of speeches, band music, and singing. Carrying flags and shouting Hurrahs, the crowd followed the Choir in a huge procession . . . after which the St. Olaf Choir sang 'So Soberly and Sweetly the Seasons Tread Their Round,' composed by F. Melius Christiansen to a Norwegian folk melody.[30]

In the 1920s and 1930s the fame of the St. Olaf Choir and its director spread. Many articles have been written on the influence of the choir during this period, and its part in the flourishing of the a cappella choral movement in America. Bergmann summarizes "throughout the thirties the appearances of the choir in the principal cities of America drew audiences of increasing size. Enthusiasm for a cappella singing mounted; directors and singers were eager to learn proper techniques."[31]

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[28] Schmidt,137.
[29] Shaw, 646.
[30] Shaw,169.
[31] Bergmann, 143.

In 1935 the first annual "Christiansen Choral School" was organized in Winona Lake, Indiana, for the "dissemination of the pedagogical tenets of the Christiansen tradition."[32] The school met in Indiana because it was co-taught by both F. Melius and his son Olaf, who was teaching in Ohio at Oberlin Conservatory. During one week in the summer, conductors from around the country came to learn the Christiansens' choral techniques. In the school's first four years 851 individuals came to study in the summer with the Christiansens, 506 of them were high school choral directors, the rest were church, collegiate, and community choir conductors.[33] These directors gained a greater understanding of Christiansen's pedagogy, further spreading its reach and influence.

In the years that followed, F. Melius remained devoted to St. Olaf College, producing more compositions and further increasing the fame and reputation of the college and choir. In the late 1930s, as Christiansen approached his seventies, it became increasingly obvious that a suitable replacement for his choral leadership would need to be found. F. Melius selected his son, Olaf Christiansen to fill this important position.

After graduating from St. Olaf in 1925, Olaf Christiansen went on to teach at Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Oberlin, Ohio, founding the Oberlin A Cappella Choir in 1929. In 1941 Olaf was at the peak of his career. He expected to soon achieve the rank of full professor at Oberlin and had received an attractive offer to teach at the University of Michigan. His father F. Melius, hearing of Olaf's interest in Michigan quickly informed St. Olaf President Lars W. Boe of his intention to retire and name Olaf as his successor. Beginning in the 1942-43 school year,

[32] Anton Armstrong, "The Musical Legacy of F. Melius Christiansen," *Choral Journal* 37, no. 4 (November 1996): 12.

[33] Richard I. Kegerreis, "History of the High School a Cappella Choir," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1970): 323.

Olaf and F. Melius co-directed the St. Olaf Choir, with Olaf assuming full responsibility for the position after a two-year collaboration.

F. Melius' accomplishments at the time of his retirement were impressive. He had lived the great American dream; an immigrant who created an artistic empire and became an iconic figure in the world of choral music. American Public Media summarizes:

> By the time he retired in 1941, F. Melius Christiansen had been knighted by the King of Norway, granted four honorary doctorates, and lauded in a book about his life. He was by then a much sought-after speaker and conductor, had composed or arranged more than 600 songs, and had directed his beloved St. Olaf Choir before kings, emperors, and United States presidents.[34]

F. Melius lived the remainder of his life in his home on St. Olaf Avenue until his death in 1955. He continued his close association with the college and the choir and was a regular visitor around campus and in rehearsals. He had succeeded in establishing a specific school of choral music. Many collegiate, high school and community choirs actively emulate the sound ideal of the St.Olaf choir. Aspects of this sound ideal include homogeneous blend, clear diction, and an emphasis on perfect intonation. In addition to these ideas of choral sound, a highly polished, completely memorized performance was also prized by proponents of the St. Olaf choral approach.

[34] *The Legacy of the St.Olaf Choir*, American Public Media: St. Paul Sunday. On-Line. Available from internet, http://saintpaulsunday.publicradio.org/featured_artists/stolafhistory.html, accessed April 8, 2009.

Christiansen's Success: The People and the Pedagogy

The Support Personnel

There were several individuals that provided important support services to Christiansen and helped insure his success during his long tenure with the choir. The choir manager for many years was Paul G. Schmidt, who had helped bring Christiansen to St. Olaf. Schmidt possessed a profound bass voice and exceptional organizational skills and was invaluable as both a singer and a manager. From its inception in 1912 into the 1950s, Schmidt anchored the second bass section of the Choir. When he finally retired his son Fred Schmidt would take over as the choir manager for F. Melius' son Olaf.

Another person that aided Christiansen was a young soprano by the name of Gertrude Boe who joined the choir as a student in 1920. After graduating in 1923 she married Oscar Overby, F. Melius' music colleague and the author of numerous texts for Christiansen's compositions. Gertrude Boe Overby remained in the St. Olaf Choir through the 1940s. Together, Boe Overby and Schmidt provided Christiansen stability in both the soprano 1 and Bass 2 sections to anchor a changing cohort of students from year to year.

The Choral Pedagogy

The demands on incoming singers were heavy. If a bass could not sing a low D (D2), a tenor a high A without falsetto (A4), an Alto a low E (E3), or a soprano a high E comfortably (E5), they would not be considered for choir membership. "Tremolo" as Christiansen called it, was not tolerated. Bergmann reports that F. Melius once remarked to a bass with a considerable vibrato, "we are having an ironing party at our house at two o'clock this afternoon; you are

invited to come down and get pressed out."[35] As he put it "a great solo voice has tone-color, but not a tremolo."[36]

Christiansen perhaps didn't coin the term "straight tone," but he did propagate the technique in America as a tool to serve ensemble blend. In part, it was a reaction against the full vibrato choral tone common to the time.[37] Before the days of political correctness, Christiansen explained "the voice should be straight as an Indian woman's hair or a telegraph wire."[38] Eventually this technique became known as "straight tone" singing.

Every year, around a hundred or more individuals would try out for 15-20 open spots in the St. Olaf Choir. Those who did not make it found a home in one of the other choral ensembles on campus and hoped to improve their skills enough to get into the choir the following year. Christiansen utilized a choir of 60 voices. He thought 40 would be ideal, but his 40 young voices often could not achieve a climactic *forte*, so he settled on 60 to expand the choir's dynamic range. He preferred 18 sopranos (10 firsts + 8 seconds), 15 Altos (7 + 8), 11 tenors (5 + 6) and 16 basses (6 + 10).[39] Since he sought uniformity in all things, including volume, one may infer Christiansen's concept of vertical balance by the number of singers he assigned to each section.

Christiansen's placement of singers was specific and was designed to support his concept of choral blend. From the director's vantage point, on the left side of the ensemble the first row was first sopranos, with second sopranos behind. The first basses and second basses stood behind the sopranos in the third and forth rows respectively. The right half of the ensemble was

[35] Bergmann, 146.
[36] Bergmann, 146.
[37] Richard I. Kegerreis, "History of the High School a Cappella Choir," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1970): 323.
[38] Bergmann, 145-146.
[39] Bergmann, 154-55.

first altos in the first row, followed by second altos, first tenors, and second tenors in the second, third, and forth rows. Each row was organized with the larger voices in the middle of the row, and lighter lyric voices on the ends in order to facilitate blend. For special choral effects, a chamber choir of lyric voices (perhaps the first two individuals in each section from the middle) could be used to sustain a chord after the majority of the choir had cut off, creating a spectacular *pianissimo*.

The seating Christiansen used is diagramed below. The letter represents the voice part, soprano, alto, tenor, or bass. The number represents division within the part, first or second. The uppercase bolded letters are the larger voices in the middle of the row, and the lower case letters the lighter lyric voices. The italics around the first two inner lyric voices represent the aforementioned inner chamber choir used to create pianissimo effects.

Figure 1: The Christiansen Choir

b2 b2 b2 **B2 B2 B2 B2** b2 *b2 b2* || *t2 t2* t2 **T2 T2** t2

b1 **B1 B1 B1** *b1 b1* || *t1 t1* **T1 T1** t1

s2 s2 **S2 S2 S2** s2 *s2 s2* || *a2 a2* **A2 A2 A2 A2** a2 a2

s1 s1 s1 **S1 S1 S1** s1 s1 *s1 s1* || *a1 a1* **A1 A1 A1** a1 a1

(Conductor)[40]

[40] Adapted from Bergmann, 155.

Instrumental Influences

Christiansen himself always conducted with a baton, although his successors, even his two sons, conducted with just their hands. Christiansen's training was primarily with instrumental ensembles, and his approach to choral conducting was influenced by his work with instrumental groups. Perhaps another element that Christiansen took from his work with instrumental ensembles was the use of student leadership. Each section would elect a section leader that would lead twice-weekly sectionals for the memorization of music, in addition to the daily rehearsals of the choir.

The Secret of the Beginning Pitch

During Christiansen's tenure, much attention was given to the "miraculous" ability of the choir to begin each piece without receiving a pitch from the piano or director. Many assumed that the choir members were each endowed with absolute pitch. The explanation of how this occurred was much more mundane. During the applause after each number, a choir member would blow the next pitch on a pitch pipe just loud enough for the singers near to them to hear, and the choir would then quickly hum the pitch to themselves while the applause was dying down, all the while smiling to the audience. From the audience's perspective each piece would end, and there would be nothing but motionless silence between the applause and the beginning of the next piece, fueling that sense of mystery behind the pitch's origin.[41]

During a choir tour in Detroit in the early 1940s, a pushy newspaper critic found her way to Christiansen before the concert to confront him about the pitch secret. He told her to watch his baton carefully, for the secret was in his baton. During intermission she hadn't figured it out and came to ask him again. "Watch my baton," he said. When she still couldn't figure it out

[41] Bergmann, 157-59.

after the performance Christiansen carefully explained "The secret of pitch is in my baton. It is made of soft pine, and everyone knows that soft pine is full of pitch."[42]

In the November 1996 issue of *Choral Journal*, current St. Olaf Choir conductor Anton Armstrong created a list of "representative characteristics" of Christiansen's philosophy of choral sound.

1) Purity and beauty of tone.
2) An emphasis on choral blend and balance with attention to the selection and placement of singers in each vocal section. Singers with excessive and wide vibratos were not desirable ensemble members.
3) An emphasis on uniformity of vocal timbre, with a preference for the selection of lyric voices. Also, there is great importance placed upon the uniformity of vowels throughout the range.
4) Excellent intonation and accuracy of pitch, with an emphasis on good unisons. Great importance placed on the musical ear of each singer. The tuning of chords occurs throughout the composition, not simply at cadences. Block formation preferred with basses seated behind sopranos and tenors behind altos.
5) Disciplined singing which leads to the precision of ensemble attack and release. Clear textual enunciation achieved by continuous unification of vowels and precise execution of consonants.
6) Attention to textual nuance and text painting.
7) Flexibility and nuance of phrasing as well as the expressive use of rubato.
8) Emphasis on legato singing.
9) Impressive use of softer singing which permitted a wide range of dynamics by the ensemble[43]

Conclusion

An overview of Christiansen's biography and pedagogy should aid in the preparation of his compositions. When Christiansen began arranging works for choir, he was both attempting to preserve the great Lutheran chorales and to provide quality literature for his ensembles. He wrote during a period where good choral music was scarce in the Midwest, and his

[42] Shaw, 213.

[43] Armstrong, 11. Armstrong cites Howard Swan, "The Development of a Choral Instrument." In *Choral Conducting Symposium*, edited by Harold A. Decker and Julius Herford, 7-68. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1988. Armstrong's list is certainly a synthesis of Swan and his own research. The discussion of the St. Olaf Choral sound begins on page 23 of Swan.

compositional practice was often a matter of practicality. As Christiansen and the St. Olaf Choir grew in success, he gradually turned away from arranging chorales and toward free composition. These later "choral tone poems" often de-emphasize text while treating the choral ensemble in an increasingly orchestral manner.

The following three chapters explore the major genres of Christiansen's compositional output. Each chapter also provides a thorough conductor's guide to Christiansen's most integrous works. Chapter II explores his simple hymn arrangements, while Chapter III the more complex chorale fantasias. Chapter IV analyses his chorale tone poems, a genre of compositions increasingly prevalent Christiansen's later life.

CHAPTER II: The Simple Arrangements

Introduction

This document's categorization of F. Melius Christiansen's compositional genres is based on René Clausen's outline.[44] Clausen divides Christiansen's compositional output into three categories:

> 1) Simple arrangements of hymns, folks songs, and original melodies, primarily in a homophonic style with the melody in the top voice,
> 2) extended chorale fantasias, and
> 3) choral tone poems.

In this document the first category is divided into "hymn arrangements" and "folk and folk-like arrangements." The two are similar in structure but differ in source material and function. Hymn arrangements served a religious function and folk song arrangements were used in secular concert settings.

Christiansen had a lifelong interest in the simple melodies of hymns and folk tunes. During his 1907 study in Leipzig he researched the influence of folk music on church music, and did his own harmonization of about 70 chorale melodies.[45] Bergmann writes "the plaintive, emotional coloring and texture of the folk songs appealed to him as beauty in its truest sense."[46] In the chapter that follows, this document will first examine Christiansen's hymn arrangements and then turn to an examination his of folk arrangements.

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[44] Rene Clausen, "The Compositional Style of F. Melius Christiansen." *Choral Journal* 37, no. 4 (November 1996): 19-26.

[45] Bergmann, 105.

[46] Bergmann, 185.

Hymn Arrangements

Christiansen's hymn arrangements represent his simplest and most direct form of composition. In some instances these works possess a more enduring quality than Christiansen's more ornate and sentimental works written in a post-Romantic style. *Beautiful Savior* and *Lamb of God* are two examples that represent the best of this genre and are among the most frequently performed of Christiansen's works. Also popular are his settings of *O Bread of Life*, and *O Sacred Head Now Wounded*.

In its strictest definition "hymn" refers only to the text. This can be confusing as "hymn" in modern usage is often defined as the aggregate text and music in a liturgical song. Originally the term "hymn" was nearly interchangeable with "psalm." Properly, the melodies accompanying a hymn are called chorales. This stricter definition is used in this document to differentiate between the textual and musical parts of liturgical songs and their arrangements.[47]

Christiansen's hymn arrangements are straightforward presentations of a hymn text and chorale melody. In these arrangements, the chorale melody is usually given to the sopranos or to a soloist. The remainder of the choir serves an accompanying role, often evoking the sound of an organ through long sustained homophonic passages. Christiansen's penchant for having the accompanying choir hum underscores this analogy to the organ. The overall scope of these works is quite modest, and the form generally adheres to the verse structure of the original chorale.

While the general description outlined above is most often true of this type of choral work, there are some exceptions. *Lamb of God* is an example that varies from this compositional

[47] Wilton, Peter, "Hymn." In *The Oxford Companion to Music*, ed. Alison Latham. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

model. It is written in a miniature Renaissance motet style, centering around two points of imitation. This differs from the homophonic choral accompaniment most often found in this category. The soprano-dominated texture and the small scope of the work, however, suggest that it should be classified as a hymn arrangement and not as a fantasia.

Christiansen composed arrangements of the great Lutheran chorales as a means to preserve them and bring them to a wider audience. John Ferguson, professor of church music at St. Olaf College, notes one anecdote from the early life of F. Melius. Often employed to dedicate new church organs throughout the region, he was serving in this capacity for a congregation in South Dakota when he stopped mid-hymn and lectured the congregation on their poor singing and lack of "vitality," threatening to repeat the hymn until their singing improved! Ferguson goes on to explain

> It was this concern for the preservation of the chorale as much as anything else that stimulated his settings of certain chorales for the new St. Olaf Choir. He believed that if the youth of the church could be exposed to this rich body of hymnody through special choral settings, they would grow to love these texts and tunes, treasuring them both as congregational and choral song.[48]

The source hymnals for the texts and melodies for the purpose of this document are *The Lutheran Hymnary* of 1921 and the *St. Olaf College Song Book*, a special covering and printing of the *Concordia Hymnal* for use in the St. Olaf chapel. Christiansen was among the editors of *The Lutheran Hymnary* of 1921, but was not on the editorial board for the later Concordia Hymnal. Christiansen's involvement on the editorial committee for this earlier hymnal will be discussed in chapter 3.

The *Concordia Hymnal* was produced in 1933 by Augsburg Publishing House in Minneapolis, and the *St. Olaf College Song Book* edition was printed the following year. While

[48] John Ferguson, "Hymnody and St. Olaf: The Hymn and the St. Olaf Choral Tradition." *The Hymn* 39, no. 1 (January 1988): 31.

Christiansen was not listed as an editor of the hymnal, his close colleague Oscar Overby was. It is certainly possible that Christiansen had input in this edition of the Lutheran hymnal, given his close association with Overby.

Noting Christiansen's desire for the preservation of sacred Lutheran hymns, it is safe to assume that the contents of this *St. Olaf College Song Book* are close to the source hymns for Christiansen's arrangement. Therefore, for the purposes of comparative analysis between "source" texts and melodies and Christiansen's arranged compositions, I will utilize *The St. Olaf College Songbook* hymnal.

Beautiful Savior

One of the traits of a cappella choirs in America has been the programming of a "signature piece" that is used to close every concert of the choir, and thus becomes a part of that choir's identity.[49] In a 2006 *Choral Journal* article, David Holdhusen surveyed 200 colleges and universities inquiring about the inclusion of such pieces with their college ensemble. Of the schools that responded, 36 a cappella choirs indicated that they followed this practice of closing each concert with a "signature piece." Of these 36, seven are compositions by F. Melius Christiansen, six of them *Beautiful Savior*.[50]

Beautiful Savior is undoubtedly Christiansen's most famous composition. The genesis of this arrangement was *Deilig er jorden* ("Lovely is the Earth"), published in 1910. The Norwegian text was sung to the same tune as *Beautiful Savior*, a Silesian folk tune.[51] This melody was transcribed in an 1842 Leipzig publication of folksongs prepared by Hoffmann von Fallersleben.[52]

While on a tour of Norway in 1913, Christiansen asked Mrs. William Benson to sing one of the stanzas of *Deilig er jorden* as a solo. In 1919 the solo accompanied by choral humming was published, very close to *Beautiful Savior's* modern form. At that time it was published as *Deilig er jorden* in Norway and *Beautiful Savior* in America. The American publication was in

[49] David Holdhusen, "Repertoire & Standards: College & University Choirs Programming Tradition: The Signature Selection," *Choral Journal* 47, no. 3 (September 2006): 51. Not every a cappella choir utilizes a signature piece, but this practice was common amongst the three original American a cappella choirs (at St. Olaf College, Northwestern University under Peter Christian Lutkin, and Westminster Choir College under John Finley Williamson) and also propagated by many of the imitators in the early generations of American a cappella ensembles. Today this practice exists but is less common.

[50] Holdhusen, 52-53.

[51] Silesia was a region in Eastern Europe.

[52] *St. Olaf College Song Book*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1934, 8.

the new "St. Olaf Choir Series" published by Augsburg Publishing House.[53] F. Melius and later his son Olaf both continued to edit the work, and F. Melius would regularly change the key to best suit his chosen soloist. Today there are published versions in both D-flat major and D major.

Deilig er jorden was a hymn text strongly associated in Norway with Christmas, as it includes the closing text "for us today a Savior born." *Beautiful Savior*, however, is not a translation of *Delig er jorden* and has no relation to that text other than utilizing the same melody. *Beautiful Savior* is actually a translation of the German hymn *Schönster Herr Jesu*, originally authored by Joseph A. Seiss in 1823.[54]

Numerous versions of this text exist, with the most common version titled "Fairest Lord Jesus." Only in a minority of hymnals, most of them Lutheran, will "Beautiful Savior" be listed as the title to this hymn. Texts printed under both titles are virtually identical, with only cosmetic alterations to the language. For example, some hymnals change "Robed in the flow'rs of blooming spring" to "Robed in the blooming garb of spring." Another common change is turning "He makes our sorrowing spirit sing" into "Who makes the woeful heart to sing." The changes were made in an attempt to update the language for contemporary audiences. Perhaps the most obvious of these changes is the title itself, *Beautiful Savior*, becoming *Fairest Lord Jesus*.

The structure of Christiansen's arrangement is in three sections, nearly identical to the original chorale. Christiansen appends the third part with a five-bar coda. The first introductory section contains no text, but rather a hummed harmonization of the chorale melody. Christiansen writes "con bocca chiusa" at the beginning, meaning "with mouth closed." Various humming

[53] Shaw, 615-617.
[54] Shaw, 617.

techniques have been utilized, including a bright "trumpet hum" that was used in Olaf Christiansen's tenure.[55]

The work is set for SSAATTBB chorus, but on closer examination the soprano 1 and tenor 1 parts are identical, as are the soprano 2 and tenor 2, alto 1 and baritone, and alto 2 and bass, so there are only four parts, doubled at the octave. The melody line is given to the alto 1 and baritone parts, with the soprano 1 and tenor 1 parts providing a countermelody.

The second section of the work is for solo soprano or alto, accompanied by the men's voices, which continue to hum as accompaniment. The writing for the men is identical to the first verse with the exception of the baritones, who no longer have the melody but a new counterpoint. The text here is from the second verse of the hymn.

The third section utilizes the fourth verse of hymn text. Here the women sing in unison while the men repeat the accompaniment music from the solo section, this time adding text. This verse is closed by a coda, in which the last bit of text "now and forevermore be thine" is repeated. Always sensitive to the text, the original hymn ends with an exclamation mark, which Christiansen retains at the end of the coda. The text becomes "now and forevermore be thine. Now and forevermore be thine!"

Two versions of this melody exist in current hymnals. One is constructed of two eight-bar phrases, while the other is an eight-bar phrase followed by a seven-bar phrase. The seven-bar phrase comes from an elision of measures 5-6 of the second eight-bar phrase into one measure, illustrated in the chart below (Chart 1). Christiansen's arrangement utilizes this seven-bar consequent phrase, as does *The Lutheran Hymnary*, though the *St. Olaf Songbook* hymnal uses the eight-plus-eight construction. Clearly Christiansen was familiar with both.

[55] Humming techniques are discussed further on page 31.

Though Christiansen places the melody in an inner voice, the chorale still "speaks" largely because the original harmonic sequence of Hoffmann von Fallersleben is intact, with only some minor elaboration. The biggest change occurs in measure 7. The chorale is harmonized with a simple V^{65} to I, leading to a V half cadence in measure 8. Christiansen extends the harmony by doubling the harmonic rhythm in measure 7, using IV^{6} – vii^{o7} – I – $vii^{ø7}$/V, leading to a V half cadence in 8. The added chromatic harmonies strengthen the motion into the half cadence and provide a break from the austerity of the largely tonic harmony that prevails throughout the first six measures.

In the chart below the original chorale melody is graphed above the Christiansen arrangement. In this graph, each horizontal box represents one measure of music, and the corresponding measure numbers are listed directly above the graph. Small letters indicate the melodic fragments within the larger phrase. The use of (a, a') and (c, c') indicates that the first four bars of each eight-bar phrase are made up of repeating two-bar figures, transposed to a new spot within the diatonic harmony. Below the graph, the harmonic sequence has been charted, with additional detail given in areas of difference between the compositions. Measure 7 of the chorale has two chords, while measure 7 of the Christiansen arrangement has four chords. For spatial reasons the analysis for this measure has been indicated with asterisk, and charted in a box below. Notice also measures 13-14 of this composition are reduced to one measure in the Christiansen, and this truncation is shown in the measure listed with a cross.

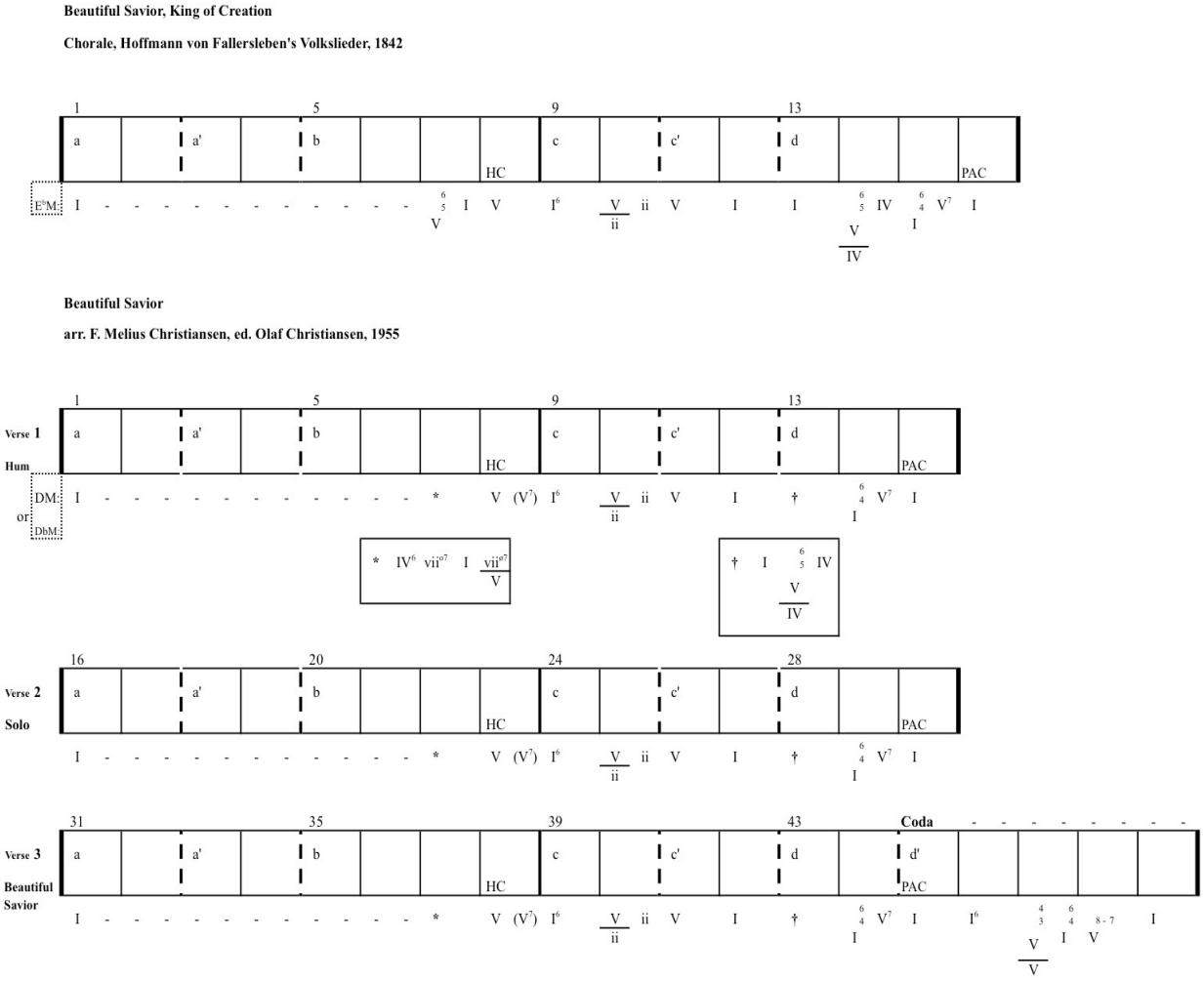

Chart 1: Beautiful Savior, chorale and arrangement

The three verses of the Christiansen arrangement are displayed on top of one another to highlight their structural similarity, and their similarity to the original chorale. The extension of the third verse, labeled "coda" in the score by the Christiansen, utilizes a repetition of the (d) melody and verse text. This chart also highlights the compositional simplicity of the arrangement. Here Christiansen's arrangement acts as a thesis for his beliefs regarding hymnody; the power and beauty of this great Lutheran chorale is not overly arranged and retains the simplicity of the original hymn.

Today *Beautiful Savior* is the work that closes each concert of the St. Olaf Choir and the St. Olaf Christmas Festival, but this tradition developed slowly. In the early part of the century, the St. Olaf Choir performed the piece predominantly, although Bergmann notes that by 1944 it was his best selling composition.[56] Over the years the piece has been performed numerous ways and in different keys. The contemporary version of the work was finalized by Olaf Christiansen and published in 1955.

The conductors of the St. Olaf Choir since F. Melius have taken the liberty to perform this work *en masse* as a combined multi-choral work, occasionally reserving certain verses for a smaller group or utilizing an entire section or choir to sing the solo. On occasion a male voice has been used for the solo. Under Anton Armstrong, the practice has been to close the St. Olaf Christmas Festival with only the final "Beautiful Savior" verse.

Its performance history suggests many performing options for a conductor. The key may be altered to accommodate the soloist or choir. The solo may be sung by a female or male voice, or a combination of voices. Certainly the work has been performed with the entire soprano and alto sections singing the solo, yet this removes the textural differences between the solo and the final verse. Kenneth Jennings directed the St. Olaf Choir from 1968 to 1990. Regarding choosing a soloist, he advises,

> Altos or sopranos can be effective. The long-time soloist for F. Melius Christiansen was a high lyric soprano [(Gertrude Boe Overby)]. Needed are a seamless legato, great breath control, and a quality of sympathetic warm beautiful tone. Since we always sang Beautiful Savior at the end a concert the singer had to have great poise and control at the end of a night of singing.[57]

[56] Bergmann, 184.
[57] Quoted from an email correspondence with the author, April 22, 2009.

The humming ("con bocca chiusa") at the beginning is occasionally substituted with a soft vowel, such as a [∂] schwa. Kenneth Jennings offers the following advice regarding the hum:

> Olaf Christiansen often used a lip-hum (buzz) with loose lips and a bit of air behind the lips, rather like Brrrr, the vowel being a schwa [∂]. This gives more tone and sound than a nasal hum. It was used particularly for the melody. In any hum, open space is needed behind any hum for resonance. Lower voices especially basses can have slightly open mouths again with a schwa rather than an oo [u:]. High voices need to keep jaws and lips loose to lessen tension in humming. Above all, avoid the tight closed nasal hum.[58]

Further, in his book, *The Augsburg Choirbook*, Jennings advises,

> While humming, singers should "steal" breaths at different times from their neighbors; especially, they should not breathe at the obvious phrase endings. Bring out the main tune found in alto I and bass I. Also, in this eight-part a cappella style, the bass II line can be sung a degree stronger.[59]

A small variation of tempi can be appropriate, but most often near to MM=58 to the quarter is appropriate, with a slight relaxation at the close of every four-bar phrase. An archival recording of F. Melius conducting this work is at MM=60 to the quarter, with now antiquated-sounding glissandi between the slow moving melodic notes. Depending on the context of performance, other tempi could be considered. When performing only the final verse, a tempo as slow as MM=48 to the quarter may be permissible to give the piece an appropriate sense of gravity.

[58] Quoted from an email correspondence with the author, April 22, 2009.

[59] Kenneth Jennings, *The Augsburg Choirbook: Sacred Music of the Twentieth Century*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998), viii.

Lamb of God

Christiansen has two arrangements of the *Lamb of God* chorale. The source melody dates from a 1540 collection of sacred and secular songs in Germany, possibly Valten Schumann's *Gesangbuch*.[60] His first arrangement was a congregational hymn, performed at St. John's Church as early as 1907. This setting paved the way for his later, more famous arrangement.

Christiansen served as organist at St. John's Church in Northfield. Both the St. Olaf Choir under the direction of Christiansen, and later the St. Olaf Chapel Choir under the direction of Oscar Overby sang at St. John's Sunday services. One Sunday, Overby took the liberty of performing Christiansen's new *Lamb of God* arrangement while it was still in manuscript, in order to surprise the composer at the organ. In Overby's book, *The Years in Retrospect,* he recounts his trepidation in approaching Christiansen after the performance, hoping he had not given offence at preempting the premiere.

> I found the master stooped over at the organ, unable to speak; his face was wet with tears – the only time I saw him weep and shed tears visibly. I stood helpless during the silent moments that followed; I felt as if I stood on sacred ground. He finally regained his composure and muttered softly under his breath: "Thank you! Did *I* write that?"[61]

In the *St. Olaf Songbook* hymnal, *Lamb of God Most Holy* occurs in the "Lord's Supper" section: the traditional place such a text would occur within a Lutheran service. Because this hymn text is a paraphrase of the *Agnus Dei*, the first and second verses are identical, and in the third verse only the final phrase is different. The *Agnus Dei* of the Latin mass has tripartite textual repetition with the final phrase changing from "*miserere nobis*" (have mercy on us) to "*dona nobis pacem*" (grant us peace). Below is the first verse of the *Agnus Dei* text. The upper

[60] See *How Fair the Church of Christ Shall Stand* in Chapter three.
[61] Oscar R. Overby, *The Years in Retrospect*, (Northfield, MN: Unpublished Typescript), 1963, 92.

line in italics is the original Latin; directly below is the most common translation. The third line, in quotations, is the hymn text from Christiansen's *Lamb of God Most Holy*.

> *Agnus Dei,*
> Lamb of God,
> "Lamb of God most holy! Who on the cross didst suffer, Patient still and lowly, Thyself to scorn didst offer;"
>
> *qui tollis peccata mundi:*
> who takest away the sins of the world,
> "Our sins by Thee were taken, Or hope had us forsaken:"
>
> *miserere nobis.*
> have mercy on us.
> "Have mercy on us, O Jesus!"

Nicolaus Decius wrote the *Lamb of God* hymn in 1531. It was translated into English by Arthur T. Russel in 1848. Christiansen's choral arrangement utilizes the first verse of text without change. The most common modern edition was first copyrighted in 1933 and is still available through Augsburg Fortress.

The form of the piece borrows from the Renaissance, utilizing two major points of imitation (beginning in measures 1 and 22) that form the basis of this miniature work. In the chart below, five sub-phrases are identified (a-e) of which "a" and "b" repeat at the beginning of the chorale. As in the previous chart, each horizontal box represents one measure of music, and a harmonic topography is provided below the graph. Measure numbers are given above the graph. The aforementioned sub-phrases are labeled both for the original chorale and Christiansen's later arrangement below.

In general, Christiansen expanded the rhythm of the original chorale by doubling the note values. The chorale's two-bar phrases become four-bar phrases, and in addition Christiansen has added phrase extensions within the texture, labeled "(ext)" below. The harmonic language between both versions is similar in its focus on the tonic, sub-dominant, and sub-mediant, yet it

is quite different in harmonic rhythm. The first six measures of the arrangement are in E flat major (due to the nature of the opening imitation around the ascending E-flat triad,) with increased harmonic action at the cadences.

The major structural feature of this short piece is the two points of imitation, the first occurring in measure 1 and the second occurring at sub-phrase "c" in measure 23. Where the tenor voice duplicates the soprano theme with "(aT)" in measure 3 and "(cT)" in measure 25 is noted in parenthesis. The alto and bass voices are also loosely imitative, and the voices enter in a downward cascade of soprano and alto in measure 1, tenor in measure 3, and bass in measure 4. This feature also occurs at the second point of imitation in measure 23. Both points of imitation coalesce in a cadence involving a dominant with a four-three suspension that resolves to the tonic, creating uniformity between the close of the two large structural phrases. In the closing measures, Christiansen doubles the length of this cadence to help balance the composition and provide suitable weight to the closure.

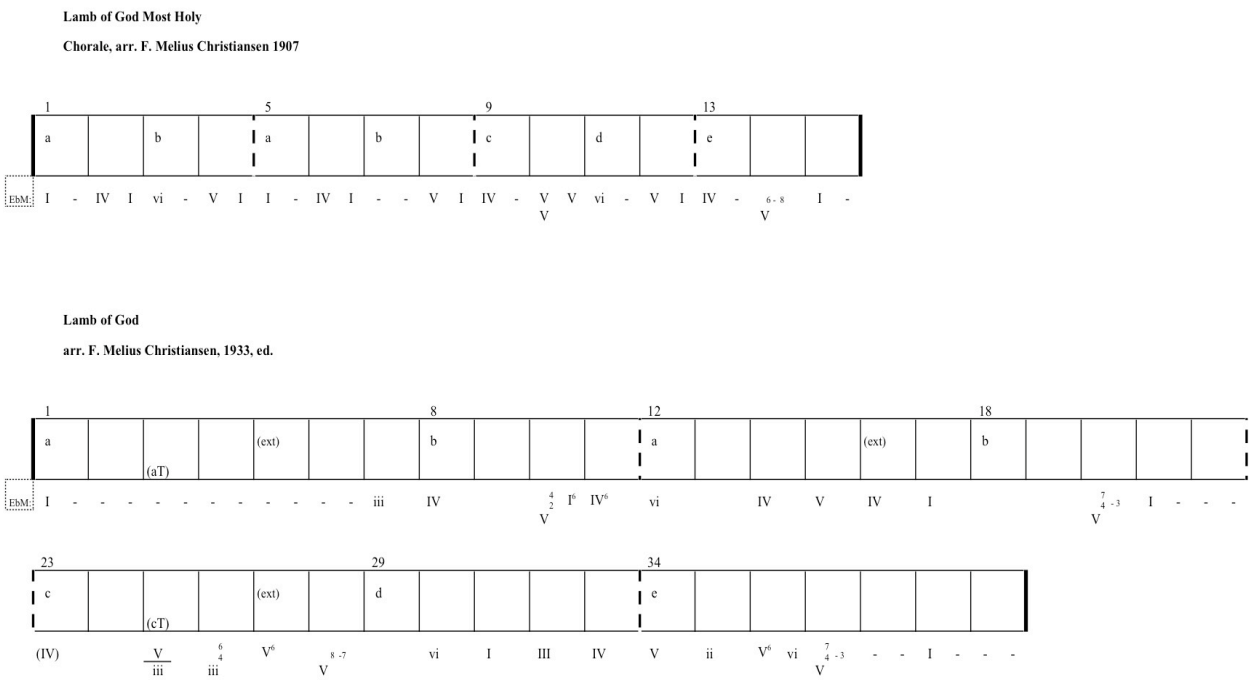

Chart 2: Lamb of God, chorale and arrangement

In Christiansen's arrangement for *The St. Olaf College Song Book*, he adds a barline in the music between each of the sub-phrases listed above. The effect is arresting to the eye:

Lamb of God most || Ho-ly! || Who || on the cross didst || suf-fer,

Figure 2: Lamb of God chorale, Rhythm Detail

I do not believe it was Christiansen's intention to create a mixed meter chorale, but rather to illuminate the separation between the phrases. Because they serve to highlight the phrase structure, the added barlines are similar to the use of fermatas within Bach chorales and thus

represent indications of a breath. In Christiansen's later setting the sub-phrases are separated from one another through the addition of time and phrase extensions.

John Ferguson, professor of sacred music at St. Olaf College notes the piece's simple structure, and terrific craftsmanship.

> But the simplicity of effect masks a wealth of compositional craft as contrapuntal imitation and other polyphonic devices are subtly employed throughout the three pages of the setting. The first phrase is presented in a kind of double imitation: first soprano and alto then tenor and bass. The third phrase is presented in straightforward, four part imitation beginning with soprano and moving through alto, tenor, and bass. The contrapuntal manipulation is enhanced by the careful attention to text placement in which words with similar vowel sounds are juxtaposed to provide a more uniform choral sound within a polyphonic texture. This is subtle, sensitive and evocative choral writing at its very best.

Of this work, Kenneth Jennings advises "Sing simply but expressively, with the supporting voices slightly softer than the melody. This piece is best sung legato with minimal vibrato like a 16th-century polyphonic motet."[62] Most modern performances are around MM=48-52 to the half note, although a range of tempi are possible. An archival recording by Olaf Christiansen begins at around 30 beats to the half note, and it is possible F. Melius also conceived it that slowly. Jennings advises, "the space, acoustics, the occasion, size and quality of the choral group always enter into tempo choices. I usually feel a slow half-note to the beat, sensing the quarter notes in between, rather than four quarter notes to the bar."[63]

Undoubtedly some of the popularity of *Lamb of God* comes from the accessibility of the music for the choir. This is a good work to program with a choir of any ability, and is an especially fine work for helping less advanced choirs sing with good intonation, since the harmonic language is quite simple.

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[62] Jennings, x.
[63] Quoted from an email correspondence with the author, April 22, 2009.

Folk and Folk-Like Arrangements

Folk and folk-like arrangements within the body of Christiansen's output are constructed with the same method as the simple hymn arrangements. The fundamental difference between these types of compositions is the nature of the source material. Christiansen also freely composed his own folk-like melodies, and set them just as he would when arranging previously composed material.

As in the simple hymn arrangements, his folk arrangements often set the melody in the soprano voice and utilize the remainder of the choir as accompaniment. In many instances humming or neutral vowels are employed, as in *Lullaby on Christmas Eve*.

Christiansen had an advanced understanding of the human voice and the creation of vocal color within a choral ensemble. Much of the magic of these simple arrangements is not only within the folk melodies but also in Christiansen's wonderful accompanimental textures. Ferguson notes,

> [Christiansen's] understanding of the human voice was so complete that the choir almost instinctively seemed to make the right sounds. Christiansen was blessed with a remarkable grasp of the subtleties of choral sound and used voices in their various timbres and ranges most effectively and creatively.[64]

[64] Ferguson, 32.

Lullaby on Christmas Eve

The text of *Lullaby on Christmas Eve* is from the first and third verse of Albert J. Lange's poem, *Vuggesang om Julekvelden* (Cradle Song on Christmas Eve), translated into English by Overby. In the early decades of the twentieth century, Christiansen had arranged *Vuggesang om Julekvelden* for solo soprano. A few days before the Christmas Festival of 1934, Christiansen decided he wanted an English choral setting. As Shaw describes,

> he phoned Oscar Overby, played and sang his choir setting of the piece, and asked for a translation of the text into English *at once*… In short order the anthem, music, and English text was written, copied, and placed in the hands of the St. Olaf Choir for its next rehearsal.[65]

In Christiansen's music, the choral arrangement is a soprano solo with the choir serving as accompaniment- largely humming with a few added textual echoes. The piece was written for the solo voice of Gertrude Boe Overby, to whom the piece is also dedicated. The choir functions much like an organ. Clausen notes,

> the first four measures, scored in a low range for alto and three-part male chorus, produce a warm and evocative choral color. On the other hand, the interlude between the first and second verses shifts to a considerably higher register, not unlike switching stops on an organ.[66]

The primary difficulty in the setting is creating a uniform and healthy hum.[67] After this the vocal writing presents few difficulties. The popularity of the work undoubtedly comes from the tenderness of the setting and the excellent craftwork within the vocal lines.

The chart below illustrates the compositional similarity between *Lullaby on Christmas Eve* and the hymn arrangements like *Beautiful Savior*.

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[65] Shaw, 595-596.

[66] Clausen, 20.

[67] Kenneth Jennings provides some helpful hints to humming technique in the section on *Beautiful Savior* in Chapter two.

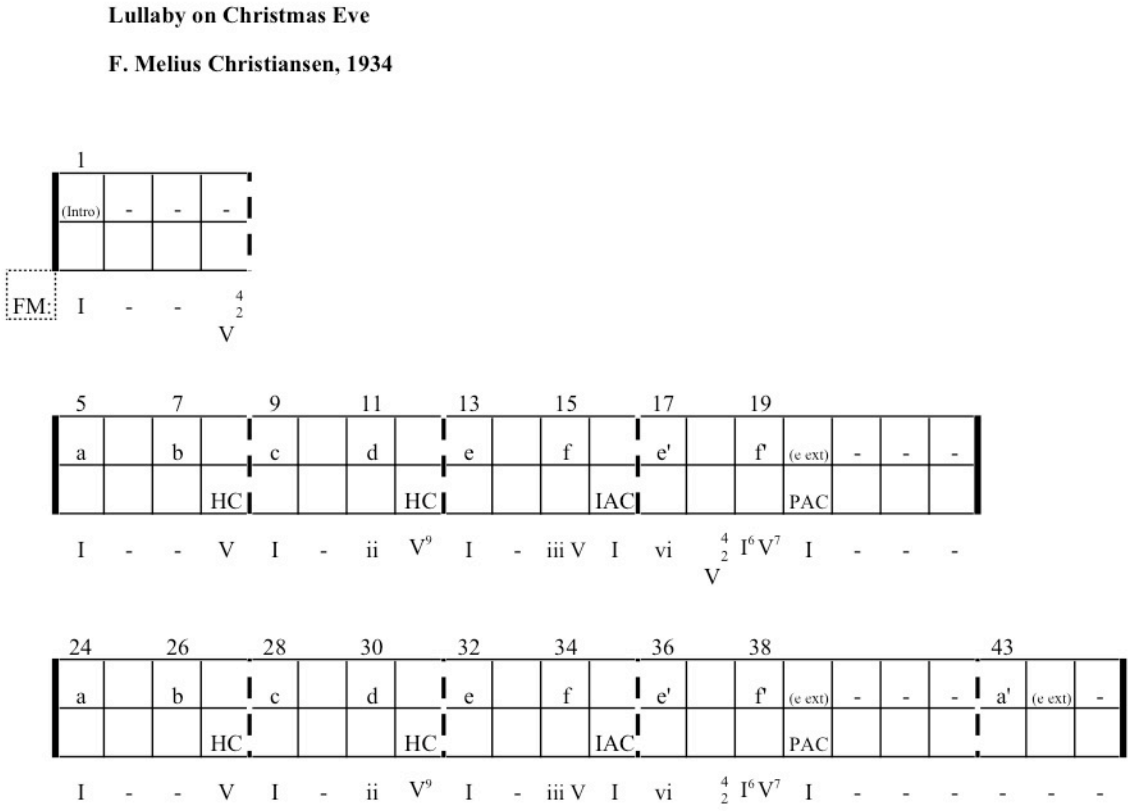

Chart 3: Lullaby on Christmas Eve

The piece begins with a four measure introductory section. As Clausen noted above, the introduction is scored for altos, tenors, and basses, in a low and quiet hum. The effect produces a warm and sonorous texture in the lower voices that allows the dominance of the soprano solo. The choir hums throughout the introduction except for a few textual interjections during the slow moving parts of the melody. For example in measure 10, while the soprano holds long notes the alto voice enters repeating the soprano's text as an echo of measures 9 and 10.

The only difference in the two main sections, besides text, is the addition of the (a') codetta. As the prime designation suggests, this small phrase repeats the opening (a) phrase

almost exactly with the exception that it moves step-wise down to F4, rather than leaping dramatically up to F5.

Lullaby on Christmas Eve is a wonderfully sweet and warm holiday piece. The demands on the soloist are not great. The range of the solo is from D4 to F5, never moving above the treble staff. Because much of the choral material is a hum, even a less mature soprano may succeed with this solo. The piece is most effective when it is performed as an intimate and quiet repose, adding contrast to louder and faster works.

Conclusion

Because of Christiansen's love of choral melodies and hymnody, his simple hymn arrangements hold a special place in his choral output. The works analyzed above demonstrate several of the common traits of these works including, soprano dominated texture, strophic form, and the predominance of the chorale. Ensembles of all abilities can perform these well-crafted arrangements with excellent results. In the next chapter I will examine Christiansen's Chorale Fantasias, works that move beyond simple arranging to manipulate and ornament the source material.

CHAPTER III: The Chorale Fantasias

Introduction

Christiansen's chorale fantasias set several hymn verses in an expository manner similar to an organ prelude or fantasia. Christiansen manipulates the source material, including revising, repeating, and omitting text, altering the melody, expanding or truncating the original structure, expanding the harmonies, and adding new textual-musical tropes. Because Christiansen knew these hymns and chorale tunes so intimately, he was able to bring out the best of the original material and show it in new light.

There are three types of chorale fantasia in Christian's output. In the first type, exemplified by *How Fair the Church of Christ Shall Stand*, several verses of the hymn are presented each with their own musical section, but the chorale is not used until the end of the composition. The opening verses of the hymn, set to new music, become a prelude to the later chorale melody. *How Fair the Church of Christ Shall Stand* has extensive use of pedal tones in the opening verses, and the melodic material culminates with the entrance of the chorale toward the end of the work.

Lost in the Night and *O Day Full of Grace* are examples of the second type of choral fantasia. These compositions are structured around a short introduction, followed by two repetitions of the chorale melody. After the two chorale repetitions, a third section presents a verse of the hymn with a completely new melody, key, and/or time signature. This third verse contrasts the chorale melody so that when the chorale returns in subsequent verses, it is heard in a new light. Following the contrasting third verse are one or more repetitions of the original chorale, closing with a coda or coda-like section.

A third type of chorale fantasia utilizes unaltered settings of the chorale, with expanded harmonies and thicker choral writing. For these compositions Christiansen writes new material for the introduction, the transition between verses, and the close. His arrangements generally divide into eight choral parts and often contrast the lower and treble voices. Examples of this type of chorale fantasia are *Built on a Rock*, and *Praise to the Lord*. In both works contrasting sections of new material are interposed with the chorale melody.

The composition *Wake, Awake*, also discussed in this chapter, does not conform to the above categorizations but may be viewed as another category of choral fantasia. It is constructed almost entirely from material found in the original chorale, yet small thematic parts of the chorale are repeated, presented out of order, and used extensively as counterpoint. New counterpoint is inserted above the chorale melodies, yet as dense as the setting becomes it serves to highlight the original chorale and add excitement to the arrangement. The resulting work truly embodies René Clausen's term "chorale fantasia."

The following section will provide context and analysis for the six chorale fantasias discussed above. Where applicable, performance practice suggestions have been included, as well as a note regarding errata within the published scores, and Christiansen's changes to the music after publication.

Built on a Rock

Ludvig Mathias Lindeman was a Norwegian composer and theologian who lived from 1812 to 1887. He was an avid collector of Norwegian folk melodies and a famous church musician in Norway during the nineteenth century. One of his chorales was a setting of *Kirken Den Er Gammelt Hus*, authored by Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig. Grundtvig was a Dane, trained in theology, and a prolific hymn author.[68]

The English text was translated in 1909 by Carl Døving. Døving was a 1903 graduate of Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, and went on to work as a pastor at several Lutheran churches in southeast Minnesota before moving to Chicago. Because of the proximity of Døving to St. Olaf, and the relatively small world of Scandinavian Lutheran hymnology, it was almost inevitable that Døving and Christiansen should meet.

Due to growing dissatisfaction with the Norwegian hymnals, and the need for new English Lutheran hymnals to serve a new generation of English-speaking Lutherans, a committee was formed in 1908 for the creation of a new hymnal, *The Lutheran Hymnary*. The committee was populated by representatives from several prominent Lutheran organizations, and Christiansen and Døving were both members.[69] Interestingly, only Grundtvig's name is published in Christiansen's arrangement, with no mention of the translator.

Grundtvig was almost certainly inspired by Matthew 16:18, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my Church." In Latin "Peter" is *Petrus* and "rock" is *Petram*. The textual similarity supports the theology that an individual is as much (or perhaps more) a foundation to

[68] *Nethymnal*, http://nethymnal.org/bio/l/i/n/lindeman_lm.htm (accessed April 18, 2009).
[69] Bergmann, 107

the church as is the solid ground. Grundtvig underscores this theology in his second verse that closes with the text "built in our bodies His temple."

The structure of the text is 7 lines of 8 syllables each. Lindeman's setting places each line of text in a four-bar phrase. The entire chorale consists of a line of seven such phrases. The seven short phrases are labeled below, (a-d). (a) and (b) repeat in the opening, and the final four measures can be labeled (b') because of the cadential function of the line, and its final resolution from scale degree 2 to 1. As in previous charts, every box represents one measure of music.

Below the chart a roman-numeral analysis represents an abstraction of the chorale harmonies, focusing only on the most prominent harmony in a measure. Notice the fresh harmonization of the repeated melody in measures 9-16, focusing heavily on the submediant. The (c) phrase temporarily tonicizes the mediant. Christiansen expands upon Lindeman's harmonies, emphasizing the mediant and submediant, as well as borrowing from the minor mode (see Chart 4). In Lindeman's setting each of the three large phrases end with a dominant chord (with a four-three suspension) resolving to tonic.

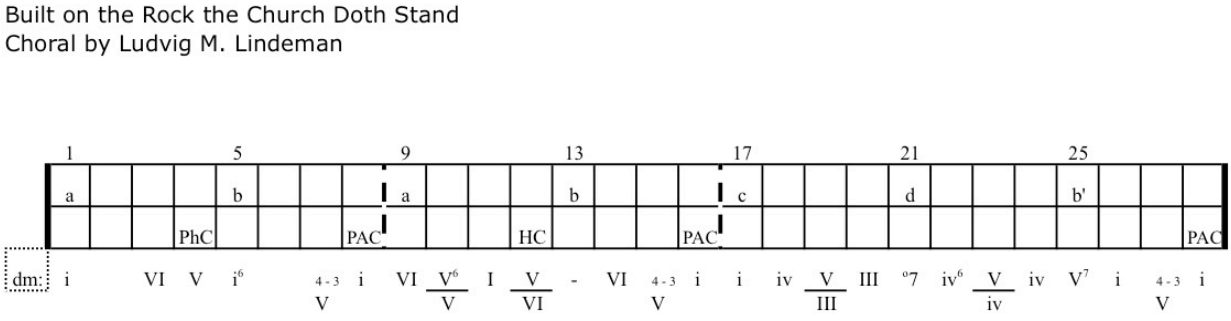

Chart 4: Built on the Rock, Chorale

The chorale is remarkable for the range of its melody, which spans a tenth. Written in D minor, it asks the congregation to sing a high F5. The chorale also has a Phrygian half-cadence in measure 4, and the B-natural in measure 5 evokes a sense of the Dorian mode. These represent two Renaissance melodic idioms present in this nineteenth-century chorale. Although the melody of the first eight measures repeats for the second eight measures, the harmony switches to the relative major.

Christiansen sets the first two verses of the Grundtvig/Døving hymn in three formal sections, saving the second verse for the middle section and repeating the first verse at the end. Perhaps because Christiansen knew Døving he felt free to slightly alter the translation in his arrangement. The textual changes between Christiansen's printed arrangement and the original hymn are minor. The first change occurs in the first line and the title; "Built on the Rock" becomes "Built on a Rock." In the second verse of text the word "temples" is changed to "temple" in Christiansen's arrangement. Also, he alters the rhythm of "heav'ns cannot contain," changing the textual emphasis. In the original chorale, "not" falls on a downbeat creating the emphasis "heav'ns can**not** contain," but in Christiansen's arrangement he gives "heavens" two syllables rather than one and places "can-" on the downbeat, changing the syllabic emphasis to "heavens **can**not contain."[70]

While the printed textual alterations were minor, Christiansen changed other small parts of the text if he felt it would enhance the meaning or allow for easier singing. For example, the knotty "but above all the soul distrest [*sic*]," becomes "calling the souls of those distressed." When Christiansen returns to the first verse of text in the final section, he reverts to the original "Built on <u>the</u> Rock," as opposed to "Built on <u>a</u> Rock."[71] Perhaps one is a typo, or perhaps he

[70] Boldface type added by the author.
[71] Underline type added by author for emphasis.

enjoyed the subtle difference of meaning between the two versions. A recording by Olaf Christiansen uses "Built on the Rock" throughout.

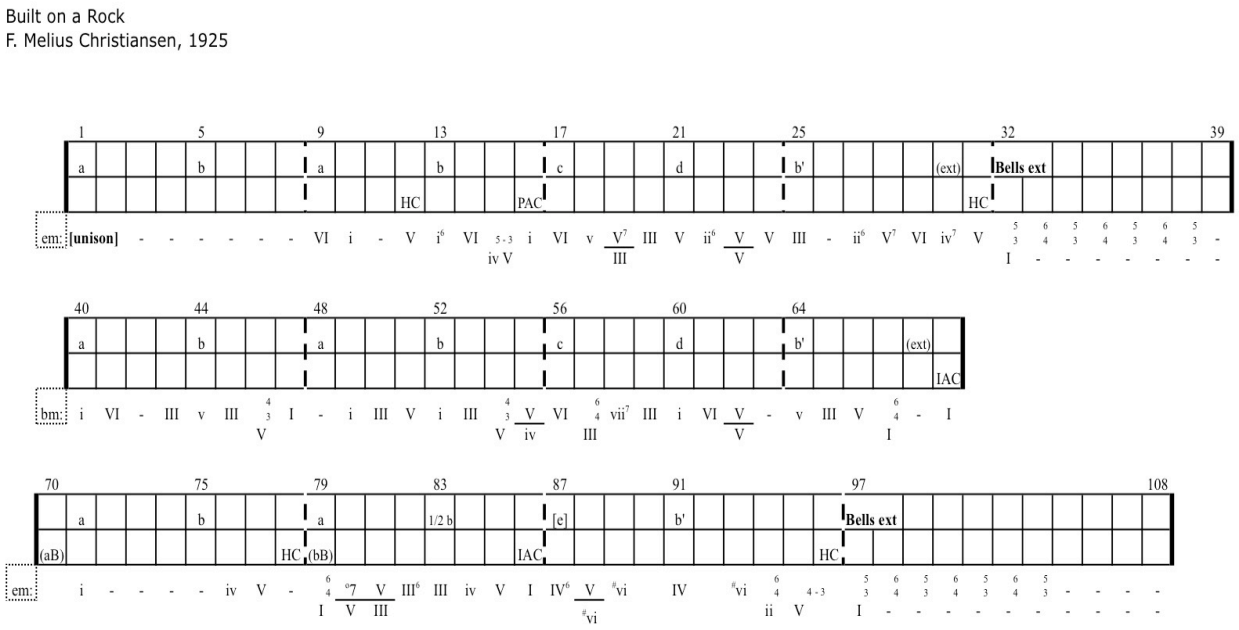

Chart 5: Built on a Rock, arr. F. Melius Christiansen

Built on a Rock is in three large sections that increase in complexity. The first section, outlined above, is from measure 1 to measure 39 and utilizes the first hymn verse. The chorus begins in unison, but when the harmony begins in the second phrase (measure 9) Christiansen moves to the submediant harmony, as in the chorale. Lindeman utilized dominant chords with a four-three suspension to close each phrase. In measure 15, Christiansen employs a similar technique. Because his bass line moves, it becomes a five-three suspension even though the soprano figure is the same descent from scale degree 2 to 1. Instead of closing the verse in an authentic cadence, Christiansen prolongs the cadential figure with a deceptive cadence in measure 29, beginning a brief phrase extension that culminates in a half cadence two bars later.

This dominant harmony from measure 31 resolves to the parallel major. In this E major section Christiansen paraphrases the text from the middle of the first verse "bells still are chiming and calling," with "bells are chiming, calling." This is a clear depiction of church bells ringing in the distance (labeled "Bells ext." in the chart above). The basses prolong an E and B fifth, while on alternating measures the remaining chorus sings an E major chord followed by an A major-major seventh chord. Musically it is a very effective depiction of distant bells ringing and serves as a long tonic pedal to close the first verse.

The second verse is set for baritone soloist and chorus in the key of B minor. The choir follows the solo part in a quasi-canon. The soprano part sings a modified version of the choral melody exactly one measure behind the baritone, who sings the true chorale. Because of this imitative writing the harmonies of this verse are noticeably different than in the first verse. As noted in the chart above, there is an emphasis on the mediant (D major) and submediant (G major) in this section. As in the first and final verses, the solo verse ends with a sudden shift to the parallel major.

In the third formal section it appears that Christiansen evokes the Renaissance mensuration canon. The basses begin singing the (a) melody a measure before the remainder of the choir enters, labeled in the chart (aB). The basses sing one note per measure, not a mensural technique because their rhythm does not follow the chorale rhythm. Because the melody occurs simultaneously in the soprano and bass voice at two different speeds, Christiansen evokes a texture that is similar to mensuration. Because of the arpeggiation at the beginning of the (a) sub-phrase, the harmony becomes static until the basses move to the fourth and then the fifth scale degree. In measure 79 the sopranos restart the (a) theme while the basses begin the (b) theme, labeled above (bB).

Since the melody at this point begins with a stepwise assent from B through C-sharp to D, the harmonies from 80 to 82 serve to tonicize G major. In measure 85 the canon ends but the melody continues with a phrase extension that culminates in a brief cadence. In measure 87 new melodic material is used, labeled [e] in the chart, and C-sharp is introduced into the texture allowing (b') to be harmonized by A major. The entrance of (b') is one scale degree higher than it should be, with its final resolution becoming a move from scale degree 3 to 2, rather than 2 to 1. This precipitates the supertonic chord in measure 94, which then leads into the half-cadence extension in measures 95-96. Here Christiansen refers to the original chorale with a broad dominant four-three suspension. The bell-like extension that closes the piece is a direct repeat of measures 32-39, with an additional four measures of the E major chord providing further closure. The voicing of the final chord in all three verses places the third scale degree in the soprano, aids in unifying the composition's three sections.

This work is currently out of print, but the rights to the publication are held by Augsburg Fortress. A common printed edition is copyrighted from 1925, and the prospective conductor should note two errors in the score. The first is in the baritone solo, measure 48, which is missing a beat. "Earth" should be a half-note rather than a quarter. In the tenor part of measures 92-93 the four Cs should all be changed to C-sharp. In measure 96 of the Olaf Christiansen recording, he allows the second basses to double the B at the low octave (below the bass clef), and if your choir is able to execute this change, it is an option worth considering.

How Fair the Church of Christ Shall Stand

How Fair the Church of Christ Shall Stand was written by the Danish author Thomas Kingo, and most likely appeared alongside 85 other poems in his 1699 book *Kingo's Hymnbook*. Ole T. Sanden translated the hymn in 1908. Sanden was a teacher in Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota and Illinois during his lifetime.[72] The chorale is identical in both *The Lutheran Hymnary* and the *St. Olaf College Songbook*, the only difference being in the number of verses.[73] As is typical for Christiansen, he chose three of these verses to set in his choral arrangement. The melody is originally from a 1539 collection of sacred and secular songs published in Leipzig by Valten Schumann.

How Fair the Church of Christ Shall Stand
Chorale, Schumann's Gesangbuch, 1539

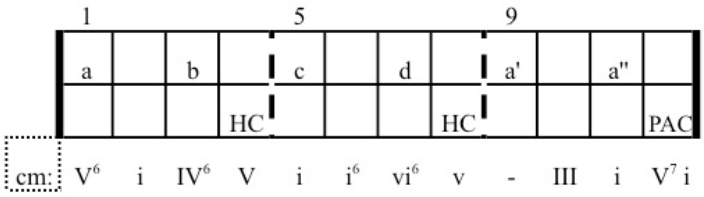

Chart 6: How Fair the Church of Christ Shall Stand, chorale

The closing (a') and (a") phrases are similar to the opening phrase in their cadential structure and closing three-note scalar descent to the tonic. The only difference between these

[72] *Nethymnal*, http://nethymnal.org/bio/k/i/n/kingo_th.htm (accessed April 26, 2009).

[73] Note: A primary motivator for reducing the number of hymn verses for publication in the *St. Olaf College Songbook* may have been space. In *The Lutheran Hymnal* only the first verse of text was printed in the score with others listed below the score in prose. The *St. Olaf College Songbook* printed all the hymn verses in the score, and five verses appears to be the maximum allowable with four musical stanzas, in order to preserve the hymn on a single page.

phrases occurs at the opening of each phrase, (accepting that (a') is set in the relative major) and this difference is largely cosmetic. Because of this return to (a)-like material, the chorale tune is elegantly rounded. Christiansen's setting follows this form in both the small phrases and the large-scale structure.

Christiansen's arrangement of *How Fair the Church of Christ Shall Stand* is a unique chorale setting because of the absence of the chorale melody for much of the composition. While the text is presented without great change, the chorale melody does not make an appearance until the end of the piece. The first hymn verse is presented twice, with little acknowledgement of the original chorale. Here Christiansen sets the work in 3/4 meter, contrasting the 4/4 indication of the original chorale. The freedom of the setting, the symphonic-like treatment of the voices, and episodic material employed in this section also link this work to his later choral tone poems.

The first section sets verse one with melodic material based loosely on the (a) theme of the chorale. An extended pedal in the voices underscoring the image of the "beacon light" the church represents accompanies this theme. The repetition of this verse continues with the pedal accompaniment but now with more florid counterpoint. Here the mediant is heavily tonicized, as indicated in the chart below.

The second hymn verse, just six measures in length, is sung by the men. This short section is mostly in unison, and the contour is an embellished chromatic ascent. Here Christiansen does alter the original text, changing every instance of the word "you" to become "we," and "your" becoming "our," giving the text a much more inclusive character. The last third of this verse is omitted entirely: "Observe the rule: To others do as you would have them do to you."

How Fair the Church of Christ Shall Stand
arr. F. Melius Christiansen

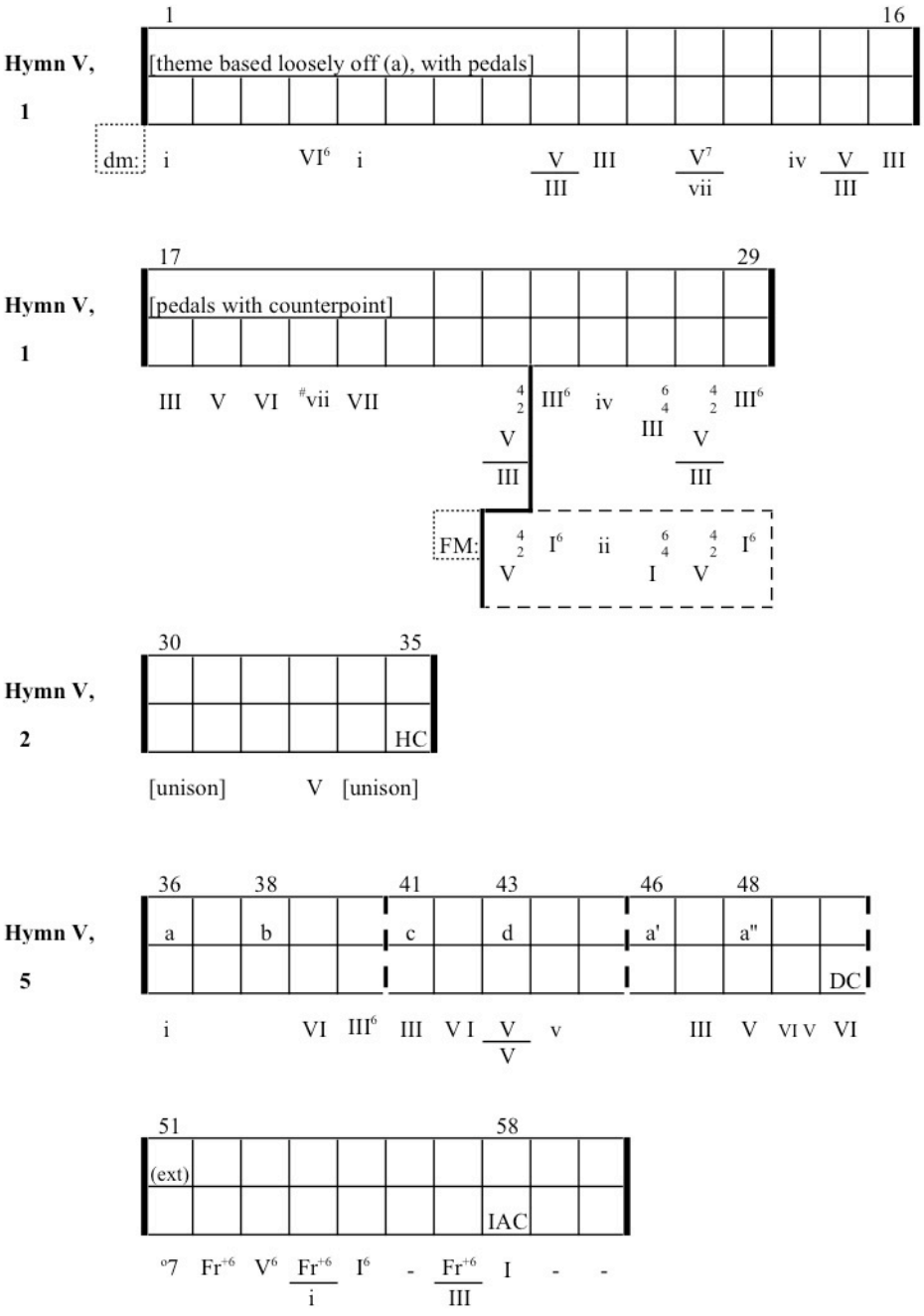

Chart 7: How Fair the Church of Christ Shall Stand, arr. F. Melius Christiansen

The chorale melody enters in measure 36 with the final hymn verse. Here Christiansen includes the marking "chorale" as if to underscore its previous absence. The sopranos sing the chorale with the tenors echoing in a quasi canon. The chorale is relatively unchanged. The pitches remain the same, but rhythmically the close of each small phrase is lengthened from one quarter-note in value to three. This in turn offsets the metrical accent of phrases (b), (d), and (a") because they no longer begin on an upbeat.

The counterpoint in this verse is well crafted, and very similar to the contrapuntal setting of the *Lamb of God*.[74] This section ends with a deceptive cadence in measure 50, moving to a fully diminished seventh chord in measure 51. Here Christiansen embarks on a series of French augmented sixth chords, first embellishing A in measure 52, then D in 54, and finally F sharp in measure 57.[75] This highly chromatic moment at the close of this arrangement displays how advanced Christiansen's harmony had become, demonstrating that he was not resigned to simple cadences if something more adventurous struck him.

How Fair the Church of Christ Shall Stand was a popular piece for the St. Olaf Choir up through the 1960s. It was featured on the 1920 and 1930 tours, and was among the most programmed of F. Melius' pieces during Olaf Christiansen's tenure as choral director.[76] The opening sections largely serve to set the stage for the chorale. The closing phrase extension from measure 51 to the end of the piece can be performed with liberal use of rubato, letting the highly chromatic harmonies inform the speed of the music. Like an organ prelude, these sections should be treated with a degree of spontaneity, and performed in the character of a fantasia.

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[74] Note: The main difference between the arrangements is in their harmonic language. *How Fair the Church* exceeds *Lamb of God* in the use of advanced chromatic harmonies.

[75] Note: There could be alternative analyses for these chords, especially since they all occur in third inversion (4-2) resolving to first inversion (6) sonorities. One possible analysis could be a dominant flat-five chord, but in this case you would expect the fifth to resolve down, and this is the very pitch that Christiansen resolves chromatically up. Another possible analysis might be a dominant augmented eleventh chord, in which one would expect the augmented eleventh to resolve up.

[76] Shaw, 352.

Lost in the Night

Christiansen's *Lost in the Night* arrangement is one of his later chorale fantasias, first appearing on the 1930 tour programs and copyrighted for publication by Augsburg Publishing House in 1932. The chorale version was not in *The Lutheran Hymnary*, but added to the later *St. Olaf College Songbook*. The melody is credited as a Finnish Folk tune, and its contour belies a secular rather than sacred origin. The dramatic ascending minor sixths that highlight the beginning of the (a) phrases (see chart below) are especially atypical of a chorale, as large leaps are not usually prescribed for a sight-reading congregation. This chorale, like most of the melodies Christiansen favored, places heavy emphasis on the mediant key area.

According to the *St. Olaf College Songbook*, the text is from a "translation of a Norwegian rendering of a Finnish Song, by Olav Lee, 1929."[77] The text is very metrical, presenting problems for the prospective translator. Specifically each (a) and (b) phrase is comprised of three dactyl feet followed by a trochee. Since any translation would have to deal not only with translating the meaning of the text but also the rhythmic pattern, it is likely that certain compromises had to be made. How faithful the English version is to the original Finnish, having first passed through Norwegian, remains a question.

[77] *St. Olaf College Songbook*, 357.

Chart 8: Lost in the Night, Finnish Folk Tune

Christiansen opens his arrangement with a five-measure introduction, which places the (c) motive in the bass section, and ends with a half cadence. The first major section is set in quasi canon between the sopranos and the tenors, the same compositional technique Christiansen used in *Lamb of God* and *How Fair the Church of Christ Shall Stand*. In this section the melody is true to the chorale, but the submediant is tonicized instead of the mediant, and the (d) melody does not close with a cadence, but rather prolongs the arrival of tonic until measure 14.

Measure 14 functions not only to close the previous section, but also to provide a one-bar introduction to the next formal section, for solo voice with choral accompaniment. This "introductory" material becomes the main accompaniment figure for the next two verses. The rhythmic and textual genesis of this motive comes from a metric diminution of the (c) and (d) phrases. The text for (c) and (d) is the same, "he is coming soon," is reused for this accompaniment. The rhythm for the accompaniment is also the (c) and (d) rhythm, but with all the note lengths cut in half, creating a motor-like rhythm.

This repetition of pitches and text in a motor-like rhythm is an instrumental style of composition, not a vocal one. This transition to a more instrumental, or symphonic conception in Christiansen's choral writing began in the 1930s and is typical of his later compositions.

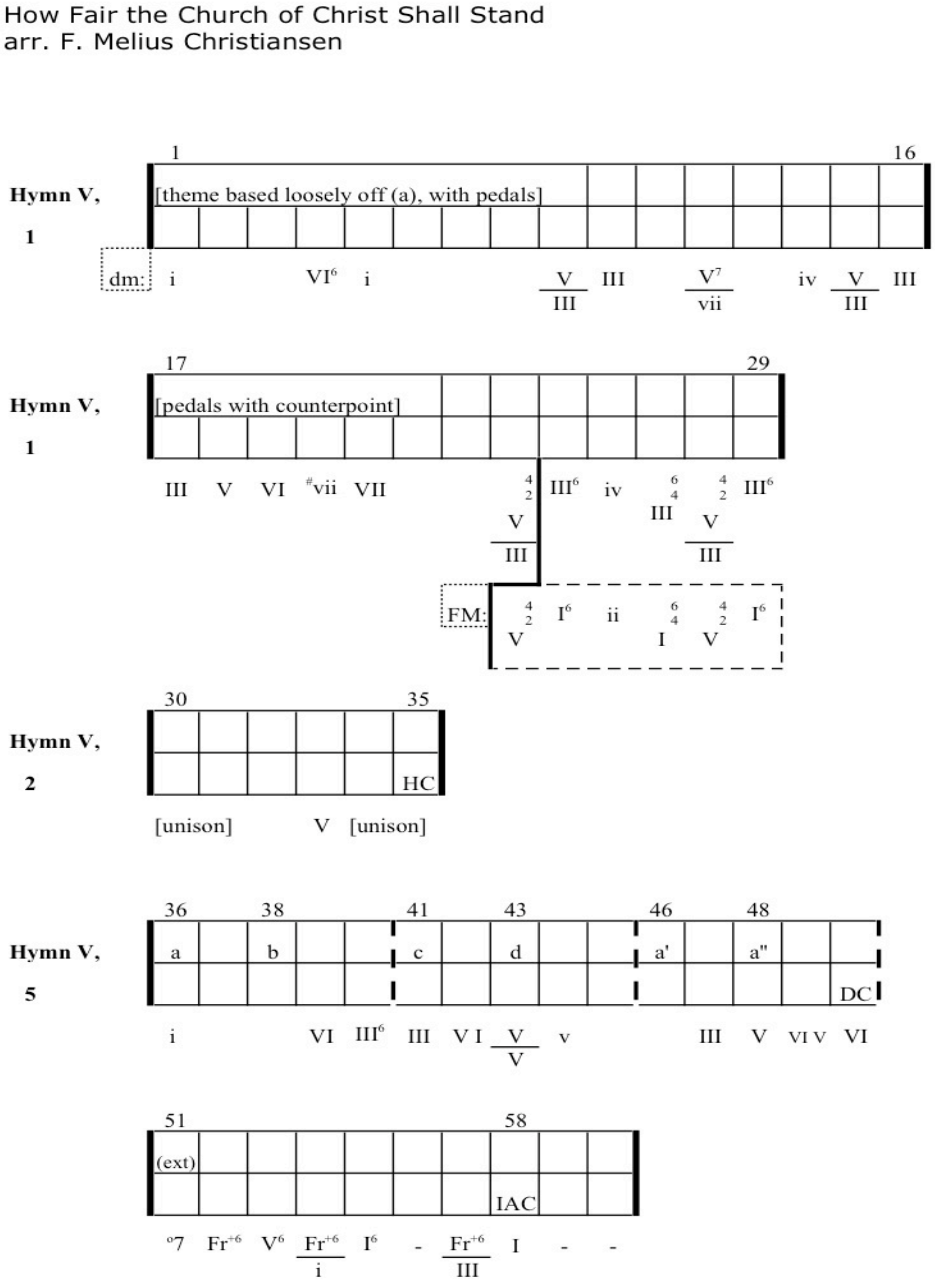

Chart 9: Lost in the Night, arr. F. Melius Christiansen

In the second repetition of the chorale melody, Christiansen moves to the third hymn verse, and sets the text for solo soprano with choral accompaniment. It is quite likely that the voice of Gertrude Boe Overby was in his mind as soloist. She was the preferred soprano soloist during Christiansen's tenure with the choir. This time the (d) phrase does close in a perfect authentic cadence (in measure 22). In measure 23, the tenors alone prolong their B natural, the dominant. This lone sounding of the dominant pitch serves as a pivot point for the major transition of the piece.

In measure 24 we arrive in E major with new melodic material, a new time signature, and a faster tempo. Here the visual effect of the chart is deceiving. While this sections looks to be twice as long as others, the measures are half as long as Christiansen switches from common time to 2/4. In addition, Christiansen writes "*tranquillo con moto*" indicating a faster tempo. In duration, this section has equal or less weight as the two sections preceding it.

The melody in the E major section, marked [e] in the chart, comes from an inversion of the (c) melody used at the very beginning of the piece. The joyous music here exemplifies perfectly this fourth verse of the hymn. While the other three verses contain an anguished desperation for the saving grace of Christ, this verse paints a contrasting picture of salvation. The final words of the verse "come and save us soon! Come and save us soon!" are omitted; instead Christiansen lingers on the word "redeeming" creating an elaborate and chromatic move to the dominant.

Beginning in measure 37, Christiansen extends the previous material with motivic development that propels through each vocal section. The extension from measures 37 to 53 is another example of an instrumental treatment of the choral ensemble. The meaning of the text is

subservient to the overall musical effect, and beginning with the half-diminished chord in measure 43, the treble writing certainly evokes the sounds of a violin section.

C natural and G natural are reintroduced in measures 37 to 51, functioning as a retransition to E minor. The use of the half-diminished chord and the minor subdominant are both borrowed from the minor mode. In measure 54 the introductory motor-like rhythm begins anew in E minor, and the soloist begins a measure later with the second hymn verse.

Christiansen alters the text in this verse, partly because the original text makes little sense grammatically. He turns the puzzling "Shall we who have it no light let him borrow?" into the still somewhat troublesome "Shall we, no light and no comfort him borrow?" The (c) and (d) text for this verse is "Will you help us soon?" but Christiansen favors the text from verse one, "Will not day come soon?"

What follows the verse in measure 63 is not technically a coda (as there has not been an authentic cadence to this point in the piece,) yet these seven measures represent classic Christiansen closing material. Two iterations of the (a) melodic theme occur with the (c) and (d) text, both culminating in half cadences. In the final two measures Christiansen provides a textual trope on the (c) and (d) text, with "He is coming soon." He sets this above his introductory/accompaniment material from the two solo verses, and ends with the major tonic, a rich E major sonority.

It was a fairly common practice for Christiansen to end a minor chorale setting in the parallel major. Some may see this ray of textual hope painted in the major tonic as little more than a subtle wink to the audience. This combined with the instrumental character of much of the writing, and the sweeping melancholy of the minor sixths marking the melody, has led some critics to find this piece dated. When approaching this work, it is best to utilize the same stylistic

sensibilities one would reserve for the sweetly lyric music of Ralph Vaughan Williams. Note that Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) is almost an exact contemporary of Christiansen (1871-1955).

O Day Full of Grace

The text for *O Day Full of Grace* is an anonymous Danish text of the 14th century. It was set by Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig, and later translated by a small team of individuals in 1911, including Carl Døving. This was the same team that provided the text for *Built on the Rock, the Church Shall Stand*. Along with Døving, Oluf Hanson Smeby and George Alfred Taylor Rygh are also credited for the translation. The three men were all graduates of Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, although at different times. Smeby and Døving were both editors of *The Lutheran Hymnary*, while Rygh was an active as a teacher and pastor throughout the upper Midwest, and briefly taught at St. Olaf College from 1910-1913.[78]

The chorale tune is by Christoph Ernst Friedrich Weyse, a prominent Danish composer who lived from 1774 to 1842. Weyse was named court composer in Copenhagen in 1819, and the *O Day Full of Grace* melody comes from an 1826 collection. The setting of this chorale is identical in *The Lutheran Hymnary* and the *St. Olaf College Songbook*, but reduced from six to five verses for the *St. Olaf College Songbook*. The text itself has a regular metric accent, alternating lines of nine syllables with lines of eight (9 8 9 8 9 8). The musical setting of the text follows these literary divisions, with each line of text receiving its own melody, and every eight-syllable phrase closing in a cadence. The resulting form is charted below.

[78] Compiled from *Nethymnal*, http://nethymnal.org/bio/s/m/e/smeby_oh.htm, http://nethymnal.org/bio/r/y/rygh_gt.htm, and http://nethymnal.org/bio/d/o/doving_c.htm, (accessed April 21, 2009); along with the *St. Olaf College Songbook*, 197.

O Day Full of Grace, Which We Behold
Chorale, arr. C.E.F. Weyse, 1826

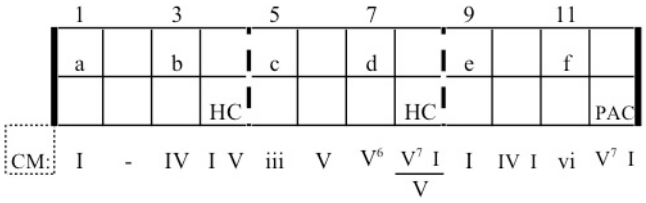

Chart 10: O Day Full of Grace, chorale

The choral arrangement of this work takes on almost the same large-scale structure as does *Lost in the Night*. Both pieces include an introduction (both of five measures) followed by two sections utilizing the chorale, a third section that sets the hymn text to new music and changes the meter and emotional effect, and then a return to the chorale in subsequent sections. The effect of the third formal section that dramatically changes the musical setting is striking in both cases, and it serves to paint the chorale melody in new light.

The formal structure of *O Day Full of Grace* and *Lost in the Night* employ a third large section that contrasts the preceding musical material, before returning to the original. In both cases, the third section breaks the monotony of the repeated melody, while offering an opportunity to paint the text and highlight the return to the chorale.

O Day Full of Grace begins solemnly with a pedal in the basses, joined by the tenors and altos. The harmony shifts very slowly over the opening bars, adding gravity to that music that follows. The first two notes in the basses are F sharp up the fourth to B, giving the impression at first that the piece will commence in B minor. In measure four, the tenors descend stepwise from F sharp to D while the basses ascend stepwise from F sharp to G, a subtle shift that brings

the piece to G major in measure 5. Measure 5 then resolves to an arrival on D major in bar 6, a plagal cadence perhaps foreshadowing the devout tone of the work.

The first major formal section sets the first hymn verse in a manner that is faithful to the original chorale. The harmonies have been altered by Christiansen, but not the sequence of two half-cadences leading to a perfect authentic cadence. The second formal section follows this pattern with the second hymn verse, this time beginning with richly voiced writing for the lower voices to include the altos and sopranos.

After the second section closes in measure 29, it is common practice to cut from the close of the second section (measure 29) to the bass entrance on the last beat of measure 53. The most recent printing of the work (2006, Augsburg Fortress) contains an explanatory note on the back cover, indicating that this cut reflects the changes in the performance practice of this piece with the St. Olaf Choir under the auspices of Olaf Christiansen, Kenneth Jennings, and Anton Armstrong. The piece is undeniably effective when using this cut, however the often deleted music is wonderful and worthy of exploration. Richard Sparks, Director of Choral Activities at Pacific Lutheran University until 2001, said the following about this deleted music:

> When I first came to PLU in 1983, the tradition there was to cut of the third verse. This was most likely a long standing tradition, since Gunnar Malmin, who conducted the choir for 24 years, was a student of Olaf Christiansen--and Maurice Skones, my immediate predecessor, who was at PLU 19 years, was a student of Paul J. Christiansen. To me, the piece seemed incomplete without the third verse, which was the major contrast in verses, and set up the final verse. So I always performed it uncut. The current conductor of the Choir of the West, Dr. Richard Nance, also does the same.[79]

Beginning in measure 30, a solo tenor enters with an introductory theme based on the later [g] theme of measure 37. Here the melody, setting the fourth hymn verse, is also

[79] Richard Sparks, quoted from an email correspondence with the author. Dr. Richard Sparks was Director of Choral Activities and conductor of the Choir of the West at Pacific Lutheran Universty from 1983 to 2001

onomatopoeic, sounding like the birdcall the text is describing. The introduction ends with an authentic cadence in measure 37, which coincides with a sudden shift to triple meter. The sopranos are entirely absent from this verse, which is set for a unison alto melody accompanied by divisi men. The structure of this verse from measure 37 to 53 is exactly the same as the chorale, but the melody is different. Six two-measure sub-phrases are still present and grouped into three larger phrases, the third of which is extended.

In measure 48 we expect this section to end with a perfect authentic cadence in order to retain the structure of the earlier verses. But, an F sharp dominant chord resolves deceptively to G major in measure 49, with a retardation from the A sharp up to the B in the tenors. The G major then extends to an A^7 chord resolving perfectly to D, creating a large IV – V^7 – I sequence over measures 49-52.

O Day Full of Grace
arr. F. Melius Christiansen

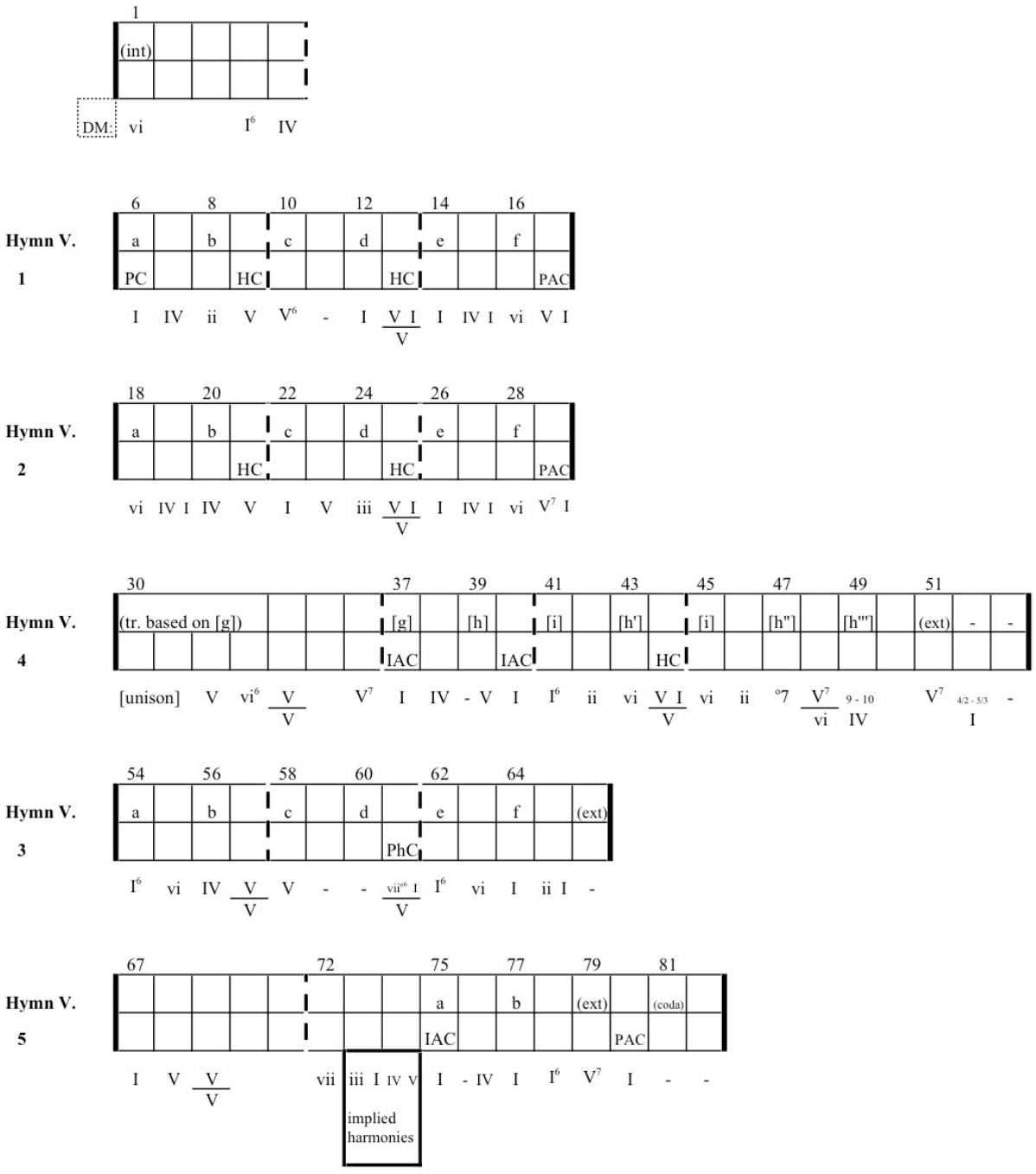

Chart 11: O Day Full of Grace, arr. F. Melius Christiansen

At this moment the basses sing the chorale tune, singing the third hymn verse. The upper voices divide into quarter and sixteenth-note counterpoint, painting the exuberance of the melody. Because the basses are singing the melody, the harmony of this section is slightly altered from the previous choral sections. This subtle shift in harmony allows Christiansen to omit the usual sequence of cadences, helping to set up the grandeur of the arrival in measure 75. In measure 57 there is a half cadence on a secondary dominant. In 61 there is a Phrygian half cadence, but it is missing the usual fifth relation of sequential cadential chords. The motion to the tonic in 65 is also weak, being simply a resolution from the supertonic back to tonic.

Starting in measure 67 the fifth hymn verse begins with a dramatic upward leap cascading through the voices. Here the harmonic motion is somewhat static because in 69 the basses arrive on a B pedal tone. Throughout the pedal tone (measures 69 through 71) the harmonies are stationary. In 72 the basses resolve up to C sharp creating a vii^{o} chord. Here the basses drop out, and the upper three voices ascend through C sharp to D, then E, finally resolving to a resolute D major chord on the downbeat of 75.

This climactic arrival has been heightened by the lack of strong cadences preceding it, the absence of a strong tonic from measure 68 through 74, and the omission of the basses directly before 75 in order to add weight to their re-entry.

Verse five of the hymn speaks of the transition of humans from Earth into heaven. The opening line states that not with fear, not with trepidation, not with sorrow, but "with *joy* we depart for our fatherland,"[80] (often altered to be "with joy we depart for the promised land," both versions of text are written in the 2006 publication). In measure 72, the upper voices begin an ascending figure, clearly depicting that assent into heaven, and the arrival in 75 occurs on the final "land" syllable, depicting that arrival. At this moment the upper three voices are quickly

[80] Italics added by the author.

joined by the basses who underscore the heavenly association using the hymn text "and there we shall walk in endless light."

Only two lines of verse five are used, both written in the above paragraph. They correspond to melody fragments (a) and (e) of the chorale. Christiansen also uses the (e) text ("and there we shall walk in endless light") on both the (a) and (b) melodic fragments in measures 75 into 78. The final two-measure coda is shorter than is usual for Christiansen, but a long coda is not needed for closure since a dynamic climax had already been achieved in measures 75 through 77.

O Day Full of Grace was among the most programmed of F. Melius' works during Olaf Christiansen's tenure at St. Olaf.[81] The St. Olaf Choir has sung the work at Grieg's house in Norway, for the Norwegian royal family on their visit to St. Olaf, at Olaf Christiansen's funeral, and on Anton Armstrong's first program with the choir in 1990. Between 1944 and 1997 the work has appeared 11 times on St. Olaf Choir programs.

The opening can be taken quite slow. It is marked in the score at MM=48 for the quarter note. When the sopranos enter with the melody in measure 6, a tempo closer to quarter note equals 60 is often employed to move the chorale along, despite no written change in the score. Christiansen's performance style was a product of the age in regards to tempi and rubato. Numerous performing options are available to the conductor, and the best guide is an ear to clear enunciation of the text combined with one's own sense of style.

[81] Shaw, 352.

Praise to the Lord

The author of this hymn is Joachim Neander, a German author and musician who died at the age of 30 in 1680. He is perhaps most famous as the author of two cantatas by J. S. Bach, *Herr Gott, Beherrscher aller Dinge* (BWV 120a) and *Lobe den Herren, den mächtigen König der Ehren* (BWV 137). It was this latter text, *Lobe den Herren*, that was translated by Catherine Winkworth into *Praise to the Lord*, in 1863.[82]

Catherine Winkworth was a nineteenth century Englishwoman and a prolific translator of German religious texts, having produced four books of translations by her death in 1878. *Praise to the Lord* was among the texts in her 1863 book, *The Chorale Book for England*.[83] The translated text is in seven verses, five of which Christiansen chose to include in *The Lutheran Hymnary*. Text and music are identical in both *The Lutheran Hymnary* and the *St. Olaf College Songbook*, the latter crediting F. Melius for the chorale arrangement.

Christiansen, in turn, used three of the verses for his choir arrangement (verses one, three, and five,) without altering the text. There is one word in the final verse that might puzzle some younger singers, "gladly for *aye* we adore him!"[84] "Aye," might seem peculiar to modern ears, but it is the same word used in naval confirmations (as in "aye, aye captain") or to cast a positive vote in parliament and is a word that expresses truth or assent. Thus the line could be translated as "gladly for *truly* we adore him!" or "gladly *oh yes* we adore him!" Care should be taken with the pronunciation of this poetic word. Traditionally it is pronounced "ae" as in "fate."

The text is irregular in meter, split syllabically as (14 14 4 7 8). The melody is equally irregular, but is well suited to this asymmetrical text. The chart below highlights the melodic

[82] *Nethymnal*, http://nethymnal.org/bio/n/e/a/neander_j.htm (accessed April 18, 2009).
[83] *Nethymnal*, http://www.cyberhymnal.org/bio/w/i/n/winkworth_c.htm (accessed April 18, 2009).
[84] Italics added by the author.

construction, two equal and repeating (a) phrases, followed by short yet distinct (b) and (c) phrases before ending with a truncated (a'). The (a') melody is built from the second half of the (a) melody, with different rhythmic placement of the beginning of the ascent, and a higher climax. The ends of the (a) and (a') melodies are harmonized with a ii^6 – V – I perfect authentic cadence. These cadences grow in intensity, first adding a seventh in measure 11, and then a lovely 5–3 suspension in the alto voice in measure 20.

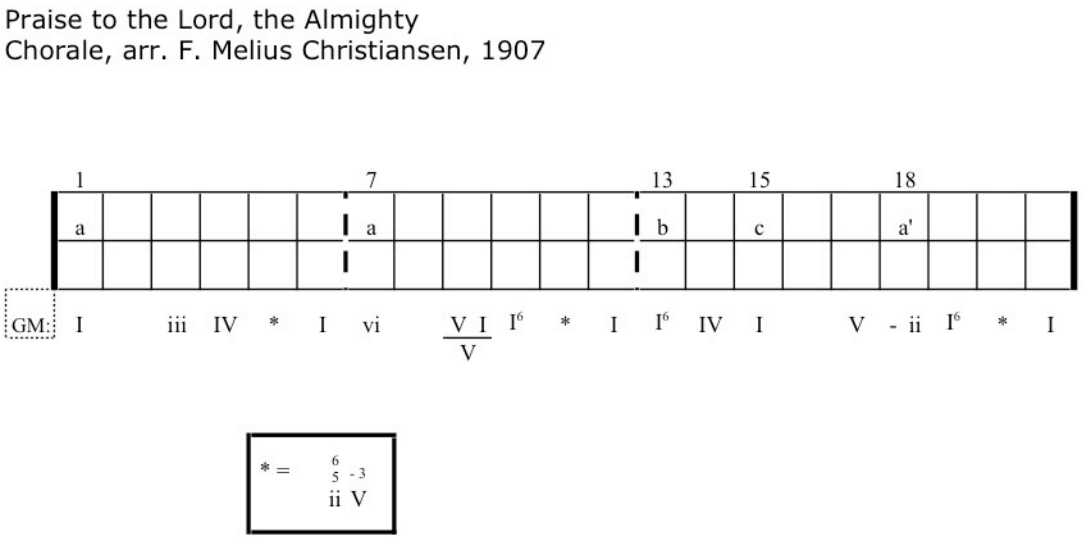

Chart 12: Praise to the Lord, Chorale

The most recent published version was edited in 1957 (after F. Melius' death) by Olaf Christiansen, and published by Augsburg Fortress. This version contains an organ part that is *ad libitum*, yet does not simply follow the choral parts. It includes a fifteen-measure introduction, and fast counterpoint to compliment the opening unison singing from the sopranos. While the organ part would undoubtedly aid choirs in their intonation, this work is most often performed unaccompanied. The unaccompanied version will be analyzed below.

Praise to the Lord
arr. F. Melius Christiansen, ed. Olaf Christiansen 1957

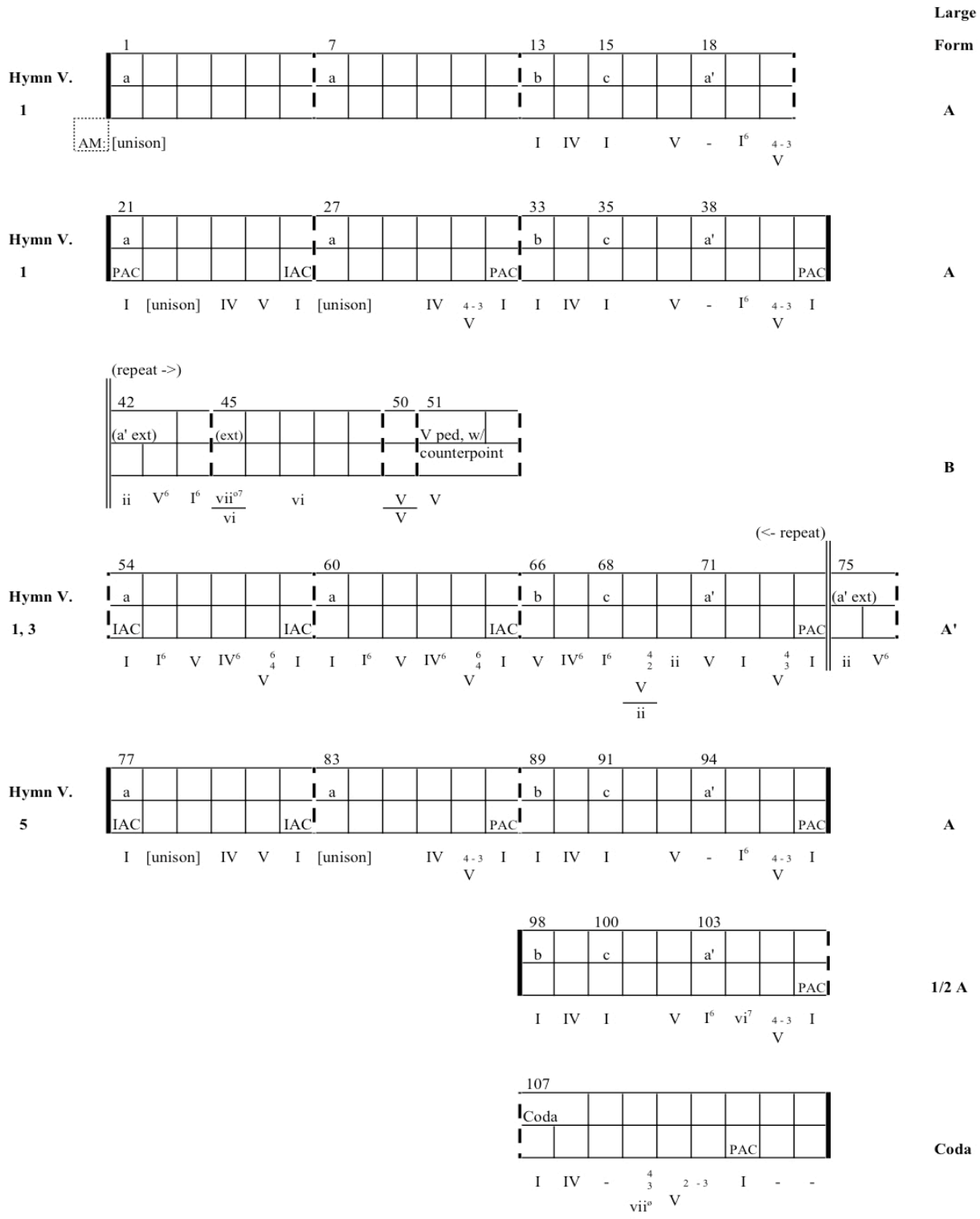

Chart 13: Praise to the Lord, arr. F. Melius Christiansen

Christiansen sets verses one, three, and five of the hymn. He repeats verse one three times, resulting in five full repetitions of the chorale. The large-scale structure of his arrangement is noted vertically along the right hand side of the chart. This form is:

[A A | B A' B A' | A $^{1/2}$A Coda]

Figure 3: Praise to the Lord Structure

Each large (A) section is virtually identical in structure and harmony to the chorale. Christiansen tends to elide these large (A) sections together. The first section has its cadence in measure 21, simultaneous to the beginning of the second (A) section. The (A') section is different only in its harmonization of the chorale, and this harmonic difference is largely the result of having the chorale as a bassline. The coda follows the perfect authentic cadence in measure 106. This material is essentially an extended I – IV – V – I cadence. There is an interesting retardation in measure 111, where the first tenors continue their F sharp from measure 110, creating a V^9 sonority, before resolving up to the G sharp leading tone in 112.

The (B) section utilizes entirely new material, introduced by an extension of the (a') figure, which begins in the final two measures of the preceding (a') phrase, another example of phrase elision. In this section the counterpoint in the women's voices is very florid, and the harmonies the most adventurous of the whole arrangement. This treble counterpoint figure continues as accompaniment to the men's verses beginning in measure 54. The major structural fulcrum of the piece occurs at measure 50. The harmony arrives on B major, the dominant of the dominant. This energy from the secondary dominant propels the counterpoint into three

equally energetic measures above a dominant pedal (on E). This in turn returns the composition to the chorale melody in 54.

The 1957 edition contains the tempo marking of quarter note equals 126, which is an excellent benchmark for the performer, although many begin the work slower, perhaps 116. An archived recording of Christiansen conducting this work uses the resolute tempo of 108 per quarter, though the first six measures are even slower. In Christiansen's recording each quarter of the chorale melody receives a small accent and weight. The (B) section is sung without any rubato, and when the women move into quarter notes they are sung separated and with precision. This steadfastness of tempo continues until the "*molto largamente*" marked in measure 98, where Christiansen halves his tempo. From here to the rest of the piece he employs rubato, beginning phrases slightly faster and relaxing at the cadences. At measure 54 the men move directly to the third verse of text, and ignore the repeat signs at 74, therefore, this may be considered an option in performance.

Some modern choirs performing this work take pains to smooth out the articulation of the chorale, with the aim of creating a more natural arc to the longer phrases, rather than emphasizing individual pitches as is sometimes evident in older recordings. Many contemporary choirs stretch the note values in measure 50, underscoring this particular moment's structural significance, before returning *a tempo* to the counterpoint in 51.

This piece requires a great deal of independence from the singers, particularly the women, and exemplifies Christiansen's propensity to set men's chorus against treble chorus. So much of the writing in this work employs the men and trebles in separate motives that, at times, the piece resembles a work scored for double choir. Yet with all the beautiful counterpoint

employed to adorn the chorale, the true power of this arrangement is in the simple yet profound unison in the trebles or the men, symbolizing the union that is a corporate expression of faith.

Wake, Awake

Philipp Nicolai was a German Lutheran pastor, an author, and a musician, who lived from 1556 to 1608. In 1599 he published a collection of hymns called *Freudenspiegel des ewigen Lebens* (Joyous Mirror of Eternal Life). Within this collection was *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, which has a long and famous life that includes a cantata setting by J. S. Bach (BWV 140).

There are several English translations, including "Sleepers, Wake!" by Frances E. Cox, and "Wake, O Wake!" by Francis C. Burkitt. Another translation, "Wake, Awake," closely resembles the translation in *The Lutheran Hymnary* and is by Catherine Winkworth (the Englishwoman who also translated Christiansen's version of *Praise to the Lord*). Her translation is contained in her publication *Lyra Germanica* in 1858.

The hymn found in *The Lutheran Hymnary* is a translation credited to William Cook in 1871. Cook was a preacher, poet, and private publisher who lived in Salem, Massachusetts from 1807 to 1876. In the 1953 printing of the Christiansen score, the editors added the word "cento" next to William Cook's name, indicating that the translation was taken primarily from Cook but also from other established authors. The hymn that Christiansen set is the exact text found in *The Lutheran Hymnary*. From the *Hymnary* version, the editors of the *St. Olaf College Songbook* changed the final verse from "no vision ever brought, no ear hath ever caught, such bliss and joy" to "to mortal eyes and ears, what glory now appears! Hallelujah!" Apparently Christiansen preferred the older text from *The Lutheran Hymnary* to the updated text in the *St. Olaf College Songbook*.

Nicolai's chorale tune is among the longest and most complex melodies that Christiansen arranged. Because the hymn syllables are irregular, the number of beats per phrase is also irregular. Every phrase begins on an upbeat, and the beginning triadic assent, the motive most commonly associated with the chorale, begins with two strong upbeats. When J. S. Bach set the chorale in the final movement of his cantata BWV 140, he regularized the rhythm and set it in common time. The Nicolai melody found in the source hymnals is in 3/2 time with three measures of 4/2. It is this rhythmic scheme that Christiansen uses in his arrangement.

The chorale is tripartite, with each of the three phrases closed by the same (c) sub-phrase. This (c) phrase begins with a four-beat measure while the remainder of the chorale is in three. The first two sections utilize the same melody with altered harmony. The third phrase begins with a repeated descending scalar motive (d), and then a truncated "hallelujah" motive (e). This is followed by the (f) sub-phrase that functions in the place of the (b) phrase, bringing us to (c) to close the chorale.

Christiansen's arrangement of *Wake, Awake* is among his most complex and ~~most~~ famous compositions. Bergmann notes that

> in Christiansen's first prolific burst of serious choral composition his creativity sought expression in strict contrapuntal arrangements of sixteenth-century chorale melodies (his "developed chorales")…such rugged pieces as "Wake, Awake" and "Praise to the Lord."[85]

In *Wake, Awake* Christiansen's masterful counterpoint creates a virtuosic choral piece that simultaneously features the technical proficiency of the ensemble and highlights the beauty of the original chorale.

In his arrangement, Christiansen often repeats the melodic material of a sub-phrase, exchanging it between several choral parts. This particular method of counterpoint leads to

[85] Bergmann, 184.

many incidental harmonies that are relatively non-functional. This is reflected in the chart below, which displays a harmonic analysis with a greater level of abstraction than with Christiansen's other works.

Christiansen's setting of the chorale includes more repetition and manipulation of the melodic material than in most of his other arrangements. The large-scale structure of Christiansen's arrangement is identical to that of the original chorale, with two long sections setting two hymn verses, each composed of three phrases containing the same thematic material as the phrases of the chorale. Yet within each phrase the thematic material is repeated, extended, truncated, or otherwise manipulated.

The first section sets the first verse of the hymn. The piece begins with a straightforward setting of the (a) material, with the (b) sub-phrase first seen in the soprano section now repeated in the altos and tenors (bAT), then the basses (bB). In measure 7 the (c) phrase is presented in 4/2, but resolves to an imperfect authentic cadence, at which time the sopranos and altos move forward with the renewed (b) theme, spilling into another (c) theme in measure 10 that closes this phrase in a perfect authentic cadence.

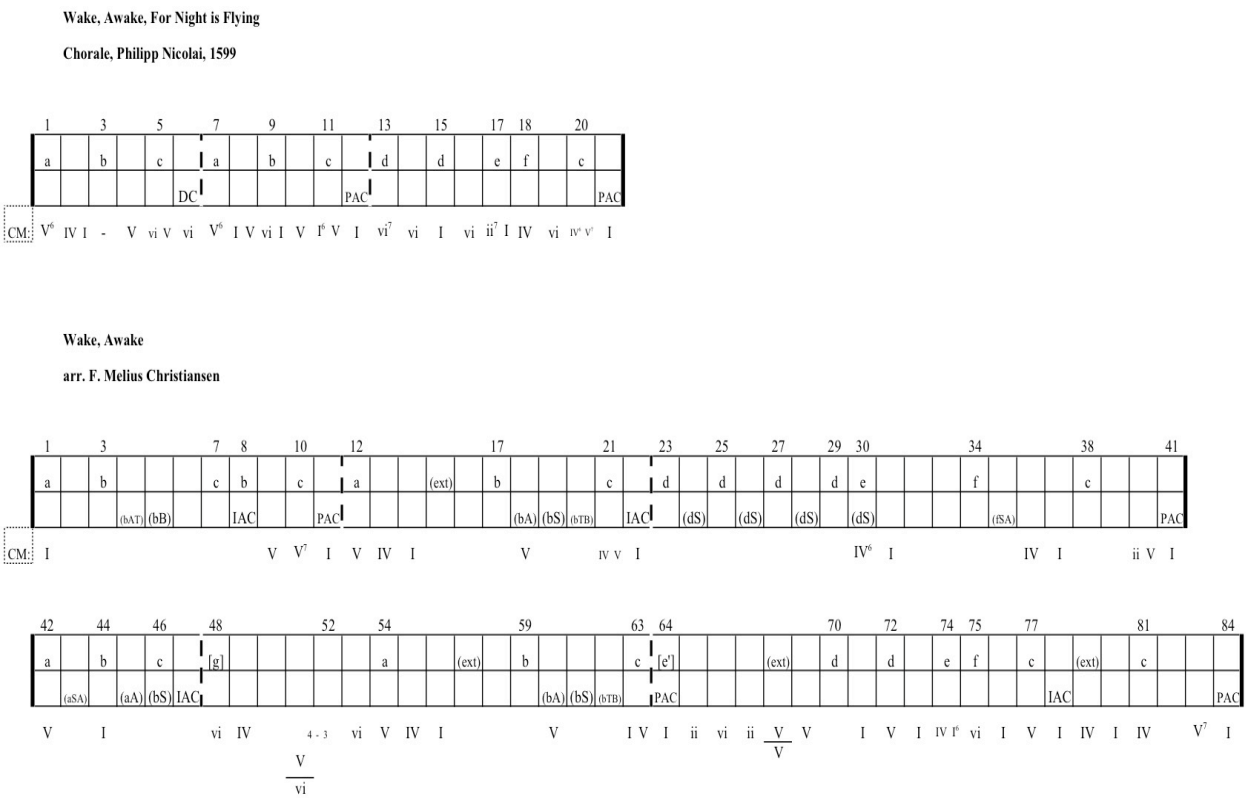

Chart 14: Wake, Awake, chorale and arrangement

The second phrase begins in measure 12 (with a pickup) and is the most similar to the original chorale, with the (a) phrase extended through an additional cadence applied to the words "is tolling." The (b) material is given to all the voice parts, something Christiansen does frequently in this composition. When the (c) sub-phrase occurs in measure 21 the large phrase comes to a close with an authentic cadence.

The next phrase begins in measure 23 and displays some of the contrapuntal skill and sensitivity to text that is a hallmark of Christiansen's early compositions. Here the (d) phrase is repeated in the altos, with the sopranos echoing a measure behind. There is some inherently counterintuitive text painting in the original chorale where the descending scalar motive (d) is used to set the text "rise up with willing feet." Christiansen balances this by placing an

ascending scalar motive in the basses to mirror the altos, and echoing it in the tenors, to mirror the sopranos. The entire section also ascends in a scalar fashion, with the (d) motive and its tenor-bass mirror beginning on G in measure 23, A in 25, B in 27, and C in 29.

In measure 30 the natural finish of the alto and bass lines lead to a IV^6 chord, an effective setup for an "amen." Here Christiansen utilizes the (e) melody, which is present in the high soprano. However the (e) section is taken over by a strong rhythmic motive reflective of the athletic joy inherent in "hallelujah." This rhythmic motive is repeated in measure 78, and is the genesis of the counterpoint that begins in 64.

In measure 34 the (f) melody is presented in the tenors and basses, echoed a half measure behind in the altos, and then a full measure behind in the sopranos. In measure 38 the rhythm of the (c) theme is doubled, as a means to provide closure to the section.

Measure 41 not only contains the perfect authentic cadence that concludes the first section, but also the two pickup notes of the (a) theme for the second section. Since there is no fermata at this point (unlike in measures 12, 47, and 52) we can assume Christiansen intends the second section to follow without pause.

Although the phrase from measure 42 to 47 is filled with repeated thematic material, the structure of the phrase most closely resembles the original chorale. This section sets the third hymn verse. Unique in this section is the use of the (a) theme to accompany the (b) material in measure 45, and the use of the (b) material to accompany the (c) theme in measure 46. Beginning in measure 48 Christiansen employs a new melody [g], based rhythmically on (a). The [g] theme is sung by the men's voices, and coalesces in a dominant chord of the submediant, with a strong four-three suspension. The text here, "by Thy pearly gates in wonder," underscores

the “wonder” both in its dramatic use of the men’s choral texture, and the movement from C major to a resolution on an E major triad in measure 52.

The close of this section is lengthened with a fermata and almost a full measure of rest. The (a) material resumes in the pickup to measure 54. From measure 54 through 64, this material is a near repeat of the phrase from 12 to 22, although some changes have been made. The beginning (a) material is placed in the women’s voices instead of the men’s, and the close of this phrase elides with the next phrase in 64.

The perfect authentic cadence in measure 64 begins with virtuosic melismas in the treble voices reminiscent of the treble counterpoint in *Praise to the Lord*. The material, marked [e'] in the chart, is new but follows the basic contour of the original [e] melody. If the [e'] were an exact repeat, it should begin on D, rise through E to F, repeat F and then descend to E. The [e'] treble counterpoint rises in the first sopranos to D in measure 65, then E in 66, followed by F in measure 67. At this point we would expect the melody to return to E in 68, but the move to F sharp extends the phrase with a secondary dominant, setting up the entrance of the (d) theme in the men in measure 70. The connection to the (e) theme is further underscored by the text “hallelujah.”

From measure 70 through to measure 77 the men sing the unaltered chorale melody in unison, while the women sing virtuosic counterpoint above. This moment is another mirror of *Praise to the Lord*, which utilizes this same approach in its central large (A') section. The imperfect authentic cadence in measure 78 is quickly followed by the “hallelujah” rhythmic motive first employed in measure 30. In 81 the (c) theme is presented for the last time, doubled in length as in measure 38. Here Christiansen includes the marking “broad” in the score, and

includes a breath marking in the middle of the phrase (something not included in the measure 38-41 iteration) indicating that the section be taken much slower.

Before *Beautiful Savior* became established as the traditional final concert piece of the St. Olaf Choir, *Wake, Awake* enjoyed that position. It was used as the final number on concert programs from 1913-1918, 1920, 1924, 1928, and 1930, with *Beautiful Savior* taking its place from 1931 to the present. Since these pieces evoke such an opposite effect it is interesting to consider them in the same function on a program. For as lush, quiet, beautiful, and profound as *Beautiful Savior* is, *Wake, Awake* is an energetic tour de force.

An archival recording of Olaf Christiansen conducting this work clearly displays all of the options available for the perspective conductor. Although the opening tempo marking is 76 to the half-note, Olaf Christiansen conducts 92 to the half note in measure 3, with the beginning just slightly slower. The section from measure 12 through 16 is taken around 48 to the half note, with the cadences lengthened even more, but the return to the (b) theme in measure 17 returns immediately to 92 to the half note. This tempo continues until the (c) theme in measure 38, which is proceeded by a substantial *ritard* in measure 37.

The section from measure 42 to 47 is taken a bit slower than 92, with a long, gradual *rallentando* to the fermata in 47. Interestingly, in this recorded example, Olaf completely omits the men's section "by thy pearly gates in wonder" from measures 47 through 52, and instead moves directly to the women's entrance on the same text in 53. Here the theme is taken quite slowly, just as the parallel place in the first section (measure 12). As in the first time, the return to the (b) theme in 59 is accompanied by a return to the 92 tempo, in this instance with an added *accelerando*. In the final "broad" section, Olaf slightly alters the rhythm of the work so that each

of the final notes (beginning with "praise") is close to equal length, specifically the timing of the half-notes is lengthened.

The above description is an example of only one performance, and is not intended as a comprehensive guide, but more as a collection of options available to the perspective conductor. Recordings of F. Melius conducting this piece include tempos as fast as 108 to the half note during the (b), (d), and (e) thematic sections. F. Melius employs exactly the same kind of rubato as Olaf, however, he generally uses this expressive devise to a lesser degree. Beginning in measure 64 with the fast and virtuosic treble writing, it seems that F. Melius' tempi are influenced by the speed in which his women could cleanly articulate the eighth notes.

In general, recordings of both F. Melius and Olaf Christiansen utilize a robust and athletic sound, with each melodic half-note receiving a weighted accent, especially in the opening (a) theme. Clearly the Christiansen's liked vitality in their rendering of the chorale melody. Modern performances may incline more toward presenting a long melodic line, but they should not sacrifice a strong and cleanly intoned chorale.

Conclusion

In the above chapter I have analyzed and provided historical context for the Chorale Fantasias of F. Melius Christiansen. While these six compositions represent only a fraction of his output within this genre, they represent each of the structural forms and techniques he employed in his arrangements. The following chapter will explore Christiansen's Tone Poems, focusing on two compositions, *Celestial Spring*, and *Psalm 50*. Unlike the Chorale Fantasias, the Tone Poems are fully original compositions, and in general they are products of Christiansen's later compositional life.

Chapter IV: The Choral Tone Poems

Introduction

Unlike many composers, Christiansen does not have clearly defined compositional periods. In general, his earlier works are dominated by chorale arrangements and fantasias and his later works are dominated by choral tone poems. This transition to choral tone poems was a gradual development beginning in the mid 1920s.

The name "tone poem" implies a link to the symphonic compositions of such composers as Franz Liszt (1811-1886) and Richard Strauss (1864-1949).[86] There are two obvious connections between the symphonists and Christiansen: freely defined forms and structures and a descriptive programmatic character. Occasionally Christiansen's pieces are not programmatic, but instead focus on vocal effects. In these works Christiansen composes for the choir as though it were an orchestra, often ignoring text and utilizing varying voice parts (SATB) for their particular vocal color. He also explored new formal structures (including multi-movement works), that included advanced chromatic harmonies, and a deemphasized text.

Psalm 50 stands alone as the choral tone poem that retains text as a central part of the composition. In many of the tone poems, all of the music was composed before the text was added. Because the text had to fit the music, it is often inferior in quality. Christiansen's biographer Bergmann notes this compositional trend:

> Until about 1925, to use that date as a convenient peg, the religious significance of the text was of prime importance to him. He was writing church music, so he used for his texts poetry with a definitely religious inspiration. Perhaps *Psalm 50* is the peak of this period. There more than in any other composition he achieved a complete union of text and music. The bulk of his music after *Celestial Spring*,

[86] "Choral tone poem" is a description coined by Rene Clausen in: Rene Clausen, "The Compositional Style of F. Melius Christiansen." *Choral Journal* 37, no. 4 (November 1996): 19-26. See also within this document, Chapter II: The Hymn Arrangements.

> however, cannot strictly be called church music. If a religious theme appears at all in the texts, it is in the form of a diluted pantheism. And the increasingly secularized texts were, on the whole, greatly inferior to those of his earlier compositions. They are usually poor poetry, if they should even be called poetry, both in their aesthetic qualities and in their thought. A colleague in the music department has furnished Christiansen with many of the lyrics for his later compositions, and it is obvious that the writer is choosing words merely for their vowel content, not for their meaning.[87]

Throughout Christiansen's life he cultivated an interest in original compositions, rather than simply arrangements of preexisting material. The tone poems represent Christiansen's realization of that interest. During his compositional study he kept numerous "motive books," in which he would record melodies he composed or overheard. He used these books as a first reference when drafting a new piece. By his death in 1955 he had accumulated a hundred or more such books.[88]

Though still an active teacher and conductor, during the 1930s and 1940s Christiansen turned more and more energy toward composition. The compositions from this later period enjoyed tremendous popularity in the middle part of the century but have largely left the modern performance repertory. The inconsistent quality of these works has adversely affected the entire collection. Bergmann notes, "it is unhappily the case that the Christiansen of this later period rather frequently drops to the level of the banal, the saccharine, and sometimes even to the cute in such works as *Sunbeam Out of Heaven* and *Beauty in Humility*."[89]

If Christiansen had a problem with Bergmann's criticisms, it is not known. Her biography was published in 1944 while Christiansen was still alive, and these above quotes have been drawn from a copy of Bergmann's *Music Master of the Middle West: The Story of F. Melius Christiansen and the St. Olaf Choir* personally autographed by both F. Melius and Olaf

[87] Bergmann, 188-189.
[88] Bergmann, 181-182.
[89] Bergmann, 185-186.

Christiansen. As part of his job, Christiansen was obliged to provide occasional music for certain events and festivals. As the demand for new compositions increased later in his life, the quality of those compositions became less consistent. For example, *Lullaby on Christmas Eve* was assembled at the last minute for inclusion in the 1934 St. Olaf Christmas Festival. *Lullaby* is a quality arrangement, but many other compositions have not withstood the scrutiny of time. In this chapter we will explore *Celestial Spring* and *Psalm 50*, both works of high quality that deserve a continued place in the choral repertory.

Celestial Spring

One of the most striking features of *Celestial Spring* is the music-text relationship. Christiansen conceived the work entirely before any text was added. After its composition, Oscar Overby fitted text to the existing parts. This compositional process carries a few implications. First, the text was obviously not a motivating contributor to the genesis of the work, a fact that stands in stark contrast to Christiansen's many hymn-based compositions. Second, because the text was not a factor in the composition Christiansen utilized non-textual means to create compositional interest, such as continuously developing motives, non-functional harmonic effects, and vocal virtuosity. As Bergmann notes,

> The appearance in 1931 of *Celestial Spring*, a motet in four movements, may perhaps be regarded as a milepost. It is unquestionably program music, descriptive, written for its tonal effects and to show the virtuosity of an admirably trained choir. At this point Christiansen began to write for his public.[90]

Celestial Spring lacks the clear soprano-dominated texture that is present through the majority of Christiansen's hymn-based compositions. Throughout *Celestial Spring* melodic development is repressed, and the primary musical interest comes from the (often non-functional) progression of interesting harmonies, and the transition from one motivic idea to another.

The music of *Celestial Spring* can stand alone, although the conductor must approach this work differently than other Christiansen compositions. Unlike the chorale-based works, where text and strophic repetition tie the piece together into a series of closely knit phrases, *Celestial Spring* is constructed from far more ephemeral musical ideas and the conductor must work harder to create continuity within the work.

[90] Bergmann, 185.

Especially within the movements "The Spirit's Yearning" and "Regeneration" the improvisatory character of these movements requires much more attention to the overall pacing in order to tie the movements together.

The piece is in four movements. As the movements unfold the structure becomes increasingly rigid. This becomes especially apparent in the differences between the first and final movement. The first movement is an improvisatory arch form (ABA' with an added codetta,) while the final movement is a modified fugue. The second movement is an extended ABCBA arch with a coda. The form of the third movement is ABCABD with coda.

Structural charts have been provided for each movement. The same notation has been used to denote small phrases (i.e. lower case letters) within the tone poems as in the chorale-based compositions annotated in Chapters II and III above. However, these phrases are often less defined than those of the chorale melodies. Because the nature of the writing is far more improvisatory, often these letters represent short motivic cells, not arching melodic phrases.

The Spirit's Yearning

The first movement of *Celestial Spring* is titled "The Spirit's Yearning." This movement is in a three part form, ABA' + codetta. In the absence of the regular structure of a chorale, Christiansen moves freely throughout this movement from one musical idea to the next, generating an improvisatory character. The harmony travels through several key areas, weakening the establishment of any single tonic.

The text through this movement is particularly uninspired. The text for the (A) section:

> Let there be light! And the dome of the mountain was lit, with the shimmering shine of the sun, and the thunder of torrents afar, and the shudder of sea was begun, live and attain! And the spirit came to reign.

The "thunder of torrents afar" is depicted programmatically with a sixteenth note tremolo in the bass section, occurring in measure 18. This is the most overt text painting in the movement, and yet ironically, this musical depiction must be attributed to the lyricist Overby who fit this text to Christiansen's bass tremolo. Other more generic instances of text painting exist, owing to Overby's efforts to find text best suited to the music. These text painting examples include the crescendo and upward leap to depict the shine of the "sun" in measures 16-17, and the sixteenth note "shudder" in measure 20. Because of the lack of textual intensity, this movement must stand on the strength of the music alone.

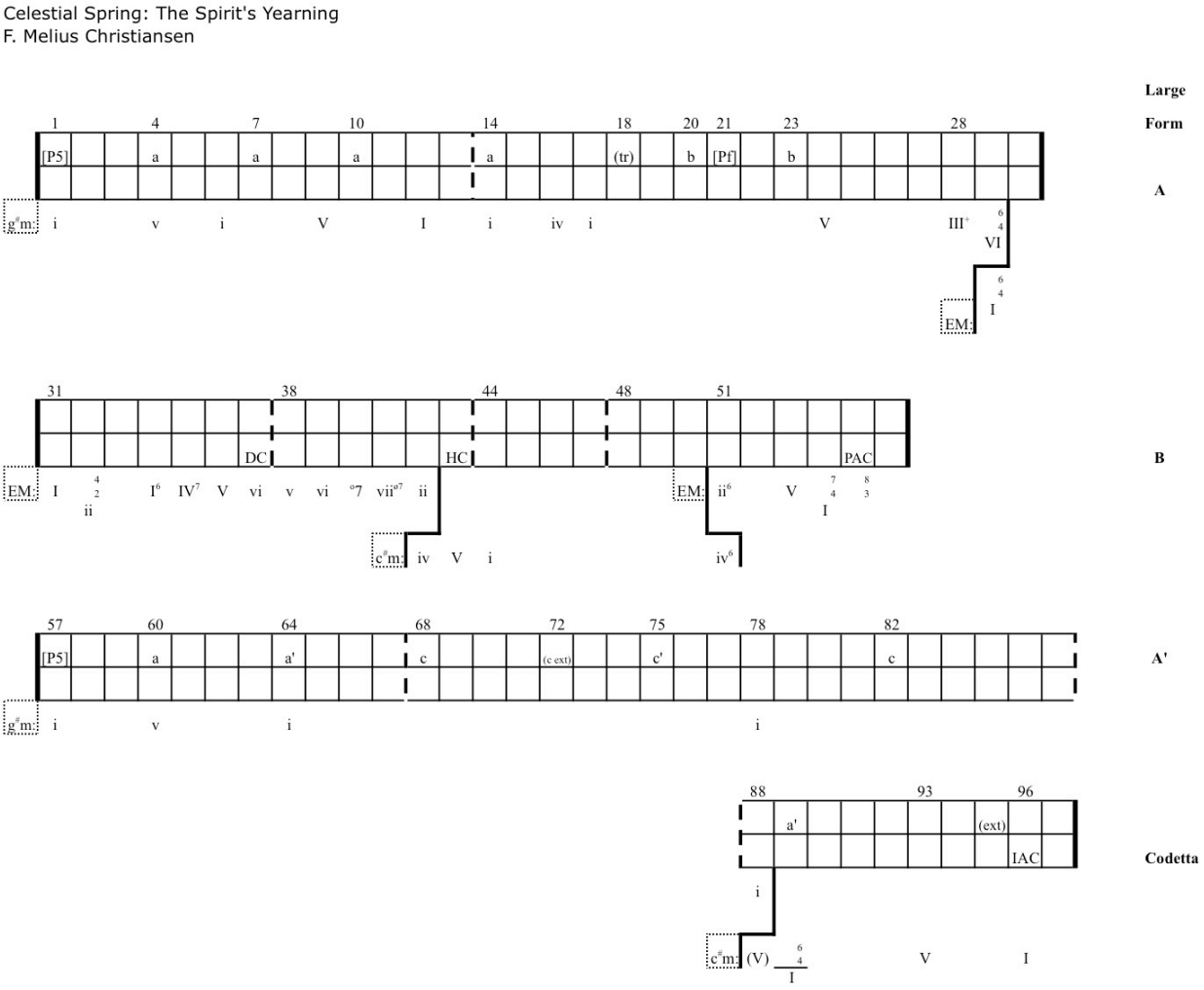

Chart 15: Celestial Spring: The Spirit's Yearning

"The Spirit's Yearning" begins with an ascending perfect fifth figure in the tenors, marked [P5] in the chart. This figure returns in measure 21 and in measure 57 at the beginning of the (A') section. In measure 4 the (a) theme begins, the only musical theme that recurs throughout the movement. Coinciding with the entrance of the (a) theme, the harmony turns to D-sharp minor, the minor dominant. The G-sharp minor tonality throughout the opening section is unstable, with repetition of the minor dominant in measures 4 and 9, and an arrival on the major tonic in measure 12.

The (a) theme is presented in a fugato section, with the first sopranos beginning on D-sharp in measure 4, the second sopranos on G-sharp in measure 7, and the altos on D-sharp in measure 10. However, any resemblance to an actual fugue dissipates by measure 18, when a low rumble in the basses functions as transitional material to the (b) phrase.

The (b) phrase spans only a single measure, and is primarily a rhythmic motive serving to bring the music to a series of quasi-cadences. This section culminates with an augmented chord in measure 28 coming to rest on a second-inversion E-major triad. Because the second section begins in E major, we can retroactively analyze this as an $I^{6/4}$ chord. The tonal ambiguity of this cadence reflects that of the entire opening section.

By contrast, the second formal section has a much more defined harmonic plan. Beginning and ending in E major, this section contains a brief respite to the relative minor (C-sharp minor), and is marked with three clear cadences. The texture here is homophonic, and the writing is chorale-like. Any true melody is absent. The sopranos ascend primarily stepwise from B3 in measure 31 to E5 in measure 44. Following the peak in measure 44 is a (mostly) stepwise descent back to E4.

This section is typical of Christiansen's later counterpoint, including a chromatic retardation in the sopranos in measure 34 and a double suspension in measure 39 that resolves deceptively. Because of the density of suspensions and other resolving non-chord tones throughout this section, the final cadence is heard as a kind of triple suspension. The soprano, alto, and tenor voices are suspended above a strong E and B fifth in the basses in measure 54 before resolving into an E major triad by measure 55.

In measure 57 the perfect fifth motive returns in the tenors, signaling a return to the large (A) formal structure. However in measure 68, a new (c) theme enters, frustrating an exact

repetition of the opening section. Beginning in measure 68, numerous passing harmonies create tonal ambiguity before a strong G-sharp pedal begins in 78 and continues into the codetta. In measure 88, the lone G-sharp functions as the dominant for a transition to C-sharp. After several measures in the minor mode the movement's final cadence is on C-Sharp major.

Because the movement ends in C-sharp, one harmonic analysis would be to retroactively interpret the entire movement within the context of that key. However, the three main sections give little indication that the movement is destined towards C-sharp. The codetta at first appears to function as a transition to the second movement, yet "Exaltation" begins in B major. The sudden shift of tonality is a result of the improvisatory nature of the entire movement.

Exaltation

"Exaltation" begins with a typical Christiansen texture. The opening B major triad is set for four part men's voices, and is spelled B2 – $F^{\#}3$ – B3 – $D^{\#}4$. This particular voicing recurs in multiple keys throughout Christiansen's compositions, and can be considered a signature Christiansen sound. It often is set for four-part men's writing, but may also be presented SATB. For this warm major sonority he prefers the sharp keys of B major, E major, and D major.

Christiansen built this entire movement around this particular voicing, a celebration of this sonority. Almost the entire first (A) section is a repetition of this chord, which also is present in the (B) section and throughout the entire coda.

The text of this movement is chosen for the sound of the words more so than their poetic meaning. The opening text uses alliteration to create a particular choral sound: "Mellow music mingles in ev'ry mood of reawakening spring." When taken in the abstract the text praises springtime and depicts music awakening along with the green colors of the season. The text also

encourages music to sound itself, as in the opening text of the second (B) section "How can spirit bow in silence when the song on highlands is announcing the year on the highlands?"

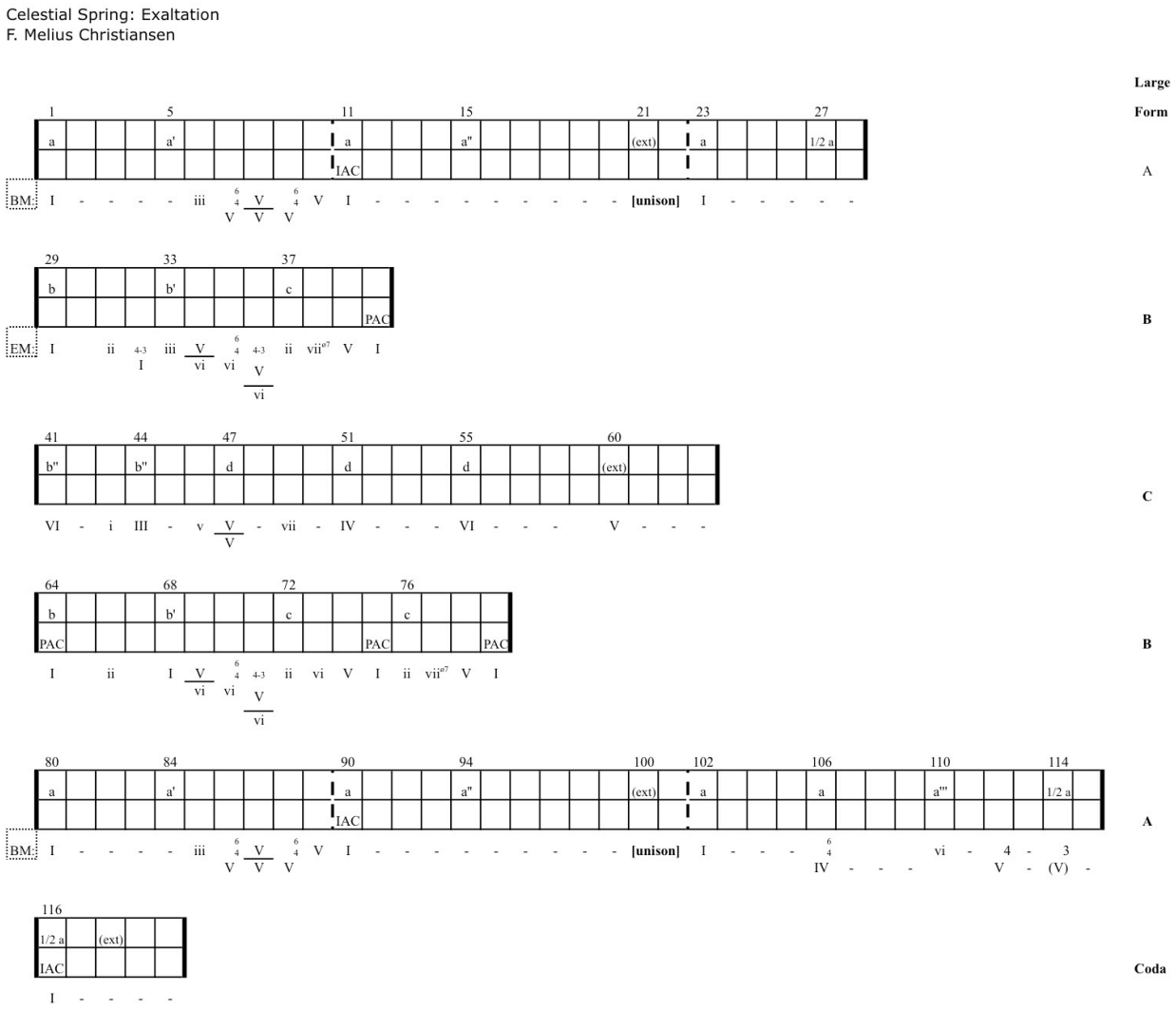

Chart 16: Celestial Spring: Exaltation

"Exaltation" is an extended arch form, ABCBA, with an added coda. This movement is one of the most succinct within this piece, reusing motivic ideas throughout larger sections. The first section is homophonic with very slow harmonic motion. The (B) section begins in measure

29 with the altos singing a melody above homophonic men's writing. The alto writing is quite low, mostly within the sixth from F#3 to D4.

In measure 41 a new section begins with a variation of the (b) theme. This time the melody travels through all the voices, beginning in the sopranos and then moving to the tenors, altos, and basses. In 47 the disparate voices coalesce into a homophonic climax. In measure 64 the (B) section returns, this time elongated with a repetition of the (c) phrase from 76 to 79. In measure 80 the (A) section returns, likewise lengthened by an extension. A slight twist of one note in the alto line in measure 111 should not be regarded as an error.[91] A short five-bar coda ends the work with the exact sonority with which it began.

A successful performance of this movement requires close attention to the intonation and vocal timbre of the often-recurring B major sonority. This movement is capable of creating a wonderful effect, yet does not have as much thematic development as the other movements. Perhaps more so than in other works from the Christiansen repertoire this movement hinges on creating a beautiful timbre and clean intonation within these simple chords.

One successful truncation of *Celestial Spring* is to perform only the second and fourth movements, "Exaltation" and "Glorification." "Exaltation" ends solemnly in B major, while "Glorification" begins energetically in E major with a V – I cadence from B major to E major. Both the key and the tempo relationships create a nice pairing.

Regeneration

The text of "Regeneration" follows the springtime theme of the other movements. The overall effect of the text can be summarized by the opening line: "The woodlands are turning from slumber and yearning to blossoming cheer." Regeneration is more thematically unified

[91] The second alto pitch of measure 111, G3, should not be performed as A3.

than the preceding two movements. The overall form of the movement is ABCABD with an additional (1/2A) and Coda at the end.

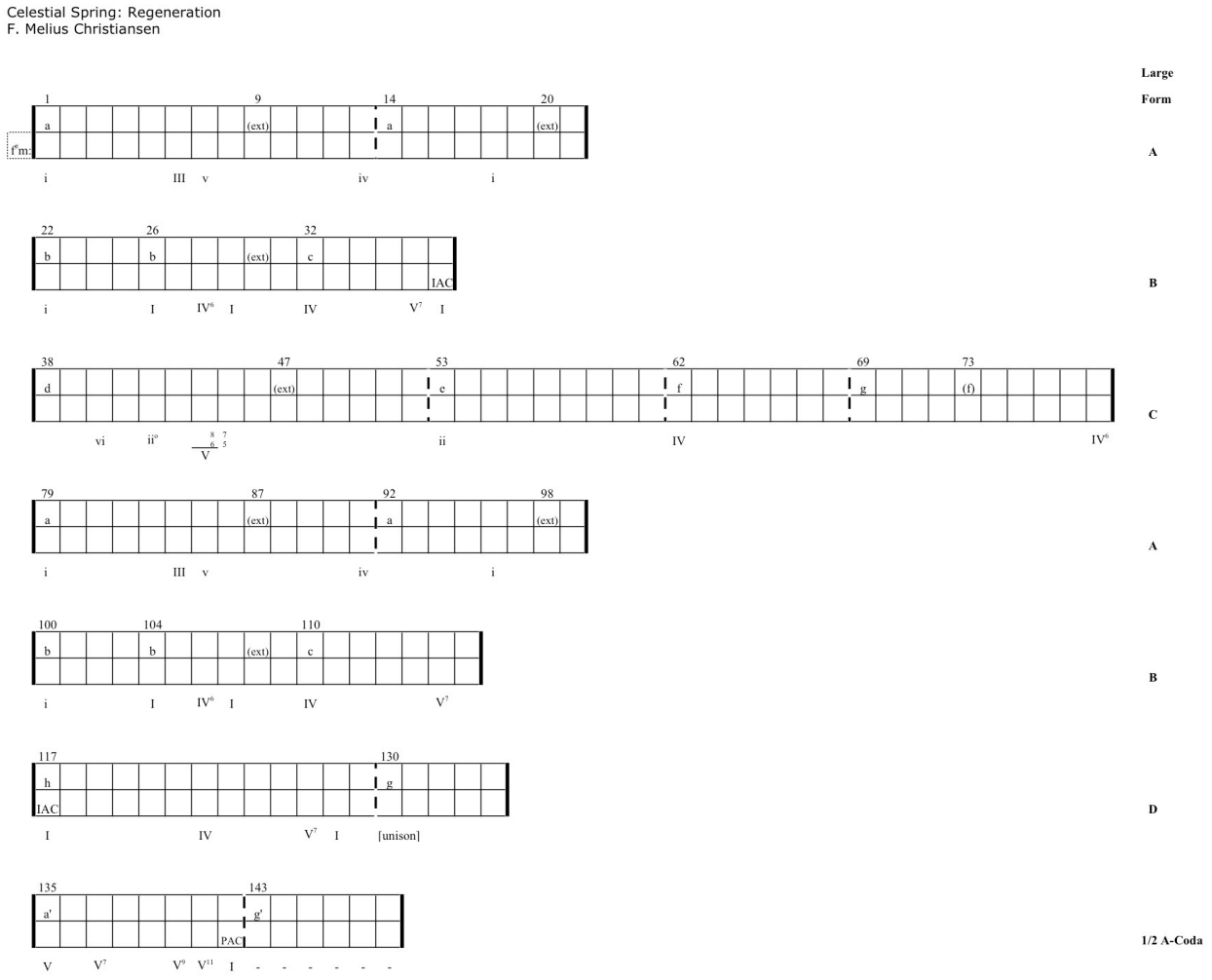

Chart 17: Celestial Spring: Regeneration

The beginning (a) theme starts with the second tenors alone, then quickly adds the first tenors, second altos, and first altos in turn, building up to a F-sharp minor triad in measure 3. The harmonic motion is slow, as is the tempo (MM = 72 to the quarter note) taking advantage of the arrival on A major in measure 6. In measure 9 the theme is extended in the second tenors,

and then the extension is imitated in measure 11 by the basses. In measure 14 another (a) theme begins, this time in the treble voices.

The large (B) section begins in measure 22. The basses enter alone, singing a new theme. The tempo in measure 22 increases to MM = 160 to the quarter note. In measure 26 the remaining voices enter to repeat the (b) theme, this time in the major tonic (F-sharp major).[92] In measure 32 the (c) theme enters, which foreshadows the (g) theme of measure 69, 130, and 143, in that they both share a characteristic descending perfect fifth interval. The (c) theme closes with an imperfect authentic cadence in measure 37.

The large (C) section begins in measure 38 with the (d) theme. This theme is carried briefly by the altos, but then becomes homophonic and slow moving, with one note per measure. The text here states "how dreary, dark and dismal is winter's frozen tomb." The harmonies from measure 40 to 45 are among the most chromatic of the movement, culminating in a suspended dominant chord in measure 45. The (e) theme begins in measure 53 in the supertonic of G-sharp minor. Both melody and harmony are quite static throughout this section. In measure 62 the sopranos ascend above a stationary bass, creating a wedge figure, and the music brightens as a result of both the higher tessitura and the turn to B major.

The large (A) section and (B) section repeat nearly verbatim beginning in measure 79. Not until measure 114 (the equivalent of measure 36 of the opening) does the music or text differ. In measure 114 the cadence is intensified by resolving up chromatically in the sopranos from D-sharp through E to E-sharp, the leading tone. In this equivalent spot in the opening the sopranos had already descended to C-sharp of the F-sharp major triad. Here the E-sharp leading tone is sustained for nearly two measures over the dominant harmony before resolving to the tonic in measure 117. Christiansen heightens the resolution in a characteristic way. The

[92] Note in measure 26, a typo in the first tenors: the A natural should read $A^{\#}$.

sopranos hold the leading tone through nearly two measures, and then drop down to the dominant (C-sharp) before resolving up to the third of the chord (A-sharp). It produces a great effect, since the ear expects to hear the tonic in the soprano after such a stress on the leading tone, but receives the third of the chord instead.

Measure 117 begins the large (D) section, with a new (h) theme. The cadence into measure 117 and the resulting major-tonality music are reflected in the text, which paints the arrival of the anticipated spring. "When woodlands are turning no season of yearning has pow'r over me: The Lord, God, has spoken, my prison is broken, my spirit is free." In measure 130, the choir sings the (g) theme tutti, in unison.

The ending section begins with a modified (a') theme, which progresses just as the original (a) but more chromatically. The first two (a) themes were placed in F-sharp, but the (a') theme occurs in C-sharp major, the dominant. In measure 139 a C-double-sharp is used as a leading tone to D-sharp, highlighting the use of a ninth chord. In measure 141 the chord grows into a full C-sharp dominant eleventh chord, resolving in a perfect authentic cadence in measure 142. The remaining (g) theme constitutes a coda as the harmony remains fixed in F-sharp major.

Glorification

The closing movement of *Celestial Spring* begins as a fugue. This follows the traditional Baroque and Classical practice of ending major sections of music with a fugue. It is also a rare instance of Christiansen writing in strict counterpoint. This movement is not a true fugue because only the first fugal exposition is written strictly, the following sections truncating the subject and setting it less formally.

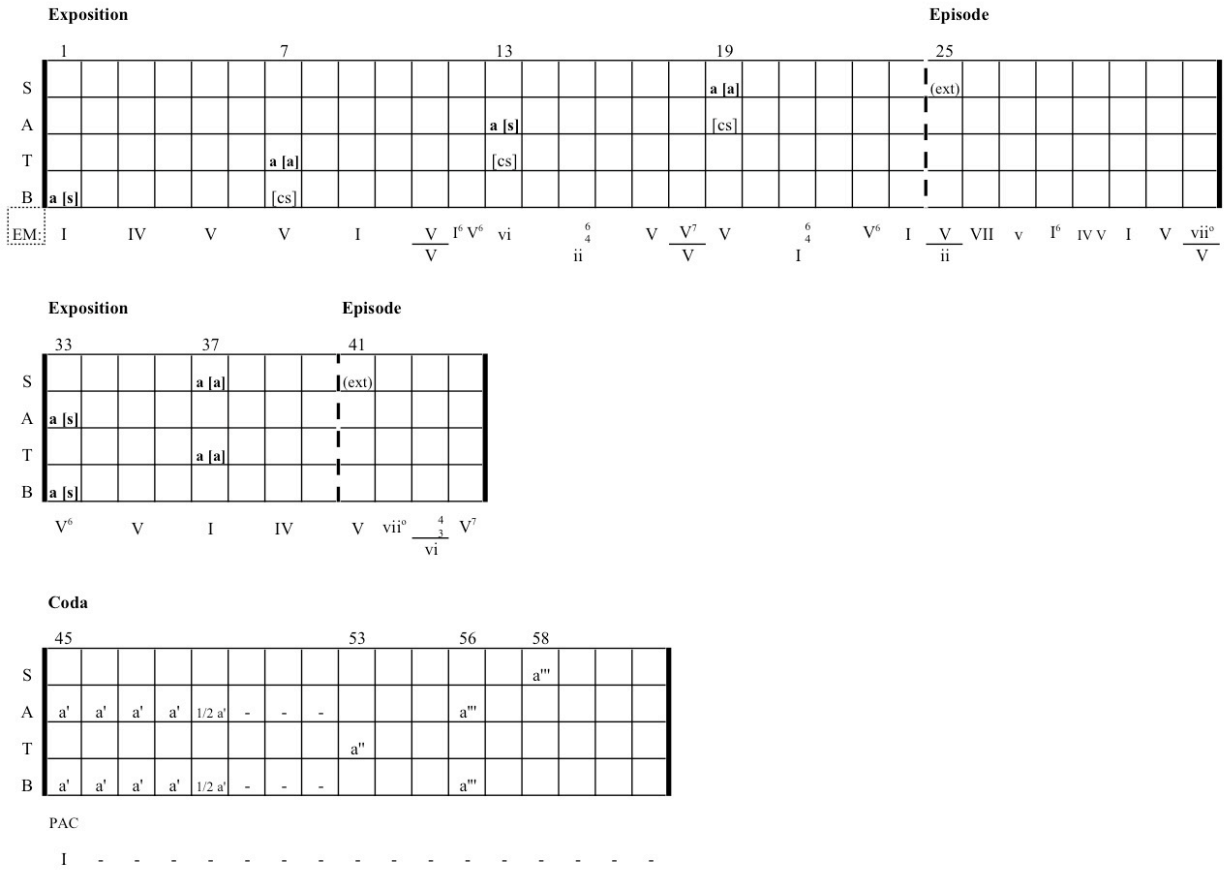

Chart 18: Celestial Spring: Glorification

The graph for this movement incorporates some of the elements of fugal graphs. All of the normal graphing practices within this document have been preserved. The horizontal line representing the passage of measures has been expanded from two boxes to four in order to represent the four choral parts. The top line represents the sopranos, the second line represents the altos, the third line represents the tenors, and the bottom line represents the basses. This is noted with S, A, T, and B respectively. Also terminology from fugue analysis has been placed in

brackets next to the normal phrase analysis, [s] for subject, [cs] for countersubject, and [a] indicating a tonal answer.[93]

Glorification begins with a textbook-perfect fugue exposition. A six-measure subject begins in the basses (a). In measure 7 the tenors provide a tonal answer in the dominant key of B major, while the basses begin a countersubject. In measure 13 the altos begin the subject while the tenors sing the countersubject. At this moment the subject remains in E major, but the presence of a C-sharp in the basses creates a submediant tonality and a deceptive resolution from the dominant chord in measure 12. In measure 19 the sopranos sing a tonal answer in B major while the altos sing the countersubject.

The episodic material that begins in measure 25 introduces E-sharp and B-sharp, hinting at tonal areas outside of E major. The D major chord in measure 26 further distances the ear from E major, as does the B minor chord of measure 27. In measure 28 the counterpoint resolves stepwise into an E major first-inversion chord, the beginning of the return to E major.

In measure 33 the altos and basses begin singing a truncated version of the (a) theme subject, the first four measures. The altos and basses do not sing in unison, but rather the altos enter one quarter-beat behind the basses. This continues until measure 37, when the sopranos and tenors take on the same truncated (a) theme, with the sopranos one quarter-beat behind the tenors. The second episode at measure 41 encapsulates most of the harmonic nuance of the first episode within a shortened scope. It also begins with the introduction of E-sharp and B-sharp, passing very quickly through a D-sharp chord before arriving stepwise on an E major first-inversion triad.

[93] For example: In measure 1 the (a) theme is listed as beginning in the basses, while in brackets next to it [s] indicates that this is the fugue subject. In measure 7 the (a) theme has moved to the tenors, simultaneously functioning as a tonal answer [a]. In this same measure the basses begin the countersubject [cs].

A perfect authentic cadence occurs on the downbeat of measure 45, where both the soprano and the bass parts land stepwise on E. The remaining 17 measures function as a coda. Starting in measure 45 the bars lengthen from triple meter to common time. The basses and altos sing a half-measure-long ascending figure (a') based off the original (a) theme. As in measure 33, the basses begin each measure and the altos follow two quarter-beats behind. In measure 49 the figure is further reduced into a single ascending motive that repeats in the altos and basses until measure 53.

In measure 53 the tenors sing the (a") figure alone. Here the text is "Let there be light! And there was light." However, in recordings of this work by Kenneth Jennings and Anton Armstrong, the text of this short motive is altered to "A new Hosanna shall arise." This is followed in measure 56 by the altos and basses singing a fourth version of the theme (a"'), again offset by one quarter-beat, the altos behind the basses. In measure 58 the sopranos enter with the (a"') theme, ending on a high G-sharp ($G^{\#}5$) in measure 59, supported by the remaining parts singing an E major chord.

Psalm 50

As Bergmann noted, *Psalm 50* has been regarded as one of Christiansen's better syntheses of text and music. For this setting, Christiansen used the King James Bible translation of the text, with relatively few alterations. The scope and conception of the work are similar to *Celestial Spring*, but unlike the former piece the text of *Psalm 50* existed long before the music was written. The movements of *Psalm 50* do not carry programmatic titles like those of *Celestial Spring*. In the performance history of *Psalm 50*, often the second and third movements have been extracted and performed as a set.

I

The first, untitled, movement of *Psalm 50* sets verses 1-6 of the 50th psalm. With the exception of the second verse, each verse receives its own distinct motive. The main motive of the second verse (b') is distinct, but it receives some compositional foreshadowing from the (b) theme beginning in measure 28. Christiansen organizes the movement around the Biblical verses, much in the same way as he treated the hymn verses in his chorale-based compositions. The second verse is set with the (b') theme, beginning a new section in measure 36. The third verse corresponds to the (c) theme of measure 52. The fourth, fifth, and sixth verses correspond to the (d), (e), and (f) themes respectively.

The tenors and basses sing the opening text in unison. The second measure of the movement receives the only textual alteration: The omission of the word "even" from the phrase "The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken." The word "spoken" is emphasized with whole

notes. Following this the treble voices enter for the first time in the pickup to measure 7. In measure 12 the “rising of the sun” is painted in the tenors and basses with an ascending figure.

The first (a) theme is treated motivically and slightly altered into (a') and (a''). The note values of (a'') in measure 19 are augmented to twice their normal length. At the same time the tempo increases (“faster” in the score), creating a moment that seems at once grander but also more active. In measure 24 the (a'') theme extends with triplet figures in the inner voices. Buried within the texture in measures 23-24 is a foretaste of the final (f) theme, presented in the altos and basses. In measure 28 the (b) theme begins, most remarkable for the opening motion from scale degree 1 down through 7 to 5.

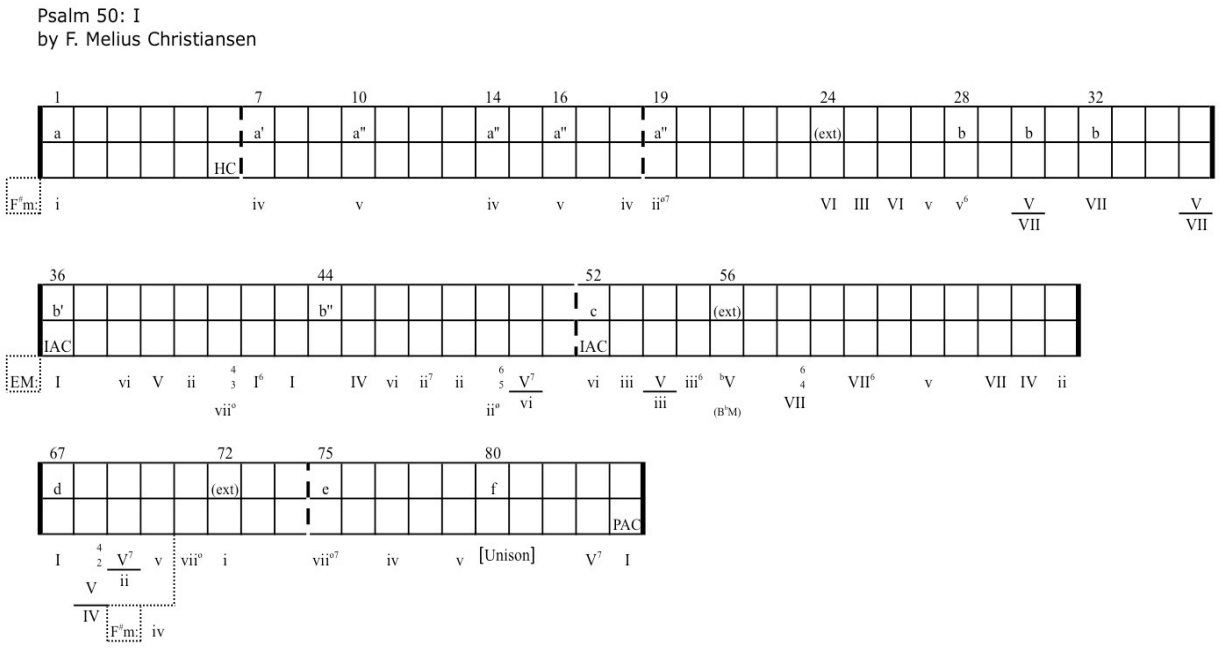

Chart 19: Psalm 50: I

The (b') theme and the second verse of text begins in measure 36, where the meter changes from 4/4 to 3/4 and Christiansen marks “cantabile.” This (b') phrase lasts eight

measures, before repeating in measure 44 with added triplet ornamentation in the treble voices. In measure 52 a new (c) theme begins, sung in unison in the tenors and basses underneath continuing triplet figures in the trebles.

Harmonically, the entire movement vacillates between F-sharp minor and E major through the use of B minor and C-sharp minor chords. This results in neither the F-sharp nor the E tonalities receiving a true dominant chord. In measure 56 the harmonies become quite obscure, beginning with a B-flat major chord, the voice leading descending through B-flat to the A of an inverted D chord.

Stability is found in measure 67, with the arrival in E major and the beginning of the (d) theme, presented in the tenors. The secondary dominant chord in measure 69 resolves deceptively (up by step rather than by perfect fourth) to a B minor chord, bringing the piece back to F-sharp minor. By measure 72 the piece is firmly in F-sharp minor, underscored with an F-sharp pedal tone in the basses.

In measure 75 the basses have the (e) melody, punctuated by homophonic chords in the upper voices. In the pick-up to measure 80, the tenors and basses have an unison figure that is the movement's penultimate gesture, leading into a densely scored, slow ("largamente") and full ("fortissimo") closing figure typical to Christiansen. The unison gesture in the men's voices begins on F-sharp and ends on E, while the closing tutti gesture begins on E and ends on F-sharp, both figures concluding rather succinctly the overall harmonic drive of the movement.

In the final measure Christiansen writes F-sharp major rather than minor. This turn of tonality is common in Christiansen's writing, and serves a duel function at the conclusion of this movement. Firstly it adds some depth to the textual depiction of God the judge. When the word "judge" is used as a verb, often Christiansen uses minor and diminished tonalities. In the ending

measures the word “judge” is used as a noun, “for God is judge himself.” In this usage the final “himself” receives the F-sharp major tonality. Secondly, F-sharp major acts as a dominant to B major, the opening chord of the second movement, providing a fitting segue.

II

The second movement of *Psalm 50* skips verses 7-13 of the 50th psalm, setting only verses 14-15. The opening (a) theme begins with verse 14. The text is altered slightly. “Offer unto God thanksgiving” is troped to become “offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving.” Also “pay the vows unto the most high” becomes “pay the vows unto the Lord.” The (b) theme of measure 20 begins with the text of the 15th verse. In measure 26 the return of the (a) theme coincides with the return of the 14th verse text. The (c) theme beginning in measure 34 repeats the 15th verse.

The second movement begins in B major. It starts piano and more slowly than the first movement (“Andante” MM = 66 to the quarter, verses “Maestoso con moto” MM = 72 to the quarter). The tonality and effect is almost exactly the same as the second movement of *Celestial Spring*, “Exaltation.” The structure of the movement is very simple, essentially three repetitions of the (a) theme. The (b) and (c) theme act as contrast within the larger (A) and (A') sections.

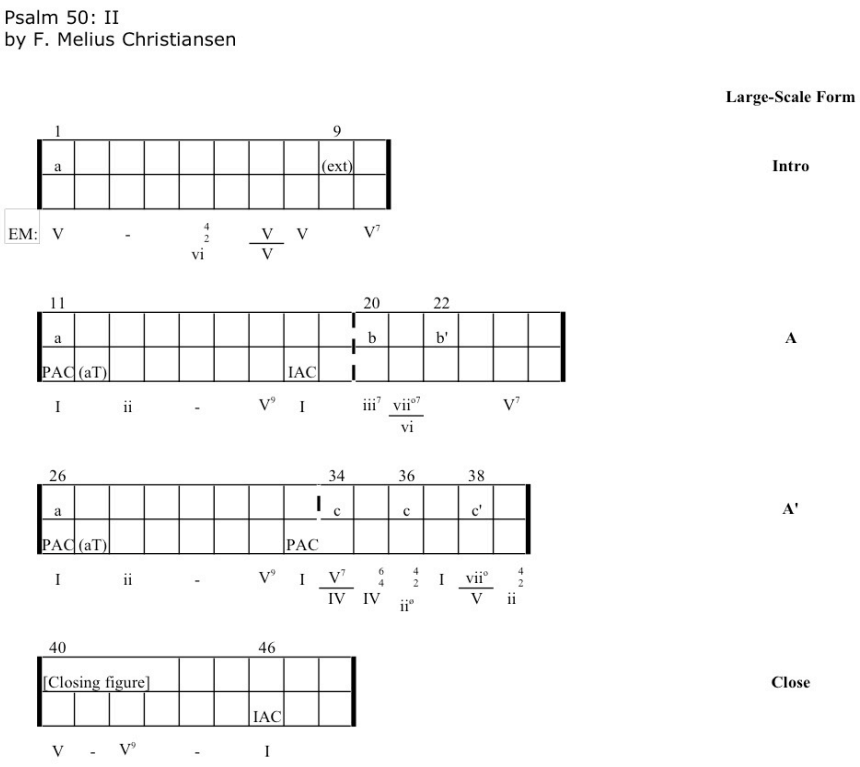

Chart 20: Psalm 50: II

The opening introductory section presents the (a) theme in the altos, with homophonic chords sung by the men's voices below. This texture is one that Christiansen uses in tender moments, such as the second verse of *Beautiful Savior*.

Beginning in measure 11, the sopranos have the (a) melody, with the tenors singing in imitation a measure later (indicated with (aT) in the graph above). The (a) melody is repeated without alteration. In measure 20 the altos enter with the new text (verse 15), "and call upon me in the day of thy trouble." The word "trouble" is set with some extended minor (iii^7) and diminished tonalities (vii^{o7} of vi). In measure 24 the men enter with the verse 14 text and the dominant B major, returning to the placid (a) theme in measure 26.

The (c) melody of measure 34 is given to the sopranos, with accompanying whole notes in the altos and tenors. The texture is spare, due to the absence of the basses and the relative lack of activity in the middle voices. Beginning in measure 40, Christiansen constructs an elaborate V to I cadence. Beginning with the basses, voices enter part by part from the bottom up, stacking into a dominant ninth chord in the downbeat of measure 42. Then just as suddenly Christiansen removes voice parts from the top down until the basses are alone in measure 44. In measure 45 the altos enter alone on a B natural, and in measure 46 the remainder of the choir enters into a 7-voice E major chord, pianissimo. This E major, like the F-sharp major of the first movement, acts as dominant for the third movement's A major. The sopranos, singing G-sharp ($G^{\#}4$) have the leading tone to their entrance in the next movement (A4).

III

Christiansen sets the beginning of the last movement of *Psalm 50* with a fugal exposition, the same compositional choice he made for the final movement of *Celestial Spring*. The score marks MM = 96 to the half note, but an archival recording of Christiansen conducting this work is at MM = 116 to the half note by measure 3, and even faster for the men's section beginning in measure 26.

The final movement of *Psalm 50* utilizes an interesting combination of texts. Christiansen sets the first part of the final (23^{rd}) verse of psalm 50 "whoso offereth praise glorify me," altering the final "me" to "God." In measure 44 during the bridge section, Christiansen returns to text from the first verse of the psalm, "and called the earth from the rising of the sun." Since this text was also set in the first movement, this serves to unify the composition. In measure 62, Christiansen sets the doxology "praise God from whom all blessings flow," utilizing

the familiar Old Hundredth choral tune. Although the second and third lines of the doxology begin "praise Him" in both the score and *The St. Olaf College Songbook*, several of the scores from the St. Olaf College choral library have the word "Him" crossed out and replaced with "God," specifically in measures 68 and 72. The chorale dominates the later part of the movement, and is an excellent synthesis of Christiansen's two major genres, the choral tone poem and the chorale arrangement.

The movement begins with a five-voice fugal exposition. The five-measure (a) theme, which is also the fugue subject [s], begins in the sopranos. When the second sopranos take up the (a) theme in measure 6 on the dominant, it is in the form of a real answer [a]. In measure 6 the sopranos begin a countersubject [cs], which also functions as the (b) theme.

In measure 10, on the dominant of the dominant, the altos enter with an extra countersubject, rather than singing the subject itself. This creates a phrase extension, before returning to the tonic in measure 15 for the return of the (a) theme fugue subject [s] in the tenor voice. In measure 20 the baritones sing the answer [a] on the dominant while the tenors sing the countersubject [cs]. Following a brief phrase extension in measures 24-25 the basses sing the final subject [s] entry on the tonic while the baritones sing the countersubject [cs].

A fugal episode begins in measure 31, where the (b) theme countersubject [cs] cascades throughout the six voice parts, ascending in entrances from the basses through all six voice parts up to the sopranos. The entrances are spaced one measure apart, although the first sopranos enter only half a measure after the second sopranos. This is a truncated form of the countersubject, and the entire 13-measure section from measure 31 to 43 serves primarily to prolong the dominant.

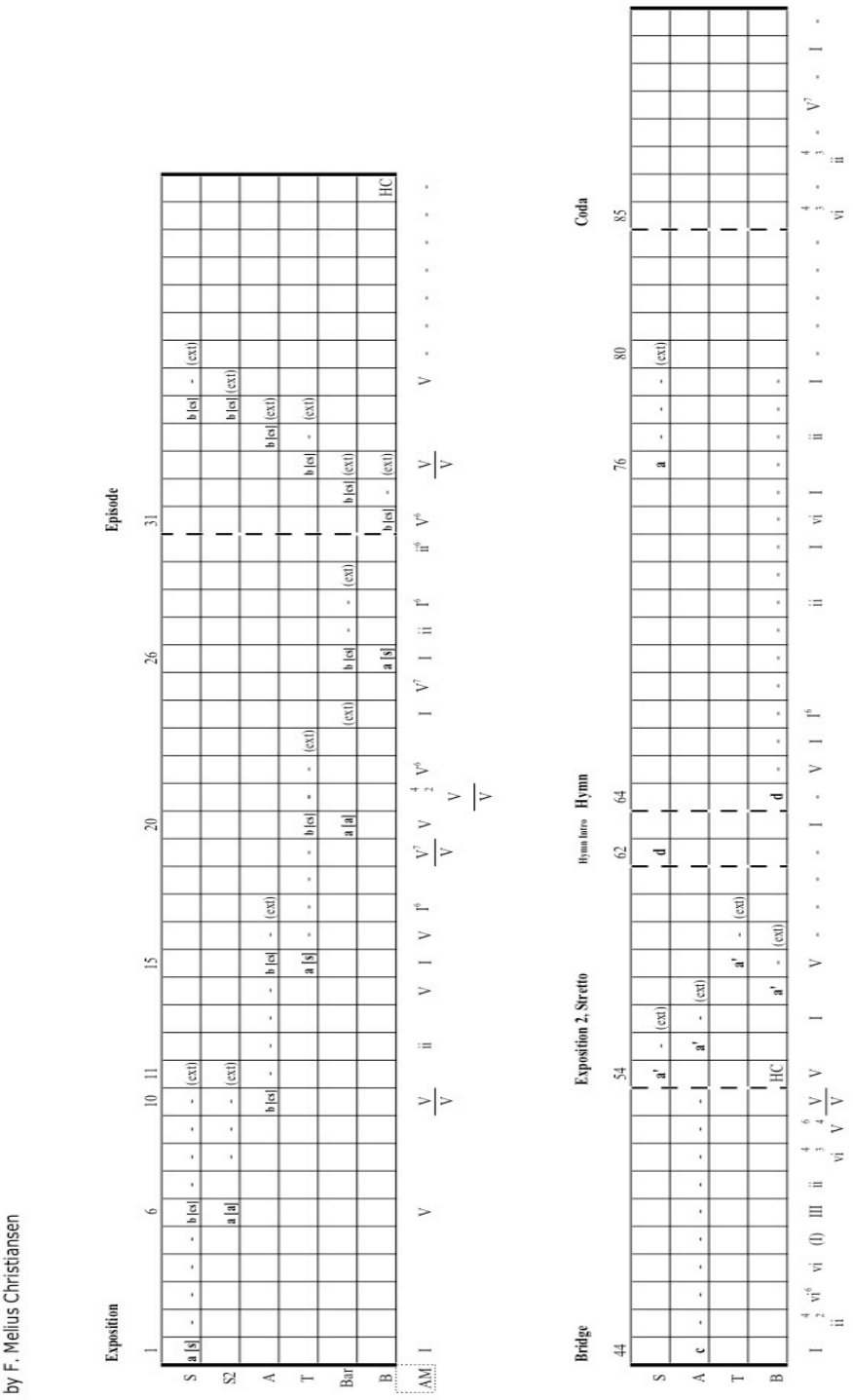

Chart 21: Psalm 50: III

Beginning in measure 44 the altos enter with a new theme, using text from the middle of the first verse of the psalm. This section functions as a bridge between the episode and the second exposition. In this bridge section, the music is scored only for altos and tenors, helping to create a textural difference between this section and the remainder of the movement. The "rising of the sun" is depicted musically with an ascending chromatic scalar figure in the altos between E4 and B4.[94]

Beginning in measure 54, a modified exposition begins in which the subjects are presented in stretto, in inversion, and modified to fit the tonality. Although the contour of the inverted subject remains faithful to the original, this (a') theme only strictly inverts the first 3 pitches. In measure 54 the sopranos enter with this inverted (a') theme followed by the altos in measure 55. The basses enter with the (a') theme in measure 57 followed by the tenors in measure 58.

In measure 62 Christiansen sets the first phrase of the doxology with the Old Hundredth chorale. Old Hundredth is set in quarter-notes, twice as fast as the (a) and (a') subject head, (which is half-notes). Measures 62-63 constitute a hymn introduction, only providing the first phrase of the chorale and setting it in an oddly fast rhythm. Beginning in measure 64 the basses and baritones begin the doxology in half-note octaves. The chorale melody dominates the texture for the entire section from measure 64 to 79, however the (a) subject enters with the sopranos in measure 76 so that the (a) subject's melodic climax coincides with the end of the chorale in measure 79.

Both the bass/baritone chorale and the soprano (a) theme land on an A in measure 79, with the remaining five measures from measure 80-84 functioning to prolong the A major tonic. Although there is not a definitive authentic cadence leading into the tonic of measure 79, the

[94] With the exception of one whole note.

length of the tonic prolongation confers a strong sense of cadence, so that the following section beginning in measure 85 sounds like a coda.

Christiansen marks "broader" for the final section from measure 85 to the end. Typical to his conclusions, Christiansen moves to 7 and 8 part writing, slows the harmonic motion, and culminates in an authentic cadence.

Conclusion

Christiansen's choral tone poems offer contrast to the more formally rigid and melodically driven hymn and folk arrangements and chorale fantasias. These larger works, which utilize freely defined forms and structures coupled with often non-functional harmonic progressions, complement Christiansen's other compositions such as the densely contrapuntal ornamentation of *Wake, Awake*, and the simplicity and regular phrasing of *Lamb of God*. This results in a varied repertory encompassing numerous compositional styles.

Chapter V: Summary

Because of the variety of styles employed, Christiansen compositions can be included in programs ranging in theme, style, and content. While completely at home within the context of religious and liturgical works, Christiansen's works would not be out of place alongside those of his contemporaries such as Samuel Barber, Benjamin Britten, Ralph Vaughan-Williams, Sergei Rachmaninoff, or Max Reger. In addition, Christiansen's contrapuntal works can complement Baroque or Renaissance pieces. *Wake, Awake* would work well in a program alongside J.S. Bach's Cantata 140 *Wachet Auf*, since they share both a common chorale and many compositional features. *Lamb of God* would pair well with many Renaissance motets for their shared points of imitation compositional technique.

In my performance experience with Christiansen's works, no matter the compositional techniques employed, the vocal writing excellently fits the voice. This is one of the enduring strengths of this repertory, and a facet I have heard echoed by many singers and conductors. Working with singers so intimately throughout his career, Christiansen had an unusually fine ability to write idiomatically for the voice. In addition, his experience with the St. Olaf Choir allowed him to discover and capitalize on particular chordal voicings that he found best aided ensemble intonation, resonance, and a blended sound.

During his early tenure with the St. Olaf Choir, Christiansen's compositional energies were directed at forming compositions that helped a modest (by today's standards) ensemble sound exceptional, while promoting Lutheran hymnody. His simple arrangements and chorale fantasias still serve this function today by promoting blend and intonation while being easy to

sing. Since the original chorales were intended to be sung congregationally they represent a body of melodies accessible to all singers.

The hymns Christiansen arranged have lasting tenure within the body of Lutheran hymnody. Modern audiences often recognize the hymns Christiansen employed in his arrangements and chorale fantasias. This recognition often improves the reception of Christiansen's arrangements. The chorale cantatas of J.S. Bach employ the same principal.

The choral tone poems offer contrast to the hymn-based works and a larger scope of composition encompassing multiple movements. Within the tone poems Christiansen's gift for idiomatic vocal writing is released from the constraints of a fixed melody. The result is a collection of works that vary in style from the chorale arrangements, often longer and with a far freer formal structure.

If hymn-based arrangements such as *Wake, Awake* and *Lamb of God* may be compared to Baroque and Renaissance works, the tone poems should be compared to late Romantic works. The tone poems develop within an improvisatory style. Melodies are often non-repeating, and continuously developing. Harmonies are often non-functional. While functional harmonies serve to organize the ear around a single tonic pitch, Christiansen's non-functional harmonies offer melodic decoration and develop only as a series of passing sonorities. The result is formal structures that often begin and end in different keys.

The choral tone poems offer the conductor more freedom with tempo and rubato because the works do not employ fixed chorale melodies and often utilize decorative non-functional harmonies. This freedom demands more from the chorale ensemble because successful performances hinge more on subtlety of expression than simply the clean intonation of a chorale melody.

This document has been written to encourage the continued performance of Christiansen's choral repertory. Because of Christiansen's exceptional musicality and craftsmanship, an enduring body of literature exists that is not only fine musically but also serves to enhance the performing ensemble. With the best results, you will find in Christiansen's works compositions that are beloved by both ensembles and audiences alike.

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APPENDIX: A Guide to Graphs

Within this document, graphs are used as a visual guide to the structure of Christiansen's compositions. These graphic representations provide an overview of form, harmony, and thematic usage serving as a compositional overview for the perspective conductor.

The following comments provide an interpretive guide to the graphs in this document. Any symbols or annotations particular to a single graph will be discussed within that chapter.

1) Each horizontal square equals one measure of music.
2) Single large phrases or formal sections of music are graphed horizontally.
3) The key of the piece is listed below and to the left of the first section. Lower case letters are used for minor (e.g. dm = D minor) and uppercase letters for major (e.g. FM = F major).
4) A harmonic overview is provided below the graph, with each symbol corresponding to the measure of the graph above it. On occasion two symbols reside in one box, indicating that two harmonies are predominant, the one to the left occurring before the one to the right.
5) Above a graphed section are Arabic numerals indicating the measure number of the box below it.
6) Within the graphed section, small letters indicate the smaller phrase or sub-phrase melodic material. A prime (') designation means a variation on the original letter, (e.g. a' is a variation of a). If a chorale and arrangement are both graphed, the same phrase designations will be used for each version to highlight the usage of original melodic material.

7) When Christiansen creates new melodic material in chorale based compositions or arrangements, the freely composed material will be indicated by a letter in brackets.

8) In certain cases Christiansen will repeat a melodic sub-phrase in a different voice part than the composition on which the arrangement is based. This use of imitative counterpoint is noted in the score, one level below the main thematic material, and above the harmonic analysis. It is indicated within parenthesis, with the theme letter in lowercase and the voice part presenting it in upper case. For example, the (a) theme presented in the tenors would be (aT). The (b) theme presented in the sopranos and altos would be (bSA).

9) At cadence points, a cadence may be labeled with initials.

HC = Half Cadence
IAC = Imperfect Authentic Cadence
PAC = Perfect Authentic Cadence
PC = Plagal Cadence
PhC = Phrygian Cadence
DC = Deceptive Cadence

10) To the right of the graph, the large formal structure may be indicated with upper case letters.

11) When the information is available, to the left of each section an indication of the hymn text used in that section will be indicated (e.g. Hymn V. 1 = Hymn verse 1).