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WIND ORCHESTRA WITH HISTORICAL CONTEXT
AND TRANSCRIPTION METHOD

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ABSTRACT

Antonin Dvorak, Biblical Songs, Op. 99: A Transcription for Wind Orchestra with Historical Context and Transcription Method

by

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This document includes a transcription for wind orchestra of five movements from the vocal solo Biblical Songs, Op. 99 by Antonin Dvorak. An overview of the historical background of the composer and the transcription method are provided.
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The goal of this document and transcription is educate musicians about the life and work of a great composer through a biographical sketch, analysis and transcription that will bring quality music with a vocal soloist into the wind orchestra repertoire. When selecting vocal music for a successful wind orchestra transcription, it is important to consider three questions. First, do the techniques that the string instruments use translate to the wind and percussion instruments? Second, will introducing this work increase the listeners’ awareness of the composer, his style, or musical era? Finally, is the quality of the music exceptional and will that quality translate to current wind orchestras?[1] Because Biblical Songs, Op. 99 (composed in March 1894) by Antonin Dvorak represents a unique example of Czech music, incorporates a vocal soloist, and translates idiomatically to wind and percussion instruments, a transcription of Biblical Songs will be an asset to the wind orchestra repertoire.

Biblical Songs is most often performed in its original medium: voice and piano. It is recognized for its unique speech-like rhythms and is published for both high and low voice. The original piano and voice composition has ten movements, each with a duration of two to five minutes. For unknown reasons, Dvorak arranged only the first five movements for orchestra. These five movements also translate well to the wind orchestra and therefore have been selected for transcription.

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For wind orchestra directors, Dvorak’s *Biblical Songs, Op. 99* offers:

1. Music that has many contrasts in dynamics, compositional techniques, and moods that succeed in offering dramatic musical variety throughout its five movements
2. A performance time of only thirteen minutes with minimal ensemble rehearsal time required
3. Sentimental music that works well in the middle of a concert program
4. A vocal soloist, which is rarely used in the wind orchestra medium, connecting musicians across genres.
5. A introduction to the Czech composer Antonin Dvorak.

Any music that is being considered for transcription should be transcribed only if the music is exceptional and that its quality can be successfully translated. Considering Dvorak’s skill as a composer, the unique American history of *Biblical Songs*, and the compositional techniques that can be employed to adjust the work to the modern wind orchestra, *Biblical Songs* meets the criteria to justify the transcription effort. Other important aspects discussed in this document include the history of Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904), how he helped solidify the Czech musical voice in classical music\(^2\) and the background and transcription process of *Biblical Songs, Op. 99* (March 1894).

\(^2\)David Hurwitz, *Dvorak: Romantic Music’s Most Versatile Genius*, (Milwaukee, WI: Amadeus Press, 2005), 1
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CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Antonín Dvořák was born on September 8, 1841, in Nelahozeves, Czechoslovakia, a small town 15 miles north of Prague that lies on the banks of the Moldau (Vltava) River. His father, František Dvořák (1814-1894), and paternal grandfather, Jan Nepomuk Dvořák (1764-1842), operated inns and butcher shops. The Dvořák families often struggled for survival and faced problems such as paying their butcher shop’s lease and the financial tragedy of their family inn burning down. Jan Nepomuk Dvořák encouraged his sons in their music interests, which included studying the violin, viola and piano. In addition to playing the violin, František played the zither and even composed a few folk songs. As young Antonín became interested in music, his father gave him his first violin lessons and encouraged him to pursue his musical studies. Antonín’s mother, Anna Dvořáková, enjoyed music but was not known as a performing musician.¹

Antonín’s parents planned for their son to continue the family trade in his adult years, but they continued to encourage his musical training. In 1847, at the age of six, Antonín began studying music from the village schoolmaster and organist, Josef Spitz. Antonín progressed quickly and as his natural talent emerged he began playing violin in both the village band and local church. At age 12, he apprenticed with his father, learning the butcher’s trade while he continued his musical studies by playing the violin and entertaining the patrons at his father’s inn.²

¹John Clapham, Dvořák. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979), 9-11
²Hans-Hubert Schonzler, Dvořák. (New York: Marion Boyars, 1984), 34
In 1854, Antonin was sent to live with his uncle, Antonin Zdenek, who was a steward to Count Kimsky at Zlonice. This move was to give him the opportunity to study with Antonin Liehmann, a music teacher with a respected reputation. Within a year, Liehmann had extended Dvorak’s skills as an instrumentalist beyond the violin to include the viola, piano, and organ, along with learning various elements of music theory.

Unfortunately, Frantisek’s business ventures needed assistance and young Antonin set aside most of his musical studies and was sent to work at the butcher shop. For two years he worked at the slaughterhouse connected to the butcher shop and used every free moment to practice and study with Liehmann. On Sundays he continued to play the organ for the Zlonice choir.\(^{3}\)

In 1857, with his Uncle Zdenek’s vow to assist financially, 16 year-old Antonin left the family butcher business and traveled to Prague to study at the School of Organ-Playing. He studied diligently for two years and left with a letter of recommendation stating that he had excellent talent as a performer and technician, but had some weakness in music theory. His difficulty comprehending some of the elements of music theory may be partially due to the fact that the instruction was in German. German was the official language of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but Dvorak struggled with it his entire life preferring to communicate and write in his native Czech. His composition performance notes and direction are in Czech and tie Dvorak’s music to Czech Patriotism, for which he is well known.

Antonin made friends with Karel Bendl, a fellow student, who owned a piano and had a library of orchestral scores. These scores exposed Dvorak to the full range of color

found in the orchestra. He also played viola for the St. Cecilia Society’s special orchestra concerts. These concerts put him in the path of Franz Liszt, Hans von Bulow, Richard Wagner, and Clara Schumann. This paper contends that this contact with these professional musicians and the further studying of the orchestral repertoire not only strengthened his mastery of music theory and orchestral instrumentation, but also inspired him to work diligently toward becoming a world-class composer.

After graduating from the School of Organ-Playing, Dvorak was able to find work as a music teacher and performed in local restaurants. However, performing and teaching to pay for daily expenses, made it difficult to find time and energy to work on his compositions.4

Dvorak continued to develop as a composer and create important new connections. In 1860, the Austro-Hungarian Empire loosened restrictions, allowing acclaimed composer Bedrich Smetana and other artists exiled for anti-government sentiments to return to their homeland. Smetana helped found the Society of Arts (Umelecka Beseda), which encouraged and commissioned Czech nationalistic music. When Smetana became the conductor of the society’s Czech National Theatre Orchestra, Dvorak was hired to play violin. During his tenure with the Czech National Theater Orchestra, Dvorak enlisted his colleagues to read through drafts of his operas Alfred (1870) and The King and the Collier (1871). In 1874, he reworked the music to The King and the Collier and Smetana premiered the work in Prague.5

In 1873, Dvorak became engaged to 19 year-old Anna Cermakova, who was a former pupil of Dvorak and a contralto in the Society of Art’s opera chorus. Dvorak’s

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4 John Clapham, Antonin Dvorak: Musician and Craftman. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1966), 4-6
5 Alec Robertson, “Dvorak’s Songs,” in Music and Letters, (XXIV 1943), 18-20
success with *Hymnus: The Heirs of the White Mountain* (1872) won her parents’ blessing. Although Anna did not continue her musical training, she was an asset in Dvorak’s business and financial affairs. She motivated Dvorak to seek a publisher, get his larger works published, and pursue higher pay for his work.⁶

In 1874, Dvorak left the Czech National Theater Orchestra to take a more lucrative position as an organist at St. Adalbert’s Church. That year he also submitted his *Symphony No. 3* and *Symphony No. 4* into a grant contest sponsored by the government to help “Young, Poor, and Talented Artists.” His application stated that he was married, with one child to support, and earned 186 gulden (about 90 U.S. dollars) a month. The application was successful and the award supplemented his income by 400 gulden (about 200 U.S. dollars).⁷

Throughout his compositional career, Dvorak imposed high standards. Because of his high expectations, Dvorak would not send any composition to the publishers that did not satisfy him completely. For example, Smetana conducted Dvorak’s *Symphony No. 3 in E flat* on March 30, 1874 (composed in June 1873). However, Dvorak, unhappy with the final product, did not send the symphony to be published. He is also said to have burned many of his early works, which may explain the disappearance of a violin sonata that was performed in 1875 and never heard of again.⁸ When Dvorak’s remarked, “I always have enough paper to make a fire,” he showed how committed he was to publishing nothing but quality works.⁹

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⁶ Schonzeler. 55
⁹ Butterworth, 19
Dvorak’s works, such as his *Symphony No. 3* and *Symphony No. 4*, continued to gain success and bring recognition to the young Czech. In 1874, with the financial support of the government, he was able to compose more vigorously, writing his fifth symphony, a grand opera, a string quintet, a piano trio, a piano quartet, the *Serenade in E*, and four *Moravian Duets*. These compositions got the attention of the new Commissioner of the Austrian State Prize, Johannes Brahms. Later, Brahms successfully requested that the government renew Dvorak’s stipend as a promising composer for a third year. (Dvorak received this stipend for a total of five years.)

Brahms saw the high quality of Dvorak’s compositions and understood that they needed to be internationally published and performed. Brahms wrote to his publisher, Fritz Simrock, in Berlin and recommended that Dvorak’s *Moravian Duets* and a few other small works be published. Simrock agreed and commissioned Dvorak’s first set of *Slavonic Dances, Op. 46* in 1878. These dances earned Dvorak the attention of the German people. In fact, this composition was so successful that for the second set of commissioned dances the composer’s fee went from 300 (about 120 U.S. dollars) to 3,000 German marks (about 12,000 U.S. dollars).

After sudden success of *Slavonic Dances*, Simrock was interested in publishing similar compositions. In late autumn of 1878, Dvorak submitted many smaller compositions, including *Serenade No. 2 in D minor, Op. 44* for a chamber ensemble that included two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, three horns, cello, and

\[\text{Reference:} \]

10 Butterworth, 50
11 John Clapham, *Antonin Dvorak*, pp 7-9
bass. This composition demonstrated Dvorak’s ability with the wind and brass instruments’ unique colors. In two months the first printings sold out.  

Dvorak’s next major works earned him increased recognition with well-known musicians, composers, and orchestras. Dvorak dedicated his *Symphony No. 5 in F* to the famed Wagnerian conductor Hans von Bulow. Bulow thanked Dvorak, saying that next to Brahms he considered Dvorak the most God-gifted composer of the present day.  

Dvorak’s international reputation continued to expand with the premiere of his *Symphony No. 6, Op. 60* (1881) in Prague. The work was performed in London in 1882 and a year thereafter in Vienna by Hans Richter, to whom the new symphony was dedicated. The New York premiere, also in 1883, was conducted by Theodore Thomas. Dvorak then accepted an invitation to Dresden to perform his new opera, *Dimitrij, Op. 64* (1881-1882).  

Dvorak’s time in Germany increased the cultural and nationalistic pressures that pushed him to abandon his Czech heritage. He was invited to be the honored guest at the German Artists Club in London, but he declined, stating he was not German. As a result of his desire to remain identifiably Czech, Dvorak had to write multiple forceful letters to his publisher, Simrock, explaining why he wanted his first name to be printed as the Czech “Antonin” or at least to be printed in the contracted form of “Ant.,” instead of the German form “Anton.” Other musicians, especially in the city of Vienna, recommended that he write in the German language if he wanted his operas to be more successful. In 1884, the General Intendant of the Court Opera of Vienna, Baron Hoffman, offered two

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12 Paul Stefan, *Anton Dvorak*, 101  
13 Paul Stefan, *Anton Dvorak*, 67-68  
14 Fischl, 22-25  
15 Robertson, 42-43
German libretti to Dvorak. Now completely frustrated with the pressure of German nationalism, he rejected the libretti and reached out to the English community accepting an invitation to conduct some of his compositions with the Philharmonic Society of London.\textsuperscript{16}

The first invitation to travel to England (he journeyed to England a total of nine times) came from Henry Littleton, the secretary of the Philharmonic Society. In March 1884, English newspapers warmly welcomed Dvorak. He wrote to his father about the overwhelming size of London. He stated that all of the Czech inhabitants throughout Bohemia would not match the number of those who lived in London and would not even fill the Royal Albert Hall, where the first of three English concerts was held. After three highly successful concerts, Dvorak returned to Prague on March 29, 1884. He also returned with a commission, valued at 2,000 pounds (about 9,700 U.S. dollars), for a choral work to be performed at the Birmingham Music Festival. On June 14, the Philharmonic Society of London elected him an honorary member and commissioned him to write a symphony.\textsuperscript{17}

Dvorak returned to England in the autumn of 1884 to guest conduct the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester. On September 11, he presented his sixth symphony, with 27 year-old Edward Elgar in the first violin section. During this second tour, Dvorak met American composer, Dudley Buck, and received an invitation to perform in a concert tour of the United States.\textsuperscript{18} In December 1884, Dvorak wrote concerning the effect that England had on him:

\textsuperscript{16} John Clapham, \textit{Antonin Dvorak}, 10-11
\textsuperscript{17} Schonzeler, 108
\textsuperscript{18} Butterworth, 51-58
I have just completed the second movement – andante – of my new symphony, and I am just as happy and blissful in this work again as I always was before, and with God’s help I shall continue to be so, for my motto is and will be, ‘God, love, motherland!’ and that alone will lead to the happy goal!¹⁹

Dvorak’s third trip to England was in April and May of 1885, just one month after he completed his seventh symphony. On April 22, the London Philharmonic Society premiered the *Symphony in D minor* to great acclaim. England had embraced Dvorak and his Czech-influenced music. Dvorak had become such a celebrity that autograph seekers would often search for him at the local market. After receiving pressure to concede to the German culture, the warm reception of the English public confirmed Dvorak’s commitment to compose and represent his native Czech language and culture.

Unfortunately, problems arose with Simrock about publishing Dvorak’s seventh symphony. Simrock offered 3,000 marks for the work only if Dvorak would also compose another set of *Slavonic Dances*. He reasoned that higher sales from the smaller works were required to offset financially the larger works that did not sell enough to pay Simrock’s own expenses. Dvorak explained that if he agreed with Simrock, there would be no point in writing symphonies and that if he only composed a few dances, piano pieces, lieder, and other “publishable things,” it would diminish himself as an artist. In the end, Simrock agreed to pay 6,000 marks for the symphony, while receiving a promise from Dvorak to consider strongly writing more *Slavonic Dances*. Dvorak reiterated that his first name was Antonin and should not be printed as the German “Anton.” Simrock’s compromise was that Dvorak’s first name would be printed “Ant.,” which could be

¹⁹ Fischl, 33-35
interpreted either German or Czech and that the title would be in both languages. In a letter dated September 1885, Dvorak explained that he, as an artist, found strength and inspiration in his homeland and that not publishing his Czech name denied that heritage. However, when the published score was delivered to Dvorak, he found that Simrock had published the title only in German and had again given Dvorak the German name of Anton.20

Dvorak returned to Prague for the premiere of his new opera, *The Spectre’s Bride* (1885). With his growing international success, Dvorak was able to buy a modest house in which his family, comprised of his wife and five children, could spend their summer months. The small farmstead was close enough to the woodlands for Dvorak to enjoy his morning walks, close enough to the village to enjoy discussions with others, and far enough from town to continue his hobby of raising pigeons.21

During his fourth visit to England in August 1885, Dvorak prepared for the English premiere of *The Spectre’s Bride* in Birmingham. Within one year, the opera was being performed in Manchester, England; Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA; and Melbourne, Australia. *The Spectre’s Bride* was such a success that Dvorak traveled home with a commission for an oratorio for at the next year’s festival.22

On October 15, 1886, Dvorak returned to premiere his oratorio *St. Ludmilla*. This oratorio was influenced by Handel’s multi-movement *Messiah* and was another English success. Between his travels to England, Dvorak was awarded the Austrian Order of the Iron Cross and was given a private audience with Emperor Franz Josef I.23

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20 Stefan, p. 101  
21 John Clapham, *Dvorak*, 73-76  
22 Schonzeler, *Dvorak*, 116-118  
23 Hoffmeister, 42-44
In 1888, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky traveled to Prague and invited Dvorak to give a series of concerts in Russia. On March 11, 1890, Dvorak conducted a collection of his works with the Tsarist Musical Society in Moscow. While at a banquet held in his honor, Dvorak learned that the Academic Senate of Charles University in Prague had awarded him an honorary Doctorate of Philosophy.24

Dvorak was offered the Chair of Musical Composition and Instrumentation at the Prague Music Conservatory in 1891. Josef Suk remembered that Dvorak was a difficult and demanding teacher. Dvorak’s students stated that he was a teacher and an artist whose teaching style was harsh yet rewarding.25

Dvorak’s, international fame as a composer, coupled with his skill as a teacher, attracted the attention of American philanthropist Jeannette Thurber, the wife of a wealthy grocer. In 1885, she founded the American Opera Company and the National Conservatory of Music. In 1891, Thurber sent a telegram from Vienna, offering Dvorak the position of Director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York. Her vision was to expand American music by connecting it to the extensive music history of Europe. Her goals were to hire a highly trained and accomplished faculty and connect them to the most promising American students. The school encouraged all students to apply, without prejudice of gender or race (a controversial and advanced ideal for 1891). At every level of study, talented students were offered financial scholarships, including women and African Americans.26

24 Fischl, 47-48
25 Butterworth, 81-88
At first, Dvorak did not show any interest in the offer. In June 1891, she sent another telegram from Paris, adding that the position would also involve conducting six concerts of his compositions. The contract arrived six weeks later, stating that he would teach three hours a day, prepare four student concerts, and conduct six concerts of his own music in American towns.27

As Dvorak carefully considered Thurber’s offer, he struggled with the idea of leaving his Czech homeland that had given him inspiration for many compositions. Anna, Dvorak’s wife, was the first one interested in moving to America; she saw the practicality of a steady income. The Prague Conservatory paid 1,200 gulden a year (less than 600 U.S. dollars), as compared with Thurber’s offer of 35,000 gulden (about 15,000 U.S. dollars) and included four months’ vacation. In November 1891, the family agreed to go to America for two years. (This contract was eventually extended for an additional year.)28

At first, Dvorak and Anna took only the two eldest children, feeling it was necessary to leave the younger children with family in their homeland. The small group traveled to America on the SS Saale, arriving at Staten Island on September 26, 1892. Upon their arrival in New York, the school officials excitedly greeted the Dvorak family. The family moved into an apartment at 327 East 17th Street, which was furnished with a gift of a grand piano from the Steinway Company. The city was home to a substantial number of Czech immigrants; however, New York City was much noisier and busier than Dvorak was accustomed.29

27 John Clapham, Antonin Dvorak: Musician and Craftman, 17-18
28 Otakar Dvorak, Antonin Dvorak, My Father (Iowa, Czech Historical Research Center, Inc, 1993), 12-14
29 Schonzeler, 146-148
Dvorak produced many notable students at the National Conservatory of Music. He taught African American students Henry Thacker Burleigh (Burleigh brought Dvorak material about many Negro spirituals) and Will Marion Cook (Cook was later a teacher of the famous jazz musician and composer Duke Ellington). During his time in North America, Dvorak became enamored with the possibilities found in African American folk melodies. He stated in The New York Herald:

In the Negro melodies of America I find all that is needed for a great and noble school of music. They are pathetic, tender, passionate, melancholy, bold, merry, gay or what you will. There is nothing in the whole range of composition which cannot be supplied from this source…. I am satisfied that the future music of this country must be founded on what are called the Negro melodies.\(^{30}\)

The American northeast had developed a new devotion to the arts, and Dvorak attended many rehearsals and concerts of the ensembles in the area. In New York City there were three major orchestras: the Philharmonic, conducted by Anton Siedl; the Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Walter Damrosch; and the Metropolitan Opera, which had opened 10 years earlier in 1883. Outside of New York, Antonin traveled to Boston to see Arthur Nikisch, director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, who conducted Dvorak’s Requiem.\(^{31}\)

In 1893, Dvorak sent for the rest of his children. He announced to his family that they would spend their summer in a town called Spillville, Iowa, which had been settled by Czech immigrants. The break from the city, coupled with the familiarity of the Czech

\(^{30}\) Robertson, 170
\(^{31}\) Butterworth, 94-96
people, inspired Dvorak to compose his *String Quartet in F Major, Op. 96*. He also traveled to Chicago to conduct several of his works at “Czech Day” at the World Exhibition.\(^{32}\)

While in Spillville, Dvorak was able to study Native American melodies from a small group of Iroquois Indians led by Chief Big Moon. By Dvorak’s request, they gave a program of native songs and dances, which was so well received that they performed it a second time. Afterwards they allowed Dvorak to take pictures of the instruments and performers.\(^{33}\)

In 1893, Dvorak wrote his most prominent work, *Symphony No. 9 “From the New World.”* Although some called it “a lot of Indian music,” there was no truth in the rumors that he had used original American melodies and Dvorak called the symphony “genuine Bohemian music.” Even with such success, Dvorak refuted the rumors that he planned to stay indefinitely in the United States, vowing that he would soon see his homeland again.\(^{34}\)

Dvorak’s last six months in America were consumed with teaching and composing. *Biblical Songs, Op. 99*, composed between March 5 and March 26, 1894, was the sixth composition in Dvorak’s three-year tenure in America. His decision to compose on a sacred subject may have been influenced by the passing of fellow composers Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Charles Gounod, and conductor Hans von Bulow, who had championed many of Dvorak’s works. In addition, Dvorak received news that his father, Frantisek, was ill. Frantisek died on March 28, 1894, only two days after *Biblical Songs* was completed. Dvorak received the news of his father’s death after the

\(^{32}\) Fischl, 52-55  
\(^{33}\) Dvorak, 23-24  
\(^{34}\) Stefan, 204-207
funeral had already taken place and therefore could not attend. For the text of *Biblical Songs*, Dvorak used the Czech version of the Book of Psalms. After completing the ten songs that made up the complete piano and vocal work, he arranged the first five songs (composed between January 4 and 8, 1895) for symphony orchestra.\(^{35}\)

Dvorak declined Thurber’s requests to again extend his stay in America. The fact that she was often behind in paying his fees did not encourage the homesick composer to extend his tenure. Dvorak and his family left America on April 16, 1895, boarding the same ship on which they had traveled to America, the *SS Saale*.\(^{36}\)

By November 1895, Dvorak had reacquainted himself with the directions and interests of the Czech musical organizations. He returned to teaching at the Prague Conservatory and composed a collection of tone poems based on Czech folklore. The first three were composed for the piano and then orchestrated. *The Water Goblin* (earlier translated as *The Watersprite*) was completed on February 11, *The Noon Witch* on February 27, and *The Golden Spinning Wheel* on April 25, 1896. He finished this series with *The Wild Dove*, which he completed in October 1898. These tone poems connected Dvorak’s love of opera and his success with the orchestra. Dvorak continued traveling and conducted the premiere of his *Cello Concerto in B minor* on March 19, 1896, on the same program with the first five movements of the newly orchestrated *Biblical Songs* in London.\(^{37}\)

Dvorak’s last symphonic poem was *Heroic Songs* (1897). Although the work does not have a specific storyline, it is believed to be autobiographical. Gustav Mahler,

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\(^{35}\) Antonin Dvorak, *Biblické Pisne, op. 99*. (Statni Hudeni, Praha: Spolecnost Antonina Dvoraka, 1963), IX-X

\(^{36}\) Schonzeler, 166-167

\(^{37}\) John Clapham, *Dvorak*, 143-153
the new conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, asked for the honor to premiere the symphonic poem. The performance was so successful that Mahler conducted *The Wild Dove* the next season. After the death of Brahms in 1897, Dvorak was appointed to the Austrian State Prize Board that had supported him during the early years of his career. On March 14, 1901, Dvorak was one of two Czech artists elected to the Austrian Senate. Ironically, Dvorak was thrilled to find a great selection of pencils at the Senate that he could use when composing at home.38

On March 25, 1904, Dvorak suddenly fell sick during a rehearsal of his new opera *Armida* (1902-1903) and was diagnosed with “arteriosclerosis of the brain arteries.” Although there was a hope that his health would improve, Antonin Dvorak passed away on May 1, 1904 at the age of 62.39

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38 Butterworth, 121-129
39 Otakar Dvorak, 101-102
CHAPTER TWO

PROCESS FOR WIND ORCHESTRA TRANSCRIPTION

Problems and Solutions

There are two areas of focus that were important for the adaptation of *Biblical Songs* (1894) to become a functional work for the wind orchestra. The first focus point was how to address the change of instruments from the symphony orchestra to the wind orchestra. The second focus point was how to best translate the important compositional techniques in each of the five movements. These techniques and motives will be discussed separately in the movement details later in this chapter. Because of the length of the multi-movement work, the focus will be on the principle problems and solutions.

The first challenge of the transcription process was how to successfully manage the differences in instrumentation from a symphony orchestra to a wind orchestra. In orchestra, the string sections may include more than 40 musicians, which carries a full symphony with depth. When comparing an orchestral work to its wind orchestra transcription, the parts are often doubled for the wind orchestra to achieve a full sound that more accurately resembles the sound of a symphony orchestra. This was done in all of this transcription’s five movements. A major concern with the transcription of *Biblical Songs* was that the instruments must balance to the voice. The vocalist must be allowed to use a full range of dynamics and expression while in front of the large wind orchestra, especially in the softer sections, and must not be overpowered by the dynamic strength of the wind orchestra. By taking advantage of the expressive moments that occur when the voice rests, the wind orchestra showcases its own strengths by emphasizing the color or mood of the text in each movement.
Example 1 is the instrumentation in Dvorak’s original orchestral score.

Ex. 1.

Flute I
Flute II
Clarinet in A/B-flat I
Clarinet in A/B-flat II
Horn in F I
Horn in F II
Trumpet I
Trumpet II
Timpani
Triangle
Harp
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello
Double Bass
Voice

Example 2 lists the wind orchestra instrumentation and the corresponding symphony orchestra parts to which they were primarily connected.
The bass drum, snare drum, cymbals were added to the instrumentation to reinforce the rhythms and accents that were originally in the string parts and were used
primarily in the exclamatory sections of the first and fifth movements. Dvorak rarely composed for these instruments. His use of the cymbals in his Symphony No. 9 provided a model for the transcription. The marimba, which was not available to Dvorak in his lifetime, was added to fulfill several roles and is played by two musicians, each with two mallets. The marimba adds warmth through the middle and low ranges, can perform tremolos without the fingering concerns of the wind instruments (movement II) and is able to help articulate the pizzicatos of the stringed instruments.

Details for Movement I, Psalm 97:2-6

The first movement uses a time signature of 3/8, is in the key of G major and is marked Andante, which when combined with the text creates a mood that is grandiose, confident and regal. Dvorak begins the work by introducing the primary motive that propels the movement. The motive is built on a C# half-diminished seventh chord, C# being the tritone of the key of G. Although Dvorak is often considered a composer who used the techniques of the past, by presenting the main motive in a distant or unrelated key (the tritone is as far as possible from the tonic key), he demonstrated his foresight to use techniques that were later employed by many 20th century composers. (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1.
This C# half-diminished 7th chord, in measure 1, is suspended and acts as a secondary leading tone (vii) chord to the D7 (dominant) chord in measure 10. That D7 chord again presents the motive and is suspended until measure 15. Here the work finally arrives at the tonic (G Major) and the motive is played for the third time (see Fig. 2).

Fig. 2.

In the orchestral version, each time the three-measure theme occurs (measures 1, 8, 15, 45), the winds, especially the horns, strengthen the lower range of the orchestra. The compositional gesture uses large leaps down, starting at the C# in the cellos to the G three and a half octaves lower in the basses. In the transcription, the trombones and tubas strengthen the cellos and basses respectively on these register changes. Because these repeating measures are without the voice, they provide an opportunity to showcase the wind orchestra’s dynamic strength. Scoring the measures for the entire ensemble at *forte* helps to convey “darkness and thunderclouds” in the text (see Fig. 3).
Fig. 3.

m. 43
In the orchestral version at measure 25, the accompaniment switches to the violas and cellos. In the transcription, this is accomplished by moving the parts to a solo trombone and euphonium while retaining the cellos in their original role. Marking the trombone and euphonium as “solo” allows the musicians to balance more easily with the vocalist (see Fig. 4).

Fig. 4.

The wind orchestra grows in intensity as it approaches measure 33. This one measure acts as the dynamic apex of the movement and uses the full wind orchestra. After the dynamic arrival, the instruments diminuendo, allowing the text by the vocal soloist to be heard (see Fig. 5). The movement ends with the primary motive combined with the same C# half-diminished seventh chord that was used in measure 1 (see Fig. 3).
Fig. 5.
Details for Movement II, Psalm 119:114, 115, 117, 120

The second movement uses the key of e minor, a 4/4 time signature and is marked *Andante*, which when combined with the text “In fear and trembling” and “Lord, I fear Thy judgment exceedingly” creates an uneasy and nervous mood. When Dvorak uses the relative major of G, the mood becomes relaxed and comforting, which parallels the text “Lord my shield, my refuge and hope” and “May my delight be all in Thy commandments ever.”

The orchestral version begins with a quartet, using two flutes and two clarinets, which can be directly employed in the wind orchestra transcription. However, in measure 4, the woodwind quartet switches to the string instruments, texturally contrasting the sections. To keep the contrast Dvorak intended, the wind orchestra transcription moves the string parts to the brass instruments, accompanied by the saxophones. The low brass instruments, emphasizing the trombones (historically used in church music), continue to accompany the sacred text “And in Thy word put I my trust” (see Fig. 6).
Fig. 6 (continued).

m. 7

A - vant from me ye who ev - il do prac - tise. Thy word is law and I will love the
A unique compositional tool used in the second movement is the tremolo. Tremolos are metered in the piano score, while Dvorak's orchestral transcription (and this wind orchestra transcription) employs both metered and unmetered tremolos. The string sections perform the tremolos in measure 19 of the orchestral score (see Fig. 7). These tremolos translate well to the lower clarinets and bassoons, as these instruments can perform tremolos more naturally than brass instruments (see Fig. 8). The woodwind instruments can maneuver the trill in a manner that supports the “fear and trembling” referred to in the text.

Fig. 7.
To finish the movement, Dvorak marked the trill motive *perdendosi*, meaning “to fade and die away.” In the transcription, the marimba, with hard mallets, was employed because the notes in the lower register are distinctly audible and the warmth of the instrument blends with the mood set by the text (“fear exceedingly”) (see Fig. 9).
The third movement is set in the key of B-flat, marked *Andante* and uses a 3/4 time signature, which creates relaxed a waltz. This movement has a stricter tempo, as the faster rhythms (eighth notes) under the melody lessen the amount of rubato possible. In measure 5 of the orchestral version, the violins and violas play these eighth notes. The trombones perform this rhythmic accompaniment in the wind orchestra transcription (see Fig. 10).

At measure 22, the first oboe replaces first violin playing in a high range with a *pianissimo* dynamic that balances well with the vocal soloist. To reinforce this countermelody, the second oboe and alto saxophones are added an octave lower. The horns are added to the rhythmic trombones to assist with the melodic swell (see Fig. 11).
At measure 42, the bassoons, bass clarinets, and contrabass clarinets continue the eighth-note rhythms; this change in instrumentation keeps the texture light enough to balance the voice’s melody and flute’s countermelody (see Fig. 12).
At measure 55, the movement intensifies by dividing the driving eighth notes into sixteenth notes, adding a crescendo, and rising in pitch. The gesture reverses at measure 58; the compound sixteenth notes quickly descend in pitch, and slow chords end the movement (see Fig. 13).
Fig. 13.

m. 55

string. cres

rit.

in tempo

poco a poco rit.
Details for Movement IV, Psalm 23:1-4

In the key of B major, with a 4/4 time signature, and marked *Andante*, the fourth movement has a free-flowing compositional style showing the introspective nature of the movement. The horns begin the work and introduce the *quasi recitative* vocal soloist (see Fig. 14).

Fig. 14.

The unique motive that occurs throughout the movement (measures 11, 19 and 30) is the ornamented eighth note combined with two sixteenth notes (see Fig. 15). The motive connects the verses of the psalm while assisting with the pastoral feeling of the text, “In the soft pastures green and beside waters clear.”

Fig. 15.
In the orchestral version, the strings are primarily used as chordal accompaniment. The melody is first given to the flute in measure 6, while the string sections play suspended chords. Assigning the string parts to the saxophone section keeps the accompaniment homogeneous while accenting the unique instruments available to the wind orchestra (see Fig. 16).

Fig. 16.

Using the key of A-flat major, a 4/4 time signature, and marked *Risoluto* *Maestoso*, Dvorák creates an energetic and march-like movement to bring *Biblical Songs* to a close. The fifth movement is similar to the first movement, beginning with a striking motive that returns throughout the work (measures 1, 11, 21, 31, 48). The motive is stated in the *forte* dynamic and then is repeated in the *piano* dynamic. As in the first movement, the vocalist rests during these exclamatory interludes enabling the entire wind orchestra to perform the motive with energy and at full volume (see Fig. 17).
The harp and triangle are only used in this movement; their unique colors bring brilliance to the ensemble sound. The marimba is transcribed to accent the harp and can be used instead of the harp if one is not available for performance (see Fig. 18).

Fig. 18.

In measures 42 to 48, the compound triplet eighth notes gradually grow in dynamic (from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*) and expand into higher and lower registers (see Fig. 19). The registers spread until measure 48 where it arrives in the tonic (A-flat). The repeating motive (see Fig. 17) then returns and presents multiple plagal cadences (IV to I), also known as the “Amen Cadence,” that gently closes the work reminding the listener of the sacred text, “Everyday I will bless Thy name and I shall sing to my Savior.”
APPENDIX

ANTONIN DVORAK’S BIBLICAL SONGS: WIND ORCHESTRA

TRANSCRIPTION SCORE
Meno mosso, quasi

Tempo I.

Trembled, Tremb - lang-ly waited on His word. Melt - mits melt like wax when they behold the
Lord, who is God of earth and heaven, when the Mighty One comes. The heart shall declare His righteousness and the
Piu mosso in tempo
**Biblical Songs**

**Mvt 2**

Psalm 119: 114, 115, 117, 120

Andante

legato

poco accel.
Lord, give me strength.
Keep me from evil. May my spirit be light with all Thy commandments ever. In fear and trembling I stand in Thy sight.
in tempo perdendosi
God and hide not Thy self from my an
B. Tuba
b

Ty.

Hear my prayer, oh hear my prayer. To the voice of my
I spake thus:

... fear of death lies heavy upon me and terror hath encompassed me. And thus I spake...
un poco piu mosso
Rit.
in tempo

poco a poco ritard
Biblical Songs
Mvt 4
Psalm 23: 1-4
Andante

Oh, my soul, is the Lord, I shall not want, shall want for nothing In the soft pastures green, and beside
where I shall glorify His lead-eth me.

He re-turns - eth my soul, leadeth me in the paths where I shall glorify His lead-eth me.
Et in saecula saeculorum, et in mortem et resurrectionem.

Even thought must walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil.
Biblical Songs
Mvt 5
Psalms 144, 145

Risoluto maestoso rit. in tempo
My name, and I shall sing to my love.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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Associate of Arts, Music, 2000
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