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Religion and Spirituality in Late 20th Century Music: Arvo Pärt, Jonathan Harvey, and John Coltrane

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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In this dissertation I focus on significant trends in music and spirituality in the latter half of the twentieth century as a legacy of dramatic transformations in religion and society. During this era, especially in the 1960s, a growing disaffection with traditional religion – as well as with traditional society in general – led many individuals to explore spirituality, either as a replacement for or as a byproduct of religion. I examine these trends in spirituality as a way of bringing to light the different ways composers and musicians have used their music to communicate a sense of spirituality. My dissertation consists of three case studies of musicians who lived during or emerged from the pivotal era of the 1960s and who, following a conversion experience, created music that can be seen as responding to the particular tensions of religion, spirituality, and the secular world that became apparent in the last decades of the 20th century.

The music of these three composers evoke religious and spiritual meaning outside of a traditionally religious context.

In my first case study, I examine two works by Estonian born composer Arvo Pärt: *Te Deum* (1984) and *Fratres* (1977). Following his conversion to Russian Orthodox Christianity, Pärt created music highly evocative of both medieval and contemporary minimalist music traditions. My second case study examines *Ritual Melodies* for Quadraphonic Tape (1986-1990) by British composer Jonathan Harvey. Though raised in the Church of England, Harvey largely turned away from Christianity and towards the beliefs and philosophies of Hinduism and Buddhism, which are reflected in the musical elements drawn from Asian religious traditions that he uses in *Ritual Melodies*. My final case study examines *A Love Supreme* (1964) by American jazz musician, John Coltrane. Following his 1957 conversion, Coltrane became increasingly focused on creating music both evocative of his changing spiritual beliefs and reflective of his constant search inward for truth. In returning to his religious roots and outward towards an eclectic mix of different Western and Eastern religious traditions, Coltrane represents a universalized spirituality.

Dedication Page

I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my mother,

Irene Gehring (November 14, 1925 – March 26, 2011).

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Chapter 1 Introduction, Concepts, and Terms

Introduction

In a 1967 interview, composer Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) declared that "most of the arts are unsuited to the expression of religious truths: only music, the most immaterial of all, comes closest to it."[1] Messiaen suggests that the "immateriality" of music closely parallels the ineffability of religious experience, a connection others have made as well.[2] Because of this perceived connection, composers have used music as a means to express religious devotion or describe a transcendental experience. For Messiaen that meant composing within the long established Roman Catholic tradition. For over 60 years, from 1931 until his death in 1992, he served as the organist at *Église de la Sainte-Trinité* in Paris. Both his concert works, such as *Trois Petites Liturgies*, *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jesus*, and *Quartet for the End of Time*, and his liturgical works, written expressly for use at *la Trinité*, were products of his devotion to Roman Catholic Christianity.

Whereas Messiaen worked within an established religious tradition, a number of Western composers who emerged in the mid- to late-twentieth century worked outside of the context of established religious sects. Composers from diverse genres, such as Arvo Pärt, Jonathan Harvey, Alfred Schnittke, Sophia Gubaidulina, John Tavener, Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Coltrane,

[1] Claude Samuel, *Conversations with Olivier Messiaen* (London: Stainer and Bell, 1967), 7.
[2] For example, a recent collection of essays, *Voicing the Ineffable: Musical Representations of Religious Experience* (Hillsdale, New York: Pendragon Press, 2002) edited by Siglind Bruhn, explores music's relationship to the experience of the ineffable within the context of nineteenth and twentieth century Western concert music.

Duke Ellington, and Mary Lou Williams, evoked religious and/or spiritual traditions in music written exclusively for concert settings and without specific ties to any single religious tradition.[3]

Religious and spiritual compositions written for non-religious settings were not new in the twentieth century. Throughout the nineteenth century, composers wrote works drawing on sacred music traditions. Charles Rosen credits Felix Mendelssohn with establishing that "religion was not out of place in the concert hall," first with his *Fugue in E minor*, which the composer models after Bach, and later with his *Reformation Symphony* and his concert oratorios, such as *Elijah*.[4] Following Mendelssohn's lead, Brahms, Berlioz, and Verdi, among others, all wrote Requiem Masses for the concert hall. Composers employed religious symbolism in opera as well. Most notably, Richard Wagner uses themes of the Holy Grail and of redemption in his opera *Parsifal*. These themes present what Robert A. Davis describes as Wagner's attempt to redeem opera "to be made a vehicle of religious truths."[5] This tradition continued into the twentieth century with composers Arnold Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky, among others, who created music that referred to, or reflected on, religious practice and belief following the devastation of World War I. Schoenberg's *Die Jakobsleiter* and *Moses und Aron*, for example, draw on stories from the Hebrew Bible. Stravinsky, through many of his published writings in collaboration with Robert Craft, has indicated that he had a conversion experience in the early

[3] In the second half of this Introductory chapter I establish more specific working definitions of religion and spirituality and how they function in particular musical repertories. These definitions guide and inform my discussion in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

[4] Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation (*Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 592. Of the E minor Fugue, Rosen states that it "does not represent, like Bach's music, either some point of dogma or some aspect of the drama of religious experience: it conveys, rather, the emotional satisfaction that religion can give, the pleasure that is the aftermath of participating in a religious rite, of making a confession, or contemplating the traditional Sunday service. Rosen, 593.

[5] Robert A. Davis, "The Truth Ineffably Divine: The Loss and Recovery of the Sacred in Richard Wagner's *Parsifal,*" In Bruhn, *Voicing the Ineffable: Musical Representations of Religious Experience* (Hillsdale: Pendragon Press, 2005), 129.

1920s. Indeed, much of his middle and late period works included numerous religious compositions (*Symphony of Psalms*, *Mass*, and *Canticum Sacrum* to name a few).

In this dissertation I examine the lives and works of Arvo Pärt, Jonathan Harvey, and John Coltrane who – though separated by nationality, religious creed, ethnicity, and musical aesthetic – reflect the changing face of religion and the emerging spirituality during the latter half of the twentieth century. I analyze selected works by these composers as examples of music written to evoke religious and spiritual meaning outside of a traditionally religious context. Because these three composers were products of a period of cultural change and transformation, my analyses of their works examine how their music reflected these changes. More specifically, in this dissertation I seek to understand how these composers created music that evoked and communicated a sense of spirituality following a time period when religion and spirituality were in the midst of profound changes and transformations, reflective of the larger culture. The time period I am concerned with in this study begins in the 1960s and continues in subsequent decades. Arvo Pärt, Jonathan Harvey, and John Coltrane experienced the changes of that era first hand, and reacted to those changes through their music. The larger cultural changes and transformations of the era are reflected in their individual conversion experiences, which have in turn largely framed how their respective biographies have been constructed. For these three composers, the conversion experience was both spiritual and aesthetic: following their respective conversions, they transformed their compositional aesthetic to reflect changes in their individual conception of spirituality and focused on communicating their respective religious and spiritual beliefs through their music.

My selection of three composers, who have experienced a religious or spiritual conversion as well as an aesthetic conversion, is not an arbitrary decision. Rather, the

conversion experience as a criterion allows me to select musicians who reflect the larger transformations occurring in their respective societies. A conversion experience, though deeply personal, reflects cultural forces as well. An individual's conversion is formed, in part, by the context in which the conversion occurred. It can be in response to or reaction against ongoing changes in the society, or in aspects of the society itself. As such, my discussion of each composer's conversion experience also surveys his respective cultural context and what his conversion suggests about that context. Arvo Pärt's conversion to Russian Orthodoxy, circa 1968, not only gives evidence of his personal spiritual crisis at the time, but also suggests deeper political and cultural issues. Living in Russia during the Soviet-era and converting to the religion of the Tsars carries with it an explicit rejection of the Soviet Union's official policy of atheism. Jonathan Harvey's conversion to Buddhism, i.e., a non-European religion, reveals both Harvey's desire for spiritual growth and an implicit rejection of not only England's traditional religions but also its increasing secularization. John Coltrane's conversion experience does not explicitly reject traditional American religious belief. Instead, by both returning to the Christianity of his youth as well as exploring an eclectic mix of religious beliefs, his conversion reflects many of the transformations occurring in the American religious landscape during the 1960s.

The spiritual and aesthetic conversions of these three creators also represent the growing interest in diversity and difference that came to characterize the post-World War II-era. The three approaches to spirituality include: recapturing lost traditions but in an internalized way; creating an eclectic mix of Eastern and Western religious and spiritual beliefs; or rejecting Western beliefs in favor of Eastern traditions. During this era, especially in the 1960s, a growing disaffection with traditional religion – as well as with traditional society in general – led many

individuals to explore spirituality, either as a replacement for or as a byproduct of religion. They did so either by returning to older, ancient traditions, by exploring new traditions outside of their own, or by melding the new traditions with the old.

Though my study looks at these three specific composers and their music, it also addresses larger, underlying questions on the nature of religion and spirituality in Western society during the last decades of the twentieth century, how religious and/or spiritual meaning is created in music, and how spirituality is conveyed to an audience. Because Pärt, Harvey, and Coltrane are such disparate individuals musically, culturally, religiously, and geographically, they each represent different notions of spirituality. But while they have differences in the particulars of their respective beliefs, they share some important facets of their spirituality. First, they are linked by their common desire to create music that expresses a sense of spirituality. Second, though they come from widely different religious backgrounds, each inherited, or adopted, a European Christian heritage. Both Harvey and Coltrane received significant formal and informal training in Christianity at a very young age. While Pärt did not, as an adult he immersed himself in Christian teachings. Therefore, their diversity within a shared cultural heritage allows me to discuss a variety of perspectives on spirituality within Western culture. These various perspectives demonstrate the far-reaching tendency in the late-1950s to early-1970s in Western culture for individuals to try to discover an internalized sense of spirituality – a sense of the mysterious, the metaphysical, and the divine. Instead of attempting to pigeon-hole Pärt, Coltrane, and Harvey as responding to a single historical event or movement, I discuss them individually within a broad and fluid socio-historical context – that of religion and spirituality as transformed by the changing culture wherein each of them resided. The music of these three

musical creators provides insight into the society in which each reside, as well as revealing aspects of the larger social context of Western culture in the post-World War II-era.

The Case Studies

In my first case study, I discuss Estonian-born composer Arvo Pärt, who underwent a profound aesthetic and spiritual change between 1968 and 1975 resulting in his becoming a devout adherent to Russian Orthodoxy. Following his conversion, Pärt created music highly evocative of Christian traditions and practices, particularly Orthodox and Catholic ones. In addition, his aesthetic embraced contemporary minimalist practices, especially with regard to the minimalists' interest in inspiring meditative mental states. I begin my study of Pärt's musical spirituality by looking at his life and work within the context of Soviet culture and its attitude toward religion specifically and spirituality generally. In my examination of Soviet culture I discuss how religion often carried connotations of the counterculture for Soviet artists. Thus, Pärt's conversion not only expresses his own spiritual growth as reflected in his compositions, but also provides a response to certain aspects of Soviet modernity. Pärt's conversion coincided with, and largely led to, a dramatic shift in his compositional aesthetic. Reflecting his post-conversion interest in meditative forms of Christian spirituality, he has intimated in several interviews that his aesthetic revolves around silence and a single tone, which implies simplicity and a limitation of compositional material.[6] Indeed, his post-1976 aesthetic is largely marked by static harmony, repetition, and melodic simplicity. I focus on two of Pärt's works, *Te Deum* and *Fratres*, which are representative of his larger repertory. Both works contain most of the musical techniques associated with his compositional aesthetic, including religiously evocative titles, drones, tintinnabulation, and melodies reminiscent of Gregorian chant. In my analysis of his

[6] Paul Hillier, *Arvo Pärt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 87.

music I identify those musical signs he employs to evoke his musical spirituality. In examining his musical signs, I demonstrate how, despite his own personal connection to a specific religious tradition, his music presents an individual, non-specific spirituality.

In the next case study, I discuss British composer Jonathan Harvey, who largely turned away from the religious traditions of his native England and towards Eastern beliefs. My examination of Harvey's multifaceted spirituality includes discussions of his roots in traditional Christianity and his move to Hinduism and Buddhism, which I view within the context of Western, and especially British, attitudes towards Eastern religion and spirituality. I examine Harvey's own writings on spirituality and music to understand what spirituality means to him and how he conceives music functioning as a spiritual art. In addition, I discuss Harvey's association with the spectral movement, the aesthetic and spiritual concepts it fostered, and how it relates to Harvey's own formation of a musical spirituality. Aesthetically, Harvey presents quite different issues than Pärt or Coltrane as he composes not only for acoustic instruments but also for electronics. Whereas Coltrane's and Pärt's music can be characterized as melodically or harmonically driven, Harvey is far more interested in timbre. For him, this is where the true spiritual nature of music resides.[7] In his electronic works, he often evokes acoustic instruments whose sounds originate from various religious traditions. With this in mind, I focus on his 1990 work for electronic tape, *Ritual Melodies*. In this work, Harvey uses electronic instruments to create sounds evocative of acoustic instruments and voices associated with religious rituals.

Finally, I discuss jazz musician John Coltrane, who was a highly regarded sideman with Miles Davis when his efforts to overcome his addictions to drugs and alcohol led him both back to his religious roots and outward towards an eclectic mix of different Western and Eastern

[7] John Palmer, "An Interview with Jonathan Harvey," *20th Century Music*, vol. 8 (1998): 4-5.

religious traditions. Following his 1957 conversion, Coltrane became increasingly focused on creating music that not only revealed his constant search inward for truth but also honored God. My examination of Coltrane looks at biographical details of his life within several contexts. First, I demonstrate that Coltrane was a product of an African-American religious tradition, which was especially influential in the rural south where he was born and raised. Second, I explore the relationship between jazz and spirituality, not only by comparing Coltrane with other jazz musicians but also by locating him within a musical spirituality unique to jazz. Finally, I observe how Coltrane responded to drug abuse and racism through his conversion, and how it both related to his religious background and reflected musical and philosophical changes in jazz and society during the 1950s and 1960s. This chapter considers several of Coltrane's significant works, including the recordings "My Favorite Things" (1960), "Spiritual" (1961), and "Alabama" (1963), but the primary focus is on the composition *A Love Supreme* (1964). *A Love Supreme* because it epitomized the overall direction Coltrane's music was heading in the mid-1960s: it stands as the culmination of his work in modal jazz and the beginning of his full commitment to free jazz, and it demonstrates the growing importance of his spiritual life. My analysis of Coltrane's music focuses on how its formal and expressive features function as spiritual. These features include: religiously evocative titles; plaintive melodies; a sense of suspended time; the incorporation of non-Western elements – especially from India, the Middle-East, and North Africa; and the concept of musical freedom as a metaphor for spiritual freedom. Further, understanding how Coltrane uses these musical elements will help determine what possible models may have led Coltrane in this direction and will help identify what types of spiritual meanings his music suggests.

My research is grounded in individual biographies, but I have also examined the religious and cultural contexts in which each composer's conversion happened. Although their respective contexts are quite different, finding points of convergence between them, musically and spiritually, guided and molded the larger underlying issues and questions I have pursued in this dissertation as a whole. Further, my analyses of the compositions both fed and were fed by my research: my research led me to look for certain aspects of the music in my analysis of each of the works, and as I analyzed each work, new research questions would arise that expanded my research field.

In analyzing the music and spirituality of these three composers, I employ tools drawn from several different types of studies. For one, I identify musical symbols in each composer's works, explain how those symbols are coded to represent their religious and/or spiritual beliefs, and argue that these symbols are intended, on some level, to be perceived by each composer's respective listeners. As such, I borrow concepts from audience reception theory and semiotics. However, this is neither a reception history nor a semiotic study. While I consider audience reception in my analyses, my primary concern is with composer intention. As such, I have not performed an ethnographic study of the three composers' respective audiences. Similarly, while I discuss musical codes, I do not delve deeply into any semiotic theory. Thus, these concepts are merely tools I use to better understand the larger question of how these three composers construct their respective musical spiritualities following a time of religious and spiritual transition. Nevertheless, using these tools requires at least a theoretical conception of the audience; to understand how the musical codes function, one needs to have at least a general conception of the audience for whom they were intended. Therefore, in each chapter I will provide my theorized conceptions of the listening audience envisioned by each composer, in

part, by understanding how each composer has framed how his music is to be understood. Pärt, though himself fairly reticent when talking about the spiritual nature of his own works, seems to speak through either his wife, who often participates in interviews with him, or through conductor Paul Hillier, who has recorded a number of Pärt's choral works and has written what is largely considered his definitive musical biography.[8] In contrast, Harvey has framed all discussions of his music by writing extensively on his conceptions of musical spirituality and how that spirituality is communicated. Though Coltrane has not spoken or written extensively about the spiritual nature of his work, his words, like Harvey's, frame the discussions used to understand his music. His liner notes on *A Love Supreme* are his most extensive discussion of the religious and spiritual aspects of his life and music. By making that album's liner notes essentially the only statement on his beliefs and how his music relates to his spiritual journey, in theory, he narrows the possible interpretations of his music.

The 1960s as an Era of Change and Transformation

The 1960s were a time of profound transformation in Western society.[9] It was a decade marked by several overlapping movements including the civil rights movement, the peace movement, and the counter-culture movement, all of which seemed to call into question the traditions and truths held by many in Western culture. Religion was not immune to these sweeping changes. The seemingly steady decline of church attendance and the concurrent diminishing of religion's influence on society led some secularists to assume that the ultimate

[8] Paul Hillier, *Arvo Pärt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[9] Though the 1960s has been characterized as the epitome of change in the twentieth century, many of the roots of 1960s cultural change were already nascent in the 1950s and continued well into the 1970s. For example, the modern civil rights movement, though often linked with the 1960s, can trace its origins at least to 1954 with the murder of Emmett Till; Rosa Parks, the Montgomery Bus Strike, and the emergence of Martin Luther King, Jr.; and the Supreme Court decision Brown v. the Board of Education, which effectively outlawed segregation. Similarly, the hippie movement of the 1960s had precedents in the Beat generation of the late 1940s and 1950s and the beatnik movement of the late 1950s/early 1960s.

triumph of the secular world over the sacred was at hand. For instance, in 1967, Herman Kahn and Anthony J. Wiener of the Hudson Institute predicted that the demise of religion was inevitable, claiming that by the end of the twentieth century, world cultures would become increasingly "empirical, this-worldly, secular, humanistic, pragmatic, utilitarian, contractual, epicurean or hedonistic, and the like."[10] The intervening decades have disproved many of Kahn and Wiener's predictions and assumptions. As historian and theologian Martin Marty pointed out, Kahn and Wiener could not have foreseen "the collapse of Soviet communism and the concomitant retreat of aggressively secularist credos, such as Marxism." Nor could they have "foreseen the rise of militant fundamentalism, the burgeoning of popular religiosity, or the growth of interest in spirituality in the most advanced and affluent societies."[11]

In fact, about the same time that Kahn and Wiener's report was released, significant cultural changes were taking root in Western society. In the latter half of the twentieth century, less systematic and more individualistic forms of spirituality became increasingly part of mainstream society, both as an alternative to and an enhancement of traditional religious practices. During the pivotal decade of the sixties, and continuing through to the end of the century, the way many individuals viewed and practiced religion changed in ways that reflected many of the profound shifts occurring in society. One example occurred in January 6, 1966, at the opening of the San Francisco branch of the Esalen Institute.[12] At this opening, speaker George Leonard, the West Coast editor of *Look* Magazine, articulated some of the changes in

[10] Herman Kahn and Anthony Wiener, *The Year 2000: A Framework for Speculation on the Next Thirty-Three Years* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 39. Kahn and Wiener assumed that progressive aspects of Western culture (e.g., secularism, positivism, and scientific rationalism) would become pervasive worldwide. They believed that most world cultures would increasingly resemble European and North American society of the mid-1960s. Thus many of their generalizations, though referring to the world at large, are most reflective of Western democracies.
[11] Martin Marty, "Our Religio-secular world," *Daedalus,* Vol. 132, Issue 3 (Summer 2003): 46.
[12] Founded in 1962, the Esalen Institute is an alternative education center located in Big Sur, California. Website: http://www.esalen.org/.

attitude towards religious belief, especially traditional religions, by challenging attendees to shed themselves of what he described as a "dead-end past" and instead ally themselves with the future. Leonard stated that at that moment in history, "we now have the means at hand to end war, poverty, and racial insanity."[13] However, he warned that world leaders lacked suitable vision to lead the world into the future. According to author Eugene Taylor, Leonard was suggesting that at a time when humanity was finally in a position to alleviate suffering worldwide, "all we hear are the same worn-out doctrines of original sin and market forces driving the world economy."[14] At a time when secularists like Kahn and Weiner were predicting that religion was on its last throes, a new religious spirit was arising. This new "religious spirit" can be characterized by a shift away from traditional religious practice to spirituality.

Not surprisingly, the music emerging from this era reflected these tensions and changes in society. The transformations experienced in religion during the 1960s surfaced in surprising ways and in diverse musical styles. This was true not only in the Western Europe, but also in Eastern Europe, though for quite different reasons. Unlike Western Europe, where secularization offered a response to traditional religion, in Eastern Europe, religious belief and spirituality offered an alternative to the official state "religion" of Soviet atheism. A number of Eastern European composers emerged from this "atheistic" system during the 1970s and 1980s and bucked official Soviet policy by creating musical explorations of their religious beliefs and incorporating musical elements drawn from older Christian traditions. In North America, jazz music, which had long been considered by many in mainstream American society to be deviant, debased, and degenerate, became the vehicle for religious and spiritual expression for a small but

[13] Quoted in Eugene Taylor, *Shadow Culture: Psychology and Spirituality in America* (Washington D.C.: Counterpoint, 1999), 236.
[14] Ibid.

earnest minority within the jazz community. A few prominent jazz musicians began both incorporating religious elements into their music and attempting to use jazz as a mode of worship. There were also composers of art music from the 1960s who found traditional religion empty and began looking outside of their native traditions and towards the beliefs of other, "exotic" cultures for religious inspiration. For those in Western society weaned on Christianity, it meant looking outside of Western culture to Asian religions. This was also true for popular musicians. In 1967, for example, a collection of British and American celebrities journeyed to India to learn at the feet of the charismatic leader of the Transcendental Meditation movement, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. And while most of these celebrities would later reject the teachings of the Maharishi, most retained at least some semblance of Eastern influence in their individual concepts of spirituality.[15]

Terms and Concepts

Several concepts are foundational to understanding the ways that Pärt, Harvey, and Coltrane construct musical spirituality. Defining the terms religion and spirituality creates a number of difficulties. Both religion and spirituality are broad terms that have different meanings within different contexts. Depending on the context, they can either be synonymous – religion can be a form of spirituality or spirituality can be thought of as a religion – or they can be antithetical. Because the musical spirituality of each composer whom I discuss resides within, or is connected to, a larger religious or spiritual context, my definition of religion provides a

[15] Among the celebrities were all four Beatles, English folk singer Donavan, Mike Love of the American rock band The Beach Boys, and American actress Mia Farrow. Love is one of the few members of this group of celebrities that remains an adherent to Transcendental Meditation. Songs extolling the virtues of "TM" would continue to appear on Beach Boys albums well into the 1980s. Though George Harrison did not remain an adherent to the Maharishi's particular brand of Hinduism, he did remain a devoted Hindu to the end of his life. Others in this group of celebrities became less enamored with the Maharishi more quickly. In addition to the more positive response, "Across the Universe," John Lennon also penned the song "Sexy Sadie," on the so-called "White Album," which contained the lyric hook "you made a fool of everyone," which was allegedly meant as a critique of the Maharishi.

framework for that context. Similarly, spirituality provides a philosophical and ideological framework for each composer. Spirituality, because of its individuated nature, can provide a glimpse into each composer's philosophical and theological motivations in making his particular musical choices.

Pärt, Coltrane, and Harvey represent not only diverse religious and spiritual traditions but also diverse approaches to belief. The distinctions between their individual conceptions of religion and spirituality will have great significance for this study. Therefore, I have considered this diversity in developing working definitions of religion and spirituality that I then use as a frame of reference in analyzing the cultural significance of their music. Though each composer's concept of musical spirituality will be discussed at length in subsequent chapters, I lay some preliminary groundwork in the following section by providing a general description of musical spirituality. In defining musical spirituality, I also discuss basic concepts of musical signs as well as compare and contrast the idea of musical spirituality with general conceptions of religious and sacred music practices.

Defining "Religion"

I define the term *religion* broadly as a formalized system of beliefs, principles, and practices dealing with transcendence or a transcendent reality usually residing within a particular community and its traditions. Typically, though not exclusively, these systems of belief in the transcendent are centered on a higher power or deity. In monotheistic religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, this belief in a higher power typically connotes an "I-Thou" hierarchical relationship. Conversely, in non-monotheistic religions, such as Buddhism or pantheistic religions, the hierarchical relationship between the creator and the created either does not exist at all or is less pronounced. Buddhism, for example, which strives for self-enlightenment and the

extinguishing of the finite self,[16] originally divorced itself from ritual, authority, and the supernatural.[17]

Religion typically involves a community that shares common beliefs, practices, and rituals. Religious sects often have particular rituals, observances, and commemorations to mark various stages in the lives of the individual as well as the history of the community. As such, rituals, observances, and commemorations bond a community together. Though such rituals often are intended to evoke or reflect a higher or transcendental power, they occur in the real world – i.e., the physical, temporal, and phenomenal world; humanity's interaction with a higher or transcendent power thus takes place in the physical universe. Further, since communities are often hierarchical, religion often has a hierarchy that takes the form of a mediating presence – a priest, minister, imam, or shaman – who intercedes between the ordinary communicant and the divinity.

Religion, as a practice, also carries with it a number of both positive and negative implications. Tradition implies connectedness to the past, present, and future of a community; by belonging to a religious tradition, the members of a community are connected to all those who had been part of that tradition previously and all those who will participate in the community in the future. When a believer participates in the traditional rituals of a particular religion, they are replicating all past performances of that ritual. In a sense, this participation allows the believer to transcend time and history. Similarly, "community" implies belonging and the idea that one can find acceptance by being part of a religious group. For others, conversely, tradition and community can have negative aspects. Accompanying tradition and community are hierarchy

[16] Huston Smith, *The Illustrated World's Religions* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1994), 77.
[17] Ibid, 68.

and dogma, which imply a set of rules, control, and a lack of freedom. And since rules often define who does or does not belong, "community" can also imply a negative aspect of belonging: exclusivity.

Defining "Spirituality"

Like religion, the term "spirituality" can have different meanings depending on the context in which it is used. Within the context of this dissertation, I distinguish spirituality from religion and its earthbound aspects. I define spirituality as an experiential, nonsystematic encounter with divine or metaphysical realms. The spiritual experience can occur either inside or outside of the context of a religious tradition. While religion implies a physical, temporal, and phenomenal interaction between humanity and divinity, spirituality implies transcendence of the physical, temporal, and phenomenal universe. Whereas religion typically requires a mediating presence and group participation, spirituality does not necessarily need such mediation because it is often individual in nature. Moreover, though a particular physical space can affect or enhance a spiritual experience, a specific location or building is not necessary for such an experience. Spirituality can happen anywhere. And because spirituality can happen anywhere, it has the capacity to transform a secular space into a spiritual space; wherever an individual is located can potentially be spiritualized. As such, a definition of spirituality carries with it a sense of fluidity. This fluidity means that individuals can have widely differing conceptions of spirituality. Spirituality, though an integral part, if not synonymous with the experiential side of religion, does not necessarily have to be associated with organized religion, let alone one of the major religions. Thus for many, spirituality serves as an alternative to traditional, formalized religion as can be seen in the way it has been linked to certain Eastern concepts. British researchers Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead have noted that for many, the decline of religion in Western society

has been accompanied by the emergence of spirituality, which they contend is in need of wider study:

> Survey after survey shows that increasing numbers of people now prefer to call themselves 'spiritual' rather than 'religious.' Terms like spirituality, holism, New Age, mind-body-spirit, yoga, feng shui, chi and chakra have become more common in the general culture than traditional Christian vocabulary. Even a cursory glance around the local bookshop or a stroll around the shopping centre leaves little doubt that Christianity has a new competitor in the "the spiritual marketplace." "The times," it seems, "they are a-changing."[18]

For Heelas and Woodhead, the essential difference between religion and spirituality is that in religion, people are guided "by a higher authority to find fulfillment in a common good," while in spirituality, as they define it, "people live out their own interior lives in their own unique ways."[19]

While Heelas and Woodhead's study was done fairly recently, i.e., 2005, it points to interest in spiritual practices that, as discussed previously, emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Though the terms Heelas and Woodward mention in the above quotation – "holism, New Age, mind-body-spirit, yoga, *feng shui*, *chi* and *chakra*" – may have attained widespread acceptance in Western culture only recently, they have been around for decades.[20] Moreover, many of these concepts (yoga, *feng shui*, *chi*, and *chakra*, for example) are rooted in non-Western religious and spiritual concepts.

Because spirituality can exist outside of a religious context, for those drawn to New Age beliefs, the terms can be oppositional. Spirituality, in this context, is what religion is not. But, as

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[18] Paul Heelas, Linda Woodhead, et al., *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality (*Blackwell Publishing: Oxford, 2005), 1.
[19] Ibid, 13.
[20] Even as someone who grew up in rural Colorado far removed from more eclectic happenings of the wider world of the 1960s, if not by distance than by culture, I had at least heard of yoga at a relatively young age. I find it telling that at least some of these elements had filtered into my consciousness, undoubtedly through the medium of television, despite having grown up in rural America in the 1960s, which, culturally, had not changed significantly since the 1940s or 1950s.

stated above, in other contexts religion and spirituality coexist as aspects of the same tradition. In such a context, religion and spirituality are not oppositional. Though many describe themselves as "spiritual" rather than "religious," studies of American spirituality have shown that many more describe themselves as both and that they see the two as inseparable.[21] Indeed, there are bound to be significant intersections between these two terms since most religions have experiential and spiritual aspects. Religious spirituality represents the emotional, experiential, and internalized aspects of religious practice. Within the Judeo-Christian sphere, spirituality involves an encounter with God or a god-like sense of higher power through the I-Thou relationship.[22] However, this kind of personal interaction, as pointed out by Eliot Deutsch, is not necessarily an aspect of all forms of spirituality but rather primarily a Western concept: "although religious experience of a relational I-Thou sort is surely a kind of spiritual experience, not all spiritual experience is of that sort. Indeed, much of the profound spirituality of many non-Western philosophical-religious traditions defies characterization in Western personalistic religious terms."[23] For those who conceive of the divine in pantheistic terms, i.e., existing in all living creatures all at once, the divine is everywhere and spirituality can be found anywhere at any time and in anything.

Though spirituality tends to be an individual, non-systematic practice both inside and outside of specific religious denominations, it usually includes some form of meditation or

[21] Penny Long Marler and C. Kirk Hadaway, "'Being Religious' or 'Being Spiritual' in America: a Zero-Sum Proposition," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 41 No. 2 (June 2002): 289-300. Marler and Hadaway's findings are seconded by an August 2004 *Newsweek* poll, which indicates that while only 24% of those questioned said that they were "spiritual but not religious" while 55% claimed that they were both "religious and spiritual." Only 9% indicated that they were "religious and not spiritual." Jerry Adler, "American Faith Today," *Newsweek*, Vol. CXLVI, No. 9/10 (August 29/September 5, 2005): 48. These results are not surprising because both studies were done in America, which is still heavily Christian.

[22] Even within Christianity, significant variation can exist. While most denominations are Trinitarian, Unitarians, Universalists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormonism), and others have different concepts of God (if they even retain the concept of "God").

[23] Eliot Deutsch, *Religion and Spirituality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), ix.

prayer. Though these two practices are not necessarily synonymous, they both imply mentally and emotionally separating one's self from his/her physical surroundings. Implicit in many prayer and meditation traditions is the idea of clearing one's mind from the mundane problems of life and focusing on the metaphysical, which, depending on the tradition can be God or a transcendent reality. These practices are often used to find a place of peace and refuge from life's day-to-day concerns. Because music can also communicate a sense of peace and tranquility, it may be perceived as spiritual in nature and conducive to a spiritual frame of mind.

Because Pärt, Harvey, and Coltrane come from very different religious backgrounds and have very distinct spiritual beliefs, a too-specific definition would be limiting. Pärt's spirituality is rooted firmly in his religious beliefs. Coltrane's spirituality, however, while stemming from his religious beliefs quickly grew beyond one religious tradition and embraced spiritual eclecticism. In contrast, Harvey began exploring his spirituality before settling on religious beliefs; thus, his religious beliefs grew out of his spiritual beliefs. However, despite their religious differences, the three composers do offer some elements of convergence. For one, none of them views spirituality as oppositional to religion. Even Harvey, whose conversion was a spiritual conversion and only came to religion afterwards, still adheres to formal religious beliefs (i.e., Buddhism). Second, all three came to a spirituality following some form of crisis – Pärt's aesthetic crisis, Coltrane's physical crisis with addictions, and Harvey's spiritual crisis through his brief period of unbelief.

Musical Spirituality

Central to my discussion of the music in the individual case studies is identifying and analyzing those musical signs that each composer uses to evoke spirituality. In analyzing these musical signs, I explain how the signs were constructed culturally and historically – the context

from which the signs emerge – to understand what they symbolize and what can be inferred by their selection and use indicates much about the individual works as well as each composer's musical, philosophical, and aesthetic intentions. By understanding the cultural and historical context of the signs, I can also theorize what is suggested when the composer uses signs drawn from different traditions. In creating musical spirituality, the composers use musical elements that serve as cultural signifiers for spiritual practice and, in so doing, provide the listener with the possibility of having a spiritual or transcendental experience. In particular, because a significant aspect of spirituality is the practice, through prayer and meditation, of clearing the mind and focusing on the metaphysical, the musical signifiers each composer uses to evoke such spiritual elements as prayer and meditation provides a context for understanding his beliefs.

Though each composer uses musical elements closely related to his religious or spiritual beliefs, there are certain musical phenomena that are shared by all three and have particular significance for many other composers of musical spirituality. For example, employing musical materials that present a sense of timelessness can be tremendously evocative. Pärt achieves this through long sustained passages, drones, and almost glacial harmonic motion. Similarly, Harvey achieves it through long sustained passages, as well as extended passages of silence. Coltrane, working in a musical style that typically employs a steady rhythmic pulse, is able to evoke timelessness in part by merely removing that pulse. In addition, during these pulse-less sections, he performs plaintive, rhythmically simple melodies that avoid an obvious sense of meter. Passages such as these, though not exclusively indicative of musical spirituality, are able to evoke spirituality by drawing on ideas of the eternal (as in the case of Pärt) or meditative practices involving clearing one's mind (as with Harvey).

To varying degrees, all three composers draw on sacred music traditions to create an atmosphere conducive to a spiritual or transcendental experience. As such, their music, though not sacred as it is usually defined, takes on many of the aspects of sacred music for the listener, regardless of the music's function or performance setting. Generally, sacred music is defined as music used in conjunction with religious ceremonies, rituals, or rites. None of the music discussed herein is sacred by this definition: the compositions were not created to function as part of any religious service, nor have the composers ever intimated that they considered their works *sacred*. Instead, all of this music was intended as *music* performed for an audience. Nevertheless, though not discussed in detail in the musical analyses that follow in this dissertation, the idea of sacredness has an implicit role in the music of Pärt, Harvey, and Coltrane. Pärt's evocations of timelessness, Harvey's imaginary rituals performed in concert halls, or Coltrane's raga-influenced jazz improvisations being performed in the earthiness of a jazz club, suggest the spiritualizing of secular music and spaces. A number of Pärt's compositions feature settings of traditional religious texts – the Mass Ordinary, the Passion according to St. John, or the Te Deum (*Berliner Messe*, *Passio*, *Te Deum*) – and could easily be performed as either a concert work or as part of a service. All of the works of the three composers discussed in this dissertation draw upon sacred traditions as a means for evoking similar spiritual experiences from their audiences regardless of the listener's setting. Thus, they open up the possibility for creating a non-traditional sacred space, not confined to a building codified as "sacred," like a temple, mosque, church, or cathedral. Rather, any space where the music is performed can become "sacred."

This phenomenon, the spiritualizing of a secular space, has precedence in the concert music tradition. The nineteenth century witnessed the rise of an "art religion," where the

individual could escape from the difficulties of the modern world through great art, including music. The rise of a musical "art religion" occurred with the rise of public concerts. Though public performances of opera had been common since the early seventeenth century, public concerts of instrumental music largely began in the early nineteenth century. Quickly, there arose the solemn etiquette and ritual formality still common at concert halls. Contemporary accounts of the concert experience describe it in terms of "religious awe." However, this sense of "religious awe [was] no longer related to the church, but a new, autonomous transcendental experience."[24] In the world of concert music, the concert hall had already become a kind of sacred secular space. Pärt and Harvey are among those who suggest a trend where religion and spirituality are infused into a secular religion's sacred space.

The Work, the Composer and the Nature of Jazz Composition

In each of the three case studies, I deal with works created by an individual composer. However, each composer, in his own way, approaches the act of composing and the concept of the work with a certain level of ambiguity. For Pärt, the "work" is not necessarily fixed or final. In his composition *Fratres*, he has created a number of different versions for different instrumentations. As I discuss later in this dissertation, the versions of *Fratres* share basic formal and thematic similarities; while most are in the form of simple instrumental chorales the version for solo violin is virtuosic. The other Pärt work discussed below, *Te Deum*, though more fixed, has itself been revised: the original version was written in 1984 and 1985 but revised in 1992, possibly in conjunction with an ECM recording project, and has since been revised again (2007).

[24] Willem Erauw, "Canon Formation: Some More Reflections on Lydia Goehr's Imaginary Museum of Musical Works," *Acta Musicologica*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (Jul. - Dec., 1998): 109-115.

Interestingly, Harvey's *Ritual Melodies* is the most fixed of the works discussed in this dissertation. As an electronic work, it has no published score and has few performative aspects thus giving it a relative stability. In part, its relative "stability" comes from the fact that it is an electronic work and therefore every performance should be relatively the same: there is just the one version. That said, any "performances" of *Ritual Melodies* would occur using different sound equipment and in different venues. Hypothetically, a single listener could hear *Ritual Melodies* in multiple venues and experience the work differently every time. Thus, there is an inherent subjectivity to the listening experience even when hearing a work that will be performed the same way every time.

Nevertheless, viewing works as individual creations is a typical approach when discussing composers in the concert music tradition, like Pärt and Harvey. However, in jazz such concepts as "composer" and "the work" are not necessarily understood the same way. In Western concert music, the act of composition, i.e., a composer creating a work, is in general an individual pursuit.[25] In contrast, jazz composition is often a collective as well as spontaneous pursuit and thus the composition is rarely, if ever, "finished" or "set" in the same way as a concert work. However, as I discuss below, by understanding the ways that a jazz composition can be tied to a singular authorial voice, it is possible to treat Coltrane as the singular author of his compositions and therefore to suggest that these compositions can be viewed as being "set" or "finalized." Therefore, in the following section, I discuss how I conceptualize the nature of the composer and the work with regard to Coltrane and jazz.

[25] Even this is something of a generalization, especially regarding *Ritual Melodies*. As discussed in the Harvey chapter, *Ritual Melodies* was composed by Harvey with the help of a technician at IRCAM who performed an essential role in the realization and creation of the work.

Borrowing terminology used by Karlton Edward Hester, among others, jazz composition and improvisation can collectively be described as "spontaneous composition."[26] The term recognizes how the spontaneous nature of jazz improvisation recontextualizes and re-imagines a melody. Even though many of a composition's parameters can be set in advance, in jazz or spontaneous composition there is room for variety: the composition is fluid in that it can change both subtly and significantly during the course of the performance. The spontaneity comes from the malleableness of the composition within the context of a performance. Moreover, the malleable nature of jazz composition comes in part from the fact that the jazz composition often is due to, at least in part, its communal/collective nature.

More importantly, jazz composition raises even more elemental questions about the nature of composition. Though questions of "Who is the composer?", "What constitutes a musical work?", and "What constitutes a musical score?" have been debated over the last several decades, in the Western concert music tradition, these concepts tend to be better defined than in jazz. In jazz, because many of the musical elements are not set by the credited composer but rather by the performers, the composition often is the result of a collaborative effort rather than an individual effort. That said, even within the collaborative process, a single vision often prevails. This was certainly the case with Coltrane. Though all of his band mates participated in constructing their works, Coltrane was the driving force behind the compositions.

In jazz, where the work is relatively fluid, and changes from performance to performance, there is rarely a formal score. Perhaps, not surprisingly, the closest thing in jazz to a "work" or "score" is the recording. With recordings, a performance becomes fixed in time; it becomes set

[26] Karlton Edward Hester, *The Melodic and Polyrhythmic Development of John Coltrane's Spontaneous Composition in a Racist Society* (Lewiston: Edwin Meller Press, 1997).

and is often seen as the official version. In the case of Coltrane, though a number of live recordings have surfaced in recent years, most of his live performances were never recorded. And since he has been deceased for over 40 years, fixed versions of some of his works are few. While he recorded some works, such as "My Favorite Things," multiple times, most of the works discussed in the Coltrane chapter have only a select few versions: two of "Alabama," two of the complete version of *A Love Supreme*, and three of "Acknowledgement." Therefore, my discussion of Coltrane's music will focus on the primary studio recordings.

Conclusions

In this introductory chapter, in addition to presenting the three case studies to be discussed in subsequent chapters, I have provided foundational concepts that will underlie my cultural and musical analyses. These concepts provide the reader with an important understanding of the issues discussed throughout the rest of this study. One aspect of my analysis I have chosen not to discuss in detail in this introduction is the various cultures to which these three composers react. Because specific cultural considerations are so closely tied to the composers' respective biographies, as well as the musical signs they use, additional in depth discussions of culture are provided in the later chapters.

The discussion of these three particular composers and the selected works should not be interpreted as a definitive statement regarding music and spirituality in the late twentieth century. Given the nature of spirituality, as defined above, implicit in any discussion of late twentieth century spirituality is that there is no one spirituality but rather a multitude of spiritualities. Rather, in this dissertation I provide a possible way that any composer's spirituality can be examined and understood through an analysis of his or her music.

This study joins a burgeoning field of musicological research into religion and music. Until fairly recently, the topics of religion and spirituality were rarely discussed in musicological circles, especially when discussing non-church music. In studies done in previous decades, a composer's religious or spiritual beliefs were typically ignored or downplayed. However, that has been changing in the past decade. Recent works like those of Sander Van Maas, Siglind Bruhn, and Marcel Cobussen, among others, have broken ground by making religion and spirituality a means for understanding a composer's work and how meaning is conveyed to an audience.[27] My own work seeks to join the ranks of those who have established the viability of such research and to offer a fresh approach to this field of research by being inclusive of a wide array of musical spiritualities.

[27] For example: Sander van Maas, *The Reinvention of Religious Music: Olivier Messiaen's Breakthrough Toward the Beyond* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009); Siglind Bruhn, ed., *Messiaen's Language of Mystical Love* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998); and Marcel Cobussen, *Thresholds: Rethinking Spirituality Through Music* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008).

Chapter 2 The Desire for Tradition: Russian Orthodoxy, Tintinnabulation, and Rejection of the Modern in Arvo Pärt's *Te Deum* and *Fratres*

In his short story "The Easter Procession," Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn describes a scene in a small Russian village in which a gang of youths accosts a small group of Orthodox Christian believers taking part in an Easter procession. In the story, the youths jeer and mock the procession as it passes:

> They spit on the asphalt path, jostle each other in fun, and whistle loudly…Once they start flashing their knives at each other, they may easily turn them on the members of the congregation, because the attitude of these youths to churchgoers is not the usual attitude of the young to the old or of guests to a host; they regard them as a housewife regards flies.[28]

The congregants, in turn, react with fear to the mocking youths:

> Huddling close to the cemetery fence and the church walls, the believers dare not protest but just keep glancing around, hoping that no one will jab them with a knife or force them to hand over their watches, which they need to check the last minutes before Christ's resurrection.[29]

Solzhenitsyn's dramatic retelling of antagonistic attitudes towards religious believers also serves as an indictment of broader Soviet policies. He begins the story by noting that the incident occurred "half a century after the Revolution,"[30] placing this short story within his larger body of fiction and non-fiction works decrying Soviet totalitarianism and persecution of the church (e.g.,

[28] Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "The Easter Procession," *Stories and Prose Poems*, translated by Michael Glenny (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1970), 125. Originally published in 1969.
[29] Ibid, 129.
[30] Ibid, 125.

The Cancer Ward and *The Gulag Archipelago*).[31] In contrasting the solemn nobility of the old men and women with the brutality of the jeering youth, he draws attention to the attitude towards religion prevalent in the Soviet Union at the time (i.e., mid-1960s). The Soviet Union's official policy of atheism and antagonism towards all religious belief and believers resulted in religion being primarily the purview of only the elderly who had preserved their traditional beliefs despite the government's official policies. In a larger context, the story provides insight to other aspects of religious life in Soviet Russia. For a writer like Solzhenitsyn (a Soviet author who had converted to Christianity), as well as a number of composers including Sofia Gubaidulina, Giya Kancheli, Alfred Schnittke, and Arvo Pärt, religion became a reaction not only against Soviet policy but also against a perceived spiritual emptiness in the broader culture. Further, once the Cold War ended, the art produced by this generation of composers could be viewed as a response to musical developments in the West as well.

Emblematic of this generation of artists religiously and spiritually motivated to react against this spiritual emptiness of mid- and post-twentieth century Europe is Estonian composer Arvo Pärt (b. 1935). In the 1960s, Pärt experienced an aesthetic and spiritual crisis that led him to abandon composing from 1968 to 1976. During this period, he converted to Russian Orthodoxy. When he emerged from his self-imposed nine-year "silent" period, Pärt also experienced an aesthetic conversion. He radically changed his compositional aesthetic in favor of a simpler compositional style that embraced elements of chant as well as other religious music traditions. The religious impulses that guided his new compositional aesthetic would ostracize him in Soviet musical circles, eventually leading to his 1980 emigration from the Soviet Union

[31] Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Cancer Ward* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1969), Translated by Nicholas Bethell and David Berg, original Russian edition published by The Bodley Head, 1968; and Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago* (New York: Harper and Row), translated by Thomas P. Whitney.

and his taking up residency in West Germany. In the West, his new aesthetic would strike a chord with listeners of Western concert music, making live performances and recordings of his music relatively popular. Though few, if any, living composers of art music in the late-twentieth/early-twenty-first century can claim mass popularity, especially in a commercial sense, Pärt has managed to achieve some notoriety "beyond the circles of classical music…to include admirers in the pop-music world."[32] Moreover, his music offered an alternative to some of the musical styles prevalent in Western concert music at the time of his emigration. Though Pärt has not expressed a desire to "solve the problems of Western music," he has noted that he regards his music as a personal "attempt at – and a conscious decision for – a correction" to the "kind of composition commonly associated with the Darmstadt-School."[33]

In this chapter I examine how Pärt composes music using elements drawn from Western and non-Western Christian religious and spiritual traditions, which evoke, sonically, a sense of the sacred. These musical elements, while not "universal" in a strict sense, are broad enough that they allow Pärt's music to cross over denominational lines, creating a larger sense of religion and religious music; though his texts, titles, and symbology imply specific theological perspectives, the combination of them allows for broader interpretations of the music and thus a broader audience. Pärt, in responding to his own spiritual disillusionment and emptiness, created music (whether consciously or not) that preserved or reestablished certain general religious and spiritual dimensions of the culture that many believed to have been lost during the twentieth century, both in the Soviet Union and increasingly in Western Europe and North America. Pärt responded to his personal spiritual malaise by looking away from the secular world and instead

[32] Arthur Lubow, "The Sound of Spirit," *The New York Times Magazine*, October 17, 2010, 36.
[33] Geoff Smith, "An Interview with Arvo Pärt: Sources of Invention," *The Musical Times*, Vol. 140, No. 1868 (Autumn, 1999): 19, 24.

looking to the sacred world for inspiration. His music, regardless of whether one encounters it in a church or cathedral, a concert hall, or even on a recording, taps into millennia of European traditions in creating and/or evoking a sense of the sacred.

Understanding both how and why Pärt chooses the various musical and theological elements he uses in his compositions requires examining the spiritual and aesthetic crisis he experienced in the early- to mid-1960s. His personal and professional disaffection culminated both in his religious and spiritual conversion to Orthodox Christianity and his aesthetic conversion away from modernist tendencies to a compositional style marked by simplicity and overtly religious themes. Upon establishing the personal and cultural context that "tilled" Pärt's spiritual soil, I identify several characteristic compositional elements he uses in two of his prominent concert works: the choral work, *Te Deum*, which is a setting of a Medieval liturgical text, and the instrumental work, *Fratres*, which is notable for its numerous versions. The two works not only contain many stylistic elements indicative of Pärt's compositions, like his tintinnabulation technique, but also provide examples of how he expresses his spirituality through his music by evoking sacred traditions in a non-sacred setting, i.e., the concert hall. Pärt's compositional choices draw on cultural codes that can potentially be recognized as expressing spiritual and religious traditions that serve as a meditative contrast to modern society's complexities.

Pärt and the Conversion Experience

Though Pärt is somewhat reluctant to talk in great depth about his spiritual life and its direct role in his compositions – in general, he speaks of his works pragmatically – he has

acknowledged, "religion influences everything."[34] Not just music, but everything. Largely, critics, reviewers, and biographers have constructed Arvo Pärt's biography in terms of his religious conversion.[35] His biography, as typically told, begins with basic facts about his life. He was born in 1935 in the small Baltic nation of Estonia and was largely educated in the Soviet system. Early in his career as a composer he experienced success as part of a musical avant-garde that went against the official musical aesthetic of the Soviet Union. In the early- to mid-1960s, Pärt used serial and collage techniques in his compositions as a reaction against the restrictions of Soviet musical policies. However, Pärt soon began to weary of serialism, both aesthetically and spiritually. Pärt had begun to find serialism overly rigid and complex and spiritually empty.[36] The combination of aesthetic weariness and feelings of spiritual emptiness led him to largely abandon composition for a period from roughly1968 to 1976. During that time, he married his second wife, Nora.[37] Though he did not join the Orthodox Church until 1972, his earlier religiously themed compositions, like 1968's *Credo* (discussed below), suggest that his conversion came several years earlier. When, in 1976, he re-emerged from this "silent period" and once again worked fulltime as a composer, his music had radically changed. He had shifted from a compositional style indebted to serialism and collage to a style that was rooted in medieval musical traditions. Not only had his music changed, he had changed spiritually. In embracing Orthodox Christianity, Pärt began focusing all of his compositional energies to presenting his religious beliefs in his music. His new compositional aesthetic displayed a

[34] Jamie McCarthy, "An interview with Arvo Pärt," *Contemporary Music Review*, 1995, Vol. 12, Part 2: 64.
[35] See Paul Hillier, *Arvo Pärt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), as well as published interviews including Geoff Smith, "An Interview with Arvo Pärt: Sources of Invention," *The Musical Times*, Vol. 140, No. 1868 (Autumn, 1999): 19-22, 24-25, and Jamie McCarthy, "An interview with Arvo Pärt," *Contemporary Music Review*, 1995, Vol. 12, Part 2: 55-64. My biographical data are gleaned largely from these sources.
[36] Pärt was not alone in wearying of serialism. As noted in the Jonathan Harvey chapter, a number of composers felt that audiences often found serialism off-putting. Thus composers found it difficult to make a musical connection with his or her audience.
[37] Hillier, 32.

musical and theological eclecticism that, as will be discussed below, may have been rooted in his experiences growing up in Estonia. His musical language was indebted to Western sacred traditions, most notably those of the Catholic Church, while his music's symbolism was drawn from Orthodox traditions.

My purpose is not to dispute or refute any of the acknowledged biographical details about Arvo Pärt. Rather, in this chapter I will look at some of these details in greater focus in order to understand more fully the cultural and musical roots of Pärt's beliefs. Understanding the motivations behind his new musical style requires a deeper understanding of Pärt's conversion and his beliefs and an examination of the religious, social, and musical context in which the conversion occurred. I begin by focusing on religious culture in Estonia and the Soviet Union, especially during the 1940s when the Soviet Union asserted control over Estonia, examining the official government attitudes toward religion, and how that culture created unique responses to religion among its artistic community.

Estonia and the Soviet Union

Though Pärt's music exhibits almost no Estonian influence, aside from some early works, he nevertheless was indebted to his homeland, especially in terms of his religious beliefs. According to Hillier, Pärt has claimed that his spiritual education was largely formed by his upbringing in Estonia and his becoming a member of the Russian Orthodox Church.[38] Though Pärt has never specified precisely when these Orthodox beliefs began to take hold of him, his choice of Russian Orthodoxy reflects the eclecticism of his homeland. Much of his eclecticism can be attributed to the unique geographic and philosophic position occupied by Estonia and the other Baltic states (Latvia and Lithuania), which are "wedged between East (Russia and the

[38] Hillier, 24.

Orthodox Church) and West (Germany and Scandinavia)."[39] For much of its history, Estonia was controlled by a number of foreign powers, particularly Germany, Scandinavia, and Russia.[40] Among the cultural legacies left by these foreign conquerors was religion; the Lutheran and Russian Orthodox churches remain the two most prominent religions in Estonia.

Perhaps most compelling about the history of Estonia and the other Baltic nations is that despite a long history of being conquered, the three states managed to preserve their cultural and national identities. While the exact reasons for this cultural survival are complex and multi-faceted, political scientist Walter Clemens asserts that one possible explanation could have been due to the fact that:

> They clung to symbols – musical, literary, and sacred places – that reminded them of their community and that strengthened common bonds. Cultures that prized literacy, freedom, and solidarity helped Balts to endure Soviet repression, as they did previous repressions, and, when circumstances became favorable, emerge relatively intact…[41]

In addition to shared folklore, Clemens believes that much of the "prized literacy, freedom, and solidarity" resulted from shared religious beliefs. Owing to the greater rate of literacy, which had been encouraged by Luther's call for translating the Bible into the common languages of the people, the Baltic States achieved higher achievements in literature and arts following the Protestant Reformation.[42] Clemens argues that greater literacy encouraged more independent thinking that allowed the Balts to preserve much of their cultural heritage and resist "russification."[43] To a degree, Pärt's own childhood memories confirm at least the general idea of Clemens' argument. Though he was too young to remember Estonia's brief independence, he

[39] Ibid.
[40] Walter C. Clemens, Jr., "Comparative Repression and Comparative Resistance: What Explains Survival?" *The Sovietization of the Baltic States, 1940-1956*, edited by Olaf Mertelsmann (Kleio: Tartu, 2003), 20.
[41] Ibid, 19-20.
[42] Ibid, 29.
[43] Ibid, 30.

experienced firsthand the occupations by Germany (1941-1944) and Russia (1944-1994). He has, however, indicated that his elders passed on a sense of Estonia's independent spirit from its brief period of political and cultural independence. According to Pärt, his parents and professors told him "that the time before the Soviets was quite different," which would have a profound impact upon him as an adult, when he began to fully comprehend the ramifications of living under the Soviet system.[44]

Religion and the Soviet Union

In 1944, Estonia and the rest of the Baltic States were absorbed into the Soviet Union. As such, Estonia came under the Soviet government's anti-religious policies, which had been in place for decades. As in most of the rest of the Soviet Union, Estonian believers were often put in the untenable position of either being complicit with government policy or facing arrest.

Soviet policies towards religion were complex; though never formally banning religious activities, the Soviet government was nevertheless openly antagonistic towards all religious organizations. Prior to the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, the Orthodox Church held a position of prominence in the Russian Empire. Many at the time considered the Church merely a tool of the Tsar that helped to perpetuate his despotic regime. Following the revolution, the church initially was seen as one of the last vestiges of the Tsarist era.[45] Thus, when the communists came into power, they stripped the Orthodox Church, as well as all other denominations, of any political voice. The state mandated various forms of censure on all religions, but Christianity, as the

[44] Hillier, 25-26.

[45] The fact that the Orthodox Church was seen as a tool of the Russian monarchy should not come as a surprise. Religion had been heavily integrated with all aspects of European culture for approximately 1500 years, including government. Further, several major nineteenth century thinkers, especially Søren Kierkegaard and Karl Marx, were highly critical of national churches. Kierkegaard, in his book *Attack on Christendom*, complained that when the church became an institution of the state, it loses its authenticity as a collection of believers. Instead, it becomes part of the empty bureaucracy.

dominant faith, often bore the brunt of the Kremlin's edicts against religion. Churches, prayer houses, and seminaries all became the property of the state and were largely abandoned, many falling into disrepair if not utter desolation as relics from the past.[46] Though churches were never officially banned, clerics and priests were often imprisoned. In addition to general harassment and persecution, there were a number of special purges, as in Leningrad, Christmas Eve 1929, when the State Political Administration (i.e., the GPU, a predecessor to the KGB) "arrested a large part of the religious intelligentsia," or in February 1932 when "many churches were closed simultaneously, while, at the same time, large-scale arrests were being made among the clergy."[47] Solzhenitsyn, in *The Gulag Archipelago Two*, further contended that Soviet policy towards religious believers went beyond arrests, claiming that "a multitude of Christians" ended up in "prisoner transports and graveyards. Who will count those millions? They died unknown, casting only in their immediate vicinity a light like a candle."[48] While Solzhenitsyn's "millions" may be an exaggeration, historian Jennifer Wynot confirms that the number of believers killed during the purges was probably quite significant. Though the number of monks, nuns, and priests killed during the purges of 1932, as well as another two-year purge from 1937 to 1939, remains unknown, Wynot sites Alexander Yakovlev, the head of the Commission for Rehabilitating Victims of Political Repression, who estimated the number to be over 200,000.[49]

Because the Baltic States were not under Soviet domination until 1944, they avoided the worst of the anti-religion purges. Geography and religious diversity may have also helped

[46] Solzhenitsyn alleges that since monasteries "were enclosed by strong walls, had good solid buildings, and they were empty" they became ideal locations for concentration camps. He quotes the Petrograd *Krasnaya Gazeta*, writing on September 6, 1918, that the first of these concentration camps was to be "set up in Nizhni Novgorod in an empty nunnery." Alexsandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago Two* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 19.
[47] Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago,* 50-51.
[48] Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago Two*, 310.
[49] Jennifer Wynot, "Monasteries without Walls: Secret Monasticism in the Soviet Union, 1928-1939," *Church History,* 2002, 71(1): 63-79.

Estonia avoid the full brunt of Soviet policies on religion. First, the Baltic States were geographically and racially on the periphery of the Slavic-dominated Soviet Union. The Soviet government typically focused religious persecution on the Slavic heartland and the Muslim areas in the south.[50] Also, the government often seemed more concerned with the urban rather than rural environments; a 1929 law forbade priests and monastics from both wearing religious garb in public and from living in cities.[51] That meant that many of the more outlying areas were often left with relative religious freedom. Secondly, in Estonia, Russian Orthodoxy was a minority religion. As a residue of German and Scandinavian influence, Lutheranism was the dominant religion. Moreover, the Evangelical Lutheran Church had closer ties to the Estonian government during its brief independence (1918 to 1940). As a result, in Estonia, Lutheranism and not Russian Orthodoxy received the bulk of religious persecution by the Soviets.[52]

As such, the Russian Orthodox Church continued to have a foothold in the region. The ongoing presence and influence of religion in the area can be seen in the fact that several monasteries and convents in Estonia continued operation throughout the Soviet era. In particular, a monastery in Pskov, on the border between Estonia and Russia, has the distinction of being the only monastery within the Soviet Union to have remained in continuous operation since its foundation in 1472.[53] Though the Orthodox Church operated at its own risk throughout much of the rest of the Soviet Union, the Estonian church Pärt would have encountered as a youth had relative freedom. This more open religious climate would likely have had an impact on Arvo Pärt's spiritual formation.

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[50] Felix Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union: An Archival Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).
[51] Wynot, 63.
[52] Riho Altnurme, "The Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Soviet Union after the Second World War," *Kyrkohistorisk Arsskrift*, 2004: 95.
[53] Jane Ellis, "Religion and Orthodoxy, " *Russian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, ed. Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 279.

In the latter years of the Soviet era, several factors led people's attitudes towards the church to change. By persecuting the church, the Soviet Union may have unintentionally erased the church's association with the Tsar. As a result, when the dissident movement emerged in the 1960s, many Soviet citizens who opposed the government turned to religion as a counter-cultural response. Solzhenitsyn, in many of his novels (such as *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and *Cancer Ward*) would include Christian characters, reflecting his own conversion to Christianity while an inmate in a Soviet gulag. Also, scholar Clint Walker has identified a number of writers in 1960s Leningrad who also turned to religion as a rejection of the artistically limiting demands of the Soviet government.[54] Thus, religion became a viable alternative to Soviet modernism. Moreover, Orthodox Christianity, as an Eastern branch of Christianity, had few historic ties to modern Western capitalism, giving it the potential ability to act as a rejection of Western European and North American culture, where the lack of fundamental criticism of capitalism by many Western denominations implied an ideological approval of the free market system.

For many artists, writers, and musicians, religion and religious symbols served as nostalgic reminders of religion as an important aspect of Slavic culture that was lost during the Soviet era. Also, as historian Irena Maryniak has asserted, many of these "religious" artists may have been following, consciously or not, the example of Russian author, Maxim Gorky, who argued that though he considered religions to be false they served a purpose in society, that being the betterment of society.[55] Maryniak contends that many of the modern day religionists (i.e.,

[54] Clint B. Walker, "The Spirit(s) of the Leningrad Underground: Viktor Krivulin's Communion with Russian Modernism," *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Winter, 1999): 676.
[55] Gorky officially proposed that the communist government should appropriate religion in order to build up a new god, one that would reinforce Marxist ideology. Lenin, however, strongly disagreed and Gorky's plan never became

writers and other artists who, in Maryniak's view, extolled the virtues of returning to traditional religions in post-Soviet Russia) were practicing a similar type of "god-building" in that they saw that religious belief was inherently good, whether or not the belief was based in truth.[56]

However, the fact that many artists and writers borrowed religious symbols as reminders of pre-Communist Russia should not lead to the assumption that no writer or artist had a genuine religious experience. Clearly, religion would not have become such a popular and powerful theme for artists had not many felt that it retained quite a bit of its power, even after six or seven decades of censure. Many, like Solzhenitsyn, embraced a formal belief system and, for them, religious symbolism signified genuine religious zeal. References to religion in late- and post-Soviet era art, literature, film, and music need not be seen as only a yearning for lost elements in the culture. Nor are such references merely an attempt to exploit the often inherent need many feel for spiritual fulfillment by appropriating religious symbolism and themes to support a particular ideology. For many artists, these references to religion can also be seen as a sign of a religious revival. Depending on the particular artist or author, it is quite likely that both views are correct; that there were both those who employed religious themes in their art, literature, film, or music to reflect a sincere desire for seeking religious truth (e.g., Solzhenitsyn and Pärt) and those who had other motivations. If nothing else, the existence of an underground church and a religion-based artistic counter-culture demonstrates that in the Soviet Union, despite decades of officially sanctioned antagonism – if not actual persecution – and anti-religious propaganda, religion and religious beliefs continued to wield considerable influence on the hearts and minds of the citizenry.

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action. Irena Maryniak, "Truthseekers, Godbuilders or Culture Vultures?" *Religion in Communist Lands* 16, no. 3 (1988): 227-36.

[56] Ibid.

Artists such as Solzhenitsyn and Pärt foreshadowed a shift in the religious landscape of Eastern Europe in the early 1990s, after the fall of the Soviet Union. Almost immediately after the fall of the Soviet system, the region experienced a significant religious revival. In part, this revival was the result of churches resurfacing that had existed underground during the Soviet era. Also, with the fall of communism, people suddenly had access, for the first time in 70 years, to information about religion. Another related factor is that after the fall of the Soviet Union, the only world-view taught for 70 years became obsolete. The Soviet system, though ostensibly atheist, had acted as a surrogate religion, as demonstrated by the creation of "Soviet rituals":

> An obvious reason for creating Soviet rituals was, alongside the fact that people are not entirely rational, the contradictory reality of Soviet society. The 'model' aspect of rituals was needed in a situation where a discrepancy existed between the ideological definitions of social relations and their reality. In the Soviet Union, rituals were used as tools by the political elite in their effort to perpetuate the political *status quo*. The Soviet political elite were highly committed to achieving a value consensus throughout the Soviet Union. In this context rituals were used to legitimate or even sacralize the present political system.[57]

Following the fall of the Soviet bloc, a new world-view was needed in Eastern Europe, and since Orthodoxy both had ties to Russia's past and with the Christian West, it become a popular alternative to atheism.

Music and Religion in the Soviet Union

Concurrent with many of the changes noted above, a number of Eastern European composers emerging at the end of the Soviet era looked to religion, spirituality, or mysticism for inspiration. In addition to Pärt, composers like Henryk Górecki (Poland), Peteris Vasks (Lithuania), Giya Kancheli (Georgia), Petr Eben (Czechoslovakia), as well as Russian composers Alfred Schnittke, Sophia Gubaidulina, and Galina Ustvolskaya, represent a segment of Eastern

[57] Kimmo Kääriäinen, *Religion in Russia after the Collapse of Communism* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), 45.

Bloc composers who came of age during the 1950s and 1960s and who embraced, on some level, religion as an impetus for artistic creations or as a direct source for compositional material. These composers were part of a generation who, "searched for individuality and non-uniformity in the arts. In the spirit of the avant-garde, they strove to establish one definite rule: music has a right to experiment with musical idioms and sound, and it should be free from any preconceptions."[58]

Polish composer Górecki (who, like Schnittke, differs from the rest by being Roman Catholic instead of Orthodox) has been most linked with Pärt (along with, to a lesser degree, Vasks and Kancheli) primarily because of their similar use of long, almost glacial, harmonic motion, adherence to harmonic elements that are at least evocative of common-practice tonality, and the use of drones or drone-like elements.[59] Other composers, like Schnittke and Gubaidulina, often composed polystylistic music, which combined diverse styles both old and contemporary.[60] Pärt, along with Górecki and Englishman John Tavener have collectively been called variously, "Holy Minimalists" or "New Simplicists"[61] because of the centrality of religion in their compositional process and because their aesthetic reminds many of minimalism.

[58] Margarita Mazo, "The Present and the Unpredictable Past: Music and Musical life of St. Petersburg and Moscow Since the 1960s," *International Journal of Musicology*, 5 (1996): 376.
[59] John Tavener has also been linked to Pärt and Górecki, both through his musical aesthetic and his conversion to Orthodoxy. My leaving him off of this list is not an oversight but rather because I am, at this point, more interested in linking Pärt with those who share his cultural background, i.e. composers of the Russian sphere of influence, emerging at the end of the Soviet era. Tavener, as an Englishman, does not fit this criterion. However, I will discuss Pärt and Tavener's similarities later in this chapter.
[60] For example, Gubaidulina, in her composition *Sieben Worte* for cello, bajan, and string orchestra, employs non-tonal musical elements and non-traditional performance practice, as well as quotations from 16th century composer Heinrich Schütz.
[61] See Terry Teachout, "Holy Minimalism," *Commentary*, vol. 99 (1995): 50-53; Josiah Fisk, "The New Simplicity: The Music of Górecki, Tavener and Pärt," *The Hudson Review*, 47 (1994): 394-412; and Andreas Andreopoulos, "The Return of Religion in Contemporary Music," *Literature and Theology* 14 (1) (2000): 81-95.

Religious Conversion as Aesthetic Conversion: Pärt's Compositional Aesthetic

Even prior to his religious and aesthetic conversion, Pärt displayed a desire to go against conventional practice; instead of following the officially sanctioned Soviet compositional style, he became one of the first major Soviet composers to employ serialism with his 1961 orchestral work *Nekrolog*.[62] Serialism, as well as collage technique, dominated his musical output over the next seven years.[63] However, he soon reached an impasse, which Hillier describes in his biographical study:

> With *Credo*, Pärt had written himself into a cul-de-sac: he had reached a position of complete despair, in which the composition of music appeared to be the most futile of gestures, and he lacked the musical faith and will-power to write even a single note. It was from this creative death that there gradually arose in him a search for an entirely new way to proceed.[64]

Although Pärt never explicitly states why he found serialism so limiting, based on an interview on Estonian radio in 1968, one can speculate about the reasons:

> In any case, if we want to reach to the core of a musical work, no matter what kind, we cannot forgo the process of reduction. In other words we have to throw out our ballast – eras, styles, forms, orchestration, harmony, polyphony – and so to reach to one voice, to its "intonations."[65]

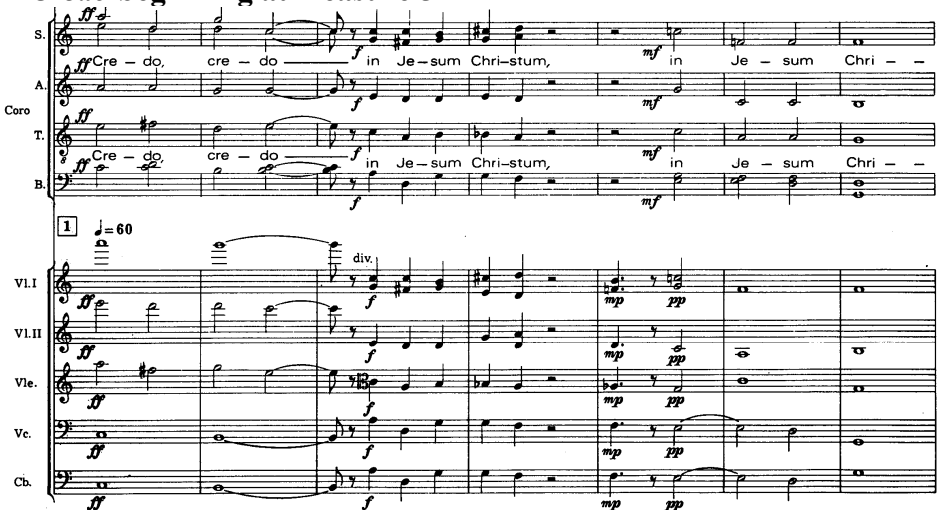
Serialism, with its inherent melodic and harmonic complexity runs counter to Pärt's desire for simplicity and reduction. However, prior to settling on a particular aesthetic direction, Pärt's 1968 work, *Credo* for chorus, piano, and orchestra musically depicted this crisis. *Credo* was his final collage work and his final work prior to his so-called "silent period."

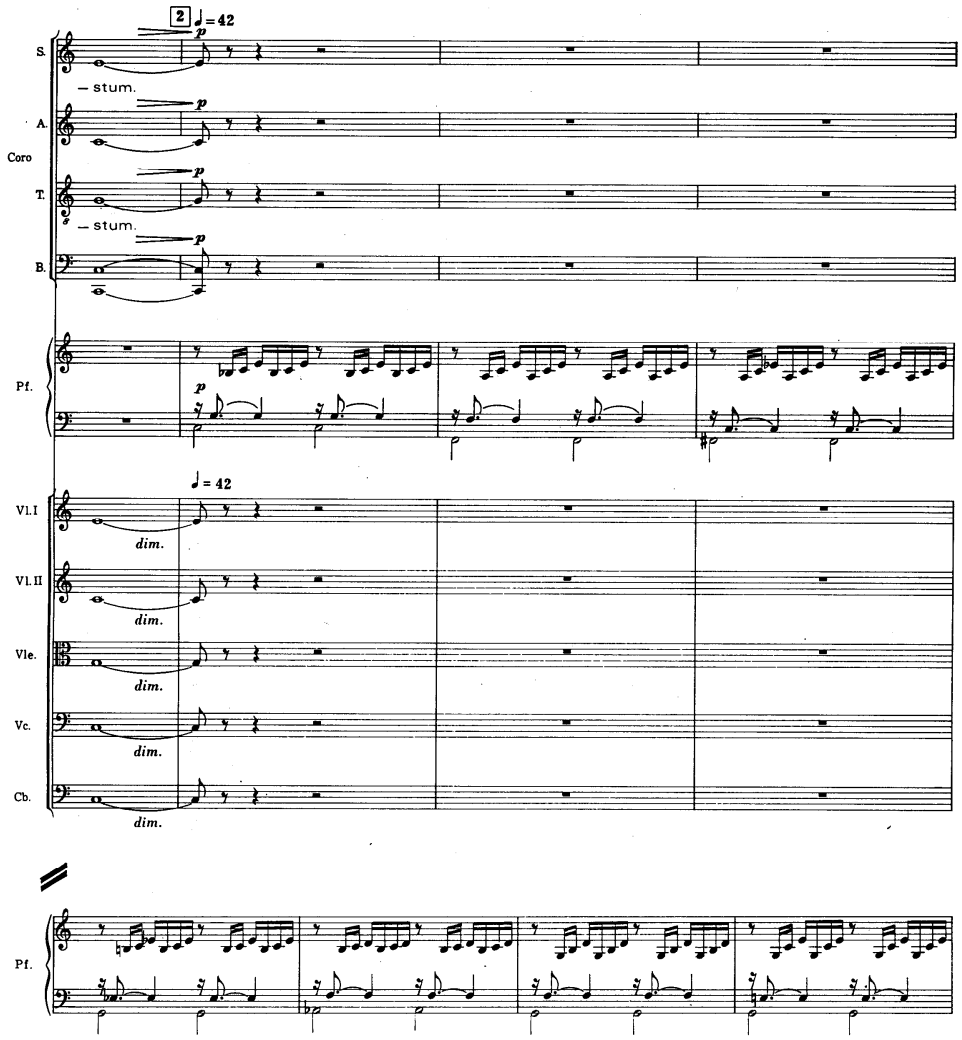
Written and premiered in 1968, *Credo* can be seen as the end of Pärt's former style as well as a declaration of his changing spiritual direction. The work is essentially a contrast

[62] Hillier, 30.
[63] Ibid, 32.
[64] Ibid, 64.
[65] Ibid, 65.

between two aesthetic positions; high modernism and neo-traditionalism. Pärt opens the work with traditional tonal harmony as the chorus sings "Credo in Jesum Christum" ("I believe in Jesus Christ") followed, beginning at rehearsal number 2, by a quotation from J.S. Bach's "Prelude in C major" from *The Well Tempered Clavier* performed by the piano, shown in Example 1.

Example 1 ***Credo*** **beginning at measure 5**





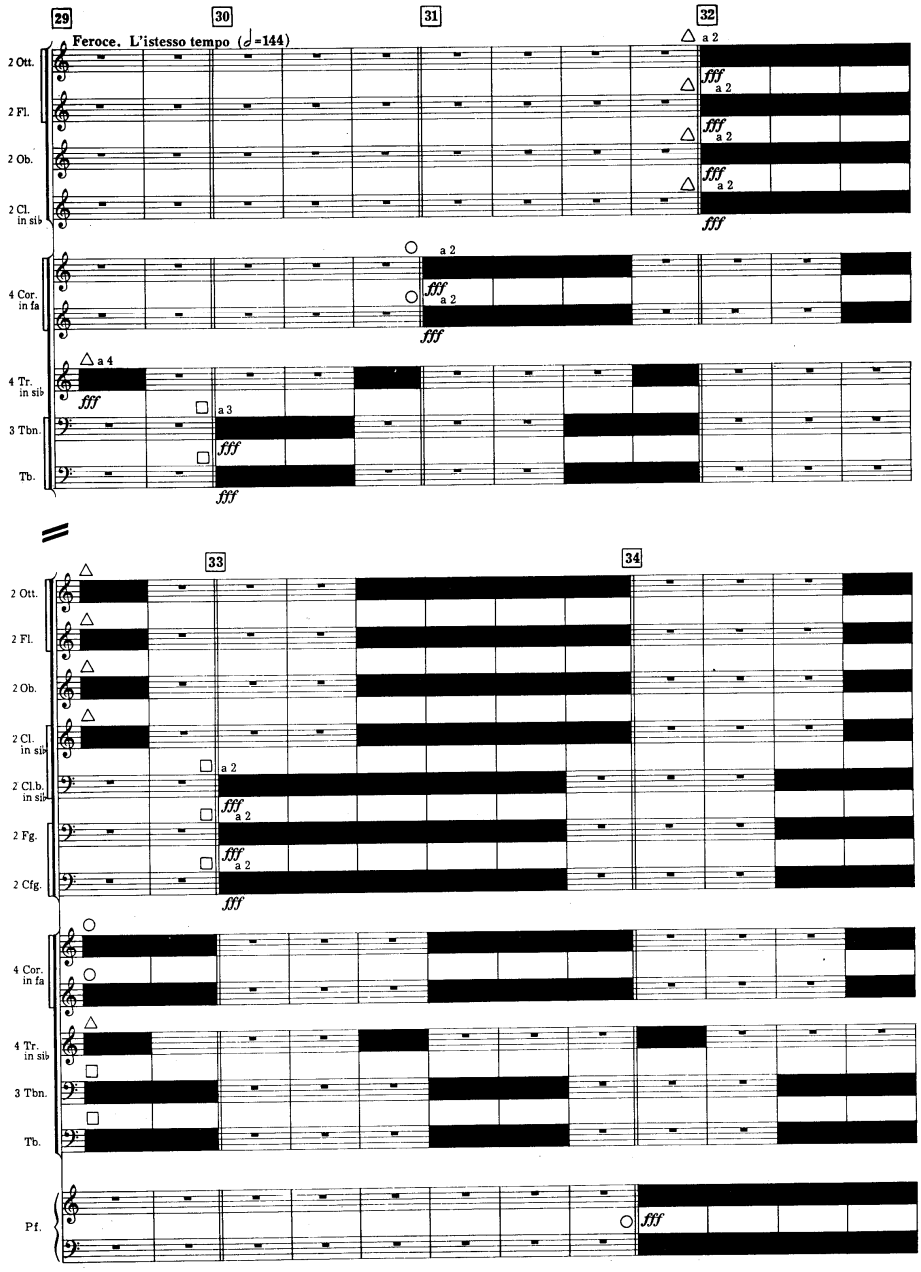
Pärt CREDO *für Klavier, gemischten Chor und Orchester*

Following the Bach quotation, Pärt disrupts the established tonality by having the winds and brass play a countermelody consisting of a series of ascending fourths and descending fifths. At each entrance an additional set of ascending fourths and descending fifths is added to the counter melody until gradually a 12-tone row emerges. The work then builds dynamically and in terms of complexity until a ferocious improvised section where Pärt abandons traditional notation, using instead black bands across the score. Pärt's transition from serialism to a mass of

sound makes the "modernist" music complex to the point of near parody (Example 2).

Following this intense passage, the work's opening tonality gradually returns to close the work.

Example 2 Improvised section of Credo



Pärt CREDO *für Klavier, gemischten Chor und Orchester*

Credo lends itself to a metaphorical interpretation because of the work's striking contrasts between tonal passages, tied textually and thematically to Christianity, and atonality. However, Pärt insists that his goal was not to demonize modernist music or to create the impression that tonal music was "good" and atonal music "bad." Instead, Pärt claimed that he was trying to portray something far more nuanced. In describing *Credo*, Pärt expressed his desire to dramatically present the central Christian idea of "love your enemies": "What I wanted to show through the work's unfolding – inexorable like a chain reaction – is how the postulate 'An eye for eye, a tooth for a tooth,' harmless as it may seen in the initial stage, only gradually displays the full destructive dimensions of its true face: an escalation of power that like an avalanche, eventually comes up against its own limits."[66] *Credo* also dramatically demonstrates his personal frustrations with his compositional dead-end and his frustrations with what had been the current state of modern composition. By contrasting tonal and non-tonal passages, Pärt creates a duality in *Credo*. Though much of his later work contains dualities – his tintinnabulation technique, as will be discussed below, is inherently dualistic – *Credo* is unique for Pärt in that its dual nature is clearly oppositional. Dualities in his later works can seldom be thought of in terms of opposition. By creating such an oppositional atonal/tonal duality for the listener, one can assume that Pärt had more in mind than just compositional frustrations, especially in light of his later aesthetic. The two sides of the duality are so oppositional that few listeners would have been unaware of it, especially considering how the "modernist" elements are so extreme to the point of parody. If, as Pärt contends, he was not making a strong, negative statement about the music of modernism but rather making a very personal statement about his

[66] Arvo Pärt, quoted in the liner notes for Hélène Grimaud, *Credo*, Deutsche Grammaphone, 2003.

own compositional frustrations, then it is not surprising that he largely stepped away from composing following *Credo*.

In *Credo*, one can see hints of the direction Pärt would take following his "silent years." With the tonal elements of the work, Pärt paves the way for his later aesthetic choices. Moreover, how Pärt generates his 12-tone row is similar to the additive processes he would use in later works. And yet, the tonal passages of *Credo* are dissimilar to his "post-silent years" aesthetic; while the tonal sections show the clear footprints of J. S. Bach, both harmonically and melodically, his post-1976 works do not. Though Pärt never explicitly stated why he chose to base portions of *Credo* on Bach, the choice is logical. Because Pärt may have been using this work as a vehicle for announcing his new religious beliefs, quoting a composer like Bach who has strong associations with religious music, would have been an obvious choice. Pärt's use of a religious text that begins with the Latin phrase "Credo in Jesum Christum" ("I believe in Jesus Christ") was not lost on his initial audience in the Soviet Union. Further, and most significant for his post-1976 aesthetic, Pärt may have been reacting to the music of the present by looking to the past. Pärt found music of the past, especially medieval music, inspirational. Though Pärt had not begun incorporating elements of medieval music in *Credo*, one can sense in both his use of material drawn from the past and his seemingly sarcastic tone when using music of the present, Pärt's disaffection with the music of his own era.

The Foundations of Pärt's New Compositional Aesthetic

When Pärt emerged from his compositional silence that began shortly after *Credo*, he began writing simple, religiously oriented music. In addition to using religiously themed titles or texts, his new compositional aesthetic demonstrated influences from both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox religious traditions. Many of the forms he used, such as the Latin mass, as

well as his tonal language drew from Western traditions. Symbolically, however, his musical material bore a striking similarity to Eastern Orthodoxy theological and liturgical traditions regarding icons. Eastern Orthodoxy, more so than most Protestant denominations, is heavily endowed with a sense of mystery and tradition; its architecture, "icons, lamps and candles, incense, ceremonies, and chant all conspire to transport worshippers into another world."[67] Icons especially have this pervading sense of mystery. To an Eastern Orthodox believer, icons are not just religious art, but a mode of access into a metaphysical reality; they create a window into heaven, if you will. The icon represents the "inner meaning" of "concrete events of sacred History" presented in a way that is symbolic "because the spiritual reality it represents cannot be transmitted otherwise than through symbols."[68] Iconographic artists do not attempt to represent an earthly reality. Rather, they seek to present images of the divine.

In addition, his new musical aesthetic showed diverse influences. His studies of medieval music helped Pärt create his transformed musical aesthetic. By the time he returned to composition in 1976, he began producing works heavily indebted to medieval polyphony, especially that of the late twelfth to thirteenth century Notre Dame school. However, his compositional style post-1976 also has elements that reveal at least a superficial influence of minimalism.[69] Moreover, his post-1976 compositions take up where *Credo* left off in asserting overtly religious themes. Though these themes are evident in the works' titles or, in the case of choral works, the texts, specific musical elements Pärt employs also assert his religious beliefs. Specifically, these elements often symbolically refer to religious and spiritual musical traditions.

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[67] Canon Hugh Wybrew, "A Western Appreciation of Orthodox Worship," *Theology Today*, 61 (2004): 48.
[68] Leonid Ouspensky, "The Meaning and Language of Icons," in *The Meaning of Icons*, ed. Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky (Boston: Boston Book and Art Shop, 1952), 29.
[69] Though Pärt had only limited interaction with minimalism while living in the Soviet Union, he does acknowledge hearing Terry Riley's *In C*. See McCarthy, 63.

Prior to discussing these elements within the context of his works *Te Deum* and *Fratres*, I first discuss the technique most unique to Pärt, tintinnabulation.

Tintinnabulation

Tintinnabulation, which literally means the tinkling of bells, is the compositional technique most associated with Pärt's post-1976 works. Instead of using real bells in his compositions he uses other instruments, including strings and the human voice to represent bells.[70] Pärt was more interested in the harmonic qualities of bells than their timbral qualities. As noted by Geoffrey Turner in his discussion of tintinnabulation, "When a bell is struck repeatedly, a variety of harmonics begin to resonate. In the same way Pärt's repeated notes explore a panoply of related sounds often based on a single note as a sort of drone to support higher voices."[71] Thus, according to Turner, Pärt used the tintinnabulation technique to represent the resonating overtones one hears when a bell is struck.

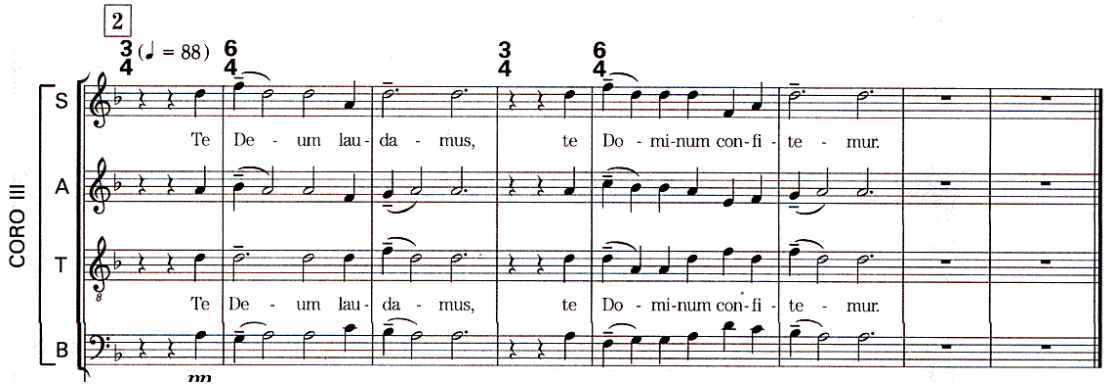
Paul Hillier, in his study of Pärt, gives a clear description of the technique based both on musical analysis and discussions with the composer.[72] In the technique, Pärt begins with two principal voice groups. First, the melodic voice, or "M-voice," consists of a simple melody that is often paired with its inversion. Second, the tintinnabuli voice, or "T-voice," consists of various notes, all taken from the tonic triad, that envelope the melodic voice. Hillier points out that note choices vary for Pärt, as he may use either an open or closed voicing, which means

[70] On the rare occasion that Pärt does use a physical bell in his composition, as he does in *Cantus: In Memory of Benjamin Britten*, he does so for a specific, dramatic effect. In *Cantus*, a single bell strikes at regular intervals evoking a funeral bell.
[71] Geoffrey Turner, "Sounds of Transcendence," *Cross Currents*, Spring 1995: 63.
[72] Hillier's analysis has been fairly well codified as the primary way to analyze Pärt's music. In fact, the "Pärt" entry in the most recent edition of the *New Grove Dictionary* was written by Hillier and includes a summary of his analytical model. With its endorsement by *New Grove*, and with no competing analytical models being offered, Hillier's model has become the standard.

either choosing notes from the triad closest to but not in unison with the melodic line or triadic notes furthest from the melodic voice but within the same octave.[73]

A cursory examination of most of Pärt's music post-1976 can reveal this technique. Examples 3 and 4, below, taken from *Te Deum* and *Passio*, respectively, show chorales demonstrating the basics of the tintinnabuli technique. In Example 3, the soprano and tenor voices, as the T-voices, are restricted completely to notes of the D minor triad (D, F, and A). The alto and bass act as the M-voices centered on the pitch A.

Example 3 Tintinnabulation as found in *Te Deum* (Rehearsal Number 2)

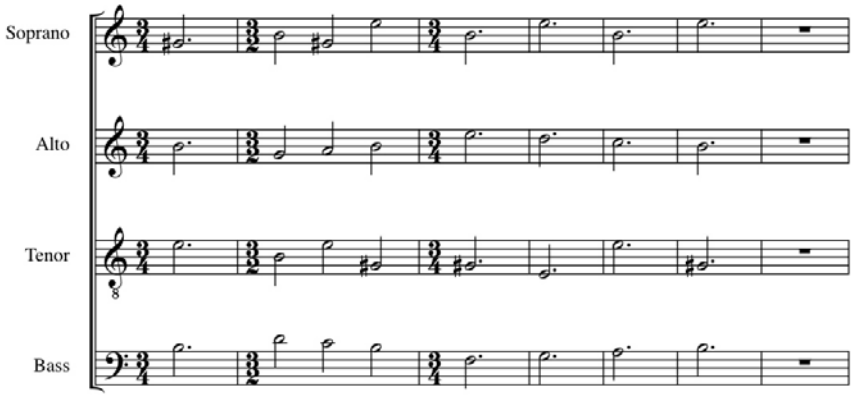


Pärt TE DEUM *für 3 Chöre, präpariertes Klavier, Streichorchester und Tonband*

Example 4 likewise shows the two tintinnabulation voices with the altos and basses sing the M-voice, which consists of scale-wise motion centered on B, while the sopranos and tenors sing the T-voice, which consists of the notes from an E major chord.

[73] Hillier, 86-97.

Example 4 Tintinnabulation as found in *Passio* (Rehearsal Number 52)



This example also demonstrates the frequent harmonic contrast between the M-voice and the T-voice. The M-voice seems to be based on a B Phyrgian mode in contrast to the E major T-voice. While there is a tonal relationship between the B of the M-voice and the E major triad, the B Phyrgian mode contains a G-natural in both the alto and bass voices either preceding or following the G-sharp of the E major triad in the soprano or tenor voices in all but one of the measures in the example above.

However, it would be a mistake to view the technique as merely a systematic compositional device. For Pärt, tintinnabulation is rich with theological implications, particularly because Pärt associates the technique with bells and because of the ramifications of the technique's inherent simplicity. Within Orthodox theology, bells are important aural icons. In the Orthodox Church, bells have a dual purpose. Not only do they serve a practical function, such as calling the communicants to religious services, but also they serve as "aural icons of past and future trumpeting," representing at once the trumpet calls of the Old Testament, the call to

repentance of the Gospel, and the angelic trumpeting at the end times.[74] Thus, by referring to bells as "aural icons" Orthodox practice identifies bells with the metaphysical. By evoking bells with his most identifiable compositional technique, Pärt ties his music to a specific iconic practice within Orthodoxy.

Although Pärt does not explicitly connect tintinnabulation with God or iconography, he links the technique, as well as the sound of bells, with simplicity and a search for "comfort":

> In my dark hours, I have the certain feeling that everything outside this one thing has no meaning. The complex and many-faceted only confuses me, and I must search for unity…This one note, or a silent beat, or a moment of silence, comforts me…I build with the most primitive materials – with the triad, with one specific tonality. The three notes of the triad are like bells. And that is why I called it tintinnabulation.[75]

Thus, Pärt's music can be seen as a retreat from complexity towards the simplicity of a single note or of silence. By his thinking of this "one note" or "silent beat" as a source of comfort, he connects them to his religious musical practice. Striving for simplicity reflects a common motive of icon artists as theologian Leonid Ouspensky maintains:

> The artist lived and thought in images and reduced forms to a limit of a simplicity, the depth of whose inner content is accessible only to the spiritual eye. He cleansed his work of everything personal and remained anonymous; his essential concern was to transmit tradition.[76]

Though Pärt never claims that he intends to cleanse "his work of everything personal" and to remain "anonymous" as an artist, nevertheless the inherent simplicity and tradition-laden nature of his compositions can be heard as having an implicit similarity to the purposes of icon painters.

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[74] Edward V. Williams, "Aural Icons of Orthodoxy: The Sonic Typology of Russian Bells," in *Christianity and the Arts in Russia*, ed. William C. Brumfield and Milos M. Velimirovic (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 3-5. Williams quotes a number of Russian theologians who assert that the Old Testament tradition of trumpet calls were replaced first in Byzantine Greece by the striking of a wooden beam with a mallet, and later in Russia with bells. Thus, for these theologians, bells were linked historically to an Old Testament tradition.

[75] Hillier, *Arvo Pärt* 87. Hillier is quoting Arvo Pärt from the liner notes of the recording, *Tabula Rasa*, ECM New Series 1275 (1984).

[76] Ouspensky, 29.

More specific to the technique, Pärt, according to Hillier, sees the melodic and triadic voices as forming a duality that possesses great spiritual significance. Hillier recalls Pärt stating that the melodic voice, "always signifies the subjective world, the daily egoistic life of sin and suffering." Conversely, the triadic voice represents forgiveness. Though the M-voice "may appear to wander," it is "always held firmly by the T-voice."[77] However, Pärt does not see this duality as representing two separate entities but rather dual aspects of a single entity, i.e., the human struggle between sin and repentance.

Pärt's symbolic treatment of bells through tintinnabulation is not a matter of imitation but rather allusion. As stated above, he rarely uses actual bells in his music, preferring to use choral or instrumental ensembles as representations of the resonating aspects of bells. Human voices and strings, for example, clearly do not sound like bells, but he uses them to present a sonic image of bells. In a sense, one could argue that the tintinnabulation becomes an icon for bells, which are both real and iconic. In other words, Pärt creates an image of an image; an icon of an icon. This raises the possibility that Pärt spiritualizes the musical experience, as if he wants the music to contain an innate connection to the metaphysical realm.

Te Deum

A work that exemplifies much of Pärt's compositional aesthetic is his composition *Te Deum*, for three choirs, prepared piano, string orchestra and tape, 1984-1986 (revised 1992). *Te Deum* not only includes most of the compositional devices identified with Pärt (like tintinnabulation), but also features one of his most pronounced uses of chant melodies and a drone. Moreover, as the work is a setting of a liturgical text, *Te Deum* can serve as an important

[77] Hillier, 96.

example of a work that can function in both sacred and secular settings. The entire text in both Latin and English with verse divisions is shown in the following example.[78]

Example 5 Translation of *Te Deum*[79]

Subsection	Verse	Latin Text	English Translation
I	1	Te Deum laudamus: te Dominum confitemur.	You are God: we praise you, You are the Lord: we acclaim you;
	2	Te aeternum Patrem, omnis terra veneratur.	You are the eternal Father: All creation worships you.
III	3	Tibi omnes angeli, tibi caeli et universae potestates:	To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,
	4	Tibi cherubim et seraphim incessabili voce proclamant:	Cherubim, and Seraphim, sing in endless praise:
	5	Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth	Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of power and might,
IV	6	Pleni sunt caeli et terra maiestatis gloriae tuae	Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
V	7	Te gloriosus Apostolorum chorus,	The glorious company of apostles praise you.
	8	te prophetarum laudabilis numerus,	The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.
	9	te martyrum candidates laudat exercitus.	The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.
VI	10	Te per orbem terrarum sancta confitetur Ecclesia	Throughout the world the holy Church acclaims you:
	11	Patrem immensae maiestatis;	Father, of majesty unbounded,
	12	Venerandum tuum verum et unicum Filium;	Your true and only son, worthy of all worship,
	13	Sanctum quoque Paraclitum Spiritum	And the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide.
VII	14	Tu rex gloriae, Christe.	You, Christ, are the king of glory,
	15	Tu Patris sempiternus es Filius.	The eternal Son of the Father.
	16	Tu, ad liberandum suscepturus hominem, non horruisti Virginis uterum	When you became man to set us free you did not spurn the Virgin's womb.

[78] Ruth Steiner and Keith Falconer, "Te Deum," in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), 191-92, and H.T. Henry, *The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume XIV*, Online Edition, Ed. Kevin Knight, 2003 (Accessed on March 2, 2003; available at www.newadvent.org/cathen/14468c.htm). Questions of the *Te Deum's* authorship remain unsettled though many attribute it to Niceta of Remesana. In the middle ages, authorship was widely attributed to St. Augustine of Hippo. This imaginative legend asserts that Augustine spoke the text spontaneously upon being baptized by St. Ambrose of Milan, c.386.

[79] Translation by the International Consultation on English Texts published in Richard P. McBrien, ed., *Harper Collins Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1995), 1,242.

Subsection	Verse	Latin Text	English Translation
VIII	17	Tu devicto mortis aculeo aperuisti credentibus regna cailorum.	You overcame the sting of death, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.
IX	18	Tu ad dexteram Dei sedes, in gloria Patris.	You are seated at God's right hand in glory.
	19	Iudex crederis esse venturus	We believe that you will come, and be our judge.
X	20	Te ergo quaesumus, tuis famulis subveni, quos pretioso sanguine redemisti.	Come then, Lord, and help your people, bought with the price of your own blood,
XI	21	Aeterna fac cum sanctis tuis in gloria numerari	And bring us with your saints to glory everlasting.
XII	22	Salvum fac populum tuum, Domine, et benedic hereditati tuae	Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance.
	23	Et rege eos, et extolle illos usque in aeternum	Govern and uphold them now and always.
XIII	24	Per singulos dies benedicimus te;	Day by Day we bless you.
	25	Et laudamus nomen tuum in saeculum, et in saeculum saeculi	We praise your name forever.
XIV	26	Dignare, Domine, die isto sine peccato nos custodire.	Keep us today, Lord, from all sin.
XV	27	Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.	Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy.
	28	Fiat misericordia tua, Domine, super nos, quemadmodum speravimus in te.	Lord, show us your love and mercy; for we put our trust in you.
XVI	29	In te, Domine, speravi: non confundar in aeternum.	In you, Lord, is our hope: and we shall never hope in vain.
XVII	30	Amen. Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus.	Amen. Holy. Holy. Holy

The work is a large arch form with three sections. In addition, each of the three sections has its own arch that Pärt creates through gradually increasing dynamic, rhythmic, and textural intensity (A chart of the gradual quickening of tempo and increased rhythmic intensity of Section One is shown in the following example). The work starts out almost imperceptibly quiet and slowly increases in volume. Simultaneously, tempo and rhythmic intensity gradually increase until culminating in the verse, "Tu ad dexteram Dei sedes, in gloria Patris." At the end of the work, the work slowly decreases dynamics until it fades into silence much like how it began.

Example 6 Tempo and Dynamic Arc in Section One of *Te Deum*

Subsection	Text Verse	Rehearsal number	Tempo marking (♩=…)	Primary Rhythmic Unit(s)	Dynamic
		(Intro)		𝅝	*pppp*
I	1	1	92	♩	*pp*
		2	88	♩	*pp*
II	2	3	108	♩	*pp*
		4	100	♩	*mp*
III	3	5	108	♩	*ppp*
		6-8	108-116	♩ ♪	*p < mf*
	4	9	108	♩	*mf*
		10-11	108-112	♩	*mf < f*
	5	12	108-112	♩	*f > pp*
		13	116	♩	*pp*
IV	6	14	120	♩	*mf*
*		15	63	♪ 𝅘𝅥𝅯	*f < ff*
V	7	16	126	♩	*pp*
		17	120	♩	*mp*
		18-19	116	♩	*mp > p*
	8	20	104-108	♩	*pp*
		21-22	112-116	♩	*pp < p*
	9	23	112-116	♩	*mp*
		24	92	♩	*p*

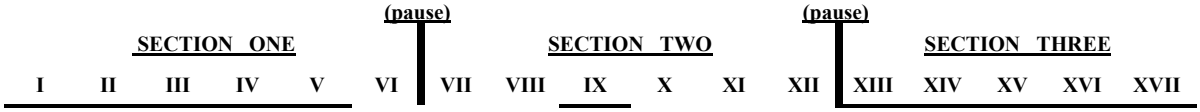
Subsection	Text Verse	Rehearsal number	Tempo marking (♩=…)	Primary Rhythmic Unit(s)	Dynamic
VI	10	25	100	♩	*p*
		26-28	116	♩	*p*
		29	116	♪	*mp*
	11	30	120	♩	*mf*
		31-33	120	♪ - triplet	*mp < mf*
	12	34	126	♩	*mf*
		35-36	120	♪	*ppp < mp > pp*
		37	120	♩	*ppp*
	13	38	96	♩	*p*

* Climax of Section One

The work is for three choirs (men's chorus, women's chorus, and mixed choir), string orchestra, prepared piano, and *Tonband* or tape player, which is used for generating a drone. Formally, Pärt divides the *Te Deum's* 29 verses of text into 3 large sections and 17 subsections of differing lengths, where he groups thematically similar texts together. Further, he groups these 17 subsections into 3 large sections by inserting a brief pause after the 6th and 12th subsections, which coincides with traditional divisions of the text. The first section focuses on God, the second on Christ, and the third containing Psalm verses.[80] Each subsection consists of at least one line of text set to an original chant melody followed responsorially by the same text sung in a four-part tintinnabulation chorale and occasionally an instrumental passage based on the chant melody. An organizational chart showing the 3 large sections and the 17 subsections is provided in Example 7.

[80] Steiner and Falconer, 191.

Example 7 Organizational Chart of *Te Deum*



The Ison

Reinforcing the formal divisions established by the two pauses is the disappearance and reappearance of a drone, or "Ison," as Pärt refers to it in the score. Though not as emblematic of his music as tintinnabulation, the Ison nonetheless provides a striking connection to sacred tradition in many of his larger works, most notably *Te Deum* and *Berliner Messe*. Specifically to *Te Deum*, the Ison provides a very subtle but important element. It functions almost as ambient sound out of which the rest of the musical material emerges. Moreover, in Pärt's aesthetic, which is typified by compositional simplicity, the Ison is easily the musical element most demonstrably lacking in complexity. Moreover, the Ison can also "play an important role in tintinnabuli music" by providing a continuing reference to a central pitch and triad.[81] The general appearances of the Ison can be seen in Example 7, above, depicted as a solid horizontal line below the section numbers.

The Ison opens *Te Deum* on a low D produced by the *Tonband*, a prepared tape loop electronically producing a single tone. Though Pärt gives no specific instructions on placement of speakers needed for replaying the tape loop, the presence of such overtly modern technology in such a "medieval" sounding work may seem incongruous.[82] However, the presence of the tape player may simply be that of expediency. The tape player has the capacity to perform a single note continuously and, aside from a few notable exceptions (i.e., the pauses noted in

[81] Hillier, 84.

[82] The seeming incongruity of modern technology is compounded by the prepared piano. Through the application of metal screws, Pärt strives for having the piano produce a more dampened sound. In neither case – the tape loop or the prepared piano – does Pärt produce sounds that are out of place with the rest of the piece. Rather, his use of these contemporary techniques is similar to how he uses tintinnabulation to produce a pseudo-medieval sound.

Example 7 and a few passages where the low strings assume the role of the Ison), Pärt uses it to produce a drone that plays throughout the work. In the initial entrance of the Ison, Pärt instructs that the low D be performed at the dynamic of *ppppp* with a gradually increasing volume for 27 seconds until arriving at *mp*. At that opening dynamic, the low D is essentially inaudible for over a dozen seconds.[83]

By calling the drone an Ison, Pärt links the drone directly to Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition. The Ison is a common technique in Orthodox chant, providing one of the distinctive aspects of the tradition. Typically, Orthodox chant is monophonic accompanied only by the Ison, a vocal bass drone.[84] The Ison functions both musically and theologically; it "not only enhances the melody, but also emphasizes the mode in which the psalm, hymn or ode is being sung, and adds solemness and power to the psalmody."[85] According to the Byzantine text, the *Papadike*, the Ison is the "beginning, middle, end, and integration of all of the signs of the psaltic art … Without it no singing can succeed. It is called 'aphonon' not because it is soundless, but because it is not counted as a tone: it is sung but not measured."[86] John Tavener also emphasizes the Ison's considerable theological importance in the Orthodox tradition, noting that it symbolizes God's eternality; that is, the single note of the drone played for long durations symbolizes God's never wavering, unchanging presence in the world.[87] In discussing his own work, *Fall and Resurrection*, Tavener describes how the Ison, "the eternity note of God held

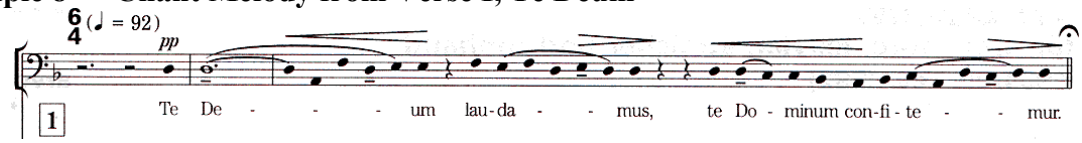
[83] On the ECM recording, the note becomes barely audible at about 10 seconds and not clearly audible until roughly 21 seconds.
[84] http://www.stanthonysmonastery.org/music/Intro.htm. Accessed on November 30, 2010.
[85] Constantine Cavarnos, "Byzantine Sacred Music," 1956. Available at http://www.stgeorgegoc.org/ByzantineMusic.html. Accessed on November 30, 2010.
[86] Egon Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), 235.
[87] John Tavener, *The Music of Silence* (London and New York: Faber and Faber, 1999), 47. This sentiment is echoed by young Macedonian composer Valentina Velkovska-Trajanovska, who describes the Ison as "a synonym for eternity, infinity and is strongly connected with the Christian meaning of the world and life." Quoted in Dojrana Prokopieva, *Rediscovering Tradition: "Ison" by the Macedonian Composer Valentina Velkovska – Trajanovska*, UKIM Faculty of Music – Skopje, Macedonia, http://www.mmc.edu.mk/IRAMbooks/papers/DoJProPaper.pdf.

softly by the double basses," emerges out of a complex passage.[88] Further, drones or drone-like gestures can be used to evoke a suspension of time or a sense of timelessness.

Chant Melodies

In creating the melodic material in *Te Deum*, Pärt borrowed elements from Western Gregorian chant. In *Te Deum*, more so than in most of his other works that employ chant-like melodies, Pärt gives the chant melodies particular prominence as all 17 musical subsections have at least one chant melody. The first chant-like melody in Te Deum can be seen in Example 8.

Example 8 Chant Melody from Verse I, Te Deum



Pärt TE DEUM *für 3 Chöre, präpariertes Klavier, Streichorchester und Tonband*

The melody is similar to, though more melismatic than, many of his M-voices in his tintinnabulation works. The melody also resembles Gregorian chant in that the melody revolves around a central pitch (D) and has a modal pitch collection. The modal aspect of the melody is reinforced by a typical modal melodic cadence as can be seen in the last four notes of the final melisma (D-C-D-D on the syllables "te" and "mur" of the word *confitemur*) of the melody shown above in Example 8.

By composing melodies that evoke Gregorian rather than Orthodox chant, Pärt reveals his tendency towards musical eclecticism in his compositions. Pärt infuses his music with religious influences outside of the Orthodox Church as demonstrated by his settings of Latin liturgical texts, like *Te Deum*, and composing in musical genres typically associated with

[88] Ibid, 83.

denominations other than Eastern Orthodox (e.g., a Roman Catholic Mass: *Berliner Messe*; and a Lutheran Oratorio: *Passio*). While his personal theology may be rooted in Russian Orthodoxy, his musical theology is far more eclectic.

Pärt also may have had pragmatic reasons for choosing non-Russian Orthodox texts, liturgies, and forms. For one, his religious eclecticism was rooted in his musical studies. While he rarely discusses Orthodox musical traditions in interviews, Pärt has often remarked on the influence of early Western music, which he had studied extensively – especially Gregorian chant, Notre Dame polyphony, Machaut, and others.[89] His studies of early music, as well as his association with an Estonian early music performance group, the Hortus Musicus, coincided with the birth of his tintinnabulation style.[90]

Pärt's choice of chant-like melodies may be rooted in deeper aesthetic and theological motivations. Pärt is not interested in composing eighth-century chant as if the intervening years had not happened, but rather twentieth-century interpretations of the medieval repertory.[91] As I have stated above, in tintinnabulation, Pärt creates an icon of an icon. Similarly, by employing chant-melodies that resemble but that are not exact copies of Gregorian chant, Pärt may desire to create an image of the icon and not recreate the icon itself.

Regardless of which theological tradition Pärt's melodies resemble, they can function as signifiers for religious music. Pärt's listeners, both at the time of *Te Deum's* initial performances and subsequently, need not be communicants of either Catholicism or Orthodoxy to have been

[89] McCarthy, 59.
[90] Hillier, 77-78.
[91] In this regard, Pärt is distinct from John Tavener, whose primary concern is to create modern icons (See John Tavener, *The Music of Silence,* 115. Tavener argues for the sacred purity of the chant tradition. Further, in an early chapter evocatively titled, "Blow Up the Concert Hall and the Opera House" (91-106), Tavener makes clear his interest in a purely sacred approach to his music that is quite different than Pärt's: whereas Pärt seems unconcerned with his music being played in concert halls, Tavener asserts that sacred music must have a sacred space (95).

acculturated to the sound of chant and its connection with religion through film, TV, or popular music. Listeners' ability to recognize chant as a religious signifier has only increased in the 1990s and 2000s via recent recordings by popular music groups Enigma, Delirium, and Dead Can Dance, not to mention the sudden burst in popularity of Gregorian chant recordings in the 1990s. In the case of Dead Can Dance, Kirsten Yri has suggested that by incorporating medieval as well as Bulgarian, North African, and Arab musical elements into modern rock, the band collapses "medieval past and Orientalist others," thus "assigning 'premodern' attributes of spirituality or naturalness to both."[92] Pärt's modest rise in popularity among audiences of Western art music (i.e., his increased airplay on "classical" radio stations and the sales of his CDs) coincided with the increased availability and popularity of chant, which suggests that some of the same factors that drove consumers to go to record stores and purchase CDs of medieval chant may have also helped Pärt achieve his relative popularity. Some scholars have argued that the chant revival was due in part to consumers looking for a release from their busy, stressful lives. Whether such a conjecture is valid or not, recording companies certainly marketed the recordings as if that were the case. As Katherine Bergeron and David Littlejohn have pointed out, sales displays in major chain stores marketed CDs of chant almost as New Age curatives.[93] Maria Cizmic has observed similar treatments in the marketing of Pärt's CDs, stating that photographs included in the 1993 ECM recording of *Te Deum*, show the composer "standing

[92] Kirsten Yri, "Medievalism and exoticism in the music of Dead Can Dance." *Current Musicology* (March 01, 2008): 53.
[93] Katherine Bergeron, "A Lifetime of Chants," In *Disciplining Music*, edited by K. Bergeron and P. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992), and David Littlejohn, "Chant Meets Culture," *Early Music America*, Vol. 2 No. 3, (1996): 24-32.

alone against one of the church walls, as if he could be yet another of the religious figures depicted there."[94]

Liturgy as Musical Element

Another significant aspect of *Te Deum* is that it is drawn from a Christian liturgical tradition. However, though works like *Te Deum* are "liturgical," they are typically performed as concert works. Even when *Te Deum*, as well as his *Berliner Messe* or his *Passio* (the Passion according to St. John), are performed in churches, they are done so as concert works.[95] Nevertheless, Pärt may be open to his works being performed as part of a liturgical worship service. *Berliner Messe*, for example, conforms to the Mass Ordinary and has different "Alleluias" relating to different times of the year. Similarly, with *Passio*, Pärt clearly strove to compose a work that would be right at home alongside any of the liturgical Passions of Bach or Schütz. In *Passio*, Pärt mirrors traditional liturgical practice for Passions by having Jesus sung by a bass-baritone and Pilate by a tenor.[96]

The fact that Pärt's liturgically based works are performed as concert works is in itself not that unusual – overtly religious works by composers like Bach and Messiaen are often performed in a concert hall setting as well. In this regard, Pärt may be taking a cue from Messiaen and attempting to create a sacred environment in a secular setting. By blending liturgical aspects in overtly religious works not necessarily intended for a sacred service, Pärt

[94] Maria Cizmic, "Transcending the Icon: Spirituality and Postmodernism in Arvo Pärt's *Tabula Rasa* and *Spiegel im Spiegel*," *Twentieth-century Music*, Vol. 5 No. 1, 2008: 65.

[95] Over the last decade, I have attended two performances of *Berliner Messe* and one of *Passio* at churches in New York City. One was a dress rehearsal performance of the *Berliner Messe* by a secular group – the Riverside Chorale Society at the Church of the Holy Spirit Cathedral, December 16, 2003. The second performance of the Mass (April 27, 2004) and the performance of *Passio* were both by the church choir at the Church of St. Luke in the Fields. These performances were not treated as religious services but as concerts (the church choir, like the Riverside Chorale Society, performed the works in evening concerts). However, the fact that these works were performed in churches reinforces the fluidity between sacred and secular listening spaces that Pärt's music inhabits.

[96] He separates his work from most traditional practice, however, by having the "Evangelist" sung by a mixed quartet.

blurs the distinction between sacred and secular music, thus sacralizing the secular concert experience. Liturgies, or orders of worship, are ritual practices that include worship music, readings from sacred texts, and other cultic practices, all intended to both remind communicants of centuries of tradition and to help listeners enter into an encounter with the sacred. *Te Deum's* liturgical elements allow listeners to experience concert music as if they were in a sacred service. By using liturgical elements as religious signifiers, Pärt opens up the possibility that he can transform the secular space, i.e., the concert hall, into a sacred space. Pärt alters the space for the listener; what had been a strictly secular space has the potential to be experienced as a sacred space. In this way, the liturgy becomes an aesthetic element in and of itself.

"Iconic" Tonality

One of the more challenging aspects of *Te Deum* is Pärt's treatment of tonality. His music gives an aural sense of tonality (i.e., consonant, triadic); however, Pärt avoids using many of the central characteristics of tonal music (i.e., functionality). Within his works, Pärt establishes a tonal center through tintinnabulation, as well as through the Ison, and includes many features in the score that imply tonality. In *Te Deum*, Pärt uses key signatures in both D major and D minor, a consistent central pitch of D, and accompaniment figures that outline D major and minor triads. Despite these surface features of tonality, Pärt does not use anything resembling a tonic-dominant polarity, obvious examples of a leading tone, or functional progressions. Instead, Pärt uses these tonal objects statically, creating only a reference to tonality. Moreover, Pärt's static tonal objects act as a denser version of the Ison. Whereas the Ison is one static note that underlies the entire *Te Deum*, Pärt's melodies and tintinnabulation present static pitch collections that underlie the entire work.

Pärt's tonal objects do, however, relate to his overall aesthetic. Because his references to tonality correspond to his religious symbolism, his tonal objects can be viewed as being, in a sense, iconic. For one, Pärt's "tonality" is marked by simplicity. Hillier contends that Pärt's implication of tonality in "its simplest triadic state" creates "a music of essentials, a music of few notes, but great strength and purity."[97] Pärt's tintinnabulation technique and his use of the Ison, along with other musical figures, are intimately related in establishing an implied sense of tonality (i.e., triadic reference points). Indeed, Pärt has succeeded in creating music of great simplicity, where a simple triad, extended over a span of time, gives an aural sensation of tonal centering.[98] His temporally extended "iconic" tonality relates to one of the main characteristics of iconography, simplicity. Just as an Icon painting appears flat, two-dimensional, depth-less, Pärt's music seems to float along in an unlayered, tensionless simplicity. Moreover, like an Icon painter, Pärt wants to use this simplicity to recreate his conception of divine peace; a comforting "moment of silence."[99]

Ritual Elements in *Fratres*

In contrast to *Te Deum*, which owing to its text has a long association with sacred music, Arvo Pärt's earlier 1977 composition, *Fratres*, has few outward associations with religion or spirituality. Instead, Pärt establishes a sense of spirituality by creating an introspective and meditative atmosphere in *Fratres*. Because of the internalized spirituality in the work, it provides an example of how Pärt constructs his musical spirituality in a less overtly religious work. Pärt creates a sense of introspection by using many of the same techniques as in *Te Deum* and through his use of simple repeated patterns that evoke ritual.

[97] Hillier, 92.
[98] Ibid, 90.
[99] Ibid, 87.

Fratres is arguably one of Pärt's most popular and intriguing compositions. One reason that the work has achieved its popularity is that Pärt has made a number of versions, each with a different scoring as well as different pitch choices. Pärt's multiple versions reflect his desire for simplicity. In the case of *Fratres*, Pärt wanted to remove color as a compositional element by creating a work with no set instrumentation.[100] Originally orchestrated for a chamber ensemble consisting of a string quintet and a wind quintet, Pärt has since reworked the piece for a variety of instrumental combinations including strings and percussion, string quartet, eight cellos, woodwind octet, solo violin and strings, solo violin and piano, and solo cello and piano. While some versions feature nothing but the skeletal harmonic motion, like the versions for orchestra or string quartet, others, like the versions for solo violin or cello, can be quite virtuosic. Nonetheless, even the virtuosic version for violin and piano still follows the work's strikingly simple, cyclical pattern. For ease of comprehension, in my analysis I use examples of the work from two of the versions scored primarily in four-part harmony, i.e., the versions for string quartet and for strings and percussion.

Fratres includes many of the elements found in other Pärt compositions – tintinnabulation, "iconic" tonality, limited harmonic motion, and drones. However, the composition exemplifies another aspect common to Pärt's compositions, ritual. This can be seen in Pärt's title for the work. The word "fratres" can be translated "brethren" or "brotherhood," which implies, among other things, a connection to monasticism. Pärt has no direct connection to a monastery. Though he jokingly admits that he has probably spent more time in monasteries

[100] Geoff Smith, 24.

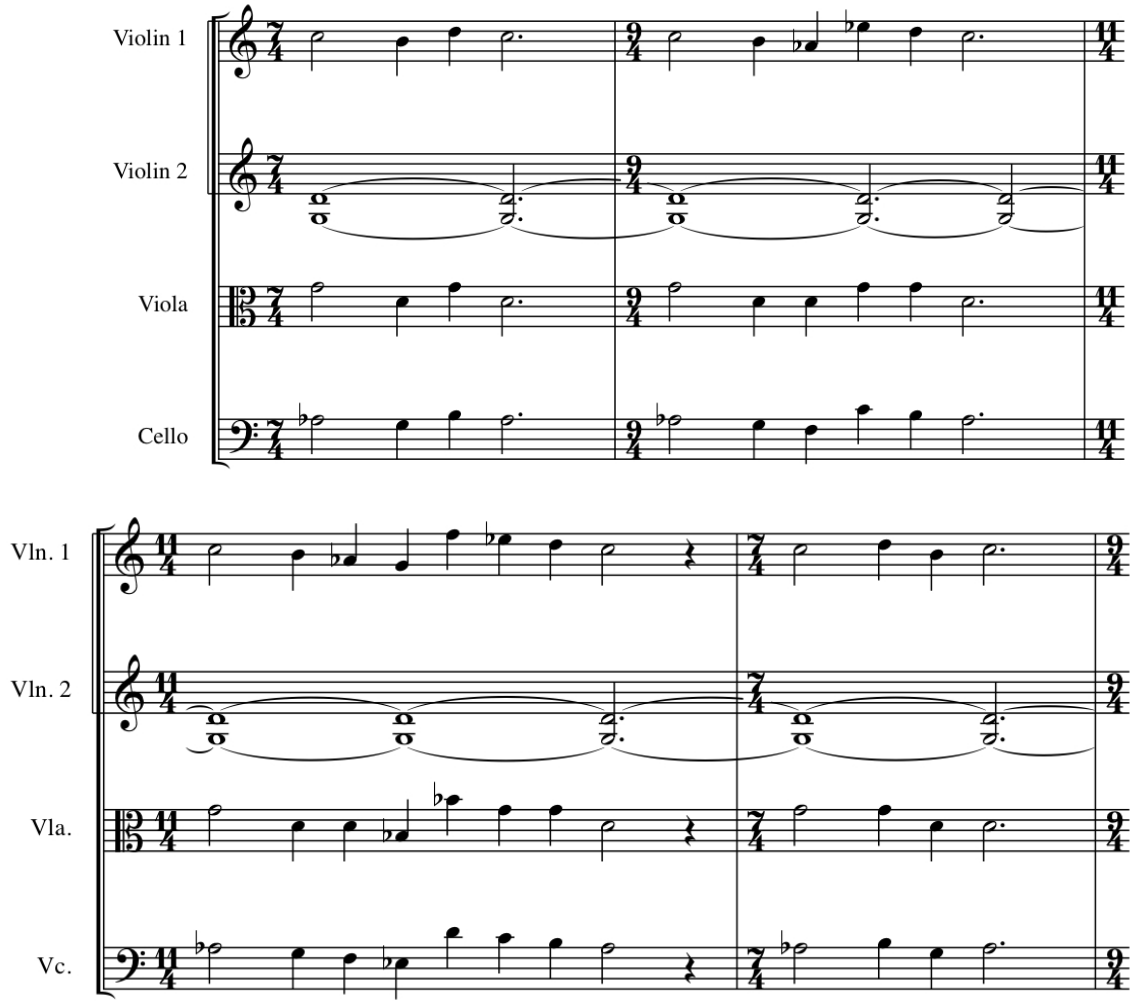
than concert halls, he himself is not a monk.[101] Nevertheless, many of his works seem to draw not only on musical elements associated with the monastic movement, but also on a more "monastic" sense of spirituality (i.e., quiet introspection, meditation, and solitude). The work's cyclical repetition of a simple pattern with a limited pitch collection, as well as Pärt's use of relatively static passages between patterns, bears out such an interpretation. Each time the material returns to where it began only to start the cycle again in a circular pattern, which evokes images of monks participating in daily ritual prayer.

Overview of the Structure

Regardless of the instrumentation Pärt uses in his various versions of *Fratres*, the work consists of four basic voices. Like most of his tintinnabuli pieces, *Fratres* includes two M-voices that move in parallel motion a third or a tenth apart, typically in the uppermost voice. While the parallel second M-voice is sometimes the lowest voice, it can be in any of the other voices as well. A third voice, again typical of his other tintinnabuli works, provides the T-voice. The fourth voice functions as the Ison. Example 9, below, from the string quartet version, shows these four voices; violin 1 and the cello perform the M-voices, the viola performs the T-voice, and violin 2 performs the Ison (the sustained G-D open fifth).

[101] Benjamin Ivry, "A Single Note, A Silent Beat: The spare beauty of Arvo Pärt – Brief Article," *Commonweal*, November 23, 2001. Website: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1252/is_20_128/ai_80787166/. Accessed on July 23, 2011.

Example 9 ***Fratres for String Quartet***

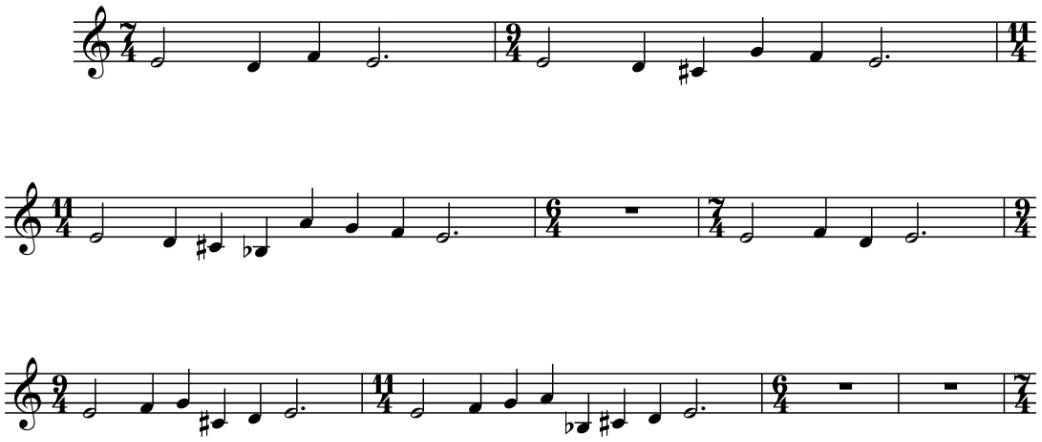


Most versions of the work can be divided into nine sections (a few versions have only eight sections). Each section consists of a statement of the complete melody, which is then repeated in diatonic inversion. Between each section are two 6/4 measures that feature a simple rhythmic pattern on beats one, three, and four of both measures (performed by the percussion in

the version for strings and percussion). Subsequent sections each begin a third lower (diatonically) than the previous statement.

As indicated in Example 10, which shows the top voice from *Fratres for Strings and Percussion*, the work's simple melody is a four-note cell that gradually expands. The initial four-note cell (E, D, F, E) expands to six notes (E, D, C#, G, F, E) by adding two scalar notes to the middle of the cell, and then ten notes (E, D, C#. Bb. A, G, F, E).

Example 10 Expansion of the Four-Note Motive as exemplified in *Fratres for Strings and Percussion*



The pattern then begins again with the same set of pitches, but this time in diatonic inversion (i.e., instead of E D F E in the upper voice, the melody is E F D E). Pärt repeats this cycle throughout the work, each time starting a diatonic third lower until the work ends roughly where it began. Thus, the starting pitches of the upper M-voice of each cycle are E, C#, A, F, D, Bb, G, E, C#. By returning to the starting notes E and C#, the cycle is starting over again. Other than pitch order, the material never really changes. The rhythm of the melody never changes, nor does the basic orientation of the voices. The outer voices always move in parallel motion a

tenth apart and use the pitch collection of a D harmonic minor scale. Likewise, the inner voice follows the outer voices rhythmically, but uses only the pitches of an A minor chord.

Overall, like *Te Deum*, the work is an arch form, which is created by dynamic intensity and, depending on the instrumentation, texture – not by the melodic and harmonic material. The version for Strings and Percussion, for example, has a clear general arc of the work. Initially, the first violins perform the M-voice, the second violins perform the T-voice, and the cellos and basses perform the Ison. In Example 11, below, one can see a subtle thickening of texture, especially in the M-voice. The M-voice begins in Sections 1 and 2 with just the 1st violins. In Section 3, Pärt adds the violas to the 1st violins. By Section 5, the 1st violins, half of the 2nd violins, and the cellos take over the M-voice. Even more pronounced, as also shown in Example 11, is the gradual dynamic increase from one section to the next, building to Section 6 of the work, and then a decrease. This chart shows two ways the overall arch form works through the gradual thickening of instrumental texture as the piece progresses (the increasing number of instruments playing the M-voice) and the gradual crescendo and decrescendo.

Example 11 Formal Analysis of *Fratres for Strings and Percussion*

Sections	**(1)**	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**	**(6)**	**(7)**	**(8)**	**(9)**
M-Voice	Vln1 (divisi)	Vln1 (divisi)	Vln1 (all) +Va	Vln1 (all) +Va	Vln1, Vln2 (1/2), Cello	Vln1, Vln2 (1/2), Cello	Vlns Cello	Vlns Cello	Vlns Cello
Central pitches (lower voice in parentheses)	E (C#)	C# (A)	A (F)	F (D)	D (Bb)	Bb (G)	G (E)	E (C#)	C# (A)
T-Voice	Vln 2	Vln 2	Vln 2	Vln 2	Vln2, Va	Vln2, Va	Va	Va	Va
Ison	Cello Bass	Cello Bass	Cello Bass	Cello Bass	Bass	Bass	Bass	Bass	Bass
Dynamic	*ppp*	*pp*	*mp*	*mf*	*f*	*ff*	*ff-mf*	*mp-p*	*ppp*

Pitch Collection

The work's simplicity can be seen in its limited pitch collection. The pitch collection of *Fratres* primarily consists of a harmonic minor scale (either D minor or C minor depending on the version). However, typical of Pärt, though he uses a "diatonic" pitch collection, he never uses it in a way that is discernable as tonal. In Example 10, above, though the pitch collection is diatonically built on "D" (D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C#), the central pitch is an "E" rather than "D." This gives the melody a modal sound; the opening cell consists of E D F E, which implies E Phyrigian. Even when the central pitch of the top M-voice coincides with the "tonic" of the pitch collection, as in Example 9, any sense of tonality is obscured. In Example 9, which has "C" as the central pitch and a C harmonic minor pitch collection, any potential tonal functions of the pitch collection are obscured. The G-D held notes (2nd violin), which act as the Ison, as well as the parallel M-voice centered on Ab, and the G, Bb, D T-voice, result in tone clusters on held notes. In the opening measure in Example 9, the vertical combination is Ab, G, D, and C, which has no identifiable sense of a vertical key center.

Ritual as Musical Narrative

As suggested previously, Pärt's repetition of a simple melodic idea that undergoes slight changes gives *Fratres* a sense of circularity. This can evoke natural cycles (lunar and solar cycles, changing seasons, etc.) as well as human rituals and festivals inspired by these cycles. *Fratres*, with its connotations of monasticism as noted above, also links the work with specific rituals. The work can be interpreted as symbolic of the ritual prayers of many religious traditions. For Pärt, as a Russian Orthodox Christian, it is likely that he intends the work as an homage to the daily ritual prayers found particularly in Christian Monasticism.

Viewing *Fratres*, as well as other works by Pärt, via its relationship to ritual connects the work to a significant aspect of religious tradition. Moreover, it can provide an understanding of how listeners experience time within these rituals. By keeping melodic material simple and repeating it with minimal development, Pärt taps into a significant aspect of ritual, i.e., repetition as a way of accessing spiritual time. Religious scholar Mircea Eliade has discussed at length the importance of rituals and how they can affect the experience of time. According to Eliade, a religious individual experiences two types of time: historical present and sacred time. Sacred time is "a primordial mythical time made present." Rituals, festivals, and services represent the reactualization of a sacred event that took place in a mythical past, "in the beginning."[102] Participating in rituals allows the participant to periodically "live in the presence of the gods."[103] As rituals reenact these sacred events, they access the circular nature of sacred time (i.e., reversible and recoverable). Rituals allow sacred time to intrude upon the historical present "Just as a church constitutes a break in plane in the profane space of a modern city, the service celebrated inside it marks a break in profane temporal duration."[104] Similarly, the repetitions found in *Fratres* also seem to provide a break from the temporal world. By repeating the same basic material with only slight variations, as well as by the constant presence of a sustained Ison, Pärt suggests the unchanging circularity of time.

Implicit within circularity is the anticipation of renewal and return, which is a strikingly different sense of anticipation than that found in typical narrative construction (i.e., the sense of arrival or finality). This concept of anticipation is borne out in *Fratres.* Because Pärt's melodic pattern starts over each time, the work has no sense of arrival or finality. Instead, much like his

[102] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt Books, 1959), 68-69.
[103] Ibid, 105.
[104] Ibid, 72.

use of the Ison in *Te Deum*, Pärt begins and ends *Fratres* in near silence, as if the work begins and ends outside of the listener's conscious awareness. Because Pärt eschews a clear sense of beginning or ending, *Fratres* becomes less about arrival and more about rest, stasis, and contemplation. Similarly, the work subverts traditional notions of anticipation by avoiding oppositional dualities. In his post-*Credo* tintinnabulation works, he does not create a sense of conflict or opposition in his music despite the fact that his music is filled with dualities.[105] For instance, in *Te Deum*, he uses a variety of dualities, especially the inherent duality found in his tintinnabulation of the triadic and melodic voices. And yet, because Pärt has these dualities flowing comfortably into each other in a non-jarring way, one never feels that these dualities represent any sense of opposition. Rather, these dualities feel completely integrated into the whole.

In a larger sense, Pärt's use of ritual and evocation of timelessness can be seen as part of his overall strategy of creating emotionally evocative but thematically simple musical narrative structures. Obviously, time does not actually stop for the listener in Pärt's or any other composer's music.[106] However, by using musical elements meant to evoke eternity, Pärt's music can be seen as what theologian and musician Jeremy Begbie has termed the "negation of time."[107] In a discussion of musical elements in the music of John Tavener similar to those found in Pärt's (e.g., Isons, the lack of definitive beginnings and endings), Begbie asserts that this type of music, "offers a kind of musical decompression, an 'aural' space amidst a temporally compressed culture, a stable place in which we are not shoved and driven from 'here' to

[105] Pärt's lack of opposition has been criticized by Josiah Fisk and others as evidence of a lack of compositional depth. See Fisk, "The New Simplicity" or Teachout, "Holy Minimalism."
[106] Jeremy Begbie, *Theology, Music, and Time (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 139.
[107] Ibid, 145.

'there'."[108] This, in fact, may be the most spiritually significant aspect of the elements that helps Pärt undercut musical narrative in his music (e.g., the Ison and tintinnabulation). By playing with the listener's perception of time, he can potentially usher the listener into a relaxed, peaceful state of mind, which in turn may well be interpreted as a spiritual or meditative state.

Conclusions

Solzhenitsyn, in his short story mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, "The Easter Procession," expressed concern about how decades of anti-religious sentiments by the Soviet government were creating a generation of irreverent Soviet youth who showed little respect for religion or their elders. Solzhenitsyn's story suggests that a national religious heritage was fading away. Ironically, shortly after Solzhenitsyn wrote this story, a number of Soviet-trained composers, including Arvo Pärt, began exploring religion and spirituality, thus turning away from the kind of attitudes that so dismayed Solzhenitsyn. Elements in Arvo Pärt's biography mirror the condition suggested by Solzhenitsyn (i.e., a spiritual malaise that called for a return to ancient religious traditions). Through the musical elements in his compositions – simple formal structures, repetition as an evocation of ritual, evocations of timelessness, religiously evocative titles and texts, and melodic and harmonic material inspired by and suggestive of Latin Christian traditions – Pärt creates a potential corrective to the perceived spiritual emptiness of Eastern Europe during the Soviet era. Pärt's reaction against his feelings of aesthetic and spiritual emptiness had a larger unintended reaction. His works reacted against Soviet modernity as well as touched on similar issues apparent in the modernity of Western Europe and North America.

[108] Ibid, 144.

Chapter 3 Finding the Path Inward via the East: Buddhism and Spectralism in Jonathan Harvey's *Ritual Melodies*

A few years ago, while commuting to work by train in Denver, Colorado, I happened to notice the books being read by some of my fellow commuters. One dozing commuter had a book titled *Ask the Cow: A Gentle Guide to Finding Peace* by Rita Reynolds, resting on her lap. Another commuter was reading a book titled *An Idiot's Guide to Zen Living*. Each book seemed, implicitly or explicitly, to be suggesting belief systems far removed from the Judeo-Christian heritage typically associated with America, especially in a place like Colorado, a location often identified with the Christian evangelical movement.[109] Instead, these books seemed to be promoting notions of spirituality rooted in Asian religions.[110] What struck me about the reading choices of my fellow commuters, however, was not that they seemed out-of-place on a commuter train, but rather that they seemed relatively commonplace. In previous generations, when Christianity dominated America's religious landscape, perhaps this genre of book may have been less ubiquitous. However, today it seems as common as any other reading material one sees being read by individuals on a bus, train, or airplane, as well as in parks, coffee shops, or any number of places; books on Asian/Eastern religions have become as mundane and commonplace as romance novels, college textbooks, thrillers, partisan political hatchet jobs, and the Bible.

[109] A number of prominent evangelical organizations make their home in Colorado, especially in the state's second largest city, Colorado Springs, such as Focus On the Family, The Navigators, Compassion International, the International Bible Society, and others.

[110] Having never read either book, my interpretation of these two books is not based on firsthand knowledge. And as much as one, of course, should never judge a book by its cover, still, one can make a fairly educated guess. For example, I found the relatively more ambiguous title, *Ask the Cow*, on Amazon.com, and discovered in the scant information provided on the website that my initial impressions were well founded: the book is largely about New-Age spirituality.

My casual observations about morning commuters bear similarities to changes in music as well. During the last several decades, a number of European and North American musicians and composers have used cultural influences from outside of Western culture in their music. Though certainly not unique to the twentieth century, borrowings and influences from non-Western sources have become more pronounced over the last 50 years, which reflects changes in the larger culture. As will be discussed in greater detail below, an infatuation with Asian musical elements can be seen as part of a concurrent fascination with Asian religions. This can be seen in the works of 1960s popular musicians (such as the Beatles and the Byrds) and jazz musicians (like John Coltrane and Miles Davis), and others whose use of Asian musical elements reflected their own interest in Asian culture, philosophy, and religion, as well as providing them a way of incorporating elements in their music that would have been heard as representing exotic mysticism. Further, by adding Asian musical and philosophical elements, especially to the popular music of the psychedelic era,[111] these musicians not only created an association between Hinduism and Buddhism and the youth movement of the 1960s, but also helped further integrate Asian culture into the Western consciousness.[112]

While my observations of Denver commuters are hardly scientific, they do suggest a way that the practice of religion and spirituality has changed in the last several decades. As noted in the introduction, one aspect of the transformations of the 1960s was an increased interest in Asian culture, religion, and philosophy. In this chapter, I focus on music that expresses religious and spiritual beliefs that are not based on recapturing a lost heritage, as previously discussed about Arvo Pärt, or combining syncretically the beliefs of one culture with one or more other

[111] The psychedelic era spanned roughly the mid-1960s through the early 1970s when much art and music in popular culture used images evocative of the experience of the taking of LSD, i.e., acid.
[112] This trend helped make Indian musician Ravi Shankar a pop star in the West, especially through his association with the Beatles.

cultures, as in the case of John Coltrane. Rather, I examine an individual moving away from the dominant religious traditions in which he was raised and instead turning to a religious belief system that is largely outside his cultural heritage.

In this chapter I examine how British composer and Buddhist adherent, Jonathan Harvey (b. 1939), moved away from Christian beliefs to an exploration of spirituality that eventually led him to Buddhism. At the same time, Harvey experimented with the era's changing technology, creating music at prominent electronic music centers, especially at Princeton University and at IRCAM.[113] Though he was not the first composer to be interested in spirituality and technology, his successful efforts to meld the two make him unique.

I divide this chapter into two large sections. The first concerns the cultural context that formed Harvey's spirituality. Harvey was part of a generation of English composers and musicians who came of age during the 1960s and who infused their music with alternative conceptions of religion and spirituality; alternative, that is, in contrast to the dominant Judeo-Christian belief system. Like others of his era, Harvey looked outside Western culture to Asia for spiritual and musical inspiration. The motivation for looking to Asia for inspiration by the1960s generation was formed in large part by the changing religious climate in Great Britain during the decades following World War II. To understand those changes, I draw on recent British academic discourse on religion and spirituality as a means to comprehend the declining role of religion in British society beginning after World War II. The decline of organized religion in Great Britain during the decades after World War II opened the door to "new"

[113] IRCAM, the *Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique*, founded in 1976 under the initial directorship of Pierre Boulez, is a music and scientific research center located in Paris. The institute is home to a major electronic and computer center and, thus, has been where many significant European electronic music has been created. Website: http://www.ircam.fr/ircam.html?L=1.

religions and spirituality.[114] Immigration was another factor in introducing specifically Asian religions to Britain. As such, I also examine increased racial diversity in post-World War II Britain and the possible effects immigration had on religion during that era. Moreover, as traditional Western Christianity seemed on the wane, a concurrent infatuation with post-colonial Indian culture emerged. Together, these trends provided an avenue for a number of 1960s-era young people to look beyond the shores of England to sample religions far removed from those experienced by previous generations.

Having defined the cultural context into which Harvey was born, I then provide a brief outline of his musical and spiritual biography. Much like the lives of Coltrane and Pärt, Harvey's life, thus far, can be framed by and interpreted through his spiritual journey, beginning with his conversion experience. To understand Harvey's musical and spiritual development, I draw heavily from Harvey's own words as found in published interviews, articles he has authored, and in the published version of his University of California Ernest Bloch lectures, *In Quest of Spirit*, in which he discusses both his spiritual journey and his philosophy of composition. Harvey, in his own writings and interviews, states that he was born into an Anglican home, but later turned from his native religion briefly to atheism, and eventually adopted Tibetan Mahayana Buddhist beliefs.[115] In constructing this framework, Harvey establishes the centrality of his spiritual journey in guiding his musical and philosophical development. I outline his interactions with musical modernism as well as his association with

[114] I refer to ancient religions, like Hinduism and Buddhism, as "new" in the sense that they were, relatively speaking, new to mainstream Western culture. That said, it has been well documented that Asian religions had at least a limited presence in the West starting in the nineteenth century. Hinduism, for example, had been known in philosophical circles early in the century, as has been noted in studies of Ralph Waldo Emerson (see Russell B. Goodman, "East-West Philosophy in Nineteenth Century America: Emerson and Hinduism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 51, No. 4, [Oct-Dec, 1990]: 625-645). However, widespread interest in Asian religions by Westerners can be seen as a twentieth century phenomenon.

[115] Jonathan Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit: Thoughts on Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 6.

the spectral movement. In addition, I examine Harvey's personal approach to music and spirituality and how they relate to recurring themes in Harvey's writings: spirituality, nature, and technology.

In my second large section, I present Harvey's concept of musical spirituality and then examine how Harvey reveals that concept in his work for electronic tape, *Ritual Melodies* (1990). Important to understanding Harvey's musical spirituality is identifying the symbols he employs to communicate his spiritual beliefs. However, by the time Harvey's compositions gained recognition, consensus on religious meaning and the symbols used to convey that meaning had largely passed, a trend of which Harvey was acutely aware.[116] As Western society had become more multi-cultural and Christianity lost some of its dominance in society, one could no longer assume that a common understanding of religious symbols remained. By identifying and examining the symbols Harvey employs in his compositions, one can see how Harvey navigated these changes in order to make his musical spirituality comprehensible to his listeners. As such, examining Harvey's music can provide insight to how spiritual meaning can be conveyed to an audience. Such a composer-centric approach also necessitates theorizing who Harvey was composing for, i.e., who constitutes his audience.

Though not Harvey's first "spiritual" composition, *Ritual Melodies* exemplifies his interest in spirituality and technology through his use of computer-generated timbres that evoke Asian religious traditions, a formal structure reminiscent of Tibetan ritual music, and silence and stasis that are meant to evoke meditative states. In my analysis, I look at the work's musical

[116] Jonathan Harvey, "Sounding out the Inner Self: Jonathan Harvey's Quest for the Spiritual Core of New Music," *The Musical Times,* vol. 133 (1,798) December 1992: 613-615.

elements and symbols and discuss the various traditions that may have inspired them and how Harvey uses these elements and symbols to construct spiritual meaning into his music.

Religion in post-World War II Britain

Prior to and during the Second World War, Great Britain could still be viewed as a "Christian" nation. However, in the decades following the war, significant changes in Britain's religious culture occurred. As early as 1946, some astute religionists could see that changes were coming. Author, literary scholar, and Christian apologist, C.S. Lewis, in his preface to a 1946 book, *How Heathen is Britain*, warned that it "is unlikely that in the next forty years England will have a government which would encourage or even tolerate any radically Christian elements in its State system of education."[117] Lewis' prediction that within a few short generations Britain would cease being a Christian nation is largely borne out by the state of things today. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, many in the popular news media considered Britain one of the most secular nations in Europe, if not the world. The growth of British secularism over the last 50 years has been discussed in several recent cover stories in popular British news magazines, which have stated that while the majority of the citizenry claim that they still believe in God, church attendance has been plummeting for years.[118] Moreover, journalist Barbara Gunnell asserts that despite surveys that indicate that a large percentage of British citizens claim to believe in God, religion has very little effect on people's day-to-day lives. Of the 72 percent of Britons who responded that they believed in God in the 2001 census, less than half had attended a church service that year.[119] According to one survey of the British

[117] C.S. Lewis, "On the Transmission of Christianity," reprinted in *God in the Dock*, edited by Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 118.
[118] See Barbara Gunnell, "Religion: Why Do We Still Give a Damn?" *New Statesman*, No. 133 (2004): 18-19, and Bryan Appleyard, "Religion: Who Needs It?" *New Statesman*, No. 135 (2006): 20-22.
[119] Gunnell, 18.

Parliament taken in 2004, 57 percent of the Members of Parliament believed that the Church of England should be disestablished. Further, a recent survey conducted by the BBC discovered that over a quarter of British citizens believed that "the world would be a safer place if no one believed in God", a far higher percentage than in most other Western countries.[120]

Such dramatic changes in the British religious landscape since World War II raises obvious questions about the cultural forces in British society that have led to these changes. While such far-reaching and complex questions cannot be easily or definitively answered, a number of scholars have suggested several possible reasons for the decline in religion in Great Britain during the latter half of the twentieth century. One current theory for the steady decline of religion that has garnered much attention and criticism amongst British sociologists, theologians, and religious historians is called the "secularization theory."

The secularization theory argues that the secularizing forces of modernity have led to the inevitable decline of religion. Sociologists and other scholars who hold to this theory argue that "modernity is characterized by increasing secularization of belief and by a corresponding increase in religious skepticism."[121] One piece of supporting evidence that many point to is the steady decline in church affiliation throughout the twentieth century, as shown by census and church membership statistics during that era. Though most agree that the statistics demonstrate a universal decline, some argue that the forces of secularization have been accelerated by much of the tumult of the twentieth century, especially the two World Wars and the social upheaval of the sixties.[122] However, others, like sociologists Alasdair Crockett and David Voas, contend that

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[120] Ibid, 19.
[121] Robin Gill, et al., "Is Religious Belief Declining in Britain?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 37 (3), Spring 1998: 507.
[122] See Alex Owen, "The 'Religious Sense' in a Post-War Secular Age," *Past and Present,* 2006, Supplement 1: 159-177.

statistics show that the decline does not seem to correlate to any such pivotal occurrences, but rather seems to be a steady, generation-by-generation decline. According to their research, "Measures of religious affiliation, regular attendance at worship, and religious belief show nearly identical rates of intergenerational decline," which indicates steady erosion rather than a response to particular events.[123] Crockett and Voas do not offer any reasons for the shift; however, they do provide ample statistics that each generation born in England beginning in 1900 tended to be approximately 18 percent less religious (i.e., they rejected traditional religious affiliation) than their parents' generation. These findings, and those by other theorists, suggest that the assumption of a clear-cut, inevitable link between modernization and religious decline may be too simplistic.[124]

Immigration and Racial and National Identity in Post-World War II Great Britain

Immigration and racial identity provide another factor contributing to religious changes in post-World War II Britain. Mass movements of people often result in the merging and overlapping of cultures. As immigrant and native populations encounter each other, even in places where the immigrant population is not welcome, the two societies at the very least influence each other. Particularly relevant to Jonathan Harvey's spiritual formation were the specific cross-cultural influences brought on by immigration in post-World War II Europe. The unique aspects of post-war immigration in Great Britain have particular significance for the aforementioned shift away from external religious expression to an internalized spirituality

[123] Alasdair Crockett and David Voas, "Generations of Decline: Religious Change in 20th Century Britain," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 45 (4): 567. Researchers Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead come to similar conclusions as Crockett, Voas, and others. See Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 139.

[124] For example see Jeremy Morris, "The Strange Death of Christian Britain: Another Look at the Secularization Debate," *The Historical Journal*, 46 (4): 963-976. Though Morris does not discount the secularization theory, he does argue for a more nuanced reading of the data.

occurring concurrently in Britain. Beginning in the 1950s, immigration of large numbers of peoples from former colonies to Great Britain greatly increased. Often these immigrants were both non-white and non-Christian, thus injecting British society with both racial and religious diversity. One of the reasons for this immigration was the changing face of the British Empire. Great Britain emerged from World War II as one of the victors, but its former glory was quickly fading. One aspect of Britain's fading glory can be seen in the breakup of its colonial empire in the decades following World War II and the emergence of dozens of new nations created out of the former colonies.

Many of the newly formed nations that emerged from former British colonies, though now independent, retained ties to Great Britain. By virtue of their membership in the British Commonwealth, former colonies were allowed to govern themselves independently while maintaining cultural, economical, and political connections to the "mother country."[125] These ties allowed for easier immigration to Britain at a time when post-World War II prosperity created the need for an enlarged workforce of unskilled workers. Methodist minister and former Director for Interfaith Relations in the British Council of Churches, Kenneth Cracknell, summarizes this trend, "Drawing on the vast resources of the so-called New Commonwealth, Britain took in people from the Caribbean, Pakistan, India and South East Asian countries to be the bus drivers, night-shift workers and hospital orderlies of an increasingly prospering Britain."[126] Thus, a new underclass was created that competed directly with poor, working class natives. However, in this Great Britain differed from other former colonial powers because those "immigrating" to Britain were from member countries of the British Commonwealth. Therefore,

[125] *World Almanac and Book of Facts, 1999* (Mahwah, New Jersey: World Almanac Books, 1999): 866.
[126] Kenneth Cracknell, "Within God's Gracious Purposes: Interfaith Dialogue in Britain," *The Ecumenical Review*, v. 37, October 1985: 452.

they were granted British citizenship as well. In other former powers, like France or Germany, generally this work force was not given permanent status and would be classified as "guest workers." Thus, in Britain, these workers from former colonies had, relatively speaking, a more stable political and social footing in the mother country.[127]

This wave of immigration from the former colonies to Great Britain radically changed the ways in which the colonizers and the colonized interacted. During the colonial era, face-to-face interaction between citizens of the colonies and the mother country generally manifested itself primarily at the colony and less often in Britain; the average native-born English citizen rarely interacted directly with any individuals from the colonies. However, in the post-colonial era, the presence of people from formerly colonized lands became a common sight in major cities throughout Great Britain. Sociologist Stuart Hall, as a Jamaican who immigrated to England in 1951, reflects on this shift in British society:

> There is a tremendous paradox here which I cannot help relishing myself; that in the very moment when finally Britain convinced itself it had to decolonize, it had to get rid of them, we all came back home. As they hauled down the flag, we got on the banana boat and sailed right into London. That is a terrible paradox because they had ruled the world for three hundred years and, at least, when they made up their minds to climb out of that role, at least the others ought to have stayed out there in the rim, behaved themselves, gone somewhere else, or found some other client state. No, they had always said that this was really home, the streets were paved with gold and, bloody hell, we just came to check out whether that was so or not.[128]

The result, according to Hall, of this influx of "others" into English cities, combined with Britain's fading position on the world stage, caused the British identity – what it meant to be "English" or "British" – to become "decentered":

> One has also to remember that Englishness has not only been decentered by the great dispersal of capital to Washington, Wall Street and Tokyo, but also by this enormous

[127] Ibid.
[128] Stuart Hall, "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity," in Anthony D. King, *Culture, Globalization and the World System* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1997), 24.

> influx which is part of the cultural consequences of the labor migrations, the migrations of peoples, which go on at an accelerated pace in the modern world.[129]

As these immigrants took up residence throughout the United Kingdom, the notion that there was something homogeneous about British society – or German, French, Italian, etc. – was being radically changed.[130]

This immigration not only changed the face of Britain, but also allowed native-born British to interact with aspects of non-Western culture first hand. Prior to World War II, the hegemony of Christendom was virtually unassailable; in the decades after the war British Christendom began to show cracks as Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims immigrated to England in increasing numbers. While these religions primarily stayed within immigrant communities, some native-born individuals, weary of the Christianity of their parents, became enamored of

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[129] Ibid. Arguably, this has continued as nations like China and India are the rising economic centers of the twenty-first century. See Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2008.

[130] This shift in how the colonized and the colonizers interacted, as well as the increased racial diversity in Britain can be readily seen in many aspects of pop culture and literature. Whereas, Rudyard Kipling's works are emblematic of the colonized being encountered at far-off, exotic locales, the emergence of post World War II authors, such as Anglo-Indian Muslim author, Salmon Rushdie, suggests the emergence of the changing face of British society. In popular music, from the days when Phil Lynott, lead singer for 70s British hard rock group Thin Lizzy was something of a novelty, there are now dozens of celebrities of color in current British popular culture including: Melanie Chisolm, aka Scary Spice of the Spice Girls, actress Freema Agyeman of the revival of popular British cult TV show *Dr. Who*, actor Naveen Andrews of *Lost*, and actress Parminder Nagra, most notably from the film British film *Bend it Like Beckham* as well as long running American television series, *ER*. Also striking is the diversity mapped out by J.K. Rowling in her Harry Potter novels. Throughout the novels Harry interacts with a number of students who reflect a racially diverse British society. Though representing only a relatively small portion of notable celebrities in British Culture, they all have nevertheless attained prominence, which opens up the possibility that persons of color need no longer be seen as mere novelties in British culture but as representing a significant segment of the larger society. However, one should not assume that there has not been any backlash against these racial changes in either Britain or the rest of Europe. Several recent articles in the British press have commented on racial tensions throughout the last decade. Se Charlotte Edwardes, "Inter-racial Tension in Britain 'At Worst Level for 50 Years'," *The Telegraph*, August 8, 2004, Website: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1468907/Inter-racial-tension-in-Britain-at-worst-level-for-50-years.html; and Alison Little, "Racial Tension Bubbling – Admit Ministers At Last," *The Daily Express,* June 15, 2007, Website: http://www.express.co.uk/posts/view/9930/Racial+tension+is+bubbling+-+admit+ministers+at+last. Non-white European football players have complained loudly about the abusive treatment given them by fans in European stadiums. In 2002, a number of black footballers advocated boycotting games until UEFA's governing board took stronger action. See Vivek Chaudhary, "Top black footballers will meet to consider Europe boycott," *The Guardian*, October 15, 2002, Website: http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2002/oct/15/race.football?commentpage=1. Accessed July 11, 2008.

Asian religions. Cracknell has noted the far-reaching influence of the increased presence of non-Christian immigrants:

> At the same time as this physical immigration of people of faith other than Christian was taking place, we have experienced, like all other Western European and North American countries, the "mental emigration" of countless numbers of people into other thought worlds. Though baptized as infants into Catholic or Protestant forms of Christianity, as adults they have chosen to become followers of other paths and ways.[131]

Though Cracknell admits that no hard statistics exist for these "countless numbers" participating in the "mental emigration" (only recently have British census forms included questions on religion), clearly he and his fellow clergy were noticing a change.

The Rise of Spirituality and "Other" Religions

The decline of Christianity and the increased presence of non-Western religions in Great Britain provided many with the opportunity to explore other religions and spiritualties. The emergence and growth of spirituality suggests a partial alternative to the secularization theory: though the religious impulse in the United Kingdom may have waned, it had not disappeared completely but rather transformed into something different, something less external and more internal. This transformation would account for the decline in church attendance/membership and the emergence of alternative beliefs. Though this trend grew significantly in the late 1960s and 1970s, such impulses pre-date World War II. As early as the post-World War I years, British thinkers and writers pondered the possibility that the "religious sense," as they deemed it, could exist outside of the perceived bonds of organized religion. Scholar Alex Owen notes that author John Middleton Murray, in a 1919 essay titled "The Republic of the Spirit," encouraged readers to "cultivate the 'inner' self and all it represents."[132] Middleton Murray, according to

[131] Cracknell, 452-453.
[132] Alex Owen, 168. Although Middleton Murray's place as a spokesman for this new spirituality was short-lived, he was connected through his wife, Katherine Mansfield, to a larger, international circle of semi-like-minded

Owens, was "trying to expound a 'religious' message founded on a deeply personal mystical experience but shorn of any orthodox Christian context."[133] Middleton Murray's desire for an inner religion removed from organized religion following World War I foreshadowed many who, in the decades following World War II, also turned away from the Church. As stated previously in this dissertation, one reaction to both the frustrations with organized religion and the emptiness of modernity was to turn, like Middleton Murray, from religion to spirituality.

The post-World War II shift from religion to spirituality, however, is difficult to quantify. While church attendance figures can indicate the decline of Christianity and, by extension, traditional religion, no readily available statistics exist for those embracing spirituality. In one of the few extensive studies on the rise of spirituality, researchers Heelas and Woodhead found that in one British suburban community there had been an extreme increase in measurable "subjective-life spiritual activities" from 1970 to 1985.[134] However, they acknowledged the limitation of studying one community "given the amount of research that would be required to establish the number of people practicing holistic, mind-body-spirituality activities, on a weekly basis, in various kinds of localities and regions, it is hardly surprising that a considerable amount of work remains to be done."[135]

Asian Elements in Western Music

The interest in Asian culture and religion, spurred by Britain's increased secularization and the effects of post-colonial immigration, were reflected in music produced during the late

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individuals, including spiritual teacher Georgei Ivanovitch Gurdjieff, whose influence would continue well into the 1960s, and his colleagues Pyötr Demianovitch Ouspensky and A.R. Orage (Owen, 165-168). In the first decades of the twentieth century Orage published a journal called *The New Age*, a name later adopted by the New Age movement of the 1970s and 1980s.

[133] Ibid, 165.

[134] Heelas and Woodhead, 54. Heelas and Woodhead include a variety of activities that constitute measurable subjective-life spirituality, such as yoga and Tai-Chi.

[135] Heelas and Woodhead, 52.

1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. As Britain became more culturally diverse, so did its music. Because Harvey's spiritual formation took longer to fully take hold, he would not begin incorporating distinctively Asian elements into his music until the 1980s. Nevertheless, his use of Indian and Tibetan musical elements in his post-1980 works links him to these larger trends in Britain, Western Europe, and North America.

This increased interest in non-Western music, especially from India, happened at a time when other cultural forces provided fertile soil for its germination. A number of trends during the 1950s and 1960s related to the rise of youth culture in the West were contributing factors to the availability of non-Western music. The coming of age of the post-World War II baby boom generation, along with the economic prosperity of the 1950s and 1960s, meant a surging youth population with leisure time and who had money to spend, which they often spent on recorded music. At the same time, recordings of non-Western music become commercially available.[136] This meant that musicians had access to broader musical influences. It also meant that the record buying public was introduced to music that had been, for the most part, unknown up to that point. As Western musicians in the 1960s adapted Asian elements into their music, the listening public could hear "exotic" musical sounds from India and other Asian countries. For most popular musicians, incorporating Asian musical elements into their music served to add exotic elements to the music rather than directly evoking spirituality. For example, early appearances of the Indian sitar in popular recordings, either directly, as in the Beatles "Norwegian Wood" and the Rolling Stones "Paint it Black," or by allusion, as in the Byrds' homage to John Coltrane's

[136] Recordings, such as the ongoing UNESCO's International Council for Traditional Music Releases (http://www.ictmusic.org/ICTM/index.php) and the Nonesuch Explorer series (www.nonesuch.com/artists/by_genre/), were available beginning in the 1960s and would have had a far-reaching impact despite their likely limited commercial sales. Certainly, these trends, especially the recording boom, were quite nascent in the 1960s and only accelerated as technology improved as vinyl records and radio gave way to CDs in the 80s and 90s, which in turn gave way to mp3s and YouTube.com during the last 10 years.

composition "India," "Eight Miles High," do not seem to have been conceived necessarily to communicate Asian spirituality. However, other recordings do foreground Asian philosophy and spirituality, like several songs recorded by the Beatles including John Lennon's "Tomorrow Never Knows," which references the Tibetan *Book of the Dead*, and two George Harrison compositions, "Within You and Without You," and "Love You To," which communicate Hindu philosophy.[137]

Harvey's Life and Work

Harvey's musical and religious training, which began early in his life, were fairly traditional. Introduced to composing when he was very young by his father, an amateur, self-taught composer, Harvey's formal musical training began at nine-years old, when he became a student and chorister at St. Michaels in Tenbury, Worcestershire. In his book, *In Quest of Spirit*, Harvey also describes his time at St. Michaels as the formative years of his spiritual journey. Though he begins his journey here, he also implies that his parents provided an earlier influence. Several times in the biographical opening chapter, Harvey mentions the profound and deeply felt faith of his mother and the impact it had on him throughout his life. The very fact that his parents enrolled him at a school founded to "foster the revival of music in the Church of England" suggests at least the possibility that his parents were sincerely concerned with the

[137] The trend to incorporate Asian musical elements into 1960s Western popular music had precedence earlier in the twentieth century, especially in the classical music world. Significantly, French composer Olivier Messiaen adapted melodic and rhythmic principals from India into his compositional aesthetic (See Olivier Messiaen, *The Technique of My Musical Language*, translated by John Satterfield [Alphonse Leduc: Paris, 1956]: 16-17). Earlier in the century, British composer Gustav Holst developed a fascination with Indian philosophy and language and composed choral works based on his own translations of Hindu texts. While Holst's *Choral Hymns from the Rig-Veda* (1912) certainly demonstrates that composers had incorporated Asian cultural influences into Western music early in the twentieth century, his work probably did not have the same kind of widespread impact that similar excursions would have fifty years later. By the 1950s and 1960s, Eastern philosophy became a prominent influence in the aleatoric work of John Cage and others. Aleatoric, or "chance" music, for Cage, involved choosing musical material through random processes. In his composition *Music of Changes*, for example, Cage charted a set of musical elements, from which he selected the elements for performance by tossing coins. In this regard, Taoism and the book, *I Ching*, as well as Zen concepts of "unimpededness and interpretation," heavily influenced Cage (See James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993]: 74, 78).

spiritual life of their son.[138] If Harvey's parents hoped that sending him to St. Michaels would instill openness to spirituality in him, their decision had its wanted effect. Though it would be much later in life before Harvey would make his spirituality a major focus of his life, he would acknowledge that his time at St. Michaels helped him discover his two great life-long loves, music and nature, both of which he describes in metaphysical terms:

> […] the glory of singing to nobody but God, the sunlight streaming through the stained glass, was part of the same world of childish excitement. At times we would attain an epiphanic splendor – in a Lassus motet, in a recent canticle, using the full power of the large Father Willis organ….
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> I loved to be alone in its [nature's] presence … I discovered that I only had to hold my breath, metaphorically, and look and listen, and "it" would happen: a mysterious sensation of *longing* [Harvey's emphasis] would overcome me – as if I was perceiving some sacred thing – quite indefinable – of infinite delight, tasted but not possessed.[139]

Harvey attempts to draw the reader to both nature and music as doorways into spirituality. Nature, for Harvey, provides a spiritual revelry that is by no means unique to him; many artists have made similar observations. However, for Harvey they provided the catalyst for his later spiritual beliefs, which he characterizes as ultimately pointing him towards a belief system that he felt would bridge the gap between the spiritual and the natural, "in which the self and nature are inseparable: one unified interdependency."[140]

Despite such mystical experiences in his youth and the continuing potential for such experiences, which he asserted he never lost, he eventually wearied of traditional religious beliefs. Similar to many other British youths of that era in his late teen years Harvey turned away from Christianity and became an atheist.

[138] Harvey, *Quest of Spirit*, 1.
[139] Ibid, 2.
[140] Ibid, 4.

Harvey's Adulthood: From Atheism to Buddhism

After St. Michael's, Harvey attended Repton preparatory school followed, in 1957, by his studies at Cambridge University. During this period, at the recommendation of Benjamin Britten, he studied composition with former Schoenberg student Erwin Stein and later with Hans Keller, also of the Viennese, Schoenberg-tradition.[141] During the same time that he was immersing himself in the Viennese musical tradition, he expressed a desire to move away from Western philosophical paradigms. After his brief turn to atheism prior to 1957, Harvey describes his spiritual journey taking him to a place where he found "liberation from the Western paradigm that philosophy can be sorted out by clear thinking alone."[142] Harvey attributes the beginnings of his break from Western philosophy to a 1960 encounter with Evelyn Underhill's book *Mysticism*, which not only gave voice to all of the spiritual yearnings he had been experiencing during his life, but also gave him the confidence to continue his spiritual pursuits:

> From then on I had the support to continue listening to the small voice that whispered sweetly and secretly. It is fatally easy to dismiss that delicate message, because it does not square with the worldview of society, friends, or teachers. Science told me nothing of it, empiricism and reason even less. Yet it is everything: the heart, the source, of all the rest.[143]

By describing his spiritual calling as "the small voice that whispered sweetly and secretly," he appears to be paraphrasing the Old Testament phrase, "a still small voice."[144] If so, Harvey reinterprets Judeo-Christian beliefs through a Buddhist lens. Harvey draws on the biblical passage's implication of both comfort and calling, but overlays it with a broader conception of spirituality than the traditional Judaism or Christianity meaning. Harvey's conception of

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[141] Harvey had met Britten while at Repton and Britten served as an informal mentor to the young composer. See Arnold Whittall, *Jonathan Harvey* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 5.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid, 3.
[144] 1 Kings 19:12, King James Version. Specifically, the phrase refers to the Lord comforting Elijah following his confrontation with the prophets of Baal and instructing him to anoint Elisha as his protégé.

spirituality becomes more apparent as he describes his desire to separate himself from Western thought:

> Finally, I came to want a greater synthesis between my reason and my questioning of the inherent existence of God or gods. Having spent so much of my life in universities, I was fully aware of the force of scientific empiricism and also of scientific uncertainty; of the relative, perspectival nature of "facts"; of postmodernism in all its forms. To me, the most profound way of thinking that reconciled such nihilistic views with my spiritual certainties was Buddhist.[145]

In Buddhism, Harvey found a belief system that he thought anticipated current critical theory, as well as Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan, "emerging as a blissfully happy and fulfilling, compassionate and ethical, way of life."[146]

Harvey's Transforming Musical Aesthetic: Spirituality and the Spectral Movement

Harvey's two greatest musical influences in the mid- to late-1960s were Karlheinz Stockhausen, whom he met in 1966, and Milton Babbitt, with whom he studied at Princeton beginning in 1969. While at Princeton, Harvey was also introduced to the school's electronic music studio, which was a significant step in his aesthetic and technological development. Though Harvey was well acquainted with the Second Viennese School through his earlier composition studies, he desired to further immerse himself in high modernism. He was drawn to Babbitt and Stockhausen because of "an urge to find greater structural depth" and as "a way to increase the intricacy of pattern, of perceptible meaning that one draws from the listening experience."[147] In addition, he was interested in what he described as "global time," in contrast to linear time. According to Harvey, both Babbitt and Stockhausen "shared the High Modernist belief that time becomes space, and that one views a musical work, a work of art, as one object, very complex, which should be experienced somehow from above, moving through it but yet

[145] Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit*, 5.
[146] Ibid, 6.
[147] Whittall, 8.

conscious of it as a whole, and with no particular sense of line pushing from moment to moment."[148] Global time resonated with Harvey's growing conception of spirituality. For him, global time was "like living in eternity," i.e., living outside of linear time.[149] In Stockhausen, Harvey found an exemplar of this concept. He especially found the "spiritual aspects of Stockhausen's work" appealing, especially in how Stockhausen's compositions served as a "model of how to at least make the attempt to bring together the rational, the scientific, the mystical, the intuitive and … the chaotic."[150] Harvey credits Stockhausen with showing him the

> … aspect of music as space, the aspect of music as physical sound (in the opposite direction), the aspect of music as something you can feel in your fingers when you manipulate sound in an electronic studio, speeding it up, feeling the buttons as they turn, changing the sound, getting inside sound, getting to understand and love the graininess, the smoothness, the richness, the roughness, the thinness of the ontology of musical sound.[151]

In the early 1970s, not long after his encounters with Babbitt and Stockhausen, Harvey was introduced to the works of Austrian philosopher, Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). Steiner impressed Harvey by "courageously" lecturing "every day of his life about spiritual experience," which gave Harvey the confidence to acknowledge where his "allegiances lay."[152] This was especially important for him during the 1970s when he perceived that openly admitting spiritual experiences in academic circles "wasn't at all fashionable."[153] Equally important, through Steiner, Harvey began perceiving what he describes as "the spiritual nature of everything" he encountered. Steiner viewed everything around him as having "its spiritual nature, its own place

[148] Ibid, 7.
[149] Ibid, 9.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.

in this clairvoyantly perceived universe of light and colour and vibration."[154] Though he admitted lacking the "clairvoyance" he found in Steiner, Harvey credits his study of Vedic techniques of meditation for giving him disciplines and practices that "at least put me on the path" towards experiencing the world as modeled by Steiner.[155] This path – this belief in the innate spirituality of all objects – would have a profound effect on Harvey's musical aesthetic in the 1980s, which would prove to be his most fruitful period.

In the late 1970s, inspired by his study of Steiner, Harvey developed an interest in composing using the entire spectrum of sound. His affinity for creating "spectral" compositions was further encouraged in 1980 when he was invited to work at IRCAM where a number of like-minded composers resided. His time at IRCAM would prove to be significant as it crystalized a number of his aesthetic positions, especially his interest in combinations of electronically and acoustically created sounds within his compositions. During his time at IRCAM, Harvey would compose several of his signature works including *Ritual Melodies*, discussed below, and *Bhakti* for chamber ensemble and quadrophonic tape (1982).

While Harvey was at IRCAM he encountered a group of young composers that shared a compositional aesthetic philosophy and who became known as the spectral movement.[156] These spectral composers emerged primarily in France in the 1970s, led by Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail.[157] In these composers Harvey found commonality through their shared perspectives on nature, sound, and spirituality. The spectralists were influenced by earlier twentieth-century

[154] Ibid, 14.
[155] Ibid.
[156] With the exception of Hugues Duforut, the composer who reportedly coined the term "spectral," most of the French composers who started the movement were students of Olivier Messiaen. Joshua Fineberg, "Spectral Music," *Contemporary Music Review*, 2000, Vol. 19, Part 2: 2.
[157] Gérard Grisey, "Did You Say Spectral," *Contemporary Music Review*, translated by Joshua Fineberg, 2000, Vol. 19, Part 3: 1. A concurrent group with similar interests emerged in Germany, centered at Feedback Studios in Cologne, which consisted of former students and associates of Karlheinz Stockhausen. See Julian Anderson, "A Provisional History of Spectral Music," *Contemporary Music Review*, Vol. 19, Part 2: 15.

composers, like Messiaen, Iannis Xenakis, and Mauricio Kagel, among others, who were seen as making "use of nature in its raw form."[158] Spectral composers drew on what they saw as unique and specific aspects of nature, "the organic, living, acoustic nature of sound."[159] As such, they were interested in the physics of sound, i.e., they sought to deconstruct sound until they were left with only its constituent parts. Spectral works "cried out for listening to the *sounds themselves*, for a musical 'language' and 'syntagm' based on a profound use of sonic phenomena in all their complexity, both harmonic and inharmonic" (my emphasis).[160] Harvey was likely drawn to the spectralists' fixation on reducing musical elements to their smallest component; a single note, a single sound, or even elements beyond human perception (i.e., the "atom" of sound). For example, spectral composers based much of their compositions on the overtone series, just as Harvey does with *Ritual Melodies*, which is based entirely on a "G" overtone series. This concept of reducing music to its smallest elements has parallels in some of Steiner's philosophical writings, which Harvey had embraced in the previous decade. Harvey paraphrases Steiner's writings from the 1920s, describing how "the single note would in future be found as rich in meaning as an entire symphony."[161] Steiner, Harvey asserts, called this, "the spiritualization of music, the penetration of its inner nature."[162]

In part, spectral composers were responding to the failings they perceived in high modernist compositions of the 1950s and 1960s. According to Murail and Grisey, the spectralists' reacted to what they perceived as post-World War II serialist composers refusal "to

[158] P.A. Castanet, "Gérard Grisey and the Foliation of Time," Translated by Joshua Fineberg, *Contemporary Music Review*, 2000, Vol 19, Part 3: 29.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid, 30.
[161] Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit*, 80.
[162] Ibid.

make even the slightest concessions to the phenomena of auditory perception."[163] While the spectralists applauded how serial music turned upside down "concepts of verticality and horizontality or harmony and melody and neutralized the parameter of pitch,"[164] they criticized the serialists for never exploring the nature of sound itself.

In the spectralists' compositional aesthetic, Harvey found a means for expressing his musical spirituality. Writing in 2000, Harvey describes spectral composition as the spiritual equivalent of the technological breakthrough of electronic music:

> History seems grand, for once; spectralism is a moment of fundamental shift after which thinking about music can never be quite the same again. Spectral music is applied to electronic music: together they have achieved a re-birth of perception. The one would scarcely have developed without the other. Electronic music is a well-documented technological breakthrough, spectralism … is a spiritual breakthrough.[165]

Spectralism, according to Harvey, achieves this spiritual breakthrough, in part, because of its relationship to time. Unlike the tonal system, spectralism "is in essence outside the world of linear time" in that it avoids the "goal or resolution."[166] For Harvey, spectralism elevates timbre to a higher position – by erasing the distinction between timbre and harmony – and eliminates music's discursive elements (i.e., goal-oriented music that focuses on a return after deviation), which allows the music to access human spirituality in ways distinct from traditional Western religions.[167] More importantly, the spirituality embraced by composers of spectral music was rooted in ideas of nature, which Harvey would have been attracted to, a love of nature having had a significant impact on his early spiritual formation (as noted above).

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[163] Tristan Murail, "After-thoughts," *Contemporary Music Review*, 2000, Vol. 19, Part 3: 6.
[164] Grisey, 1.
[165] Jonathan Harvey, "Spectralism," *Contemporary Music Review*, 2000, Vol. 19, Part 3: 11.
[166] Ibid, 12.
[167] While many of the musical concepts embraced by spectralists imply an association with eastern religions, one should not assume that all Spectral composers adhered to any one religious belief. Though not a spectral composer, Olivier Messiaen, was the teacher of many of the founders of the movement, and was in turn referred to as a proto-spectralist by Harvey and others. Messiaen, a devout Catholic, through his theoretical writings, helped lay much of the spiritual groundwork for many of the spectralists.

Though spectral composers have used a wide variety of instrumental, vocal, and media settings for their works, many of them have employed electronics (e.g., electronic tape, computers) for compositional purposes. Because of their interest in the physics of sound, much of their music can only be realized through electronics as a means for creating and/or performing musical material outside normal performing abilities of conventional instruments.[168] This can be especially true in compositions based on the overtone series. If a composer uses the upper reaches of the overtone series, traditional instruments may not be able to precisely perform the microtonal differences between notes in the series. On the surface, this dependence on electronic technology may appear antithetical to evocations of spirituality. Many conceptions of spirituality – both religious and secular spirituality – find spirituality in the transcendence of nature and the erasure of technology. Certainly, Harvey often writes of the connection between nature and spirituality, noting, "the big questions of existence generally are thought to be outside the domain of science."[169] However, technology can serve as a means of breaking down divisions between human perception and nature. Both microscopes and telescopes provide access to aspects of the natural world generally hidden from the human eye.[170] For Harvey and the spectralists, electronic technologies of sound analysis can provide a similar type of mediation by revealing the "atoms" of sound. Further, as will be discussed below, in his composition for electronic tape, *Ritual Melodies,* Harvey created melodies that allude to the sound of traditional

[168] It should be pointed out that though there is often a happy marriage between electronics and spectral music, not all spectral music is electronic neither is all electronic music associated with the spectral school.
[169] Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit*, xv.
[170] Two examples from the world of science of individuals finding a kind of spirituality through technology mediated scientific discovery can be seen in geneticist Patrick Collins' book on DNA research, evolution, and religion, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*, Free Press: New York, 2006, and the December 2002 issue of *Wired* magazine, subtitled "Science + Religion," which talks with a number of cosmologists who have found religious and spiritual beliefs in their study of the origins of the universe.

instruments, but that exceed what is possible on traditional instruments and that morph into sounds outside of the norm.

Harvey's Spirituality – an Assessment

Harvey's own interpretation of why specifically Asian thought so captured his imagination was its notion of transcendence and emptiness:

> …of reaching the level of consciousness which is beyond thought – which is not lack of consciousness like deep sleep. Transcendence is a delicate thing which most people do experience but usually only very briefly…But transcendence itself is beyond description; it is blank, empty in a sense. But near it are the borderlands; it colors the borderlands with wonderful light, and that is certainly the area of art.[171]

Moreover, within this transcendence, Harvey finds inspiration for his music:

> If you learn through meditation to dwell in it for a little time then it's very, very fruitful. It's the womb of all creative ideas, all imagination. Everything comes from this area, so if you learn about it you can compose from it.[172]

That the trappings of modern life did not sate Harvey's spiritual hunger suggests a major theme of the 1960s: the human against the system. Professor of Religion, Robert Ellwood, in his study of American spirituality during the 1960s, describes this theme as a postmodern rejection of the excesses of modernity:

> This theme is obviously postmodern in that the System inevitably meant what was created by modern ideals of unity, rationalization, and scientific/technological progress – all of which were now seen, as in Vietnam, as having become a mechanical monster out of all human control.[173]

While Harvey never associates himself with late 1960s counterculture, nor does he describe ever having any encounters with the counterculture, his words, and the timing of his venture into Asian spirituality, hint at a rejection of the established systems of modern culture, especially traditional modes of belief.

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[171] John Palmer, "Conversation with Jonathan Harvey," *20th-Century Music*, vol. 5, No. 8, August 1998, 5.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Robert S. Ellwood, *The 60s Spiritual Awakening* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 29.

Harvey, though residing in both England and America as both were in the process of significant cultural and religious changes, sees his spiritual journey as rooted in something that transcended both his familial surroundings and his cultural context. When asked in a 1994 interview about his "central preoccupation" with the "search for spiritual meaning and realization," he responded by mapping out his spiritual journey:

> I think I have always had that sense … it's something one is perhaps born with. I don't know, I can't think of any explanation, because I certainly wasn't particularly taught it as a child. A sense of search for the ineffable, for something full of wonder which often involves solitude and not playing football with everybody else but going into the countryside for long walks. I was that type of person from the beginning. As I said, it surfaced as a choirboy – I felt that very, very strongly – then at Cambridge, and I think it began to have a renaissance when I studied with Steiner.[174]

What is compelling about his retelling of his journey is that he asserts the possibility that the "search for the ineffable" had its roots in his early childhood, perhaps being something inborn. Despite the fact he went to a religious school as a child, he states above that his search for spiritual meaning was not related to his religious education. This indicates that Harvey did not believe that he was merely augmenting his parents' Christian beliefs, but rather he felt drawn to something foreign or unrelated to those beliefs. Further, his spiritual yearning was something he believed he was born with, implying the possibility that spirituality is part of human nature. If spirituality is part of human nature, it is, by implication, something natural; i.e., related to nature.

Harvey's Musical Spirituality and Compositional Aesthetic

The development of Harvey's musical spirituality can tell us much about his spiritual development. Moreover, his spiritual growth mirrors his interest in electronic music. His early post-university compositions contained spiritual elements, but like his own spiritual philosophies at the time, they were still somewhat undefined. Harvey described some of these early works,

[174] Palmer, 4.

like *Four Images After Yeats* (1965), as "mystical" but "lacking in structural depth."[175] In the 1970s, influenced by Babbitt, Stockhausen, Steiner, and his access to electronic studios, Harvey's musical spirituality became more overt. The three *Inner Light* compositions (*No. 1* for chamber ensemble [1972], *No. 3* for orchestra [1975], and *No. 2* for chorus, instruments, and electronic tape [1977]), for example, were among his earliest overtly spiritual works with the title evoking both New Age spirituality and the Quaker tradition. *Inner Light No. 2*, which used texts by T.S. Eliot and Steiner, was also one of his earliest tape pieces. But his concept of musical spirituality became fully formed when he came to IRCAM, where his "thinking was able to develop in a more coherent way."[176] At IRCAM, Harvey found that music, technology, and spirituality need not be at odds with each other but rather could co-exist in harmony.

In many of his writings and interviews, Harvey has discussed at length his conception of musical spirituality. In this regard he is unlike the other two composers considered in this dissertation, Pärt and Coltrane. In general, Pärt has been and Coltrane was fairly reticent in discussing at length the connections between music and spirituality, while Harvey has been very open in discussing the topic. Even so, he acknowledges the inherent difficulty in such a discussion, noting the "apparent impossibility, despite the admitted desirability, of giving definitive answers in a field such as the spirituality of music."[177] But for Harvey, the "desirability" of the project outweighs its "impossibilities" because "great art" must try "a bit harder for truth, whatever the odds."[178]

Harvey's acknowledgement of the "apparent impossibility" of definitive answers regarding musical spirituality is reflected in much of his discussion on the subject. Though he

[175] Whittall, 8.
[176] Ibid, 24.
[177] Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit*, xiii.
[178] Ibid, xvi.

acknowledges the importance of musical references, he locates musical spirituality in the audience's reception of a given composition rather than in any particular set of techniques or devices. Harvey suggests that "perhaps the category of the spiritual … is demarcated by the feeling we have of the music having somehow reached beyond, rather than by any associations evoked by a text, program, or the composer's stated intentions."[179] In general, he believes that "most would be inclined to use the word *spiritual* to describe works that we feel are profound, that touch us at some very deep, very important, level. Works to which we apply such adjectives as *playful*, *ingenious*, *witty*, and *lightweight* we would not call spiritual" (his emphasis).[180] However, for Harvey this is just a starting point. Just because a work has a subject matter that most do not find profound does not preclude some listeners from being deeply moved by such a work. Even works with subject matter Harvey finds "ethically suspect" – like Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, which represents "on stage the triumph of evil" – can be "somehow transfigured by the music."[181] Further, he acknowledges that the listener's emotional or spiritual state can serve as an overriding factor when experiencing certain music or sounds. If we, as listeners, "experience a similar state of consciousness every time we hear certain music" we will "impute a given quality to the music based on the reaction that it always arouses."[182]

Though this implies that musical spirituality only occurs internally and not as a direct result from outside stimuli, Harvey realizes that intention and reception are only part of the equation. External stimuli for the listener, in the form of musical signs, are an equally important part of the creation of musical spirituality. For one thing, as he has noted, music can never be

[179] Ibid, 8.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid.

free from its references and, as such, always contains meanings that the listener will comprehend:

> The intention of the subject and the music can come as a complete package…Music can't escape its references. It always relates to an agitated or calm heartbeat or breath; a running, dancing, or gesture movement; or speaking, exclaiming or chanting. It just can't escape. There is reference all over. Whatever people might say, there is no neutral level. If you write a title or program, it is just extending what is already there. It certainly helps the listener to enter into what is in the composer's mind.[183]

Further, while Harvey argues that musical spirituality is not necessarily located in programs, texts, or composer intention, he considers certain of his works "spiritual" and "non-spiritual." Works like *Bhakti*, *Ritual Melodies*, *Madonna of Winter and Spring*, and *Inner Light* that he considers to be spiritual in nature contain religious and spiritual programmatic and/or symbolic elements. Inclusion of these elements suggests that his intention as a composer is to make these works, in some sense, "spiritual," or at least to make these works better communicate their spiritual nature. Harvey's use of these elements does not necessarily contradict his previously quoted assertion that they are not the source of musical spirituality, but rather they allow him to make the work's spirituality familiar and recognizable. If musical spirituality ultimately lies within the listener, as Harvey indicates, then any musical signifiers the composer uses in an attempt to draw the listener into the music's spiritual message need to be comprehensible. Harvey is especially concerned with comprehensibility in his electronic music, which may be less familiar to the listener. According to Harvey, the potential problem with electronic sounds that "lack connection to the familiar instrumental world" is that they "can be overwhelmingly alien – other; inhuman, inadmissible, dismissible … If electronic sounds are completely separate from traditional instruments, they may as well be on the moon." However, if electronic sounds

[183] Matthew Jenkins, "A Search for Emptiness: an Interview with Jonathan Harvey," *Perspectives of New Music*, Summer 2006, Vol. 44, No. 2: 228.

are "seamlessly connected to the physical, solid, instrumental world … an expansion of the admissible takes place and the 'irrational' world is made to belong."[184]

Harvey's Ritual Melodies

Though a number of Harvey's compositions present his conception of musical spirituality, his work for electronic tape, *Ritual Melodies*, which he composed from 1986 to 1990, is especially emblematic of his religious and spiritual beliefs. The work demonstrates not only the religious and musical cultures that influenced Harvey, but also deeper spiritual concepts. In the composition, Harvey uses electronic sounds that mimic vocal and instrumental timbres connected with traditional religious rituals in order to create what he describes as "an imaginary rite."[185] His "imaginary rite," like an authentic ritual, serves to usher the listener into a deeper spiritual experience. In order to understand how Harvey creates this rite, my analysis focuses on *Ritual Melodies'* concrete (i.e., sonic) elements in order to demonstrate what traditions Harvey draws from and how these elements work symbolically. First, I connect Harvey's imagined ritual to existing ritual practices. Second, I look at the types and significance of the various acoustic instruments Harvey uses as source material for the work and their connection to Hindu and Buddhist ritual practices, as well as to the melodies he has constructed. Lastly, I discuss how the work's musical elements – form, timbre, and melody – evoke stillness and "emptiness" as a way of asserting Buddhist spiritual practices.

[184] Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit*, 62.
[185] Jonathan Harvey, liner notes for *From Silence, Nataraja, Ritual Melodies*, Bridge Records, BCD 9031, 1992.

Overview/History

Harvey's *Ritual Melodies*, a 13 and 1/2-minute work for electronic tape, was completed in 1990 as the third of his IRCAM compositions.[186] *Ritual Melodies* consists of eight interlocking melodies created from a pitch collection drawn from an overtone series built on "G." Harvey also created eight distinct timbres, which "perform" these melodies. These computer-generated timbres imitate vocal and instrumental source material, which evoke a variety of Asian musical and religious cultures. By selecting timbres associated with Asian religious culture, especially Buddhism, Harvey imbues the work with an aura of familiarity; while listeners may or may not associate the timbres with specific religious traditions, they will likely recognize them as "Asian."

As suggested by Jan Vandenheede, Harvey's assistant in creating the computer-generated melodies, *Ritual Melodies* can be divided into eleven sections, as shown in Table 1.[187] A cluster of bells or a gong strike most often indicates these section breaks. None of the timbres or melodies is tied to a specific section. Within these sections, all eight timbres and the melodies occur in a variety of ways as shown in the Appendix to this dissertation.

Table 1 Sectional Divisions in Ritual Melodies

Section No.	Time	Duration
1	0:00-1:09	1:09
2	1:09-3:12	2:02
3	3:12-3:53	0:42
4	3:53-5:12	1:19

[186] In addition to *Ritual Melodies*, Harvey composed *Mortuos plango, vivos voco* (1980), *Bhakti* (1982) and *Advaya* (1994) at IRCAM.

[187] Jan Vandenheede, "Jonathan Harvey's Ritual Melodies," *Interface,* Vol. 21 (1992): 149-183. Vandenheede never claims that the work was a collaborative effort. Rather, he indicates that he worked with Harvey in creating the digital sound waves that became Harvey's compositional material. The act of composition seems to reside solely in the hands of Harvey. Nevertheless, Harvey acknowledges in the invaluable assistance of Vandenheede and other IRCAM technicians, stating that they functioned, "not just technically helping me to realize what I had in my mind, but as composers themselves, people to discuss with and bounce ideas off and to receive their ideas." Whittall, 25.

Section No.	Time	Duration
5	5:12-6:47	1:35
6	6:47-7:41	0:54
7	7:41-9:07	1:26
8	9:07-9:38	0:31
9	9:38-10:12	0:34
10	10:12-11:27	1:15
11	11:27-13:27	2:00

Form as Ritual

By titling his work, *Ritual Melodies*, Harvey implies a connection to some type of religious ritual or gathering. However, Harvey never explicitly attaches the work to any specific existing ritual. In fact, in describing the work as an "imaginary rite," Harvey implies that he does not wish to imitate directly any specific tradition. Ambiguously, Harvey states that, in part, "rituals are for binding together contrasted personalities."[188] While it is unlikely that Harvey intends this definition to be all encompassing, it does capture an important element of rituals: bringing unique and often disparate individuals together for the singular, unifying purpose of worship.

Though Harvey neither directly connects *Ritual Melodies* to any specific tradition nor acknowledges any firsthand experience with any non-Western ritual traditions, the work exhibits a general similarity to a number of existing religious rituals.[189] Comparing *Ritual Melodies* to traditional ritual practices not only suggests the larger context of the work but also provides a way to understand Harvey's musical spirituality. Further, understanding how some of the musical elements function within the context of Buddhist musical practices can help understand what spiritual and philosophical concepts influenced Harvey's musical choices.

[188] Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit*, 61.
[189] Though Harvey acknowledges in interviews and his own writings interacting with practicing Hindi and Buddhists, he first visited a Buddhist monastery (located in Northern India) in 2005. See Jenkins, 222.

Though Harvey takes melodic and timbral inspiration from a variety of Asian traditions, overall the work most closely resembles Tibetan monastic ritual music, formally, texturally, and sonically. While the music used at Tibetan Buddhist monasteries for ritual services varies considerably and is itself a marriage of several different musical and ritual elements drawn from surrounding regions,[190] one can observe some tendencies that bear at least a general similarity to Harvey's work. Those Tibetan rituals that employ a full orchestra especially bear a similarity to the general structure and textures found in *Ritual Melodies*. Tibetan monastic orchestras are typically comprised of roughly 8 to 12 instrumentalists consisting exclusively of wind and percussion instruments. In general, their music is characterized by long sustained tones and with loud declaratory moments separating sections.[191] In a number of recordings of Tibetan Buddhist ritual music, one hears long, continuous "performances" separated by bells. These sections often alternate between vocal chants and instrumental passages consisting of long, sustained tones, similar to *Ritual Melodies*.[192] Broadly, in Tibetan ritual music, both vocal and instrumental melodies act as evocations of *mantras*: "voices chant *mantras*, the instruments sound *mantras*."[193] In this context, *mantras* are words or sounds organized into holy formulas that allow the individual to eliminate distractions in order to perform practices that "empower the spiritual quest."[194]

[190] Peter Crossley-Holland, "The Ritual Music of Tibet," in *Song of the Spirit: The World of Sacred Music*, 143.
[191] Crossley-Holland, "Tibet, §2: Music and Religion," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Stanley Sadie, ed., 1980, Vol. 18, 803.
[192] For example, "Mahakala Sadhana: Dag-kye," by the Tashi Jong Community at Khampagar Monastery, Himachal Pradesh, India, on *Tibetan Buddhism: The Ritual Orchestra and Chant*, Nonesuch Records, 1991; "Offering to the Savior Gompu" and "Offering to the Guru Drakmar," *Tibetan Ritual Music*, Lyrichord Disks, LYRCD 7101, 1961; and "Chendren, Invitation," *Tibetan Buddhist Rites from the Monasteries of Bhutan, Vol. 2*, Lyrichord Disks, LYRCD 7256, 1971.
[193] Crossley-Holland, "The Ritual Music of Tibet," 142.
[194] Huston Smith, *The Illustrated World's Religions*, 92.

Ritual Melodies unfolds, in a metaphorical sense, liturgically. As each new section of *Ritual Melodies* begins, and a new or altered musical element appears or reappears, it introduces a new element or section in Harvey's version of a sacred service. The listener need not hear these melodies as references to specific religious or spiritual practices to experience the music in a manner that is within Harvey's horizon of expectation. This is vitally important to Harvey because he was aware that by the close of the twentieth century, it had become difficult, if not impossible to find consensus regarding religious symbols among listeners. Navigating this lack of consensus, i.e., communicating philosophical and spiritual concerns to the audience, however, was vitally important because, according to Harvey, the very survival of new music within Western Art Music was at stake. As he wrote in 1992:

> In my view, they [new listeners] will be retained if they see that music is dealing with matters which concern them philosophically and spiritually. They will lose interest if it doesn't, and music will once again play a peripheral elitist role. Music must be clearly concerned with something central. This might be easier if we had less pluralism and more consensus. But how could a consensus exist again? It could hardly exist in conventionally religious terms. It might rather take the form of what William James called religious experience, a broader concept including most experiences that are 'expanding', 'uplifting', and in James's sense, 'mystical'. Although we might disagree on terminology, there is considerable consensus about this now. Certainly, if events in the world continue to force us to focus our minds on the desperate plight of the planet in the next century, we may well be obliged to ask ourselves more searching questions about our values, questions which would be reflected in our attitude to the arts. One looks back with envy at the harmony between medieval man and his art or craft. Such a man was a member of the Christian consensus which ordered his imagination without limiting it. We have to realise [sic], as he did, that aesthetic or spiritual pleasure must outweigh material pleasure. Material pleasure is at another's expense – if we have it, someone else can't. That leads to greed causing envy, causing stress, causing an explosion. Aesthetic pleasure is at no-one's expense.[195]

[195] Jonathan Harvey, "Sounding out the Inner Self: Jonathan Harvey's Quest for the Spiritual Core of New Music," 614.

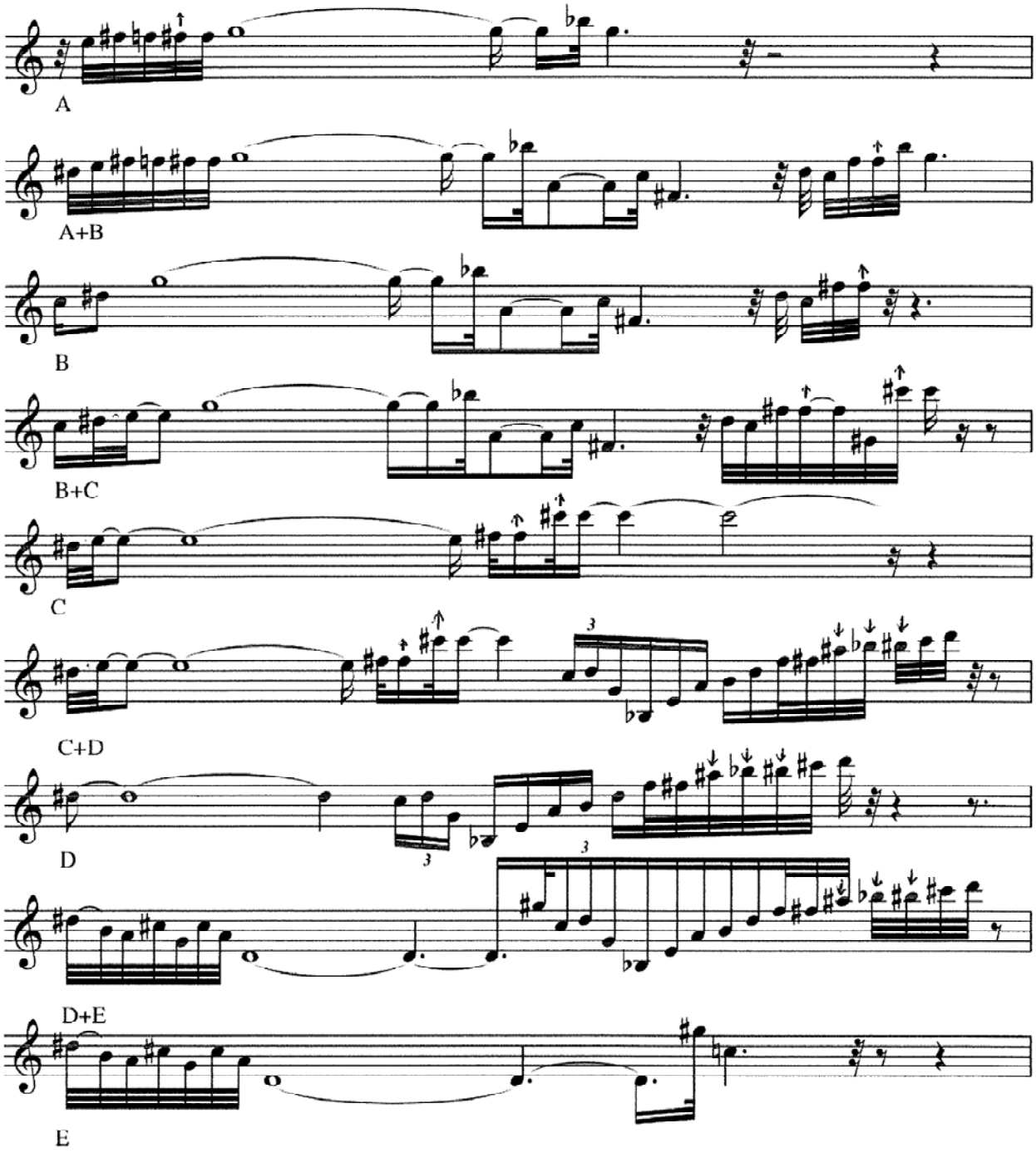
Melody and Timbre

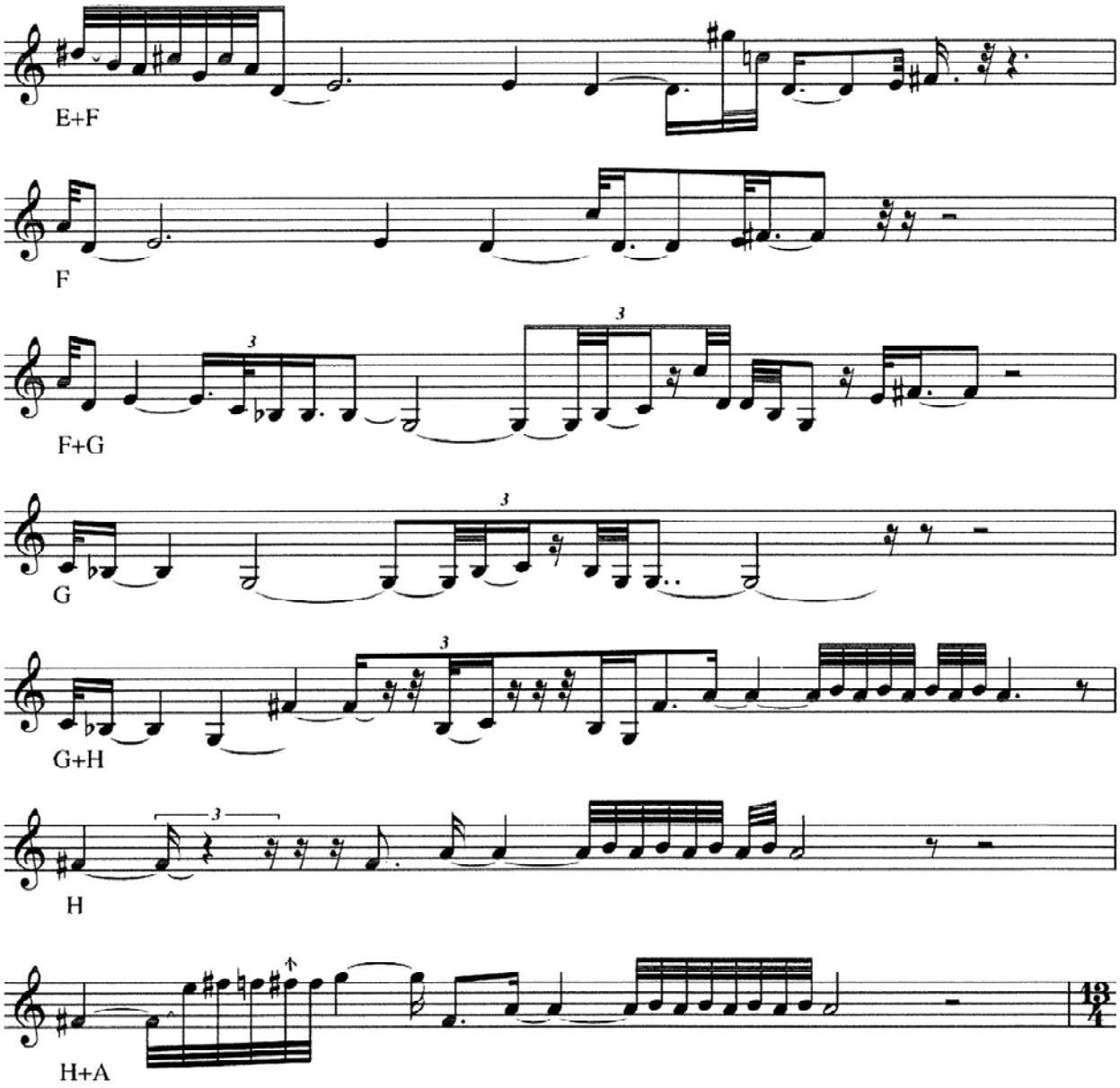
Harvey's most striking building blocks in creating *Ritual Melodies* are the work's eight electronically produced timbres and the eight melodies consisting of notes taken from the G overtone series. Both provide Harvey a way to usher his audience into the spiritual aspects of the work, i.e., his imagined rituals. He can do this because, as mentioned above, these timbres are connected to cultural and spiritual traditions. These connections become apparent with the first significant entrance by one of the timbres. Approximately 25 seconds into the work, Harvey employs the Indian oboe (i.e., *shehnai*) in a fanfare like canon. In doing this, Harvey uses the Indian oboe timbre in a way that echoes the instrument's declaratory function in North Indian temple rituals, such as weddings.[196] This opening declaration functions like a call to "worship" for Harvey's imagined rite, as if preparing communicants for beginning of a sacred ritual or holy service.

Harvey composed a series of eight melodies of varying lengths, each with a distinctive character. Some feature melismatic passages leading to long sustained tones while others feature jagged dotted eighth-sixteenth patterns. Most importantly, he designed each melody to have extended periods of silence or sustained tones, thus leaving space so that the individual melodies could be combined to create composite melodies. Harvey designated the primary melodies A through H and another eight composite melodies A+B through H+A (Example 12).[197]

[196] http://www.chandrakantha.com/articles/indian_music/shehnai.html.
[197] Whittall, 26.

Example 12 ***Ritual Melodies*** **– Melodic Material**





Jonathan Harvey, *Ritual Melodies*

(Note: Up and down arrows (↑↓) over a note indicate that the sounding pitches are either a quartertone higher or lower than the written pitch.)

In each composite melody, Harvey combines elements from the primary melodies that precede and antecede the composite melody; therefore, melody A+B combines melodic gestures and themes from melodies A and B. Connecting each melody in this way allows Harvey to have

all of the melodies "form an interlocking chain with simple ones combining to form composite ones (A, AB, B, BC, C…etc.)."[198] By having the melodies essentially lead from one to another – melody A leads to A+B, which leads to B, which leads to B+C, etc., through H+A, which returns to melody A – the interlocking chain leads back to the beginning. One reason for the interlocking melodies was Harvey's desire for the work's comprehensibility, wanting "something more memorable so that when it recurred after a long absence – after so many minutes it would still be recognizable."[199] Further, the interlocking melodies form a cycle. If Harvey had so desired he could have made the melodies continue almost endlessly. In this cyclical approach to melody, Harvey reflects Eastern notions of time; central to both Hinduism and Buddhism is idea of reincarnation – i.e., return and rebirth – both the physical/individual realm (the transmigration of the soul) and the cosmic realm (the idea of reoccurrence).

Timbre, always of interest to composers, is especially of importance to spectral compositions, as acknowledged above. In selecting timbres for *Ritual Melodies*, Harvey chose timbres that his listeners could potentially associate with specific religious and spiritual traditions. In particular, these timbres evoke Eastern cultural, musical, and religious traditions, thus loading his work with signifiers of Eastern spirituality.[200] These eight timbres mimic the following acoustic instruments or vocal chanting styles:

> Tibetan temple bell,
> Gong,
> Vietnamese koto (i.e., *dan tranh*),
> Tibetan chant (i.e., throat singing),
> Plainchant,
> Indian oboe (i.e., *shehnai*),
> Japanese flute (i.e., *shakuhachi*), and

[198] Harvey, liner notes.
[199] Whittall, 22.
[200] For specifics on how Harvey constructed these sounds, please see Vandenheede, 149-183.

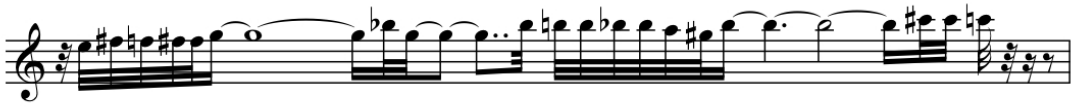
Tibetan temple bowl (also known as "water bowls").[201]

The koto is a type of Asian zither, variants of which can be found in Japan, Korea, China, and Vietnam. The Indian oboe, or *shehnai*, is a type of shawm with a very bright timbre. The Japanese flute, or *shakuhachi*, is an end-blown bamboo flute. The Tibetan temple bowl, or water bowl, is a metal bell that rests on its bottom surface and is struck or rubbed by a wooden mallet. Because it rests on a surface rather than hanging like most bells, the temple bowl's sound, when struck, is dominated by a sustained resonant pitch instead of a sharp percussive sound.

Harvey took sampled recordings of acoustic instruments as a model and, using the IRCAM facilities, electronically imitated aspects of the individual timbres, i.e., sound color, attacks, decays, and resonances. Every appearance of these timbres, along with statements of the melodies, is shown in the Appendix, presented at the end of this dissertation.

In combining the melodies and timbres, Harvey pairs melodies that match certain performance conventions of the instrumental and vocal models for the electronic timbres, thus reinforcing the ritual nature of the melodies.[202] For example, the Indian oboe timbre is typically paired with melodies that have characteristics similar to traditional fanfares played by the Indian oboe, i.e., the *shehnai*, at Hindu weddings and other ceremonies. This can be seen in the declaratory initial entrance of the oboes on Melody "A," which features two 32nd note runs moving to held notes (see Example 13) in a canon:

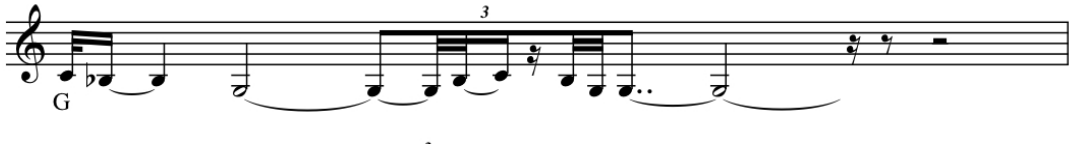
Example 13 ***Ritual Melodies*, Melody A**



[201] Vandenheede, 149, and Harvey, Liner Notes.
[202] Vandenheede, 158.

Similarly, the Tibetan chant timbre is paired with melodies suited for a more "vocal" performance. This can be seen in melody "G," Example 14, which Harvey twice pairs with the Tibetan chant timbre. This melody has a relatively narrow tessitura with few leaps and no significant runs, especially in comparison to Melody A (Example 13):

Example 14 ***Ritual Melodies*****, Melody G**



To add variety, however, Harvey occasionally combines the timbre of one melody with the attack or performance convention of another melody. For example, in Section 2 of *Ritual Melodies*, Harvey has the timbre of the temple bells gradually change to a flute timbre. Similarly, in Section 5, Harvey creates a sound that combines the timbre of the gong but with the characteristics of a flute, i.e. the ability to sustain, crescendo, and employ vibrato.

More importantly for the creation of Harvey's musical spirituality, the timbres can be heard as signifiers of Asian religious traditions, especially Buddhism and, to a lesser degree, Hinduism. Obviously Tibetan temple bells, water bowls, and Tibetan chant can be linked directly to Buddhism, while the Indian oboe (*shehnai*) is frequently used in Hindu rituals. But, more specifically, understanding the symbolic meanings behind these timbres helps grasp the spiritual significance they had for Harvey and what types of spiritual meaning he wished to convey.

For example, Harvey's flute timbre imitates the Japanese wooden flute or *shakuhachi*, which has significance within the Buddhist tradition. The *shakuhachi*, which originated in China but is now most associated with Japan, has a significant place in the musical and theological

traditions of the Japanese *Fuke* sect of Buddhism.[203] Similarly, the percussion instruments Harvey imitates in *Ritual Melodies*, like bells, gongs, and water bowls, also have a significant place in both corporate rituals and private meditation. Ethnomusicologist Peter Crossley-Holland describes how the hand bell and the scepter or hand drum are among the most significant musical instruments in Buddhist ritual music.[204] The two instruments, generally played by the same priest, symbolize Wisdom and Method, two attributes described as "inseparable partners on the way to Enlightenment": without them, "the attainment of Nirvana is said to be impossible."[205] Perhaps not coincidentally, Harvey opens *Ritual Melodies* with bells, as if to symbolically welcome the listener into the "wisdom and method" of his "imaginary rite."

The Tibetan chant timbre in particular is emblematic of Harvey's goal of contrasting sounds that are both familiar and other-worldly. The vocal technique, while recognizable, also has an uncanny sound quality. The vocal techniques of Tibetan throat singers, created through what Crossley-Holland describes as "constricted production and exceptionally deep vocal features," are generally outside the experience of most Western listeners. Crossley-Holland suggests that such "unnatural vocal features," often found in non-Western musical traditions, can provide a way for the singers to "communicate with the supernatural" in order to "call celebrants away from their ordinary world and personality."[206] In performing the vocal technique, the monks seem to be erasing the self, i.e., separating themselves from the physical world in order to engage with the metaphysical.

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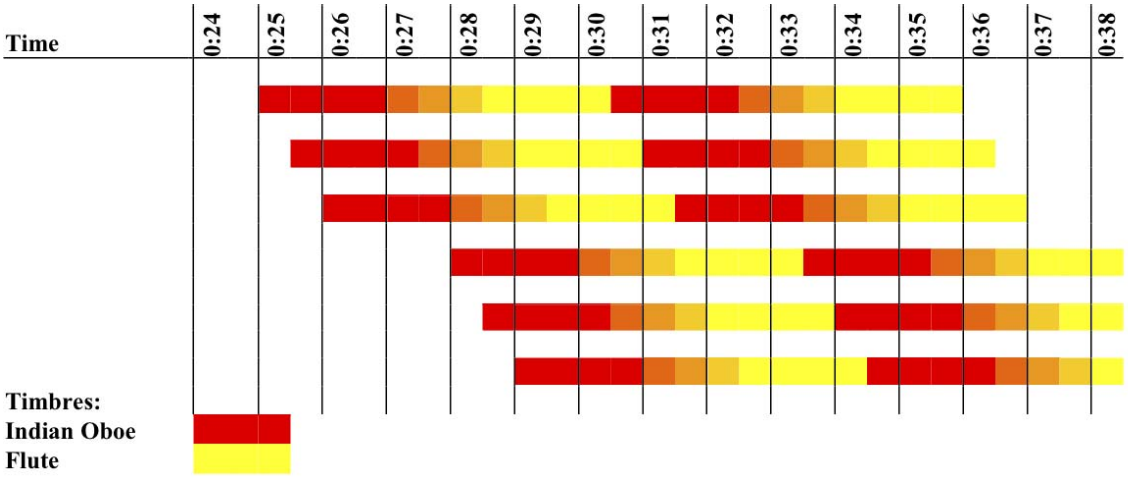
[203] Gregg W. Howard, "Musico-religious implications of some Buddhist views of sound and music in the Śūrangama Sūtra," *Musica Asiatica*, vol. 6, 1991: 100.
[204] Crossley-Holland, "The Ritual Music of Tibet," 139. The scepter is used to strike the bell. During rituals that use "more purely musical instruments," the rattle hand-drum drum serves as a stand-in for the scepter.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid.

This combination of the familiar and the other-worldly becomes a significant aspect of the work. Harvey achieves this combination by manipulating and changing the timbres. Initially, he does this in simple, direct ways. The aforementioned oboe canon in Section 1 (beginning at 0:25 and continuing to 0:48) demonstrates this characteristic by morphing into the flute timbre on a sustained note (on g^1). Example 15, below, depicts the various entrances of the oboe canon (shown in red). The various shades of orange bleeding into yellow depict the way the oboe timbre gradually transforms into the flute timbre on the sustained tone. The overall effect is that the second series of oboe entrances (beginning at approximately 0:30) seem to float over the sustained flute sound.

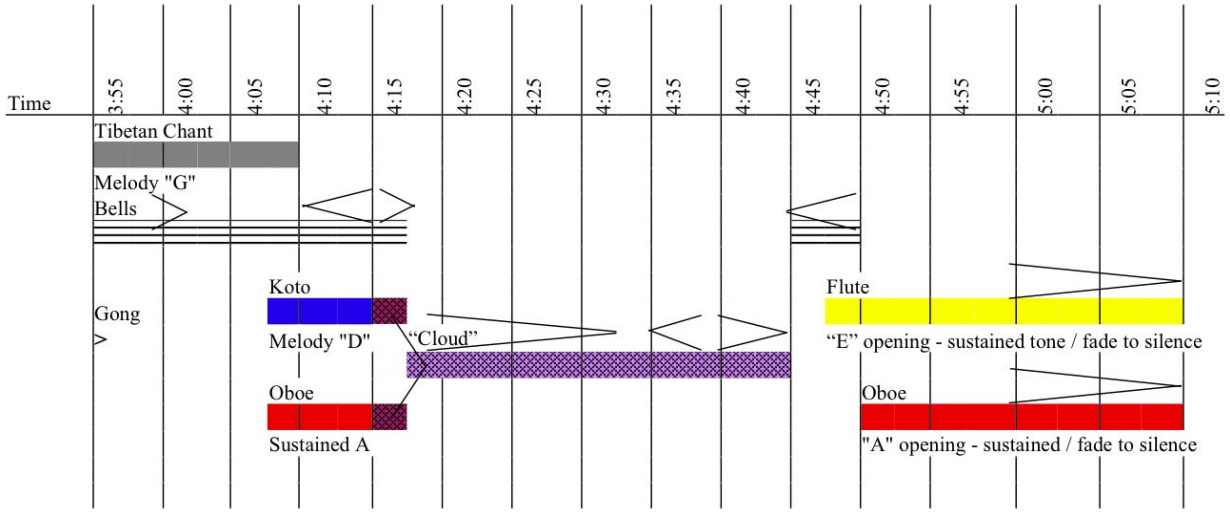
Example 15 Section 1 Oboe Timbre



In merging the oboe and flute timbres barely 30 seconds into the work foreshadows a technique that dominates large passages in the middle of *Ritual Melodies*. Starting in Section 4 and continuing intermittently through Section 7, Harvey creates what he describes as "clouds," i.e., prolongations of melodies by reverberation, "so the harmonic series sounds sometimes as a

chord, sometimes as a timbre."[207] Harvey creates his "clouds" by prolonging and merging multiple timbres or melodies into a composite sound that no longer sounds like any one identifiable instrument, thus creating a sound completely unfamiliar. The example below, which graphically depicts the entrances of the different timbres and melodies in Section 4, demonstrates the first emergence of Harvey's cloud (at approximately 4:17) and suggests how dynamic change creates a sense of motion in a rhythmless, sustained wall of sound.

Example 16 Timbre Entrances in Section 4 of *Ritual Melodies*

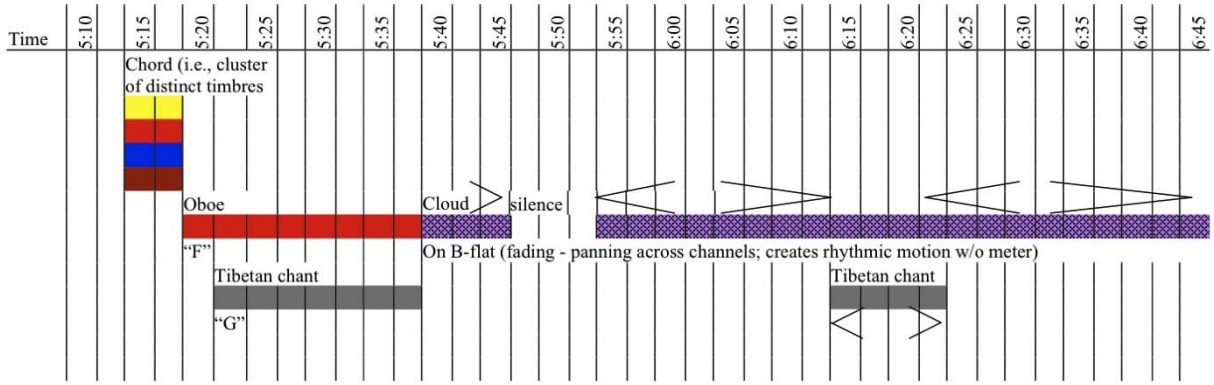


Example 16 shows that as the bell timbre decrescendos at approximately 4:15, the koto and oboe timbres, performing sustained tones, merge into the "cloud" timbre. The cloud timbre then becomes the only sound for the next 30 seconds.

The cloud becomes even more dominant in Section 5, as demonstrated in Example 17. At approximately 5:40 the cloud timbre returns and dominates for the remainder of the section – for over one minute.

[207] Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit*, 62.

Example 17 Timbre Entrances in Section 5 of *Ritual Melodies*



Though the majority of the section is melodically and rhythmically static (the cloud timbre is never paired discernably with any of Harvey's melodies but rather is only performed as a sustained tone, as the example depicts), Harvey provides variety to the sustained sound through dynamic variation (fading to silence, rising and falling), gradual upwards glissandos, or wide tremolos (for example, at 6:05 in Example 17).

"Stillness" as a Marker of Spirituality

The harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic stasis present in Harvey's "cloud" suggests a particular concept of musical spirituality, with which Harvey is especially concerned. For Harvey, one of the most important elements of musical spirituality is stillness. The importance of stillness for Harvey can most readily be seen in that he names one of the chapters of his book, *In Quest of Spirit*, "Stasis and Silence." Though Harvey contends that music (or art) "cannot reveal the transcendent," musical stillness can imitate or suggest transcendental or mystical experiences. Harvey believes that there are two types of these transcendental experiences: first, "the sudden, transforming opening to a new dimension – very emotional, very powerful" and second, "to become very still," wherein the "mind ceases its restless activity and plunges into

nothingness."[208] According to Harvey, many who experience the former, "do so only once in a lifetime, but they regard it as the most important moment of their lives." In contrast to the epiphanic experience of the former, the latter can be achieved, Harvey contends, repeatedly through techniques of meditation, such as taught by Zen Buddhism and Transcendental Meditation. In this state of transcendence (only achieved after years of practice), one cannot "know" anything about the state of transcendence; the mind is completely blank. However, when one comes out of the meditative state, one has "a great sense of calmness and lightness" and is "full of creative ideas, solutions to problems, and various vivid, clear mental notions." Harvey describes this as being in "the womb of all creativity."[209]

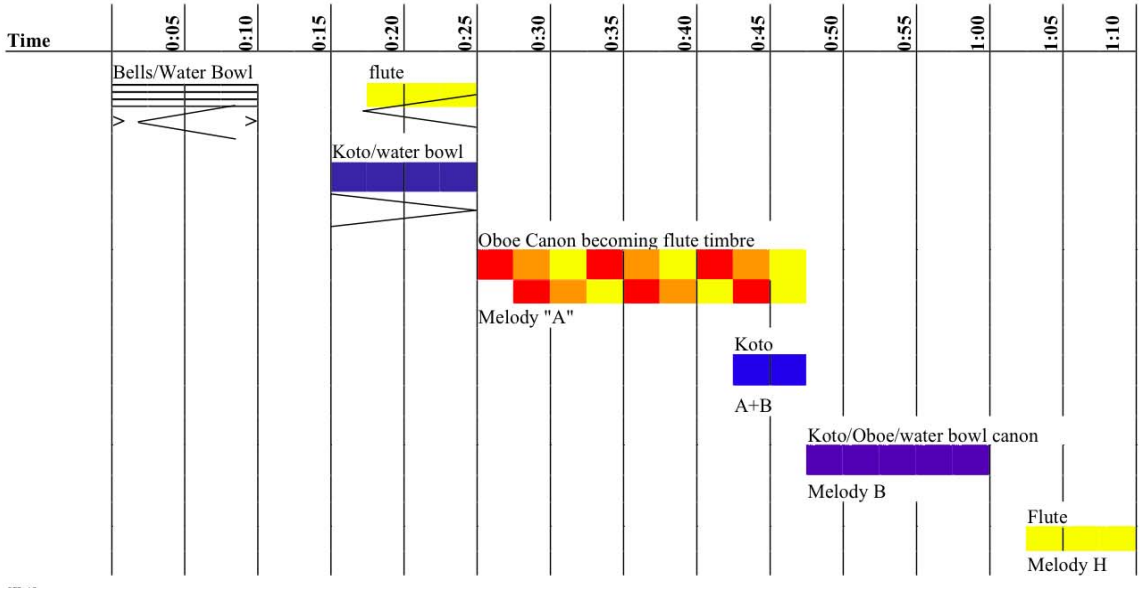
It is in these "two contrasting elements," or types of transcendental experiences, that Harvey finds music's ambiguity; for him, music contains elements of both: "stillness and moving vividness, emptiness and fullness, unity and variety, the One and the Many."[210] Harvey finds this ambiguity especially important in his conception of spiritual music. In spiritual music, Harvey sees stillness as "a vessel for energy. Stillness permeates energy; energy is shot through with stillness."[211] So, for music to be effective spiritually, it must have this combination of stillness and energy. For Harvey, the music of Arvo Pärt provides an example of this. Pärt's use of "lengthy stasis, especially the prolongation of flattened sevenths, creates a strong sense of undisturbed timelessness."[212] In Pärt's *Passio*, "Pärt clips off each phrase just before it becomes

[208] Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit*, 66.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid, 67.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid, 70.

expressive, subjective. After each completed gesture he gives us [the listener] space to stand back and contemplate it as an object without rushing us on to the next thing."[213]

In *Ritual Melodies*, Harvey uses elements of stasis and silence that are similar to what he hears in the music of Arvo Pärt. From the beginning of the work, Harvey's use of stasis and silence become quite evident. Throughout the opening section (See Example 18), Harvey connects the entrances of the melodies through sustained tones or silence. In the opening gesture, the entrance of the temple bell timbre is followed by a sustained tone (water bowl) that builds to an accented note and then five seconds of silence.

Example 18 Section 1, Ritual Melodies



Following the brief silence, the koto and flute enter with sustained tones. Then, as noted above in the discussion of the oboe canon, the oboe timbre becomes a sustained G that transforms into the flute timbre.

[213] Ibid, 71.

Harvey not only creates stasis through prolongation but also constructs stasis into the melodies by incorporating sustained tones. As can be seen in Example 12, above, all of the primary melodies ("A" through "H") have long sustained tones as part of the melody, as well as elements with greater rhythmic activity. This allows Harvey to create a combination of activity and stasis. For example, Melody A opens with a rapid 32nd note ascending gesture that resolves on a sustained note (See Examples 12 and 13, above). By using this melody for his oboe canon, Harvey creates overlapping sustained notes punctuated by the 32nd note gesture. Similarly, following the build-up of texture and activity in Section 3, Sections 4 and 5 (Examples 16 and 17, above; 3:55 to 6:45), are characterized by statements by the Tibetan chant timbre, followed by crescendos and decrescendos of the "cloud timbre" sound on a single tone that eventually descends into silence (5:43 to 5:51). In using sustained notes and stasis after completing his musical gestures, Harvey gives the listener, as he suggests, "space to stand back and contemplate it as an object without rushing us on to the next thing."[214] Stasis then provides a sense of timelessness for the listener. By removing strictly metered elements, Harvey achieves a kind of stillness that enhances the spiritual nature of the work.

Non-Gravitational Harmony

In addition to stasis, melodic and harmonic symmetry provide Harvey with another important element in his musical spirituality. Harvey, in part, attributes his approach to melody and harmony to the influence of composer Anton Webern:

> What I mention is axial symmetry… I feel such symmetry does give a sense of non-gravitational music which isn't rooted to the bass, and is in a "floating state," as Webern referred to his axial music. That's one direct "serial" connection with spiritual music. It's music which is not so rooted to the earth.[215]

[214] Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit*, 71.
[215] Palmer, 5.

Harvey found bass-rooted music, like the music of the common-practice tonal era, to be too "rooted to the earth." By creating music not "rooted to the bass" rhythmically, harmonically, or melodically, he felt that the music could be freed from earthbound restrictions. In doing this, Harvey attempts to rid his music of earthbound notions of temporality and create what he refers to as "non-gravitational music."[216] Indirectly, Harvey may be describing his music, and that of Webern, as music that transcends physical existence. Harvey continues by suggesting ways in which this can be achieved through static sounds in electronic music:

> Again, with the exploration of more "static" sounds and the interest lying in the movement about the basically static thing (there is movement within it), but the emphasis is shifted to the static element, that's a technique which again reflects the state of spiritual meditation, of silencing the activities or argument and mental conceptuality. The mind is stilled, and beautiful things come up, as in meditation after "emptiness," from the region of near-transcendence.[217]

In doing this, Harvey attempts to create music that presents what he describes as the "beautiful things" that arise in the stilled mind, similar to the emptiness one experiences following meditation.[218] By emptiness, Harvey refers to emptying one's self of his or her ego, rather than an emptiness of musical content. This emptiness works both for the composer, in the act of composing, as well as the listener: the music's "stillness" helps create a meditative atmosphere, which can open the listener up to a deeper spiritual experience.

Conclusions

As a composer, Jonathan Harvey was shaped by era of significant religious change in Great Britain, which is reflected in many of his most celebrated works, such as *Ritual Melodies*. This electro-acoustic composition not only takes as source material vocal and instrumental

[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid.

timbres associated with Asian religious and spiritual ritual practice, but also draws from Eastern philosophy.

However, though he incorporates spiritual symbolism in *Ritual Melodies*, Harvey has stated that whether or not music can be called spiritual lies ultimately in the individual and his or her listening experience rather than the music itself. Harvey contends that music acts as the means for presenting spirituality, but that "spirituality … resides in subjects, not objects; in people, not music. The music may be explicitly spiritual … or not, but the experience is necessarily subjective, and anybody is free to find any music spiritual."[219] Thus, by using musical elements coded as spiritual, and by the use of silence and stasis, Harvey hoped to elicit a spiritual reaction from his listeners. Through his music, he provides his listeners with a glimpse of deeper, meditative states. His music, he hopes, opens a path that allows his listeners to have a mystical or transcendent experience.

By naming his work *Ritual Melodies*, Harvey clearly wanted to direct his listeners to hear the work in a certain way. As will be discussed in the Coltrane chapter, the act of naming something imbues it with meaning. Though this is a concept that Harvey is clearly aware of, he also asserts that titles work in tandem with the musical signifiers that are built into the music:

> If you write a title or program, it is just extending what is already there. It certainly helps the listener to enter into what is in the composer's mind.[220]

As such, Harvey hopes that the work draws his listeners into his imaginary rite, regardless if the listeners have any experience in the particular rituals from which he draws.

[219] Ibid, 82.
[220] Matthew Jenkins, 228.

Chapter 4 "I believe in all religions": John Coltrane's Spirituality in A Love Supreme

In San Francisco, California, a small storefront African Orthodox church sits not far both from Haight-Ashbury and the historic Fillmore auditorium, both made famous as centers of "hippie" culture in the 1960s. Despite its modest exterior, the interior of this African Orthodox church appears similar to other Orthodox churches: the church has a priest, follows a standard liturgy, and has a prominently placed painted icon of its patron saint. Where this church differs from other Orthodox churches is the identity of its patron saint. This church, the Church of St. John Will-I-Am[221] Coltrane, takes its name and identity from a man who has not been officially canonized by any mainstream Christian denomination: jazz musician John Coltrane. A portrait of Coltrane, done in a pseudo-Byzantine style typical of Orthodox churches, dominates the small sanctuary, providing a visual icon for communicants.[222] While his portrait provides a visual icon, his music serves as an aural icon: the church bases its holy liturgy not on Byzantine chant or on any other traditional religious music but on Coltrane's music. Every Sunday the church's musicians – a small jazz ensemble (essentially the equivalent of an organ and choir, worship team, or cantor) lead the congregants in what they call the "Coltrane Liturgy," which "combines the Divine Liturgy of the African Orthodox Church, and the Twenty-third Psalm, with the melodies, harmonies and rhythms of Saint John Coltrane's masterpiece: *A Love Supreme*."[223]

[221] By breaking up his middle name in this manner, the church further attaches biblical significance to Coltrane. "I-Am" is a reference to Exodus 3:14 and refers to one of the names of God found in the Old Testament.
[222] St. John Coltrane Church website, http://www.coltranechurch.org, accessed February 19, 2007.
[223] Ibid.

Having instruments performing in a church is unusual for an Orthodox church – as if desiring to canonize a jazz musician did not make the church idiosyncratic enough. However, breaking with musical traditions of Orthodoxy is as telling as it is unusual: by performing Coltrane's music as part of a sacred service, the communicants of the Church of St. John Will-I-Am Coltrane believe his music to be sacred. *A Love Supreme* becomes not just a landmark recording by a highly respected jazz musician, or even just a very popular jazz composition and performance. The composition becomes, to the members of this one church, holy and divinely inspired. The congregants of this church elevate Coltrane's music to a level of sacred music historically reserved for various chant traditions.

Though the Church of St. John Will-I-am Coltrane represents a small fringe group in Coltrane reception, their attitudes towards his music echo more mainstream responses to his music taken to an extreme. Many fan-based communities endow the object of their fandom with an almost religious adoration. However, the religious and spiritual subtext of much of Coltrane's later works encourages listeners to hear his music as iconic, though perhaps not in the same way as Arvo Pärt's. As asserted earlier in this dissertation, the music of Arvo Pärt can be described as "iconic" in the way it draws from ancient musical and artistic traditions of Christianity, especially Orthodox Christianity, to create a kind of sounding icon. Obviously, Coltrane's music differs greatly from Pärt's.[224] Nevertheless, for many jazz listeners Coltrane's music serves as both a cultural and spiritual icon. It stands as one of the great individual achievements in

[224] An obvious difference is that Coltrane's music belongs to the jazz tradition whereas Pärt's music belongs to the concert music tradition. Also, in general, Coltrane's music can be described as fiery and passionate while Pärt's is serene and contemplative. Understandably, these descriptions are just generalizations. One could argue that Coltrane's music can also be serene and contemplative; however, for the purposes of introducing Coltrane's music, these categories will suffice until the more involved discussion of his music later in this chapter. Moreover, since the purpose of this dissertation is not to compare and contrast general elements of John Coltrane and Arvo Pärt's aesthetic, a detailed comparison of the character of their respective music is unnecessary.

American music and African-American culture as well as symbolizes passion, exploration, and self-expression; for many, Coltrane embodies the freedom sought for by the civil rights movement.

For this study, Coltrane's music can be viewed as iconic in the sense that it reflects the changing world of the African-American church and has become connected with ideas of spirituality and religion that were fermenting during the 1960s. Raised in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, a prominent independent black denomination, Coltrane later spent much of his early adult life struggling with addictions to alcohol and heroin. His lifestyle changed dramatically in 1957 when he had a conversion experience that not only helped him escape from his addictions but also transformed his musical aesthetic. Coltrane's conversion experience reflected a desire, in part, to recapture the religious traditions that dominated his early life. However, the spiritual path Coltrane took following his conversion indicates that he desired more than just returning to his Christian roots. His spiritual exploration anticipated the rise of an eclectic spirituality of the 1960s that rejected traditional modes of belief in favor of a wide range of syncretistic beliefs. Many who longed for alternative paths to those offered by mainstream culture found a ready-made hero in Coltrane. Thus, for many listeners John Coltrane, during his lifetime and in the decades that have followed, has become virtually synonymous with musical spirituality, especially an eclectic conception of spirituality. As early as 1957, long before he began assigning religiously suggestive titles to his music or discussed openly his conversion experience, jazz journalists described his music in terms evocative of religion and spirituality.[225]

[225] One example of this was Zita Carno, as shown in her article "The Style of John Coltrane," *The Jazz Review*, October/November 1959, reprinted in Carl Woideck, *The John Coltrane Companion*, New York: Shirmer Books, 1998, 7-15. Quite possibly, Ms. Carno, who had established a level of friendship by that time, may have known about Coltrane's conversion in 1957 as it happened, and not in 1965 when Coltrane wrote publically about it in the liner notes accompanying *A Love Supreme.*

By 1964, when Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* first clarified, to an extent, the religious and spiritual goals of his music, a cult of Coltrane was already beginning to grow. His death three years later at the age of 40 would only add to his legend. He and his music quickly grew to iconic status. Performers, fans, critics, and biographers began discussing his music in ways that ascribe, in varying degrees, profound religious and spiritual meaning to his work. While few went to the extent of parishioners at the Church of St. John Will-I-Am Coltrane, many still equated his music with the experience of spirituality.

This chapter looks at how Coltrane's music relates to spiritual experience within the religious and spiritual context of the 1960s in the United States. In contrast to Arvo Pärt, whose music evokes Christian traditions, Coltrane's music suggests a broader, more eclectic spirituality that resonated with many who sought a path away from the perceived staleness of mainline American Christianity. To understand Coltrane's eclecticism I explore his spiritual roots, from his childhood in North Carolina, through his spiritual awakening in 1957, to his monumental 1964 work, *A Love Supreme*. This requires not only examining Coltrane's life and music but also the ongoing discourse about him and how that discourse has helped create a "hagiography" of Coltrane. I examine the accepted details of his biography and how they can reveal Coltrane's critical and popular reception and how many people endow Coltrane with an aura of spiritual power. Thus, my study of Coltrane examines both biographical and cultural elements. Once these elements have been established, I look at how they are reflected in his music. Though I briefly review a number of works, I primarily focus on *A Love Supreme* and how Coltrane presents his conception of spirituality through his music. In analyzing *A Love Supreme* as part of Coltrane's larger oeuvre of spiritually oriented works, I demonstrate that Coltrane understood his music to be spiritual; for Coltrane, his music served as an offering to God. Further, because

Coltrane presented musical material rooted in a variety of religious and spiritual cultures, he evoked the growing eclectic spirituality at work in American and European culture in the 1960s.

Coltrane, Religion, and Spirituality: From Beginnings Through His Conversion

To understand Coltrane's 1957 conversion experience and the subsequent direction his compositions and performances took, one must look at the roots of Coltrane's religious and spiritual beliefs. Although this chapter is not primarily a biographical study – other works have presented the life of Coltrane in greater detail than is possible here[226] – a brief examination of Coltrane's early life is instructive in understanding Coltrane's religious roots. By examining Coltrane's life, especially religious aspects of his childhood, his struggles with addiction that precipitated his physical and spiritual crisis, and the social and cultural context of his 1957 conversion, we can better understand Coltrane's very complicated and multifaceted spiritual and religious beliefs.

Early Life

By all accounts, Coltrane's early years were dominated by religion. For most of his childhood, Coltrane lived with his family at the home of his maternal grandfather, the pastor of St. Stephen's African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in High Point, North Carolina.[227] As such, Coltrane lived at the focal point of the town's African American community. Churches,

[226] See Bill Cole, *John Coltrane* (New York: Schirmer Press, 1976); J.C. Thomas, *Chasin' the Trane* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1975); and Lewis Porter, *John Coltrane: His Life and Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998)

[227] Thomas, 3. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is an independent black denomination that emerged c.1800 in New York City. Like many other independent black denominations, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was formed in protest of racism in American churches. Prior to the end of the Civil War, as one would expect, this and similar denominations were primarily in the north. After the war, however, the denomination expanded quickly in the south (see Frank S. Mead and Samuel S. Hill, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990] 9th edition, 159-160).

especially in small rural communities such as High Point, served as the primary social and cultural center for black society in the pre-Civil Rights South.[228]

The influence of African-American Christianity on Coltrane's early years should not be understated. Arguably, the black church[229] was "the most important black institution in the United States" having "an enormous impact on the religious, cultural, social, and political aspects of life in America."[230] The black church had an especially strong influence on the fight for civil rights for African-Americans.[231] In this regard, the black church was strikingly similar to the "Social Gospel" movement of the late nineteenth/early twentieth century.[232] However, despite having a number of similarities with the Social Gospel, the black church largely rejected that movement because proponents of the Social Gospel rarely considered race of great importance:

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[228] One example of the church's centrality in African-American culture can be seen in that many seminal moments in the modern Civil Rights movement (i.e., post-1950), such as the Montgomery bus boycott, began in churches. For example, the bus boycott was largely led by ordained ministers Ralph Abernathy and Martin Luther King, Jr. Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, eds., *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam, 1990), 17-32.

[229] I'm using the term "black church" as a convenient general term for the multi-faceted and diverse predominantly African-American churches and denominations. As pointed out by Kelly Brown Douglas and Ronald E. Hopson, "The black church is a multitudinous community of churches, which are diversified by origin, denomination, doctrine, worshipping culture, spiritual expression, class, size and other less-obvious factors. Yet, as disparate as black churches may seem, they share a special history, culture, and role in black life, all of which attest to their collective identity as the black church." See Douglas and Hopson, "Understanding the Black Church: the Dynamics of Change," *Journal of Religious Thought*, Vol. 56/57, No. 2: 96.

[230] Leonard Gadzekpo, "The Black Church, the Civil Rights Movement and the Future," *The Journal of Religious Thought* 53/54 (2/1): 95.

[231] Combining social activism with Christian theology had existed in America for decades. Such a combination was a natural fit for the Black church from its beginnings. Enslaved blacks found Christianity, as espoused by their southern white masters, lacking. So the "enslaved Africans rejected their enslavers' version of Christianity, which asserted that God sanctioned slavery. The black church thus signified black people's resistance to an enslaving and dehumanizing white culture, even as it testified to God's affirmation of freedom and blackness" (Douglas and Hopson, 96).

[232] The Social Gospel movement emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as some predominantly white churches began merging theology and social activism. Following the lead of theologians like Walter Rauschenbusch, who "urged Christians to apply their faith to the elevation of [those in] poverty" (Anthony Pinn, "Jesus and Justice: An Outline of Liberation Theology within Black Churches," *Cross Currents*, Summer 2007, 218).

> African American ministers who found troubling the lack of attention to racism by white social gospelers rethought social Christianity in light of African Americans' experience. Although not consistently observed, this race sensitive social Christianity was the general principle that shaped Black Church activity during reconstruction and before. And, it continued to be the operational stratagem for activist preachers throughout the twentieth century.[233]

Coltrane's Early Professional Career

Despite his seemingly stable childhood, not long after Coltrane embarked on his professional playing career, he succumbed to two of the more virulent vices stereotypically associated with jazz musicians: alcohol and heroin. While living in Philadelphia in the late 1940s, he had begun drinking heavily, possibly to alleviate the pain caused by his chronically bad teeth.[234] Sometime in the early 1950s, he was introduced to heroin and by 1953 had become an addict. Shortly thereafter, Coltrane's chronic stomach problems began, most likely brought on by his heavy abuse of alcohol and drugs.[235]

Coltrane's addictions clearly not only affected his playing – he was fired from a lucrative position with the Miles Davis Quintet in 1956 – but also led him towards his spiritual crisis and eventual conversion in 1957.[236] Following his separation from Davis, Coltrane, along with his wife and children, moved in with his mother, who had been living in Philadelphia for several years. It was in his mother's house that Coltrane's crisis experience/conversion occurred.

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[233] Pinn, 219.
[234] Thomas, 41.
[235] Ibid, 63, 67-68.
[236] There have been many accounts of Coltrane "nodding-off" on the bandstand, especially in 1953 while he was a playing in a band led by former Ellington alto saxophonist, Johnny Hodges (see Thomas, 64). Trumpeter Ray Copeland claims that while on a record date in 1957, Coltrane was "definitely high on junk" and fell asleep while the leader took a piano solo. When it came time for Coltrane to solo, the leader, seeing Coltrane asleep screamed his name. Coltrane immediately picked up his horn and began playing, much to the amazement of Copeland. However, this report doesn't fit with the timeline of Coltrane's conversion experience (see Thomas, 81-82). Though Copeland doesn't identify the leader or the recording, the particulars fit a session with Thelonious Monk in June 1957 on the song "Epistrophy," which was after Coltrane reportedly broke his addiction to heroin. Both Copeland and Coltrane participated in that session and, as can be heard on the recording, Monk twice shouts Coltrane's name when the saxophonist missed his solo entrance. If Copeland wasn't mistaken and Coltrane was using heroin during that session, either his conversion occurred in the summer and not spring as usually reported or it took him longer to break free from the addiction than generally thought.

However, Coltrane's conversion experience did not occur spontaneously, but rather had deep roots. Though his drug abuse had led him down a very dangerous road, at the same time he had begun thinking seriously about philosophy, religion, spirituality, and God. Several years earlier, he reportedly had already begun "philosophical reading,"[237] which apparently included readings from a wide range of philosophical and religious beliefs. This indicates that from the beginning, Coltrane's religious interests went beyond traditional Christianity. According to Eric Nisenson, "Coltane was not worshipping the Christian version of God, or the Muslim or Hindu, but rather all of them or, precisely, a personal synthesis of those ideas basic to all religion."[238] Several biographers have noted that Hinduism (the writings of Parahahansa Yoganda and Jiddu Krishnamurti) and Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah) also heavily influenced Coltrane.[239] J. C. Thomas, in his Coltrane biography, *Chasin' the Trane*, further attests to Coltrane's openness to other religions quoting him as saying, "I believe in all religions."[240]

Coltrane's religious eclecticism can also be seen in the people who surrounded him, especially his two wives. His first wife, Naima (married from 1955 to 1962), was a convert to Islam, while his second wife, Alice (married from 1966 to his death), was a Hindu.[241] The fact that during his first marriage, the couple claimed that they had no conflict in their marriage based on religion further suggests that Coltrane had already achieved an eclectic view of religion. Naima Coltrane, according to Thomas, further clarified her husband's broad approach to spirituality, stating, "I never thought of John as a non-Moslem, because to me he was always a

[237] Thomas, 70.
[238] Eric Nisenson, *Ascension: John Coltrane and His Quest* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 153.
[239] Nisenson, 153, and Thomas, 185.
[240] Thomas, 70.
[241] Though they did not officially marry until 1966, John and Alice Coltrane became romantically linked shortly after first meeting in 1962.

very spiritual person."[242] Coltrane's appreciation of a wider sense of religion and the nature of God may partially be rooted in the eclectic roots of the black Church. Scholars of African-American religion have noted that, "the religious culture of the black church was shaped in large part by African traditional religions, Islam, African worldviews, and the Christian faith – as that faith was encountered in North America and as some enslaved Africans brought it with them from their homeland."[243] Alice Coltrane, in turn, may have spurred Coltrane to further embrace his spiritual eclecticism. Their relationship coincided with Coltrane's most profoundly spiritual and productive era.

In 1957, Coltrane experienced what he would describe as a spiritual awakening. However, he only rarely hinted about his conversion until 1964, when, in the liner notes of his 1964 album, *A Love Supreme*, Coltrane described his experience:

> During the year 1957, I experienced, by the grace of God, a spiritual awakening which was to lead me to a richer, fuller, more productive life. At that time, in gratitude, I humbly asked to be given the means and privilege to make others happy through music. I feel this has been granted through His grace. ALL PRAISE TO GOD.[244]

His pronouncement, while ostensibly Christian, contains little language that can specifically be ascribed to any single formal religious belief. In 1958, in an interview with August Blume, Coltrane elaborated further on his religious beliefs:

> When I saw there were so many religions and kind of opposed somewhere to the next and so forth…it screwed up my head. And, I don't know. I was kinda confused…and I just couldn't believe that just one guy could be right. Because if he's right somebody else got to be wrong, you know…[245]

Nisenson further points out that Coltrane's "religion" was universal having no set doctrine and seeming to draw on a plethora of diverse religious traditions:

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[242] Thomas, 70.
[243] Douglas and Hopson, 96.
[244] John Coltrane, *A Love Supreme*, Impulse 77, 1964.
[245] Reprinted in Porter, 258.

> Rather, he saw in his vision of God a unity of all people and all things. All paths that led to the absolute, ultimate reality were equally valid. His religion was not doctrinaire but ultimately one of profound simplicity…[246]

Nevertheless, Coltrane's God, as described in his *A Love Supreme* confession, is masculine ("His grace") and personal (bestowing grace, means, and privilege), pointing to his Christian roots.

Following his conversion, Coltrane's career became more focused and directed. Though he continued working as a sideman, first briefly with Thelonious Monk in 1957, and later rejoining Miles Davis' quintet from 1957 to 1960, Coltrane became more interested in leading his own group. After several attempts leading ad hoc groups in the late 1950s, in 1960 he broke again with Davis and formed his own group. The significance of forming his own group for his spiritual journey was that he could now direct the course of his music; his music could now reflect his own musical, philosophical, and, potentially, spiritual ambitions.

The Changing Religious Climate of the 1950s and 1960s

At the time of Coltrane's conversion, and in the decade that followed, the American religious and spiritual landscape was undergoing dramatic changes. The profound changes in society that began in the 1950s and gained momentum in the 1960s – the beginnings of the modern civil rights movement, and the rise of youth culture and the counter cultural movement – affected the religious world as well as the secular. American Catholics, for example, saw profound reforms to church doctrine, liturgy, and perspective as a result of the Second Vatican Council, instigated by Pope John XXIII.[247] The Pope's call for church members to meet "the

[246] Nisenson, 41.

[247] In 1962, at the opening session of the Council, the pope called for the church to "look to the present, to new conditions and new forms of life introduced into the modern world" and to meet "the needs of the present day." Quoted by Xavier Rynnne, "Pope John's Revolution," in Gausted, ed., *A Documentary History of Religion in America Since 1965*, 470-471.

needs of the present day" encouraged many to become social activists.[248] This combination of Christian theology and aggressive social activism would eventually become known as "liberation theology." In this, Catholicism mirrored African-American churches, which, as discussed above, had been combining theology with the efforts for social and economic improvement of Black Americans since the slavery era.

Especially pertinent to Coltrane's experience was the emergence of the modern Civil Rights Movement, especially in the person of Martin Luther King Jr. The public career of Martin Luther King Jr., from his emergence as a leader of the civil rights movement to his eventual assassination, roughly coincided with Coltrane's public career (i.e., mid-1950s to late 1960s; King's assassination occurred just a few months prior to Coltrane's death). Having grown up in the Black Church, Coltrane would have been thoroughly indoctrinated in African-America's version of the Social Gospel. He too would have been aware of the changes occurring in the civil rights movement in the late 1950s. Following the brutal murder of 14 year old Emmitt Till in Mississippi for saying hello to a white woman in 1954, and Rosa Parks refusal to give up her seat on a bus a year later, which led to the bus strike in Montgomery, Alabama, the civil rights movement began taking a much more confrontational approach.

Another important change in the religious and spiritual climate was the rise of a religious counter-cultural movement. During the 1960s, a number of individuals became disaffected with traditional forms of religion and turned instead to spirituality. Sociologist Robert Ellwood has proposed that there was a shift in the attitudes of many from ritual-laden religious traditions to more individual and free expressions of spirituality. He argues that prior to the 1960s, the most

[248] This is not to say that Catholic activism began with Vatican II; the actions of many, like Dorothy Day, give evidence that activism existed decades earlier. However, following Vatican II, activism became more prevalent.

common expression of belief was in traditional religious practices, which promoted a sense of stability, well-being, and confidence in society.[249] However, some believers in the 1960s reacted against such notions, especially as new conceptions of religious belief came into contact with mainstream traditions. While traditional practices did not disappear, the transforming effects of these cultural intersections had far reaching influence.

Religion and Jazz

Concurrent with his conversion experience, a number of Coltrane's contemporaries in the jazz world also attempted to present religion and/or spirituality through music. Jazz, like other musical expressions rooted in the African-American experience, has historical and cultural connections to African-American religious culture. Many jazz historians have made the case that musical forms that emerged in post-slavery African-American culture had, in part, a connection to the spirituals and work songs that emerged early in the slavery era.[250] And while jazz is many decades removed from these roots, subsequent generations re-inscribed this confluence of the sacred and secular. Throughout much of African-American history, and continuing up to the recent present, the raw earthiness of the blues and the uplifting power of gospel music have existed simultaneously in many forms of African-American music, including jazz.

The implicit connection between jazz and religion grew stronger during the 1950s and 1960s. For a number of musicians, musical elements both sacred and profane served as potent signifiers of African-American culture. Moreover, jazz musicians during that era began to be more outwardly concerned with religion and spirituality, both in their music and their private

[249] Robert Ellwood, *The Sixties Spiritual Awakening: American Religion Moving From Modern to Postmodern* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 15-18.
[250] See Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 8-9. Gioia generalizes the origins of African-American music as the "Africanization of American music," i.e., that African slaves brought characteristics of their traditional music into the music thrust upon them by their masters, such as hymns.

lives. For example, in the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, a number of prominent jazz musicians became among the earliest notable African Americans to convert to Islam, including saxophonists Sahib Shihab, Yusef Lateef, Gigi Gryce (Basheer Qusim), and Rahsaan Roland Kirk; drummers Art Blakey (Abdullah Ibn Buhaina), and brothers Muhammad and Rashied Ali; pianist McCoy Tyner; and others.[251] Also during this time period, a number of jazz musicians incorporated the music of the black church into a jazz context, both in order to express a sense of spirituality, as in the case of Ellington's two "Sacred Concerts" of the 1960s and Mary Lou Williams' jazz mass, and as a way to exert a "black" sensibility. The latter can be prominently heard in hard-bop of the 1950s and the related soul-jazz of the 1960s. Given the prominence of Ellington and Williams within jazz circles, Coltrane undoubtedly would have been aware of their religious works. However, Coltrane's stylistic choices during the 1950s, especially his early solo recordings and his hard-bop tinged mid-decade recordings with Monk and Davis, suggest that hard-bop had a stronger pull on Coltrane than the approach of Ellington or Williams.[252]

Some significant examples of hard-bop that used musical elements taken from African-American religious traditions are Bobby Timmons' composition "Moanin'," made famous by Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, and a number of late 1950s recordings by Charles Mingus. In both cases, the music embodies the aforementioned confluence of secular and sacred by incorporating "church" elements into the "secular" sonic world of jazz. In the Timmons composition "Moanin'," the traditional call-and-response melody evokes a preacher/ congregation

[251] Muslim jazz musicians did not, in general, incorporate religious elements into their music, possibly because of Islam's stricter views about the separation between sacred and secular music.
[252] Interestingly, Coltrane's only recording with Ellington, 1962's *Duke Ellington and John Coltrane*, Impulse 30, has no religiously themed music. Rather, the recording consists of standards and can, thus, be viewed as one of a series of recordings (*Ballads* and *John Coltrane with Johnny Hartman*) that seemed consciously intended to redeem Coltrane from the "anti-jazz" label being put on him by critics at the time in response to his early explorations of free jazz (discussed below).

relationship; several jazz educators have noted the "Amen" feel to the response.[253] Charles Mingus also evoked religious themes in many of his compositions, but to an even greater extent than Timmons. Compositions like "Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting," "Better Get It In Your Soul," "Haitian Fight Song," and others are heavily endowed with musical elements rooted in the Pentecostal religious tradition that Mingus had experienced as a child. His blues/gospel inspired melodies and harmonies, loose rhythmic quality, as well as his characteristic (and idiosyncratic) screams, evoke the ecstatic feel of the Pentecostal church. However, Mingus' intention seems to be more concerned with celebrating his African-American roots than with bringing his listeners into communion with God.[254]

Though Coltrane was ensconced in the New York jazz community of the mid- to late-1950s where hard bop was prevalent, few of his early solo recordings incorporated overtly gospel inspired musical elements. Stylistically, while working with both Miles Davis and Thelonious Monk, Coltrane was situated firmly in the hard bop camp. However, outside of his incorporation of a call and response melody similar to "Moanin'" in the title song from his 1957 recording *Blue Train*, Coltrane seemed reluctant or uninterested in using overt references drawn from the black church. Perhaps his avoidance of presenting any religious or spiritual elements in his music of the 1950s was due to his having worked primarily as a sideman; therefore, his own compositional voice had yet to emerge. Later, in the early 1960s when he embarked fulltime on his solo career, Coltrane began exploring ways to present musical spirituality in his

[253] See Henry Martin and Keith Waters, *Jazz: the First 100 Years* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 2002), 222-223, and Lewis Porter and Michael Ullman, *Jazz From its Origins to the Present* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1993), 373. In a vocalese version of "Moanin'" recorded not long after the original (1959) vocal group Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross exploit this relationship to the fullest. Jon Hendricks' bluesy lyrics for the opening verse are, "Every mornin' find me moanin' – *yes Lord*."

[254] In the late 1950s-early 1960s, Mingus seemed bent on establishing his own racial identity. As a child of racially mixed parents, Mingus grew up feeling the sting of exclusion. In an interview he stated that, as a child, he often felt ostracized because he was too dark to be taken for white or Asian, but too light to be taken for black (Brian Priestly, *Mingus: A Critical Biography*, [New York: Da Capo Press, 1982], 5-6).

compositions. However, instead of using elements from hard bop or soul jazz, he drew from other concurrent trends: modal jazz and free jazz as modes of expressing his spirituality.

Though not inherently spiritual, modal jazz's simplified harmonies offered more expressive freedom for soloists, thus, allowing the possibility of more personal, introspective solos. This soloistic freedom can be related to emerging ideas in the late 1950s and early 1960s of spiritual freedom and self-expression (as discussed above). Building on George Russell's theories as set forth in his 1953 book *Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization*, Miles Davis and a number of other jazz musicians began experimenting with improvising not on chords but on scales and modes. By moving improvisation away from chords and standard melodies, the jazz soloist found greater creative freedom. This style, dubbed "modal jazz" is often typified by simplification of the harmony of a song or composition and use of minimal chord changes. One emblematic example of modal jazz, "So What" from Davis' landmark 1959 LP *Kind of Blue*, consists of two chords derived from a D Dorian mode (with the exception of 4-measure passage in E-flat Dorian). Likewise, the melody (performed by bassist Paul Chambers) and improvised solos are also derived from the D Dorian mode. The results are sparse, meditative, almost minimalist sounding harmonies supporting flowing, introspective solos by Davis, Coltrane, and Julian "Cannonball" Adderley.

By focusing on simple harmonic structures and improvisational expression, modal jazz could be considered minimalistic. Much as minimalism would do in the classical tradition in the 60s, both listeners and musicians would find the sparse simplicity of modal harmony spiritually evocative. The melody of "So What" further suggests a shift in conceptions of spirituality. Similar to previously mentioned recordings, "Moanin'" and "Blue Train," "So What" has a call and response-based melody, which connects it to the gospel tradition. However, the two

"response" chords do not evoke the "Amen" of "Moanin'" but rather something other. Because the harmony of "So What" is based on modal harmonies – specifically, quartal harmony – rather than blues or gospel harmonies, the response chords minimize the "churchliness" of the call and response. Further, in the explicit apathy presented by the song's title, as well as the unique harmonic foundation of the work, Davis can be seen as transforming the gospel reference into a new form of spirituality; a spirituality based on freedom and openness rather than tradition.

Decades after recording *Kind of Blue*, Miles Davis asserted that, "Music is about the spirit and the spiritual, and about feeling."[255] Musicologist Jon Michael Spencer contends that one can glean several tropes in Davis' discussions of spirituality, especially the connection between freedom and spirituality. On the link between spirituality and spontaneity, Spencer comments that, "Having the freedom necessary to explore musical space seemed to Davis to be the prerequisite to music's being able to exude spirituality."[256] Further, Spencer contends that Davis believed that jazz "had its beginnings among people who gave it recognizable religious and spiritual elements of their African-rooted cultural traditions."[257] Drawing on theologian Peter Paris, Spencer sees that in this regard, Davis, and all jazz musicians who went before him, reflects larger trends in African-American spirituality: the perceived inseparability of the spiritual and the physical or sensual.[258]

If modal jazz offered Coltrane the freedom to express his inner spirituality, free jazz became the next logical stop. By stripping away the appearance of all "earthbound" musical elements (i.e., traditional harmony, melody, and even meter) – as Coltrane would do in his later

[255] Miles Davis and Quincy Troupe, *Miles: The Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 411.
[256] Jon Michael Spencer, "Critics Corner: Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue*," *Theology Today*, vol. 52 (January 1996): 507.
[257] Ibid, 508.
[258] Ibid.

recordings (especially his drum/saxophone duets) – Coltrane could create music not tied to any specific religious tradition but as a complete and total expression of his inner spirituality. The connection between spirituality and Coltrane's exploration of free jazz in his music does not appear to have been coincidental. In fact, in a 1962 interview where Coltrane and his frequent collaborator, Eric Dolphy, discuss their then controversial explorations of free jazz, Coltrane indicated that the beginnings of his musical direction occurred in 1957 (i.e., the same year as his conversion): "I guess I was on my way in'57, when I started to get myself together musically."[259] Coltrane's conversion was both musical and spiritual. Though this interview occurred over two and a half years before he publicly acknowledged his conversion, when asked about his musical philosophy, he implied that his music, specifically his move to free jazz, was inherently spiritual. In addition to creating a musical environment that was freer and more comfortable for everyone in his group, Coltrane also wanted to communicate something to his listeners:

> I would also like the listener to be able to receive some of these good things – some of this beauty. … It's more than beauty that I feel in music – that I think musicians feel in music. What we know we feel we'd like to convey to the listener … That's what music is to me – it's just another way of saying this is a big, beautiful universe we live in, that's been given to us, and here's an example of just how magnificent and encompassing it is. I think that's one of the greatest things you can do in life, and we all try to do it in some way. The musician's is through his music.[260]

Though he never specifically mentions religion or spirituality, his references to the magnificent and encompassing universe and that to communicate his conception of musical beauty is almost a calling – a sacred duty – clearly points to the religious beliefs he would acknowledge in late 1964.

[259] Don DeMicheal, "John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy Answer the Critics," *Down Beat*, April 12, 1962: 22.
[260] Ibid.

What is telling about Coltrane's choice of modal jazz over "soul jazz" or hard bop is that it indicates that Coltrane may have been consciously eschewing organized religion in favor of a broader concept of spirituality. Having grown up in a Southern Black Pentecostal church, Coltrane would have been familiar with the musical elements employed by Mingus and Timmons (noted above). So the choice of a style of expression far removed from traditional "church" music suggests that Coltrane was seeking to communicate not traditional religious beliefs but instead more esoteric approaches to God. This is born out in a July 1966 interview he gave while touring Japan. When asked about religion, Coltrane responded that he was Christian, "by birth; my parents were and my early teachings were Christian. But as I look upon the world, I feel all men know the truth."[261]

It is within this musical and theological context – both of a rich musical tradition and of a deep seated religious tradition – that Coltrane's spirituality evolved; not just as member of Davis' group on and off between 1954 and 1960, but as an individual who also had access to the larger African-American spiritual heritage. In fact, with Coltrane, the meeting of jazz and spirituality provides an exemplar: more so than most other jazz musicians, John Coltrane's life and music have taken on an almost iconic status.

The Hagiography of John Coltrane

Several years ago, a fellow musicologist mentioned that one of his students had written a paper on Coltrane but struggled because so much of the literature about Coltrane tended to deify him.[262] This student encountered one of the problematic issues pervasive in Coltrane discourse: hagiography. Because religion and spirituality pervade John Coltrane's biography, he has come

[261] Nisenson, 212.
[262] It occurs to me that hagiography is a potential hazard that many music fans fall into. Any time we strive to canonize a composer or work we run the risk of also, on a secular level, deifying said composer or work. Obviously, this is not always the case, but can be problematic in any attempt to discuss the composer as genius.

to be seen by many as a kind of jazz saint. This perspective overwhelms much of the popular Coltrane discourse (i.e., by fans, critics, and journalists); a problem recognized in 1977 by one reviewer of literature on Coltrane. Eileen Southern described the problem of "the legacy of Coltrane" as a "heavy burden for jazzmen to bear." Southern suggested that, "perhaps those who were infatuated with 'the master' are not the best qualified to offer a critical analysis of his music and to assess his contributions."[263] This section presents how a variety of performers and authors discuss Coltrane in order to demonstrate the extent of this hagiography.[264]

In his 2002 study of *A Love Supreme*, Ashley Kahn admits that it is "difficult to write of Coltrane and not sound heavy-handed."[265] Not religious himself, Kahn claims that he planned to downplay the religious aspects of Coltrane's life in his discussion of *A Love Supreme*. Nevertheless, he admitted succumbing to the temptation of viewing Coltrane's life in terms of a Christ metaphor: "The saxophonist's life of self-sacrifice, message of universal love, death at an early age – even his initials – amplify the temptation."[266] Certainly, scores of musicians, fans, critics, and scholars have claimed that both *A Love Supreme*, as well as Coltrane's sound, was in some mystical way "life changing." For example, professor M. Lynn Baker, in a 1997 lecture on Coltrane in a jazz history course at the University of Denver, recalled how as a teenager he first heard Coltrane's music on a radio station and detected something ineffable in that sound. Professor Baker is not alone; other prominent performers – contemporaries and protégés (both

[263] Eileen Southern, "Chasin' the Trane, The Music and Mystique of John Coltrane; John Coltrane; Of Minnie the Moocher and Me; Blues" Book Reviews in *The Black Perspective in Music*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring 1977): 130.
[264] I freely admit my own culpability in this hagiography. I have become cognizant of how I teach Coltrane in various settings and how I focus primarily on the conversion narrative and the discourse of mysticism and spirituality.
[265] Ashley Kahn, *A Love Supreme: The Story of John Coltrane's Signature Album* (New York: Penguin, 2002), xix.
[266] Ibid.

direct and indirect) – have made similar statements, as can be observed in the July 12, 1979 issue of *Down Beat* magazine, titled "John Coltrane Remembered":

> His musical message was as strong as ancient music which was used as healing music. Music to heal people by, music to pray by, music to meditate by. That particular spirituality came across in his music and took it out of the area of just entertainment. Most people went to hear jazz to be entertained or to feel like dancing; his emphasis was on the spiritual (saxophonist Billy Harper).[267]
>
> I always feel humble when I hear his music … It wasn't only Coltrane. McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones and Jimmy Garrison were also in it. It was spiritual, but it was universal (saxophonist Dave Liebman).[268]
>
> It was a tremendous learning experience for me and it reached the point where it was actually a *jubilant* experience, being on stage with them (pianist McCoy Tyner; emphasis by David Wild).[269]

This sample of Coltrane reception by fellow performers, though limited, shows how contemporaries – and even band mates such as Tyner – discuss Coltrane in larger-than-life terms.

Critics and scholars also write about Coltrane in similar grandiloquent ways. Ethnomusicologist Leonard Brown describes Coltrane as "a unique soul, one who comes maybe every thousand years. Coltrane manifested the power and multifunctionality of African American music. He transcended the externally dictated and presupposed western considerations of context having to be sacred or secular."[270] Similarly, former *Down Beat* critic, Nat Hentoff, also uses religious terminology not only to describe Coltrane's music but also to describe his own shift from being highly critical of Coltrane's music to being a "converted" and unabashed Coltrane supporter:

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[267] "Musicians Talk About John Coltrane," *Down Beat*, July 12, 1979: 38.
[268] Howard Mandel, "An Educated Life: Dave Liebman uses his experiences from the bandstand to teach a new generation about jazz," *Down Beat*, "Student Music Guide, 2004," October 2003, 10. Though Liebman never worked with Coltrane – his career began a few years after Coltrane's death – he can be thought of as a protégé: Liebman's recordings and interviews demonstrate that Coltrane had a significant influence on his playing.
[269] David Wild, "McCoy Tyner: the Jubilant Experience of the Classic Quartet," *Down Beat*, July 12, 1979, 48.
[270] Leonard Brown, "Sacred Music for Secular Space; In Honor of John Coltrane," *The Triumph of the Soul; Cultural and Psychological Aspects of African American Music* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2001), 205.

> In retrospect, however, it is clear that Coltrane was one of the most persistent, relentless expanders of possibility – all kinds of possibility: textural, emotional, harmonic, and spiritual – in jazz history…I was converted, or educated, from listening first to Coltrane with Miles Davis for many nights.[271]

To an even greater extent than Hentoff, Coltrane biographer, J.C. Thomas, in his book, *Chasin' the Trane*, uses religious language and tone as well to describe Coltrane's practice habits in a way that makes them seem both sensual and like a sacred ritual:

> He is alone in the bedroom, for it is practice time. He has eaten, he is relaxed, and ready to begin the methodical preparation for the creation of some notes, perhaps a few chords…All is in readiness, everything is in place…He starts to breathe…All he knows is that he has never experienced such a total involvement, such a feeling of freedom, from anything else he has ever done in his still-short life that is now happening to him when he puts his saxophone in his mouth and holds it like a woman in his hands.[272]

Later, in describing Coltrane's epiphany that led to his composing *A Love Supreme*, Thomas writes:

> It is the darkest hour before the dawn, 4 A.M., the Hour of God. John Coltrane has risen on this fall day of 1964 and is sitting on the carpeted floor of his paneled study, a silk bathrobe wrapped around his body as, his head bowed, his arms and legs crossed, he begins his period of meditation…He wishes to talk with God if he can; at the very least, he wants a message from God, informing him whether he is going in the proper direction or not…Give me guidance, God, he prays…Suddenly, music fills the space around him and the spaces inside him; melodies and harmonies and rhythms integrate themselves into his consciousness. This must be the Word of God, commanding him to create a composition as homage to the Supreme Being. The feeling he is receiving is beyond feeling itself; the communication being delivered to him is indescribable.[273]

Thomas gives no source for this intimate portrayal of Coltrane; throughout the rest of the book, the author usually acknowledges sources. However, the passage fits comfortably with much of the "Coltrane" that has been constructed by other authors: John Coltrane the mystic.

Recording companies, Coltrane's management, and club owners reinscribed the hagiography of Coltrane via their marketing strategies. A cursory look at Coltrane's albums

[271] Nat Hentoff, "John Coltrane," in *Reading Jazz*, ed. by Robert Gottlieb (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 622.
[272] Thomas, 32-34
[273] Ibid, 183-184.

covers reveals variations of several general themes: either they depict Coltrane playing the saxophone or he is shot in profile. The performing shots do not seem staged but taken from live performances (*Giant Steps*; *Quartet Plays*; *One Down, One Up*; etc.). Sometimes his eyes are open and sometimes they are closed; regardless, the cover photos present a visage of calm, introspection. Though not explicitly spiritual, the peaceful expression Coltrane presents can be read as meditative, which maps easily onto his hagiography. In the cover photos, Coltrane can come across as a holy man or mystic. The presentation of calm introspection also dominates his less common "non-performance" covers (*A Love Supreme*, *Ascension*, etc.). As part of his contract with Impulse Records, his record company from 1961 to the end of his life, Coltrane had approval power over all aspects of his albums, including graphics, layout, and packaging. Clearly, he was aware, if not actively participating, in how Impulse marketed his music.[274]

The cover art of *Stellar Regions*, for example, seems most designed to take advantage of the idea of Coltrane as a "jazz saint." Holding his saxophone, looking up towards an overhead, unseen light, Coltrane strikes a pose that consciously or unconsciously mimics many Renaissance depictions of saints gazing up to a light emanating from heaven.[275] The cover art from *A Love Supreme*, while less overtly evocative of spirituality than *Stellar Regions*, has become one of the most iconic portraits of Coltrane. This stems both from Coltrane's attentive, pensive visage in the photo, as well as from the subject matter of the album's music (discussed below).[276] Alice Coltrane, the musician's widow, recalled first viewing the photo: "I see everything in it. Ev-er-y-thing. The seeker. The devotee. The musician, father, son. The

[274] Thomas, 143.
[275] For example, Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430 - 1516), *St. Francis in the Desert*. http://collections.frick.org/.
[276] Interestingly, the cover photo has rather humble origins. Coltrane's record producer, Bob Thiele, took the candid picture of Coltrane outside of Rudy Van Gelder's studio in 1962 for his own pleasure. When Coltrane saw the picture he told a surprised Thiele, that it was "the best picture of me, ever" (Kahn, 148-149).

man."[277] Rock musician Carlos Santana remembered his first encounter with the album as a high school student, saying, "I looked at the album cover, and saw his face being so intense. It was like … his thoughts were screaming."[278]

Coltrane's Spiritual Compositions

Though Coltrane's conversion occurred in 1957, he did not begin composing spiritually themed works until the early 1960s. Even then, spiritually themed compositions would not be come prevalent until 1965, as can be seen in the following table (Table 2). In this table I use a fairly broad definition of musical spirituality, as befitting Coltrane's eclecticism. In addition to overtly Christian, Muslim, or Buddhist titles (e.g., "The Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost" [from *Meditations*], "Crescent," or "Om"), I have included compositions with astrological significance (e.g., Mars, Venus, and Jupiter from *Interstellar Space*, 1967) and compositions that have compositional elements as defined above, but which do not necessarily have a spiritually themed title (e.g., "After the Rain" and "Impressions").

Table 2 Coltrane's Religiously and Spiritually Themed Compositions

Date Recorded	Album	Composition
October 1960	My Favorite Things	My Favorite Things
November 1961	Coltrane "Live" at the Village Vanguard	India; Spiritual
April 1963	Impressions	After the Rain; India
November 1963	Live at Birdland	Alabama
April 1964	Crescent	Crescent; Wise Ones
December 1964	A Love Supreme	A Love Supreme
February 1965	The John Coltrane Quartet Plays	Song of Praise
May 1965	Dear Old Stockholm	After the Crescent; Dear Lord
May 1965	Live at the Half Note	Song of Praise; My Favorite Things
June/October 1965	Kulu Sé Mama	Vigil; Welcome
June 1965	Ascension	Ascension
June 1965	Living Space	Living Space; Dusk-Dawn
June 1965	Transition	Transition Suite

[277] Kahn, 149.
[278] Ibid, 162.

Date Recorded	Album	Composition
August 1965	Sun Ship	Sun Ship; Dearly Beloved; Amen; Attaining; Ascent
September 1965	First Meditations	Meditations Suite (1st version)
September 1965	Live in Seattle	Cosmos; Evolution
October 1965	Om	Om
November 1965	Meditations	The Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost; Mediations Suite
September 1965 February 1966	Infinity	Peace on Earth; Leo
February 1966	Cosmic Music	Manifestation; Reverend King
May 1966	Live at the Village Vanguard Again	My Favorite Things
July 1966	Concert in Japan	Meditations; Leo; Peace on Earth
February 1967	Stellar Regions	Seraphic Light; Sun Star; Stellar Regions; Offering; Configuration
February 1967	Interstellar Space	Mars; Venus; Jupiter; Saturn
February/March 1967	Expression	To Be; Offering; Expression; Ogunde

To further demonstrate the trajectory of Coltrane's output of religiously themed compositions, Table 3 (below) shows the ratio of albums with such compositions per year beginning in 1960:

Table 3 Albums with Spiritually Significant Works

Year	Total albums[279]	Albums with Spiritually Significant works
1960	6	1
1961	5	1
1962	3	0
1963	4	2
1964	2	2
1965	13	12
1966	4	4
1967	4	4

These tables demonstrate that spiritually themed compositions increased beginning in 1964 and became dominant on his later albums. From 1960 to 1963 these spiritually themed compositions are clearly isolated (5 compositions on 4 of the 17 albums released during that time). In contrast,

[279] Note: In this table I have included live albums that include previously released but still spiritually significant works.

Coltrane recorded over 40 spiritually themed compositions on all but one of his 23 albums recorded after 1964.[280]

In my discussion of specific compositions, I use Coltrane's 1964 recording, *A Love Supreme*, as the dividing point. The work, Coltrane's universally acknowledged masterpiece, as indicated in Table 2, occurs roughly halfway through his solo career and ushers in one of his most productive periods of his career. Moreover, it marks the point where Coltrane turns his full attention to spiritually themed compositions.

Though critics, biographers, and fans have constructed much of Coltrane's hagiography, it cannot be dismissed entirely as extra-musical; it also has roots in the music. Specifically, Coltrane's musical choices and how they are presented tapped into semiotic codes for musical spirituality that embody his spiritual beliefs. In addition, his music seems designed in a way that encourages his listeners to connect spirituality with the music. More importantly, Coltrane considers his music inseparable from his individual spirituality; his musical spirituality is an outgrowth of his individual beliefs. The semiotic codes he uses or creates combine elements from his personal and cultural experience so that the listener can connect with Coltrane's spiritual journey on a very personal level. Cultural codes, musical or otherwise, carry the weight they do because they connect with individuals on a personal level. Undeniably, many find something ineffable in music, nature, religious ritual, prayer, etc., which our culture has historically labeled "spiritual." Coltrane desires that his listeners have an ineffable experience with his music as well. The following sections will examine specific musical elements through which Coltrane encouraged specific responses to his music from his listeners.

[280] The only album released under Coltrane's name not including a religiously themed composition is his joint live album with protégé Archie Shepp, *New Thing at Newport*. However, there's only one Coltrane performance on the album (a recording of "One Down, One Up") suggesting that his inclusion on the album may have been merely to help promote Shepp's nascent career.

Signs of Musical Spirituality in Coltrane's Compositions

Despite the spontaneous and communal aspects of jazz composition, both of which are described in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, as the leader and visionary of his group Coltrane can be viewed as the central compositional force behind his works. Further, despite the improvisational aspects of jazz, identifiable compositional elements can be located in Coltrane's works that point to his conscious attempt to create a sense of spirituality in his music. Though many of these compositional elements are not unique to Coltrane, the intent behind these elements, as well as the context of his recordings (i.e., his growing hagiography and concurrent conversion narrative that became synonymous with his music) separates him from many other jazz musicians. Further, many of the compositional elements found in Coltrane's music show an affinity to compositional devices present in Pärt's and Harvey's music. Principal musical and ancillary elements that surround and are incorporated by Coltrane into his music to evoke a sense of spirituality include titles, hymn/chant melodies, repetition, drones, and ecstatic utterances. Collectively, these elements have been so attached to his sound – that is, the color, timbre, and tone quality – that it has itself become iconic for many listeners. For many listeners, hearing Coltrane leads to an inward emotional state that many describe as "spiritual." Leonard Brown attributes to Coltrane's sound the ability "to express sincerity, integrity, conviction, and other deep human values" and that it "stirs the feelings and stimulates the imagination of listeners."[281]

Titles. One of the more obvious elements that cannot be discounted is the way "naming" or "labeling" can communicate religious or spiritual meaning through music. Composition titles in jazz can come not only from the composer but also from the music publisher or record

[281] Brown, 202.

producer.[282] Coltrane, however, seems to have provided most if not all of his titles. The autobiographical nature of many of his titles attests to this, including those named after family members ("Naima" after his first wife, "Cousin Mary," and "Syeeda's Song Flute" for his daughter Mary) or as in the four sections of *A Love Supreme*, "Acknowledgement," "Pursuance," "Resolution," and "Psalm," which, according to Coltrane reflect his personal spiritual journey following his conversion experience in 1957.

Because the title of a work is an inescapable part of the listening experience, composers can give their work both explicit and implicit meaning, in part, simply by what they name the work. They do this by choosing names or titles loaded with historical or cultural significance that their audience will potentially recognize. Granted, the expectations set up by titles for a certain kind of music and musical experience vary depending on a wide range of factors including culture, education, economics, class, and family upbringing.[283]

Similarly, Coltrane, in giving many of his works titles loaded with religious meaning, can direct how listeners hear the music. Moreover, as demonstrated by some of the titles listed above in Table 1, the titles can reinforce Coltrane's eclecticism – "The Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost," from *Meditations* (Christianity); "Crescent" (Islam); "Om" (Buddhism); *A Love Supreme* (general spirituality); and "Interstellar Space" (Universalism). Additionally, Coltrane would often subvert or alter expectations by titling a work with a name imbued with Christian meaning but utilizing musical material from diverse religious traditions. One significant example of this was the 1961 composition "Spiritual," released on *Coltrane "Live" at the Village Vanguard*. Though the word "spiritual" can have a great many meanings, in this context

[282] Charlie Parker, for example, claimed that he never personally named any of his compositions.
[283] When, for example, Bach or any composer writes a "Passion," the composer would be reasonably assured that his/her listening public would be aware of the religious implications of such a title.

the term refers to the African-American spiritual tradition.[284] While the initial melody is reminiscent of African-American spirituals, it also features a drone played by Eric Dolphy on bass clarinet. The drone not only reflected Coltrane's interest in Indian music but also opened up possibilities of broader interpretations of spirituals, thus giving further evidence to Coltrane's theological eclecticism.

Likewise, by naming his 1964 work, *A Love Supreme*, Coltrane, to a considerable extent, directs how it will be interpreted. This does not mean that a spiritual interpretation precludes all other interpretations. Nevertheless it does imply that, on some level, Coltrane directs his listeners to a particular musical meaning.

Hymn/Chant Melodies. Beginning with "Spiritual" (see Table 1), and in a number of later works including "Alabama," "After the Rain," "Crescent," and *A Love Supreme*, among others, Coltrane used plaintive, speech-like melodies that resemble chant, which will be discussed in more detail below in the analyses of "Spiritual," "Alabama," and *A Love Supreme*.

Repetition. Repetition plays a large role in the music of Coltrane, and it can have an overall effect of evoking a sense of ritual. In many of his works, Coltrane's pianist, McCoy Tyner, would play simple repeating patterns that create a hypnotic effect for many listeners.[285] Some repeating melodic patterns in Coltrane's solos and melodies are rooted in West African musical practices.[286] Also, some of his repetitions, especially of certain scalar passages, evoke Indian ragas, thus indicating that he was also drawing on Indian musical practices. I discuss repetition in greater detail below in my analysis of A Love Supreme.

[284] In Nat Hentoff's liner notes to the Vanguard recording, the song "is based on an actual spiritual he had run across and that had remained in his mind. 'I liked the way it worked out,' he said. 'I feel we brought out the mood inherent in the tune.'" John Coltrane, *Coltrane "Live" at the Village Vanguard*, 1962.
[285] Many of my former students in Jazz History courses, upon listening to "My Favorite Things," have attested to the recording's hypnotic qualities.
[286] Cole, 13.

Drones. Coltrane occasionally uses drones in his works, played by a variety of instruments. Though drones and drone-like musical elements occur in only a few compositions, they are often used in Coltrane's spiritually evocative works. Prominent examples include Eric Dolphy's bass clarinet in the beginning of "Spiritual", the opening of "India," and McCoy Tyner's piano tremolo at the beginning and end of "Alabama" and "Crescent".

Ecstatic Utterances. Though totally "free" episodes, characterized by high "screams" in the altissimo register, multi-phonics, and other extended techniques, become more prevalent in his later recordings, as early as 1961 he would use these musical devices to express a sense of the ineffable. In an interview, saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell contends that these utterances are rooted in Coltrane's experiences growing up with Pentecostal practices common in many African-American churches and particularly in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church denomination. Further, Mitchell sees a connection between Coltrane's ecstatic utterances and the music of dervishes in Arabian musical culture.[287]

Coltrane's Religious/Spiritual Music Prior to A Love Supreme

Though Coltrane's earliest recordings as a leader occurred in the late 1950s, Coltrane was still primarily a sideman until 1960 when he began recruiting players for his own band. In these formative years of his solo career, Coltrane exhibited the first signs of his spiritually influenced recordings. Concurrently, during this period Coltrane made some of his earliest forays into free jazz as well, which led to some of his harshest criticism from both the jazz press and the listening public. At the time, Coltrane was still feeling his way as a leader, and though by 1963 he had formed his classic quartet – drummer Elvin Jones, pianist McCoy Tyner, and bassist Jimmy

[287] *The World According to John Coltrane*, BMG Video, 80067-3, 1991. Archie Shepp also relates these ecstatic utterance to "field hollers" indicating a "thorough and passionate understanding" of African American cultural traditions. "Musicians Talk About John Coltrane," 40.

Garrison – he had not firmly settled on the idea of a quartet. He employed a number of different configurations on both studio albums and live performances, and occasionally experimented with the size of the group by adding, at times, a second bass player, an oud player, or a percussionist.[288] The most important semi-regular addition to the quartet was alto saxophonist/bass clarinetist Eric Dolphy. Influenced by free jazz pioneer Ornette Coleman, Dolphy added an avant-garde sensibility to Coltrane's quartet.[289] Dolphy's presence freed Coltrane to push the boundaries of modal jazz. The song "Chasin' the Trane," originally released on his 1961 album *Live at the Village Vanguard*, is ostensibly a blues; however, the song has no discernable melody and harmonically moves quickly away from a standard blues progression. The song inspired strong reactions from critics, some of who accused Coltrane and Dolphy of being purveyors of what *Downbeat* editor John Tynan dubbed "anti-jazz." According to Tynan, Coltrane and Dolphy, "seem bent on pursuing an anarchistic course in their music."[290] In his review of Coltrane's performance at the Monterey Jazz Festival, *Downbeat* critic Don DeMichael writes, "Judging by his work this night, Coltrane may be entering another phase of his development; at times, he indulged in what sounded like animal sounds, especially on his second 'My Favorite Things' solo."[291]

For the listening audience, the free jazz influence often created a divide between Coltrane the recording artist and Coltrane the performer. In the early 1960s, Coltrane experimented more in live performances than he did during recording sessions. Moreover, recordings typically

[288] See John Coltrane, *"Live" at the Village Vanguard*, Impulse A-10, 1962.
[289] Coltrane's interest in the avant-garde side of jazz predated Dolphy's presence in the quartet. Coltrane's 1960 recording, *The Avant-Garde*, featured a number of Coleman compositions with members of Ornette Coleman's quartet (Don Cherry, Charlie Haden, and Ed Blackwell) appearing on the recording.
[290] John Tynan, "Take 5," *Downbeat*, November 23, 1961, 40. See also Don DeMichael, "The Monterey Festival," *Downbeat*, November 9, 1961: 12 and Leonard Feather, "Feather's Nest," *Downbeat*, February 15, 1962: 40. In addition to these reviews and editorials by critics, in almost everyone of the then bi-weekly issues of *Downbeat* during that same time period had letters to the editor that came down on both sides of the debate.
[291] DeMichael, 12.

would not be released until months after the recording date. By the time the public purchased his albums, Coltrane would have had months to experiment with a song. For example, fans enamored with Coltrane's hypnotic 1960 recording of "My Favorite Things" were often shocked upon hearing Coltrane's significantly longer and freer live versions of the popular song. Live performances would often stretch to 40 minutes in length with Coltrane accentuating and expanding the slight growls and screeches hinted at in the studio recording.

Early Spiritual Recordings

Prior to *A Love Supreme*, only a few of Coltrane's pieces can specifically be described as "religious" or "spiritual." However, Coltrane asserted that following his 1957 "spiritual awakening" he asked God to grant him "the means and privilege to make others happy through music."[292] The following demonstrates how one can locate Coltrane's musical spirituality within the distinctive aural signs identified above as religious or spiritual in various compositions soon after his conversion.

"My Favorite Things" (1960)

Though Coltrane's recording of a popular Broadway show tune may also seem an unlikely representation of Coltrane's musical spirituality, on further examination, his modal approach transforms the tune to a hypnotic Indian raga. In doing so, Coltrane, internalizes the spiritual center of the song, which in its original conception was arguably finding spiritual comfort in things external. In its original setting, the musical theatre work *The Sound of Music*, a Roman Catholic nun encourages one of her charges to overcome sadness by dwelling on those things that she treasured:

> Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens
> Bright copper kettles and warm woolen mittens…

[292] John Coltrane, liner notes from *A Love Supreme*, MCA Impulse, MCA-5660.

These are a few of my favorite things.[293]

Though Coltrane never commented on his thinking when approaching the song, his musical treatment implies that his "favorite things" were internal rather than external. His allusions to Indian ragas and their religious significance in Hinduism, in his performance suggest Coltrane's spiritual and philosophical leanings.

In his musical treatment of "My Favorite Things," Coltrane replaced the basic harmony of the original composition in the solo sections with a few repeated chords, and then alternated each solo chorus between major and minor. Throughout Coltrane's solos, pianist McCoy Tyner accompanies, or "comps," on the repeated chords, grounding the song in ritualistic repetitions. Further, Coltrane's solo incorporates features that carry spiritual meaning: the timbre of the soprano saxophone, Indian scales, and the implied circularity allowed by the harmonic simplicity of the modal approach. Together these musical features create the sense of constant searching; of constantly pushing boundaries.[294]

Evocations of Prayer in Compositions Prior to A Love Supreme

"Spiritual" (1961)

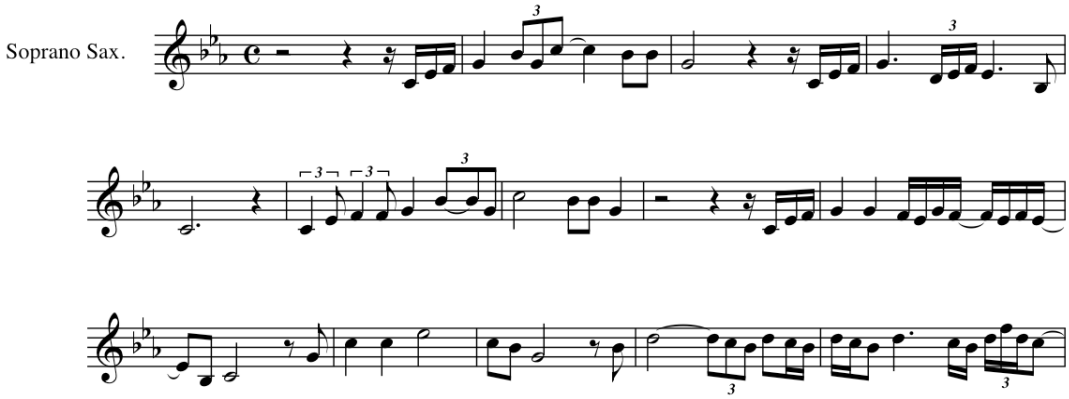
Though overshadowed by the more controversial composition on *"Live" at the Village Vanguard*, "Chasin' the Trane," the more accessible "Spiritual" was equally groundbreaking but in different ways. In "Spiritual" Coltrane first employed a simple form that serves as an evocation of prayer: the work opens and closes with a free, timeless section featuring a plaintive,

[293] Oscar Hammerstein and Richard Rodges, "My Favorite Things," Williamson Music, 1959.
[294] When I have taught Coltrane's music, or jazz history in general, I rarely play full versions of exceptionally long recordings preferring, rather, to play excerpts of the recordings. My reasoning is based, in part, on a fear that my students, having been raised on three-minute pop tunes, may have a difficult time staying focused during a ten-minute or longer jazz tune. In the spring of 2006, however, I decided to play all of Coltrane's studio recording of "My Favorite Things" forcing my students to listen to all of the nearly 13 minutes of music. Though some students did not enjoy it – one deeply religious student complained that she found the recording's ambiguity "disturbing" – many found the music profound.

chant-like melody that frames a larger improvisational middle section. As such, it foreshadowed several later compositions that also had overt spiritual themes, including "Alabama," "Crescent," and *A Love Supreme*.

Coltrane claimed that he was inspired by actual African-American spirituals in creating the opening melody of "Spiritual" (See Example 19). The somber C minor melody contains a number of flatted seventh cadences (e.g., the B-flat eighth note on the final eighth-note beat in the final bar of the first line leading to the dotted half C in the first bar of the second line). Moreover, the melody itself is relatively simple, focusing mostly on the notes of a blues pentatonic scale in C minor (C, E-flat, F, G, B-flat). Further, though played without any strict sense of time beneath it, the melody easily maps on to four-measure phrases. These simple, four-measure phrases, while not exclusive to spirituals, certainly give the opening a simple, song-like feel.

Example 19 Opening Saxophone Melody in "Spiritual"



"Spiritual" also contains an eclectic mix of musical elements. The version released on *"Live" at the Village Vanguard* included Eric Dolphy playing a drone on bass clarinet. In addition, several alternate versions of "Spiritual" were included on the 1997 release of the box

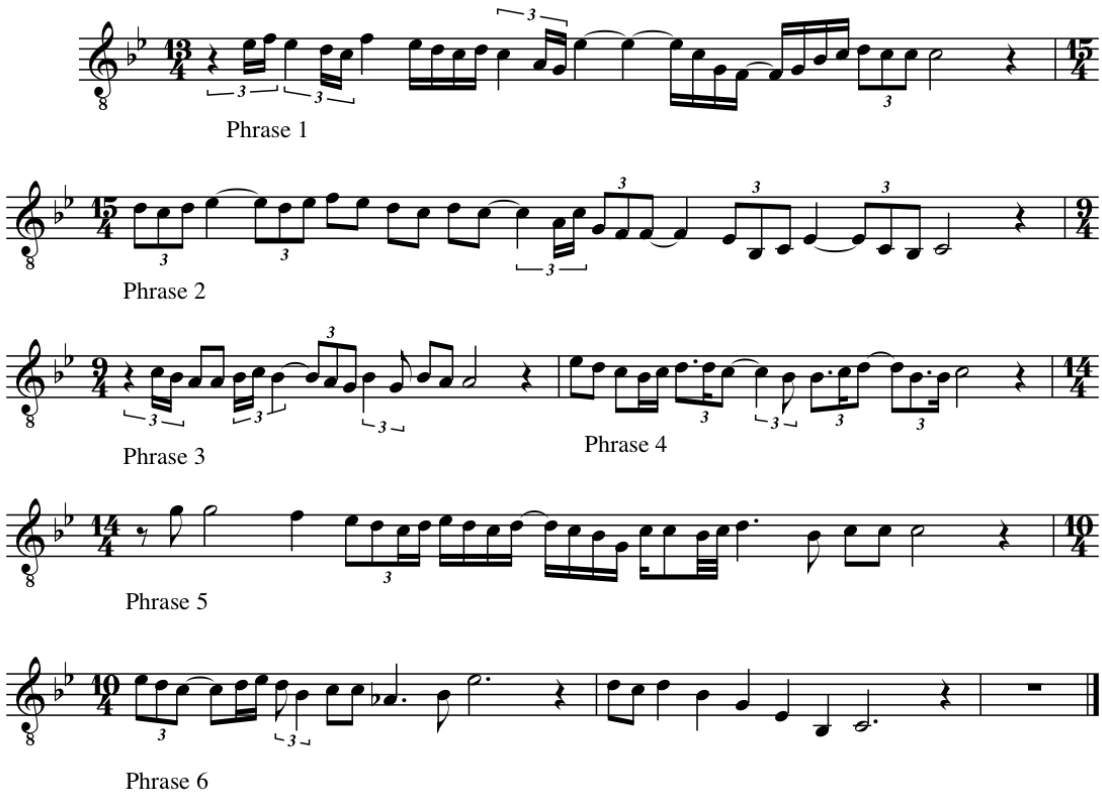
set *The Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Recordings*. One included a musician playing an *oud*, and another included a second bass playing a drone. By adding a Middle Eastern instrument (the *oud*) and a drone (the second bass player) evocative of Indian music, this composition inspired by African-American spirituals reflects Coltrane's universalism.

"Alabama" (1963)

Two years after "Spiritual," Coltrane recorded his second "prayer" song, "Alabama." Though Coltrane was rarely overtly political, "Alabama" had both religious and political ramifications. Coltrane composed "Alabama" in November 1963 reacting to the infamous bombing of a church in Montgomery, Alabama, which killed four young African-American girls two months earlier. Coltrane asserted that he based the chant-like opening melody's meterless rhythms on a prayer by Martin Luther King Jr. that Coltrane found printed in a newspaper following the tragedy. Even though no one has ever been able to "match" the words of any King prayer to the melody, one definitely gets a sense of human speech, if not prayer.[295] In Examples 19 and 20, one can see striking differences between the opening melody of "Alabama" and "Spiritual." While the phrases of "Spiritual" seem to be based on four-bar phrases, the phrases in "Alabama" have much less regularity to them. As can be seen in my transcription, below, there is little consistency in the length of any of the phrases. This lack of phrase regularity gives the melody an almost conversational feel, thus lending credence to its reported connection to a specific prayer. As noted below, Coltrane would use a similar technique in the final movement of *A Love Supreme*.

[295] Lewis Porter, in particular, has studied several King's words on the Birmingham bombing but has so far not found a connection. Porter, 331fn.

Example 20 Opening Saxophone Melody of "Alabama"



Alabama is a large ABA form, comprised of long, free, open, meterless sections at the beginning and end and a short middle section that contains a fairly straightforward modal jazz improvisation by Coltrane. This form, which he had previously used in "Spiritual," would become common among his later "religious" works. Though the title itself does not suggest an explicit connection to religion or spirituality, the connection of the song to the tragic events of 1963 clearly mark this recording as, at the very least, a lament and at most, a rare example of jazz that attempts to be "sacred."

A Love Supreme (1964)

Coltrane recorded his most acclaimed work, *A Love Supreme*, in December 1964. By every measure, the work was an unqualified success. In addition to the work receiving five-star critical reviews in *Down Beat* magazine, it helped Coltrane sweep *Down Beat*'s annual Readers Poll winning Record of the Year, Jazzman of the Year, and Tenor Saxophonist of the Year, as well as him being voted into the *Down Beat* Hall of Fame a year later.[296] Significantly, the work followed a period of relative inactivity but would be followed by Coltrane's most successful period.

One possible reason for the relatively inactive period during the summer and autumn of 1964 was the sudden and unexpected death of Coltrane's close friend and former collaborator, Eric Dolphy, in Berlin. On June 29, 1964, at the age of 36, Dolphy died from a lethal combination of drug abuse, poor diet, and diabetes.[297] Though Coltrane, ever the private individual, never attributes his lack of recording output to Dolphy's death, biographer Bill Cole describes the six-month gap from June to December as "an emotional commentary" on Coltrane's feelings towards Dolphy.[298] Lending credence to Cole's assessment, when Coltrane returned to composing and recording, Coltrane embarked on *A Love Supreme*, his most ambitious work, musically and spiritually, of his career.

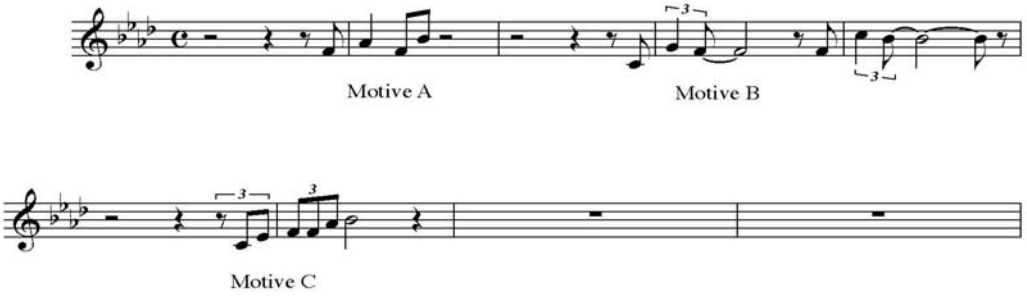
Overview of the Work

A Love Supreme is a four-movement suite for jazz quartet. Two slow and introspective outer movements frame two faster middle movements. The first three movements are connected

[296] "The Annual Readers Poll: The Year of Coltrane," *Down Beat*, December 30, 1965: 19.
[297] Raymond Horricks, *The Importance of Being Eric Dolphy (*Tunbridge Wells, Great Britain: Costello, 1989), 41-42. At the time, authorities assumed that Dolphy died of a heart attack, though most now believe his death was the result of his diabetic condition.
[298] Bill Cole notes that the closeness between Coltrane and Dolphy is exemplified by the fact that Dolphy's mother gave Coltrane her son's bass clarinet and flute. In Cole, 158.

in two ways. One is direct by using the same thematic material as is evident in movements 1 and 3. Example 21, below, shows Motives A, B, and C, the three most prominent motives of the first movement and, in the case of Motive C, the third movement. The second is by treating each movement's melody similarly (i.e., through repetition and improvisational variation).

Example 21 "Acknowledgement" Motives



As noted above, my central concern is how Coltrane presents his spirituality in the music. As such, my analysis of the work concentrates on several musical and theological elements – form, narrative, repetition, ritual, and theological eclecticism – through which Coltrane presents his musical spirituality and also through which one can discern the eclectic origins of his musical spirituality.

Form as Spirituality

The work, taken as a whole, can be seen as essentially following the same form as his earlier "prayer" compositions (e.g., "Spiritual," "Alabama," or "Crescent"), in that it opens and closes with free, meterless sections, which frame a long section where time, in a rhythmic sense, is more clearly stated. What separates *A Love Supreme* from the earlier works is its scope: Coltrane expands the form into a four-movement work. Though the free, fanfare-like opening is brief, the closing psalm is expansive, sustaining the mood for over seven minutes. A meterless

section also connects each of the movements through a bass cadenza (following movements 1 and 3) and a drum solo (following movement 2). He then takes the central, metered section of the earlier from and breaks it into several movements. Through the formal elements in *A Love Supreme*, Coltrane gives the work the necessary veneer of profundity and largeness that engage many listeners on a spiritual level. By using a multi-movement form and thematic recurrences, Coltrane provides the work with a sense of unity. The work's unity was noticed by Coltrane's pianist McCoy Tyner, who refers to the work as "definitely a kind of suite. It was beautiful, because the movements were connected."[299]

Coltrane is one of the few jazz composers to employ large forms in a small ensemble setting. While other jazz composers like Ellington, Mingus, Gil Evans, and Dave Brubeck experimented with large forms, few attempted to delve into large forms with small ensembles.[300] Interestingly, earlier jazz composers who employed multi-movement form like Coltrane, also seemed to have been motivated by the desire to communicate larger ideas through their music (e.g. political philosophy in Sonny Rollins' *Freedom Now Suite* and religious experience in Mary Lou Williams' jazz mass).

Nevertheless, the use of large forms has been the exception rather than the rule in jazz compositions. Jazz historian, Lewis Porter, contends that most jazz musicians rarely think consciously about large-scale extended forms.[301] Instead, they tended to use simple melody-solo-melody forms based on the blues or "rhythm changes" (i.e., an AABA form based on George

[299] Ashley Kahn, 94.
[300] Obviously, large ensembles offer greater versatility in color and timbre, especially in jazz where small groups necessitate the inclusion of a drummer and bassist. That is not to say that no jazz composers attempted to use large forms in the context of small ensemble; Sonny Rollins' *Freedom Now Suite* and jazz masses of Mary Lou Williams are among those that had experimented with large forms in small ensemble jazz.
[301] Lewis Porter, "John Coltrane's 'A Love Supreme': Jazz Improvisation as Composition, *Journal of the American Musicology Society,* Vol. 38, No. 3. (Autumn, 1985): 593.

Gershwin's song "I've Got Rhythm"). And yet, as pointed out above, Coltrane seems to have thought consciously about form, evidenced by the obvious form he employed in earlier works like "Spiritual" and "Alabama." As much as these earlier works display a conscious effort to unite the composition, more so than the typical melody-improvisation-melody form of most jazz since the bebop era (the mid- to late-1940s), Coltrane's 1964 four-movement composition, *A Love Supreme*, exceeds all of his earlier compositions in the extent of formal unity. Though *A Love Supreme* grew out of the formal unity of the aforementioned "Alabama" and "Spiritual" (i.e., slow, plaintive, often meterless sections framing a long, improvised section in straight time), never before had he attempted to write multi-movement works. Further, *A Love Supreme* set the stage for later works, like 1965's *Meditations* and *Transition Suite*, which also are conceived in multiple movements.[302]

Narrative

For Coltrane, form also serves as a driving force for his larger program for *A Love Supreme*. In addition to those passages of his liner/work notes quoted above, Coltrane includes a further explanation of his spiritual journey and in so doing, provides some insight into the work:

> As time and events moved on, a period of irresolution did prevail. I entered a phase which was contradictory to the pledge and away from the esteemed path; but thankfully, now and again through the unerring and merciful hand of God, I do perceive and have been duly re-informed of his OMNIPOTENCE …The music herein is presented in four parts. The first is entitled "ACKNOWLEDGEMENT," the second, "RESOLUTION," the third, "PURSUANCE," and the fourth and last part is a musical narration of the theme, "A LOVE SUPREME" which is written in the context; it is entitled "PSALM."[303]

Coltrane's biographical liner notes for *A Love Supreme* connect the music with specific moments in his spiritual journey indicating that Coltrane clearly wanted the music understood in a certain

[302] John Coltrane, *Transition*, Impulse 9195, recorded May and June 1965, and *Meditations*, Impulse 9110, recorded November 1965.
[303] Coltrane, *A Love Supreme.*

way. While he does not assign specific meaning to his musical material, nor does he ascribe the work to a particular religion, his notes draw the listener into his conversion tale. Moreover, by linking the movements thematically and by using a formal structure that he had previously established as signifying prayer, as in "Alabama," Coltrane links the program directly to musical elements that he had previously established as "spiritual."

In the first moment, both the opening gesture and Motive A reinforce the work's connection to Coltrane's spiritual journey. The opening gesture, a cadenza-like fanfare played by Coltrane in E minor preceded by a gong struck by drummer Elvin Jones, provides the work with a sonic invitation into the spiritual journey: the gesture suggests the image of one being invited into a sacred space or into a holy ritual. Alice Coltrane, Coltrane's widow, had a similar reaction, describing it metaphorically as entering into a holy city:

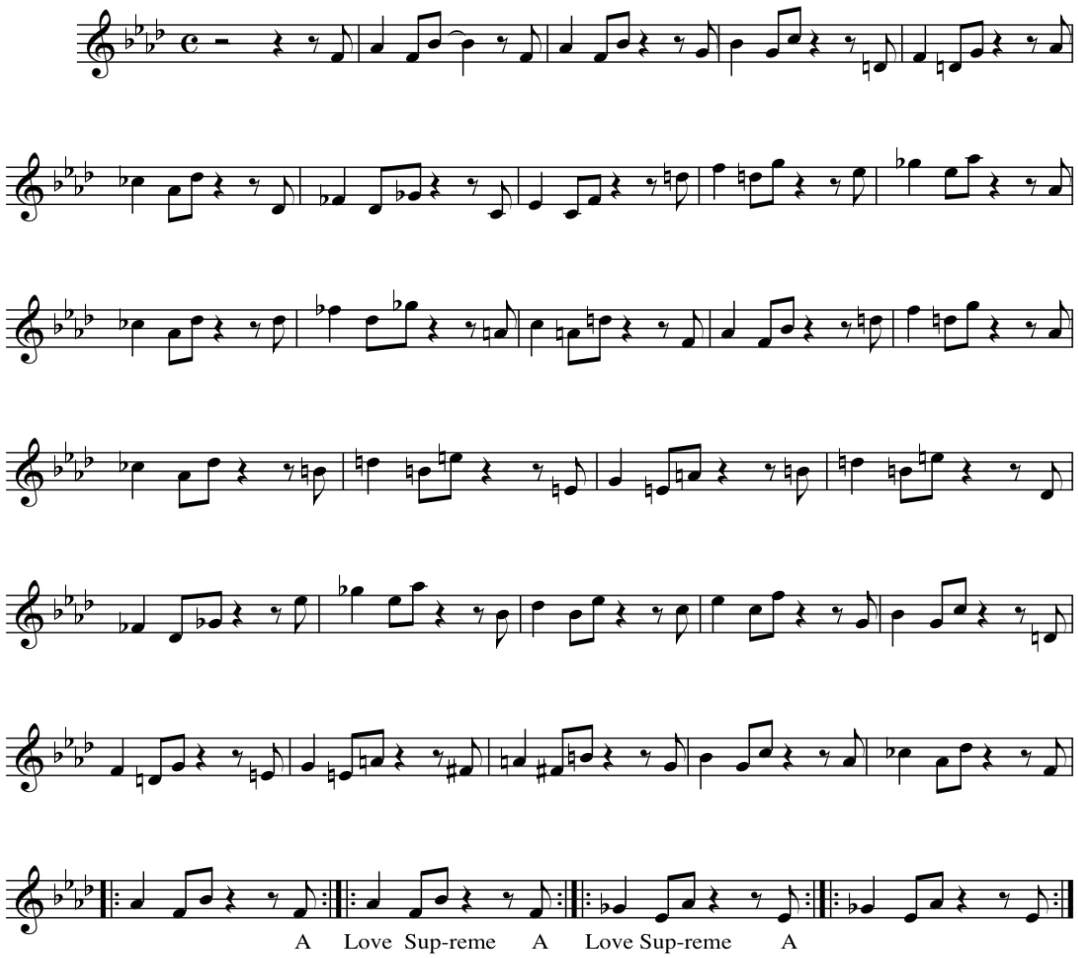
> … a beautiful city, but we don't enter, because we have to go through the portals, the corridor, and then we reach the entranceway…That's what it's like for me – the very first invitation to this beautiful place that's here, that is in our heart and spirit.[304]

Building on the opening gesture, Motive A enters as a bass ostinato supported by an F minor chord played in the piano. Later in the movement, the motive becomes the primary melody and dominates the remainder of the movement, where it undergoes harmonic transformation as seen in Example 22 (beginning at 4:56 of the studio recording). By venturing to every possible

[304] Ibid, 99. In saying this, Alice Coltrane does not seem to be claiming any knowledge of authorial intent or of a hidden program but rather seems to be providing merely her own interpretation of the work. However, due to her proximity to the work's creation – although she does not appear to have actively participated in the composition, rehearsals, and recording of *A Love Supreme* – by virtue of being John Coltrane's wife, and herself a capable musician (in addition to eventually replacing McCoy Tyner in her husband's group, Alice Coltrane would have a relatively successful career as a jazz keyboardist and harpist until her own death) she would have been present during the creative process, especially since much of the composition and rehearsals for the work occurred in the Coltrane's Dix Hills, Long Island, home.

transposition in a 12-pitch chromatic scale but not in a systematic way,[305] Coltrane suggests the idea of searching, which reinforces the idea of the spiritual journey. Though Coltrane does not follow a set pattern in moving from one key to the next, and does not avoid repeating transpositions (as can be seen in Table 3); eventually, the motive goes through all twelve possible transpositions.

Example 22 Harmonic Transformation of Motive A in "Acknowledgement"



[305] Eliminating repetitions, the order of the transpositions is F, G, D, Ab, Db, C, Eb, A, B, E, Bb, F# (the initial appearance of each transposition is shaded in the Table 3), which more clearly demonstrates that Coltrane touches on all twelve possible.

Table 4 Chart of Transportations of Motive A in "Acknowledgement"

Measure Number	Transposition (minor)
1	F
2	F
3	G
4	D
5	Ab
6	Db
7	C
8	D
9	Eb
10	Ab

Measure Number	Transposition (minor)
11	Db
12	A
13	F
14	D
15	Ab
16	B
17	E
18	B
19	Db
20	Eb

Measure Number	Transposition (minor)
21	Bb
22	C
23	G
24	D
25	E
26	F#
27	G
28	Ab
29	F

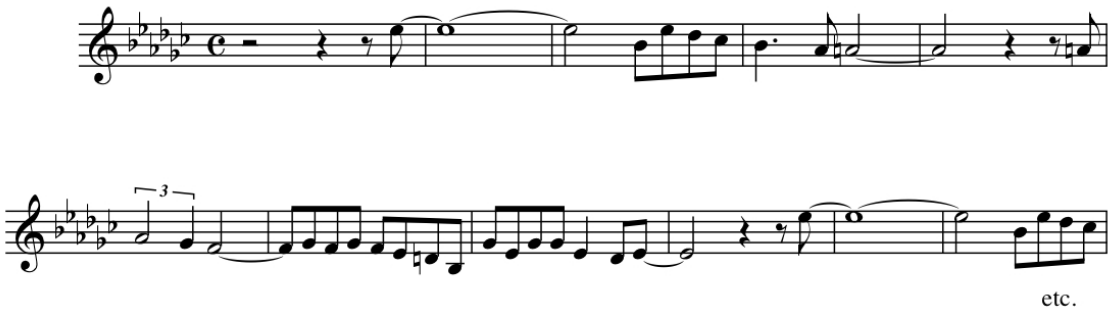
Unlike the two outer movements of *A Love Supreme*, movements 2 and 3 ("Resolution" and "Pursuance") have less overt connections to the musical spirituality established in Coltrane's earlier recordings (chant melodies, evocation of timelessness, etc.). Nevertheless, by virtue of being given programmatic titles, the two middle movements were intended by Coltrane to convey biographical elements of his spiritual journey. "Resolution" and "Pursuance" reflect a period, following his "spiritual awakening," where "irresolution did prevail." In his liner notes, Coltrane describes this period as, "entering a phase which was contradictory to the pledge (i.e., asking God to be given the musical means to bring joy to his listeners) and away from the esteemed path."[306] The second movement, "Resolution," refers to Coltrane working through his aforementioned "irresolution," while the third movement represents his returning to and pursuit of the "esteemed path."

Such an interpretation of the movements is borne out in the significant musical elements of the two movements. The characteristics of the "Resolution" melody are quite unlike the

[306] John Coltrane, "Liner Notes," *A Love Supreme*.

melodies of the first movement, or the third movement. The melody in "Resolution" is in E-flat minor, rather than the F minor of the first and third movements, and has a greater degree of chromaticism than any of the previous melodies. This can be seen in the B-flat, A-flat, and A natural found in the third full measure in Example 23:

Example 23 Opening of "Resolution" Melody



The movement's greater chromaticism and downward trajectory distinguish it from either the first or third movements. Coltrane likely employed contrasting elements in this movement to represent Coltrane's departure from and struggle to return to the "esteemed path."

In the third movement, Coltrane musically presents his return to that "esteemed path" by closely connecting the melodic material to that of the first movement. In "Pursuance," Coltrane not only returns to the F minor key of the first movement but also he returns to melodic material from the first movement. As stated above, this melody is an extended version of Motive C, which is imbedded in the principal melody found in "Acknowledgement." Moreover, the ascending pentatonic scale of Motive C has a similar upward trajectory as Motives A and B (see Example 21, above).

The final movement, "Psalm," provides the culmination of Coltrane's biographical narrative of *A Love Supreme*. If, as discussed previously, the opening "fanfare" gesture represents, as described by Alice Coltrane, metaphorically entering a holy city or temple, or embarking on a spiritual journey, then "Psalm" could symbolize the arrival at the holy city, temple, holy of holies; the completion of the journey. More importantly, by removing a clear sense of meter in "Psalm," Coltrane suggests a sense of arrival; the forward motion that Coltrane had sustained throughout the first three movements comes to an end. In "Psalm," Coltrane has reached the destination of his spiritual journey.

Mantra/Repetition

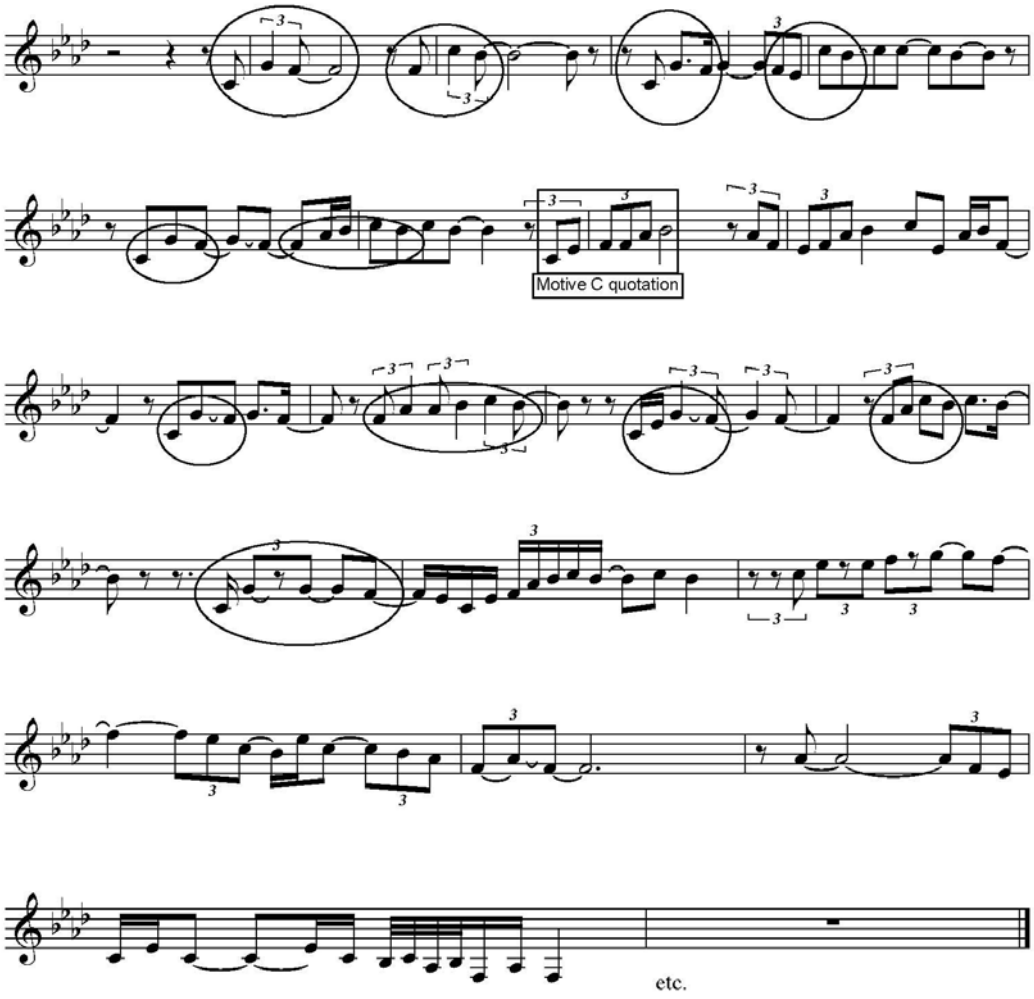
Another important element Coltrane employs to represent spirituality is repetition, which can operate as a spiritual signifier by evoking the idea of ritual. While most religions employ ritual, Coltrane seems especially interested in tying *A Love Supreme* to the idea of mantra, thereby suggesting a connection to Buddhism. Buddhism uses the repetition of short phrases as a mantra, i.e., words or sounds organized into holy formulas in order turn them from distractions to practices that "empower the spiritual quest."[307]

Motive A, in addition to functioning as an important element in Coltrane's spiritual narrative (i.e., how its repetition and transposition to different keys suggests the idea of seeking after an elusive spiritual truth), also serves as a kind of a mantra. With the initial appearance of Motive A as a bass ostinato, Coltrane suggests the idea of a mantra under-girding the rest of the movement. However, by the end of the movement, when Coltrane begins vocalizing the melody to the words "a love supreme" (see the last two measures of Example 22), the motive becomes more overtly a mantra.

[307] Huston Smith, *The Illustrated World's Religions* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1994), 92.

Repetition also plays a vital role in the melodic construction of the first three movements. As shown in Example 24, the initial saxophone melody of "Acknowledgement" is built on the repetition and variation of Motive B:

Example 24 Thematic Variation of Motive B in "Acknowledgement"

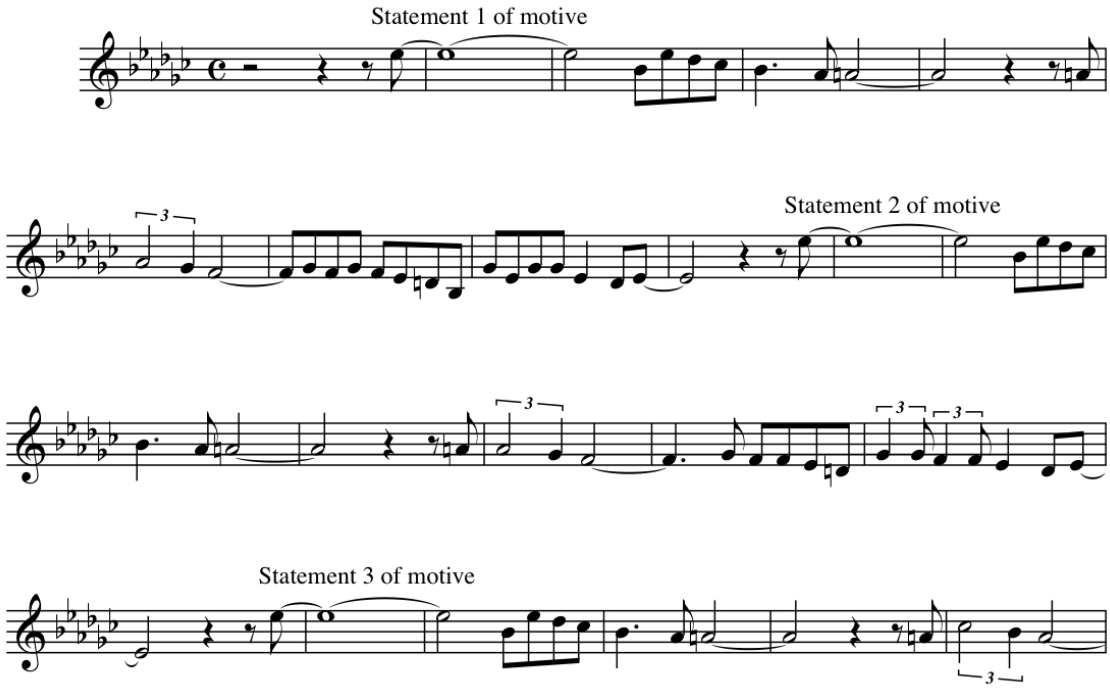


"A Love Supreme" (©1964)

Similarly, the melodies of the two interior movements are also built on repetition, as shown in Examples 25 and 26. As shown in Example 25, the "Resolution" melody is built on three repetitions of the motive. Example 26 shows that the "Pursuance" melody is built on

repetitions of Motive C (pick-up beats to measures 1, 3, and 7) as well as repeating entire statements of the melody:

Example 25 Repetition of "Resolution" Melody



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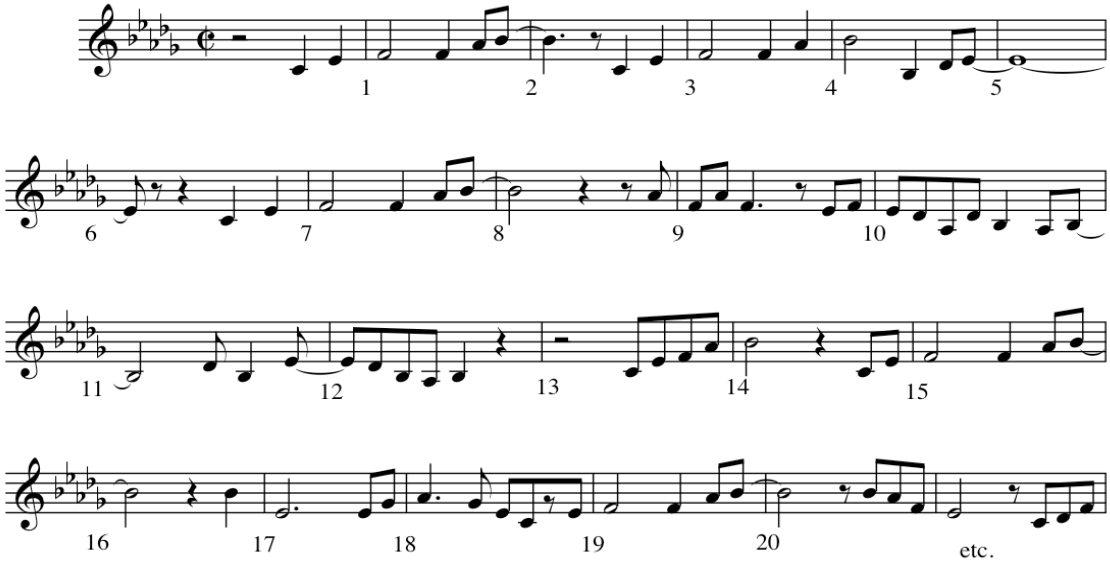
Example 26 "Pursuance" Melody, Measures 1 through 21



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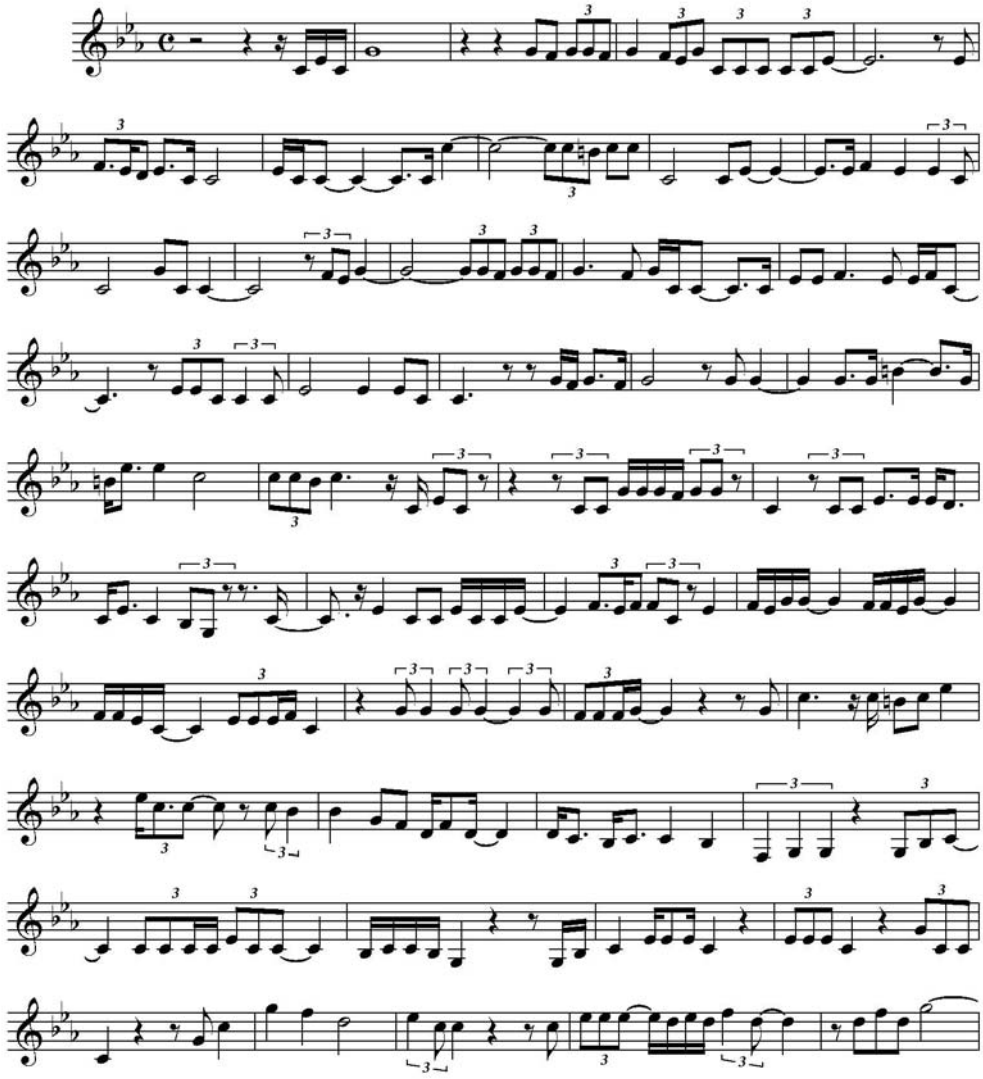
Movement 4: "Psalm"

Perhaps the most striking musical element Coltrane uses to construct his musical spirituality is his extended evocation of prayer in the work's fourth movement. The movement, "Psalm," serves as a ritual prayer, similar to what one would encounter in any number of religious liturgies. The lack of any meter or steady rhythm, as in traditional ritual chanting, helps separate the listener from the ordinary rhythms of life. The sense of timelessness creates a sense of being outside of the physical world. However, Coltrane's ritual prayer has no direct connection to any religious or spiritual traditions. Instead, melodically "Psalm" represents a continuation of Coltrane's personal spiritual experiences as presented in many of his works.

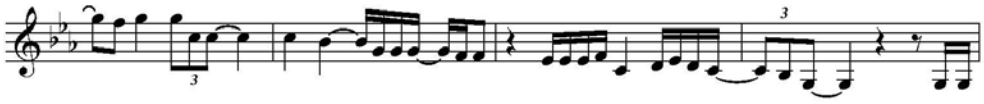
The movement consists of a slow, rubato, plaintive melody performed entirely by Coltrane on tenor sax with the rest of the band in the background, most notably Elvin Jones on drums and percussion including tympani. Unlike the three previous movements, "Psalm" has

very little thematic unity. Rather, as can be seen in Example 27, the movement has a continuously evolving melody with very few clearly defined, repeating motives, none of which bears any similarity to the previous melodies. However, through the consistent texture and emotional trajectory, Coltrane preserves the sense of cohesion and focus he created in the previous movements.

Example 27 "Psalm"[308]



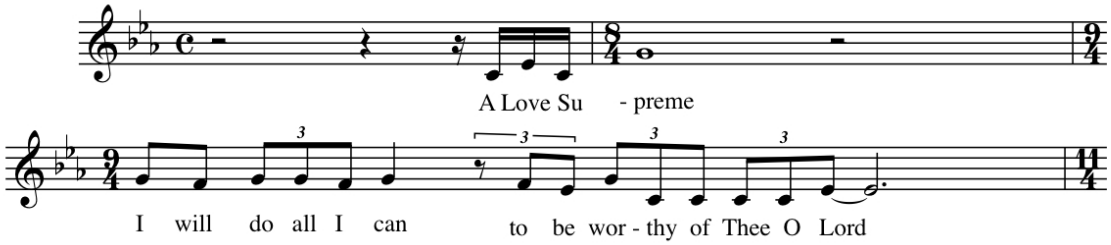
[308] It should be noted that, because "Psalm" lacks a clear rhythmic pulse, rhythms in my transcription of this movement are approximate.



What holds the listener's attention in "Psalm" is the subtle rise and fall of each phrase, as well as the overall arch of the movement and its upward trajectory. As has been observed by Lewis Porter in his analysis of the movement, the shape of the individual phrases matches the emotional shape of the phrases of the poem Coltrane includes in the album's liner notes. The poem, which represents the only time that Coltrane provides a text for any of his musical "prayers," connects directly to the rhythms of Coltrane's melody, as noted by several writers and historians, most notably Lewis Porter. Resembling an Old Testament Psalm, Coltrane essentially "recites" it on his saxophone; every note played is equal to the number of syllables of the psalm. Important words in the text, like "God" or "Lord," are matched with long, prominent tones. Further, Lewis Porter has noted that the music's emotional sweep matches the poem's words: "his communication of the words is so clear that you can actually hear these fine points."[309] A brief excerpt of a comparison of music and text, based on Porter's analysis is shown in Example 28.

[309] Lewis Porter, 247. Porter also provides a score of much of the movement with the text lined up with the music to further demonstrate the connection.

Example 28 Comparison of Music and Text in the Opening Gesture of "Psalm"



"A Love Supreme" (©1964)
Copyright Jowcol Music, LLC
All rights reserved. Used by permission.

The text to Coltrane's "Psalm" is a very personal and direct communication with God, as seen by the personal, King James-esque pronoun, "thee." However, by keeping the text theologically vague, Coltrane reinforces his image as spiritually eclectic, as can be seen in the following excerpts from Coltrane's psalm:

> I will do all I can to be worthy of Thee O Lord.
> It all has to do with it.
> Thank you God.
> Peace.
> There is none other
> God is. It is so beautiful. Thank you God. God is all.
>
> Words, sounds, speech, men, memory, thoughts, fears and emotions – time – all related…all made from one … all make in one.
> Blessed be His name.
> Thought waves – heat waves – all vibrations – all paths lead to God. Thank you God.
>
> Thoughts – deeds – vibrations, etc.
> They all go back to God and He cleanses all.
> He is gracious and merciful…Thank you God.
> Glory to God … God is so alive.
>
> It is all with God.
> It is all with Thee.[310]

[310] Coltrane, *A Love Supreme*. Impulse, 1964.

Coltrane uses a number of signifiers of monotheistic religions in the psalm (especially Christianity though many of the signifiers work equally well for Judaism or Islam) – use of the King James-esque pronoun "Thee," referring to God as masculine (use of third person pronouns "he" and "him"), as well as the idea of a personal God. However, a number of phrases could suggest non-Christian influence, or at least are religiously non-specific. For example, the statements about "vibrations" and that "all paths lead to God" clearly are outside of mainstream Christian beliefs. Moreover, the God in Coltrane's "Psalm" is not a God of judgment. Also, while Coltrane's God is eternal ("God is. He always was. He always will be."), he never "names" God in his psalm (e.g. Jesus, Yahweh, or Allah). By not using the name of any specific deity, he could be referring to the God of any or all religions.

Theological Eclecticism

The theological eclecticism found in Coltrane's text is also present in the music. With its simple, plaintive, modal melody and lack of steady rhythmic pulse or meter, "Psalm" bears a slight resemblance to many chant traditions. However, though harmonically the movement does not follow a standard blues progression, the movement shows a strong blues influence. As can be seen in the above examples (Examples 26 and 27) from movements 3 and 4, Coltrane uses numerous minor thirds and flatted sevenths. Though not exclusive to the blues, these elements are markers of the blues, which places the work squarely in the African-American musical tradition. In addition, while Coltrane's text, as noted above, contains vaguely Christian allusions, he employs musical elements, like the mantra-like usage of Motive A in the first movement, that suggest a connection to Buddhism.

As suggested earlier, Coltrane had substantial contact with Muslims in the jazz community – his first wife Naima and his pianist from 1960 to 1966, McCoy Tyner, were

converts to Islam, as well as drummer, Nasseridine, who was a close friend of Coltrane's during his early adulthood in Philadelphia. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that the monotheistic spirituality that pervades the psalm text of the final movement was equally indebted to both Islam and Christianity. Literature scholar Moustafa Bayoumi has even suggested Coltrane's chanting of "A Love Supreme" "slides easily into 'Allah Supreme."[311]

Conclusions

In addition to being one of the most respected and acclaimed jazz musicians of all time, Coltrane music depicts his personal spiritual journey. His journey, in addition to being highly personal, reflects one of the ways that religious expression transformed in the latter half of the twentieth century. Coltrane, like many in the 1950s and 1960s, though outwardly still proclaiming himself a Christian, explored diverse religious beliefs, and thus embraced religious eclecticism.

As such, Coltrane reflected shifts in larger society. Significant changes were occurring in the cultural landscape of the West in the 1960s. Religion mirrored the larger society: older forms and traditions showed signs of strain and individuals looked to newer forms of belief, most notably internalized forms of belief, to take their place. Spirituality offered an internalized, individualized alternative to traditional religion. Religious and spiritual eclecticism became increasingly common.

Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* reflected his own and the larger culture's religious and spiritual eclecticism. By giving his music spiritually evocative titles and, at the same time, using musical elements from diverse religious traditions, Coltrane offered an alternative to traditional

[311] Moustafa Bayoumi, "Moving Beliefs: Migrations and Multiplicities in Black Atlantic Islam," Paper given at *Global Diasporas Communities of Exile and Migration*, University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 29-31, 1999. Accessed at http://btcs.wisc.edu/bayoumi.pdf, June 18, 2010.

religious expression. Additionally, by using musical elements not typically thought of as "religious" or "spiritual" in his religious music, like his forays into free jazz, Coltrane expanded notions of religious music.

Chapter 5 Concluding Thoughts

In this dissertation I have used the idea of individual and collective transformations as a way of framing a study of music and spirituality. My pairing of individual and personal transformations, in the form of religious conversions and broader cultural transformations, was not an arbitrary decision. Periods of cultural transformation – periods of transition – can often lead to individual transformations; such periods create uncertainty, which in turn can lead individuals to rethink or question how they relate to their particular social environment, their beliefs, and their world. The post-World War II era could certainly be considered one of those periods of transformation. And while the 1960s were the high point of this post-war transformative period, the seeds of uncertainty were formed in the 1950s and continued to grow well in to the 1970s and 1980s.

My examination of the personal transformations of three diverse musicians, representing a wide range of beliefs, cultural contexts, and aesthetics, reveals aspects of larger cultural transformations. Arvo Pärt's conversion led him to embrace centuries-old religious and musical traditions, but which he channeled through a forward thinking musical aesthetic. His conversion was also emblematic of a movement in late-Soviet-era Eastern Europe where religion and spirituality served as a means for reacting against a totalitarian regime. Jonathan Harvey's conversion began a long spiritual and musical journey where Eastern modes of spirituality merged with modern technology. His conversion not only reflected religious and cultural

changes in Great Britain, as well as in much of the Western world, but also suggested ways in which spirituality and technology can be merged. Coltrane's conversion led him out of a life of drug addiction and into a world of spiritual universalism. Finding spiritual freedom in musical freedom, his music pushed against the melodic and harmonic conventions of jazz and became a symbol for many in the civil rights movement. Collectively, these three musicians reflect profound changes that were occurring in Western culture at the time of their conversions. Moreover, their selected works, which I have discussed above, provide a glimpse into how music conveyed spiritual meaning during the decades following the 1960s.

The methodology I have employed in this dissertation would lend itself to similar studies of a large number of composers. Studying the symbols and codes that a composer employs, regardless of style, genre, or era of music, can reveal much about a composer's cultural, religious, and/or spiritual context. For example, post-Soviet-era contemporaries of Arvo Pärt, like Alfred Schittke or Sophia Gubaidulina, would provide fertile ground from study because, like Pärt, each has also experienced a religious conversion and has written critically acclaimed compositions that draw on a variety of religious traditions. Similarly, British composer, John Tavener, who has often been compared with Pärt, would be a promising choice. Despite his general musical similarities to Pärt, Tavener's cultural differences (i.e., a British convert to Greek Orthodox Christianity) present unique opportunities.

Composers in Harvey's extended musical circle would also be promising subjects for similar studies. For example, the dozens of composers influenced by Olivier Messiaen, including many of the composers mentioned previously associated with the spectral movement, like Gerard Grisey and Tristain Murail, and Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu, would be interesting to study, especially in terms of how they reflected Messiaen's legacy. One of the

composers who most greatly influenced Harvey, Karlheinz Stockhausen, would also be an intriguing subject, given his own discussions of music spirituality, some of which are mentioned above in the Harvey chapter.

In the jazz world, a number of possibilities abound. Composer, pianist, and a convert to Catholicism, Mary Lou Williams wrote a number of jazz works including a jazz mass. Jazz pianist and harpist, Alice Coltrane, created her own individual approach to express her own religious beliefs in ways that differed from her famous husband. Other possible candidates for future studies in the jazz world are any of the number of jazz musicians who are converts to Islam, such as McCoy Tyner, Art Blakey, Yusef Lateef, and others. On the surface their music seems to not reflect any overt references to Islam. However, a thorough study of their works may reveal subtle musical elements not previously observed that point to their beliefs.

In addition to studying individual composers, particular genres could also be studied. One particularly untapped repertory is much of the recent music of the Christian evangelical church, both in secular settings, as typified by the commercially successful Contemporary Christian Music (i.e., CCM), and in church settings, as in contemporary worship music. Thus far, a few studies of current evangelical Christian music have been performed. Given the current political, cultural, and financial influence of the American Evangelical movement, especially in terms of the so-called "culture wars," a study of representative examples of music intended for popular consumption, as well as intended for church services, could lead to greater understanding for both those outside and within that cultural context.

This opportunity for understanding provides the primary benefit of studies such as this dissertation: understanding how religious and spiritual meaning is conveyed through music can help those outside a particular religious tradition understand those within that tradition.

Similarly, such understanding helps those within the tradition gain deeper understanding of their own beliefs.

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Appendix – Chart of Harvey's *Ritual Melodies*

Section No.		Melodic Entrances			Silence/Stasis	
		Melody	**Timbre**	**Time**		
1	**0:00-1:09**		Bells	0:0-0:10	Sustained flute/oboe/plainchant	0:04-0:10
					Silence	0:10-0:15
					Sustained koto/flute	0:15-0:25
		A	Oboe	0:25-0:48	Sustained flute	0:28-0:48 0:53-1:03
		A+B	Koto	0:42-0:48		
		B	Koto/ Oboe/ Water Bowl	0:48-1:00		
					Silence	1:00-1:02
		H	Flute	1:02-1:09		
2	**1:09-3:12**				Sustained	1:09-1:17
		G	Plainchant	1:17-1:49		
		H	Flute	1:44-2:00		
		B,F,H	Bell/Koto	1:57-2:05		
		H+A	Oboe	2:05-2:20		
					Sustained flute/waterbowl	2:20-2:30
		B+C	Oboe	2:30-2:55		
		D	Koto	2:55-3:00		
			Bells	3:00-306		
					Sustained flute	3:00-3:12
3	**3:12-3:53**	D	Koto	3:12-3:20		
					Sustained flutes	3:15-3:17
		A	Koto	3:20-3:53		
		A+B	Oboe	3:20-3:53		
		G	Chant	3:20-3:53		
					Sustained	3:32-3:53
4	**3:53-5:12**	G	Tibetan Chant	3:54-4:10		
		D	Koto	4:07-4:17		
					"Cloud"	4:17-4:45
					Sustained bells	4:40-4:50
		E	Flute	4:47-5:08		
		A	Oboe	4:50-5:08		
					Silence	5:08-5:12
5	**5:12-6:47**		Cluster	5:12-5:19		
		F	Oboe	5:19-5:40		
		G	Tibetan Chant	5:21-5:40		
					Cloud	5:40-5:47
					Silence	5:47-5:51
					Cloud	5:51-6:47
		G	Tibetan Chant	6:15-6:25		

Section No.		Melodic Entrances			Silence/Stasis	
		Melody	**Timbre**	**Time**		
6	**6:47-7:41**	Fragments	Flute, oboe, plainchant, Koto	6:47-6:49		
					Cloud	6:50-7:03
					Sustained koto	6:58-7:00
					Silence	7:03-7:06
					Cloud	7:06-7:41
		E	Plainchant	7:38-7:41		
7	**7:41-9:07**	A	Oboe/Flute	7:41-7:47		
		E	Plainchant	7:45-8:00; 8:05-8:15 8:20-8:25		
		D	Koto	7:52-8:00; 8:10-8:15		
					Sustained bells	8:00-8:05
		A	Oboe/Flute	8:15-8:27		
					Sustained bells	8:27-8:30
		E+F	Oboe/Flute	8:30-8:47		
		G+H	Plainchant/Koto	8:30-8:49		
		A	Oboe/Flute	8:49-9:07		
8	**9:07-9:38**	B	Oboe	9:07-9:38		
		B+C, D+E Fragments	Flute/Koto	9:07-9:38		
					Cloud	9:10-9:38
		D	Koto	8:19-9:35		
9	**9:38-10:10**	C	Koto/bells	9:38-9:48		
		B	Oboe/Koto	9:53 10:01		
					Cloud	9:42-10:12
10	**10:12-11:30**		Bells	10:12-10:14		
		G	Tibetan/Oboe/Plainchant	10:13-11:03 11:14-11:27		
		F	Flute/Oboe	10:50-11:03		
					Sustained water bowl	11:00-11:14
11	**11:30-13:42**	D+E	Koto	11:27-11:56		
					Cloud	11:30-11:45
		B+C	Oboe	11:49-11:56		
					Cloud	11:56-12:06
		H+A	Oboe	12:06-12:22 12:31-12:56		
		H	Plainchant	12:10-12:12		
					Cloud	12:23-12:48
		B	Flute	12:43-12:51		
					Cloud	12:51-13:06
			Bells	13:06		
		Fragments	Multiple	13:06-13:24		