

Politics, Prayer, and Performance: Aspects of Harmony in Edvard Grieg's *Four Psalms*, Op. 74

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REA: A Journal of Religion, Education and the Arts, Issue 10, 'Sacred Music', 2016

On 19 December 1905, Edvard Grieg wrote to his colleague, the Danish composer and organist Gottfred Matthison-Hansen (1832–1909), and remarked:

I have completed some *Psalms* for mixed chorus *a cappella* and [baritone] solo; they are free arrangements of old Norwegian religious tunes. Would that I could find time one day to copy one of them for you. There is moving depth and sincerity in these old melodies that tempted me to make love to them' (Grieg 2000, 521).

These remarks are significant not just for what they reveal, but also what they conceal. Hidden from these observations is a complex discourse of overlapping influences, including historic folk tunes, sacred texts, national markers, and personal narratives.

Situated between competing notions of nationalism, Scandinavianism, and universalism, Grieg's *Four Psalms*, Op. 74 are wrought with polemics of identity that reflect the complex social climate of late nineteenth-century Norway. These works therefore raise many questions of belonging: How could Grieg bridge the gap between historical anachronisms and a modernist discourse? Moreover, how could he use textural and harmonic devices as a way to negotiate these turn-of-the-century tensions? Through a procedure I term *chromatic juxtapositioning*, I will demonstrate how Grieg created a polysemic musical language, which could appropriate difference as it mediated temporal boundaries. This study will thereby illustrate how Grieg's response to the cosmopolitan condition produced a creative symbiosis of disparate influences, which impart significant insights into his views on politics, prayer, and performance style.

The Politics of Appropriation: Grieg's Cosmopolitan Condition

Grieg's status as an icon of Norwegian identity was uncontested throughout his life. However, far less cited are his deeply held beliefs concerning the power of cosmopolitanism to resignify markers of national belonging as part of a transnational discourse. Along with his contemporaries such as the Norwegian author Arne Garborg (1851–1924) and the Australian pianist/composer Percy Grainger (1882–1961), he developed a cultural network that could contest insular claims of belonging afforded by popular strands of nationalism and instead promote a pluralistic approach to identity. Gerard Delanty has offered an extensive analysis of this process in his study *The Cosmopolitan Imagination: The Renewal of Critical Social Theory* by examining 'the intercivilizational dynamic by which civilizations interact and [...] undergo change' (Delanty 2009, 9). Such transformations arose in the contemporaneous language debate (*målstriden*) in which Norwegians deliberated between the choice of adopting a Danish-infused dialect of Norwegian (*riksmål*) that was widely used in urban centres, or purging their language from foreign influences and adopting a 'pure' language based upon rural dialects (*landsmål*). Grieg's attitudes toward this polemic were indicative of his long-standing cosmopolitan convictions, which prompted him to view these dynamic interactions as an opportunity to develop new aesthetic affiliations rather than a mandate to uphold provincial allegiances.

As a result, his aesthetic principles might be termed *cosmopolitan modernism* because he embraced a view that 'represents the immanent possibilities within modernity and which has often been contained within nationalism as an unrealized potential' (Delanty 2009, 19). In his evaluation of 'the dimensions and dynamics of cosmopolitanism', Delanty explains:

It is useful to distinguish three main dimensions of cosmopolitanism: the historical level of modernity, the macro or societal level of the interaction of societies or societal systems, and the micro level of identities, movements and communities within the social world. With regard to modernity, cosmopolitanism

arises when different modernities interact and undergo transformation, producing a new field of tensions within the project of modernity. The central animus within modernity [...] the self-transformative drive to re-make the world in the image of the self in the absence of absolute certainty—provides the basic direction for cosmopolitanism (Delanty 2009, 76).

The interaction of such diverse cohesive and divisive forces can be traced back in Grieg's correspondences to the 1880s. For instance, in his 1889 letter to the Danish musicologist Angul Hammerich (1848–1931), he outlined a personal transformation, noting: 'I have striven increasingly toward a broader and more universal view of my own individuality, a view influenced by the great currents of our time—that is, by the cosmopolitan movement' (Grieg 2001, 96–97). He also celebrated these characteristics in his contemporaries, such as the Danish composer Christian Horneman (1840–1906), about whom he wrote:

How often, verbally as well as in music, he has fought with the warmth of conviction for the universal against the parochial, for the cosmopolitan against the national one-sidedness. In other words: How often he has shown the attentive observer that he is one of those who [...] belongs to the future! (Grieg 2001, 218)

Moreover, these properties are acknowledged in his turn-of-the century works, about which he wrote to his biographer Henry T. Finck in 1900 stating: 'My new songs [Opp. 69 and 70], which will come out this fall and which are settings of texts by the Danish poet Otto Benzon, are thoroughly cosmopolitan in character' (Grieg 2000, 230). Collectively, Grieg's discourse illustrates the importance of universalism in his work as well as that of his colleagues. His consistent championing of these principles also acknowledges his awareness of shifting ideologies in Scandinavia.

Grieg's cosmopolitan lens would serve as the basis for developing a strategy to reveal the reflexive relationship between score and society. Thus, by reading his works as attempts to mediate the tensions between subaltern identities and the hegemonic powers of his day, Grieg's *Four Psalms* become representatives of the process by which detachment from national,

religious, and even pan-Scandinavian moorings could construct a new sense of belonging. Deconstructing Grieg's symbiotic formula can therefore serve as a way of correcting historical narratives of power by privileging the 'interaction of societal systems' that gave birth to cosmopolitanism in Norway. I will therefore trace the nature of Grieg's religious attitudes before offering an analysis of how the sacred domain came to interact with historical folk music and a progressive chromatic language for the purposes of creating a multidimensional aesthetic.

Sacred and Secular Affinities: Multivalent Reverberations as Modernist Testimony

Perhaps the most prominent element that distinguishes the *Four Psalms* from Grieg's other late works is their inescapable religious attribute. To a certain degree, these choral works fulfil an accepted norm in Scandinavian society by tapping into a deeply rooted practice of Pietism, which occupied Nordic regions as early as the sixteenth-century Reformation. Yet the situation in Norway was similar to other countries throughout the region wherein movements of Methodism, Catholicism, and Swedenborgianism prevented the practices of Pietism from taking a universal grip on society. Neil Kent has described the complex situation in his volume *The Soul of the North*:

The Lutheran church had [...] dominated all aspects of religious life since the Reformation, but, after the Constitution of 1874, complete freedom of religion was granted and Catholicism began to make inroads in Iceland in the early twentieth century. Yet, even before this date, the role of the Lutheran church seemed to be more social than religious, at least according to some visitors from abroad who commented that only women parishioners appeared to make up the congregations, attending church largely in order to exchange gossip and see friends (Kent 2001, 66).

Religious symbolism in art has therefore often been a sign of ambivalence rather than a marker of deeper spiritual truths. This was no less the case throughout Grieg's life. His admonition of the Protestant views that circulated widely throughout Scandinavia is summarised in a letter to

one of his former students and pastor, Thomas Ball Barratt, to whom he wrote in 1905 while composing his *Four Psalms*:

You say, 'Just try Jesus!' One can try a topcoat, but not Jesus. Our understanding of Jesus' personality, I repeat, is conditioned by our abilities. There is only one thing that we must *not* do: We must not play the hypocrite. The great spirit—the world-soul that we call God—has breathed into each human being a desire to bow before him, and I, too, do that in full measure as I calmly entrust myself to His care when I shall depart this life (Grieg 2000, 16–17).

Grieg's discourse also reveals an added layer in Norway's complex spiritual landscape: the influence of the Unitarian Church to which he was first exposed during his trips to England (Carley 2006, 168–69). He recounted the impact of these interactions nearly two decades later in his letter to the Swiss theologian Louis Monastier-Schroeder on 28 August 1907:

During a visit to England in 1888 I was attracted to the Unitarian views, and in the nineteen years that have passed since then I have held to them. All the sectarian forms of religion that I have been exposed to since have not succeeded in making any impression on me. Pure science? As a means it is excellent, but as an end—at least for me—it is completely unsatisfying. I must retain the concept of God, even if this altogether too often comes in conflict with the concept of prayer (Grieg 2000, 540).

Though the influence of the Unitarians was not widespread in the Nordic countries, its central principles, including the eschewal of the Holy Trinity, the endorsement of intellectual freedom, and the embrace of benevolent deity all served Grieg's universal ambitions. As a result, the Unitarian reliance on social reform strongly influenced his reactions to the broad-minded cosmopolitan currents that circulated throughout the Scandinavian Peninsula.

These views also brought him nearer to the broadminded philosophies of the Norwegian poet Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832–1910) even as they maintained disagreements over the language debate. Grieg recorded his thoughts in his diary entry on 1 November 1906:

As a Unitarian I am close to Bjørnson's position, but I do not quite understand his concept of god. [God as] a primal power is all well and good, but to be able to see a great love behind its inexorable manifestations (cause and effect), which

look a bit like the work of an evil demon—that is the big trick, the big question, and the big dividing line between many freeborn, truthseeking people (Grieg 2001, 148–49).

Similar views were revealed even earlier in his letter to Bjørnson on 14 September 1897 in which he responded to the rupture between faith, nationalism, and individualism:

Ah, these Swedes! How they sang “Yes, we love this land” at the station upon our departure from Stockholm! God help me, I began to believe it was true! It is as you say: We have nothing to fear from the people—the Swedish people, I mean. For our worst enemies are among ourselves. Everything, everything is divided. No, it’s too crazy, the whole mess. And then this clergy that crushes every tender shoot that appears! There is just one thing that all of us should do: resign from the state church, this lizard that in view of its complete impotence has nothing to stab with but a poisonous stinger. There is something in me that could become a criminal if I didn’t choose to avoid that repulsive creature (Grieg 2000, 134).

The search for aesthetic, temporal, and even spiritual cohesiveness within an environment shaped by discontinuities heavily influenced his writing of his *Four Psalms* and led to a distinctive formulation of modernism. In his recent volume *Out of Time: Music and the Making of Modernity*, Julian Johnson notes, ‘To be modern is to be pulled in two opposing directions. It is to be separated from the past by a catastrophic break (to be too late) while at the same time to scan the horizon for the future for the new (to be too early)’ (Johnson 2015, 96).

These forces obtained throughout Grieg’s career and are exposed by the failure of critics to recognise his modernist struggles, which were recorded in his diary entry on 21 March 1906:

Everything has one negative point. What hurt me was that the *Norwegian Peasant Dances* [Op. 72] didn’t strike home as they should have. I played them with all the affection and magic I could muster. But—where my development as a composer has now led me, I don’t have my own people with me, and that is hard to bear. Here they always draw heavily on works from my youth, which on suitable occasions are praised at the expense of my recent ones. But—I must not let that hinder me. I hope that I can continue to develop as long as I live. That is my fondest wish. The understanding of the general public will come in due course (Grieg 2001, 114).

Grieg's testimony verifies a splintering of affinities that Johnson has elsewhere characterised as a 'bifurcated temporal identity' (53). Contributing to this sense of temporal stratification in these choral works is the mixed national and religious origins of the hymns that he borrowed. Like many of the cultural ties between Norway and Denmark, the two countries shared a common hymnal dating back to the seventeenth century. As Beryl Foster describes:

In Norway the argument about which hymns to use in church, the so-called *salmensangstrid*, lasted for a hundred years from 1835, when the Norwegian authorities decided that a Norwegian hymn book was called for, rather than the Danish ones in use up to then, and by royal decree this was to be the only book used in Norwegian churches. The task of compiling the new book fell to Ole Andreas Lindeman, who finished it in 1838. His son, L. M. Lindeman [...] was already unhappy with the melodies used in church; many of the congregation knew one tune or another, but not necessarily the same one. He believed that the traditional Norwegian melodies could be utilised and in 1848 applied for a grant to travel to the areas where he thought he would find suitable material, intending to publish a definitive version which the congregations would accept (Foster 1999, 156–57).

Lindeman succeeded in recording many folk tunes throughout Norway, especially those by the Danish writer Hans Adolph Brorson (1694–1764), which Grieg adapted for his *Four Psalms*. Grieg turned to Lindeman's numerous transcriptions for inspiration throughout his career, including his monumental *Ballade*, Op. 24 and his *Album for Mandssang*, Op. 30. In every case, however, Grieg juxtaposes these symbols from the past with a modernist vision that seeks to invert the nationalist agenda by opening up a pluralistic discourse. The widespread appeal of these hymns, Grieg believed, could create a transcendent cosmopolitan aesthetic that could speak to more than one audience, in more than one location, in more than one epoch.

Because Grieg's compositional procedures maintained causal connections to the cultural and political issues of his epoch, I will offer a reading that mediates the bifurcation of his temporal identity, the cosmopolitan resonance of his universal philosophy, and the compositional language that served as the sinew between these factions. A series of select analyses will serve as representative illustrations of how Grieg's harmonic language embodied the complexities of

his social discourse and the methods by which the choral medium became a tool for performing a multilayered identity.

Harmonic Language as Social Discourse: Performing Identity in the *Four Psalms*

Example 1 (below) presents an overview of the construction of the *Four Psalms*. Each individual setting is based upon a melody from Lindeman’s folk-song collection. The texts represent adaptations of biblical passages by Scandinavian authors from Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. Moreover, the harmonic language is organised such that Psalms 2 and 3 share closely related keys (two-flat key signatures) and Psalms 1 and 4 are in the disparate keys of A minor and B major respectively. In addition, Grieg uses a four-part (soprano-alto-tenor-bass) setting throughout each work in the collection and employs a baritone solo for poignant interjections. The interplay between ensemble and soloist takes on important hermeneutic implications in each work and places texture alongside harmony as a symbol of his modernist course.

Example 1: Overview of Grieg’s Four Psalms

Four Psalms	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3	No. 4
Title	<i>Hvad est du dog skjøn</i> (“How beautiful you are”)	<i>Guds Søn har gjort mig fri</i> (“God’s Son has set me free”)	<i>Jesus Kristus er opfaren</i> (“Jesus Christ has risen”)	<i>I himmelen</i> (“In heaven”)
Text Author	Brorson	Brorson	Thomissøn	Laurinus
Country of Origin (text)	Denmark	Denmark	Denmark	Sweden: Swedish <i>KoralPsalmebok</i> ; Norway: Landstad’s <i>Kirkesalmebok</i>
Folk Tune Origin	Lindeman, No. 376 (Telemark region)	Lindeman, No. 138 (Hitterdal, Telemark)	Lindeman, No. 327 (Valdres region)	Lindeman, No. 326 (Hitterdal, Telemark)
Form	Strophic	Strophic	Strophic	Strophic
Primary Key Areas	A minor- E major- A minor	B-flat major- B-flat minor- B-flat major	G minor- B-flat major- G minor	B major- F# major- B major
Arrangement	SATB + Baritone Solo	SATB + Baritone Solo	SATB + Baritone Solo	SATB + Baritone Solo

Turning more closely to the first psalm, *Hvad est du dog skjønn* ('How beautiful you are'), Percy Grainger's translation from the 1925 Peters' Edition (Example 2) reveals a text based upon *The Song of Solomon* 2:14. Grieg responds to the text by beginning the song with an ethereal six-bar introduction, which serves as dominant preparation for the tonic (A minor). The bass and tenor voices issue an ostinato chant on open fifths (A-E), which speaks to religious practices extending back to an immemorial past. They are joined by the upper voices on C and E in the following bar to complete the tonic harmony before the baritone solo enters at the upbeat to bar 9 (Example 3). However, the soloist's melody does not comply with the A minor tonic; it emphasises the dominant E major region through its melodic oscillation [E-F#-G#-A-B]. The preservation of the raised sixth and seventh scale degrees when descending prevents a resolution to the melodic minor scale and thereby prevents integration to the realm signified by the choir. In turn, the opposing forces of integration and fragmentation come into focus on the fourth beat of bar 10, where the sopranos take over the baritone line amidst a new harmonic realisation. The tension created by the soloist subsequently dissipates when the collective identity appropriates the melodic line at bar 12.

Example 2: First psalm. English Translation by Percy Grainger

How fair is Thy face,
 Yea fair, yea fair,
 Thou Son of God, Thou Prince of Grace!
 O Thou my Shulamite, sweet and kind,
 Yea kind, yea kind,
 All that I have is also Thine.

My Friend, Thou art mine,
 Yea mine, yea mine;
 For evermore let me be Thine.
 Thou canst me save, canst me save,
 Yea save, yea save,
 Both here on earth and 'yond the grave.

Remember my plight,
 Yea plight, yea plight;
 Around me hostile swords flash bright.
 Fly hither, Dove of Grace, Dove of Grace,
 Apace, apace!
 Among the rocks are peace and space.

Example 3:
 'How fair is Thy face,'
 bars 7–12

This process of turning to folk material for the purpose of unlocking its harmonic potential is indicative of Grieg's procedure of chromatic juxtapositioning, which occurs when a diatonic melody is set against a backdrop of chromaticism. In just this first exposition, chromatic juxtapositioning gives rise to an eclectic musical environment. The ostinato pattern in the choir serves as both a folk-like device and an allusion to sacred chant, which is enhanced by its limited range and stepwise motion. At the same time, the dissonant counterpoint maximizes the dramatic tension between choir and soloist. Grieg's predilection for bold contrasts is exhibited through the alternation of contrapuntal and dissonant passages with sections of harmonic stability and limited textural contrasts. Moreover, these contradictions are highlighted by the alternating functions of the soloist. At times, the baritone distinguishes itself from the collective chant and represents a

heightened sense of self-consciousness; elsewhere it loses its autonomous identity and is dissolved into the choir.

The contradictions set forth by the dynamic interaction of the choir and soloist create what Johnson has characterised elsewhere as ‘a ringing musical universe of altered copies, a live dialogue of musical statements and refracted answers’ (Johnson 2015, 176). The function of these copies, Johnson contends, ‘has often foregrounded spatial relations and made their exploration integral to music form’. He subsequently concludes:

Just as the subject of modernity is caught between the contradictory pull of time, between being too late and being too early, so it also finds itself tugged in the spatial co-ordinates of modernity. Between an always inadequate here and the elusive promise of elsewhere, modernity becomes becalmed in the emptiness of nowhere. The response of the subject to this spatial dissonance is a restlessness that goes to the heart of music’s metaphysics (Johnson 2015, 177).

This narrative operates on many levels in Grieg’s *Four Psalms*. The lack of high-art traditions in Norway created a temporal lag in the aesthetic domain while its delayed political unification enshrined a feeling of lateness that stretched across constituent cultural boundaries. Yet Grieg’s ‘self-consciousness of the new’ (Johnson 2015, 57), codified by his efforts to transcend the historical nature of his subject, places him in a category ‘too early’ by virtue of his experimental prowess.

As we have seen, these critical concerns led to a break in the ties between the composer’s intention and the audiences’ reception, which only complicated the integration of the cosmopolitan condition in Norway. Nevertheless, the establishment of distance from his subject allowed Grieg to cultivate what Amanda Anderson has recognised as ‘a delicate mixture of appropriation and opposition’ that is intrinsic to cosmopolitanism in literature (Anderson 2001, 58). Anderson further contends that cosmopolitanism has the power to reconcile modernity and tradition as it challenges ‘the assumption that nationalistic or imperialistic ideologies persistently

prevail’ in the work of nineteenth-century artists (Anderson 2001, 21). Grieg’s *Four Psalms* belong to the same category of ambivalence that creates a critical level of detachment from national and religious markers. This process is substantiated in the first psalm, throughout which Grieg projects the incongruities in texture and harmony into deeper layers of development by preserving the dual processes of repetition and contrast. Thus, the subsequent return of the opening material at bar 54 (Example 4) offers a reminder of the initial ostinato motive, but it is transformed into the parallel major mode in order to emphasise the text, “Prince of Grace!”. And while the arrival at A major suggests a harmonic and dramatic resolution of residual tensions, the solo motive that enters on the fourth beat of bar 55—now restored with its original texture of soloist plus choir—is presented in a modal guise (E-F-G-A-B-flat). The overarching form created by this interaction can thereby be read as an unfolding of the properties of both cyclical return and linear projection.

Example 4: First psalm, bars 54–57

54

How fair is Thy face, yea fair, yea fair

Grace!

How fair is Thy face, how fair Thy face, yea fair, yea fair yea

Grace! How fair, how fair is Thy face, how fair Thy face, yea fair, yea fair. My

But how can we interpret the function of Grieg’s procedure of chromatic juxtapositioning as a marker of his cosmopolitan condition? Johnson again provides an example of parallel significance when he observes how Chopin’s waltzes and mazurkas ‘often contrast two opposing styles in the same short piece—an archaic, collective, Polish identity on the one hand, and

something more modern, individual, and cosmopolitan on the other' (Johnson 2015, 223). In Grieg's first psalm, opposing styles emerge through the juxtaposition of an archaic, collective allusion to religious ritual, and an individual response to turn-of-the-century anxieties, marked by the dislocation between harmonic spheres. The splintering of affinities underscores both an inherent paradox and a realm of new possibilities in Grieg's modernist discourse.

Johnson also reminds us that this schism is symptomatic of a process that unfolded over the course of the nineteenth century when he refers to the extent to which 'our social identities are constructed through our performance of them' (Johnson 2015, 261). Throughout the *Four Psalms*, Grieg constructs a complex social identity by testifying to both the autonomous nature of the individual, exemplified by the harmonic tensions created by the soloist, and the collective powers of society, which seek to homogenise the individual into the collective whole. Grieg's procedure of chromatic juxtapositioning mediates these forces by harnessing a level of subjectivity that seeks to break through the firmament of nationalist ideology. Thus, as the soloist seeks to distinguish itself from the choir's chant, he is continually pulled back in, only to re-emerge transformed later in the work. This process is akin to what Johnson calls

the central paradox of modernity [...because] the autonomous self is a negotiation between collective forms (laws, languages, institutions) and individual acts through which a subjective defines itself. [...] This is the double-bind of modern art, located in its imperative to explore the irreducible particularity of the subject but to do so in communal form. But the expression of hypersubjectivity risks falling into a private language and becoming opaque to a wider, shared understanding (Johnson 2015, 233).

Indeed, Grieg was aware of these risks due to the critical failure of his self-professed 'cosmopolitan songs', opp. 69 and 70. Yet, by giving reference to the local in music, the 'wider, shared understanding' that he hoped to achieve emerges through the universalising discourse of

the psalm texts and constitutes ‘the self-transformative drive to re-make the world in the image of the self in the absence of absolute certainty’ (Delanty, see above).

Embedded in this process of signifying is ‘an ongoing dialectic of community and modern temporality’, which Michael P. Steinberg locates in the music of nineteenth-century figures who similarly engaged the sacred realm in order to define ‘a new cultural identity in music’ (Steinberg 2004, 103–104). As a result, Steinberg contends,

the antitheatricality of the Requiems of Brahms, Verdi, and Dvořák can be understood according to the distinction between performativity and performance. These works are performative but they are not really performances. This distinction is crucial to the status as critiques of ideology—nationalist or clerical—as opposed to their incorporation into ideology. They are performative [...] in that they produce, enact, the collectivity they refer to, rather than perform it in the image or name of external authority (Steinberg 2004, 166).

While Grieg’s *Four Psalms* do not belong to the same genre, they do embody the same performative powers precisely because of their ability to critique both national and religious authority. In contradistinction to the popular reception of his works, Grieg unleashes these symbols from their constituent categories and creates a new space of utterance that realigns the relationship between self and Other. Steinberg further explains that, in a modern political ‘imagined community’,

as identity and national identity become increasingly indistinct, collective subjectivity is attached to a popular voice that insists on an outsider status to the voice of the nation. Brahms called his Requiem German and Verdi wrote his to commemorate a hero of the Risorgimento. But the nations in question are never named from within the works. Thus Brahms’ label “ein deutsches Requiem” is uncorroborated from within the work itself, where the sacred pulls the frame of reference out beyond the nation (Steinberg 2004, 167).

Similarly, through an ontological shift, Grieg translates centuries-old folk tunes into a modern setting that—as with Brahms and Verdi—does not point to the nation, but to a wider source of

identity. Because of this dynamic process, the ambivalent nature of Grieg's style pulls the frame of reference beyond its Lutheran roots and submits a subjective, individual view of spirituality.

This view is evidenced most acutely in an excerpt from the second psalm, which has been interpreted in a variety of ways but rarely with regard to the manner in which subjectivity enacts the performance of social identity. Furthermore, as in the first psalm, the interaction of soloist and choir becomes the central focus for projecting the reflexive relationship between self and Other, which embodies the modern paradox that Johnson referred to as 'the irreducible particularity of the subject [...] in communal form'. The work is divided into three distinct sections, the second of which is marked by a shift in focus from the world of sin and despair to the promise of redemption with the text 'But now I'm in God's care'. This transition at bar 36 is one of the most profound moments in the *Four Psalms*, which Grieg distinguishes through multiple devices, including a caesura, an increase in chromaticism, a shift to an antiphonal texture, and disparate key signatures between soloist (B-flat major) and choir (B-flat minor).

Tranquillo Example 5: Second psalm, bars 36–43

Baritone Solo 36

Small Chorus or solo-quartet

But now I'm in God's care, in

But now I'm in God's care, now I'm in God's

40

spite of Sa - tan's snare; no

care, in spite of Sa - tan's snare; I

* shift to major mode

This last element, illustrated in Example 5, has garnered the attention of Beryl Foster, who has noted:

The most interesting and unusual feature of the piece is the middle strophe, where the accompaniment, now scored for solo male quartet or small male-voice choir and marked *Tranquillo*, is in B flat *minor*, while the baritone soloist blithely remains in B flat *major*. This bitonality—unique in Grieg’s output—is reminiscent of twentieth-century composers such as Holst and Stravinsky. The baritone has the folk-song melody as it has already been heard, although now the phrases are separated from one another by the space of one bar or more. The minor key creates a wonderful false relation (bar 42) between the A natural in the second tenor line and the A flat in the first bass (Foster 1999, 163–64).

While Foster calls attention to the dramatic cross-relation, which arises through half-step inflections of the inner voices, an even more significant detail is omitted in her analysis: Grieg frequently avoids a major/minor conflict within the tonic key by consistently employing a D-natural in the chorus. Indeed, the cadential material in measures 41, 43, and 52 confirms the lasting grip of B-flat major. The only structural cadence in B-flat minor occurs at the end of the middle section (bars 90–94), which transpires only after the soloist has dropped out (Example 6). Most significantly, throughout the entirety of the *Tranquillo* section, the prevalence of D-natural is accompanied by frequent inflections of A-natural and B-natural, thus weakening the integrity of the B-flat minor system and its purported polarity with the parallel major.

Example 6: Second psalm, bars 90–94

90

For now I'm in God's care.

mf

For now I'm in God's care.

p

For now I'm in God's care.

pp

For now I'm in God's care, for now I'm in God's care.

p

pp

* shift to minor mode

As a result, Grieg's simultaneous use of different key signatures functions not as a catalyst of conventional bitonality, but as a manifold employment of chromatic juxtapositioning. From a formal perspective, the patent diatonicism of bars 1–35 and 95–140 is sharply contrasted by the chromatic material of the central section, which creates a sense of dislocation from the stable collectivity of the flanking outer regions. From a textural perspective, the interaction of soloist and choir offers a clash of temporalities that, as Steinberg illustrates in Grieg's contemporaries, pulled the frame of reference beyond the nation. Example 7 illustrates how, within this period of displacement, Grieg integrates the competing languages of diatonicism and chromaticism by blurring the boundaries between soloist and choir. Thus, by employing chromatic juxtapositioning in both the formal and textural design, Grieg formulates what Dahlhaus more accurately described as 'harmonic sophistication, brought about by tonally integratable dissonances, [which] comes close to splitting the piece into unrelated "layers," creating a bitonal dichotomy between the late-romantic chromaticism and modal folk melody' (Dahlhaus 1991, 310). The type of bitonality to which Dahlhaus refers is not one of a harmonic nature (that Foster describes), but rather one of rhetorical significance. As such, the bifurcation of soloist and choir (and the disparate forces of annunciation they represent) creates a cosmopolitan network of belonging and disarms the power of folk tunes to function as exclusive markers.

Example 7:
Second psalm,
bars 58–62

The musical score for Example 7 consists of three staves. The top staff is a single melodic line in 2/4 time, starting at bar 58. It is annotated with a bracket labeled "diatonic melody" above it. The lyrics for this staff are: "grieve. Let Mam-mon not ex- pect to find me e'er a-gain so_ weak, so blind." The middle staff is a piano accompaniment in 2/4 time, with lyrics: "leave and leave_ all sin_ for - get_ to grieve._ Let". The bottom staff is a bass line in 2/4 time, with annotations "Bb-I" at the beginning and "I" at the end. A bracket below the bottom staff is labeled "chromatic descent - 'grief'" and covers the final three measures. The bottom staff contains the numbers "7 - 6" under the first three measures of the chromatic descent.

Above all, these contrasting signatures confirm the bitemporal nature of the inter-civilisational dynamic—to borrow Delanty’s term—that Grieg sought to enshrine in music. In this manner, the disparate key signatures also function as a visio-cultural indicator for the performers. But these symbols only convey an *illusion of distance* because the confirmation of B-flat major afforded by each structural cadence leading up to bar 90 thwarts any attempt to migrate to a different harmonic realm. This contradiction is representative of the very paradox that Johnson recognises as the hallmark of modernity. As a result, Grieg decentres hegemonic identities in favour of an in-betweenness that enunciates a novel expressive space.

Reading Keys, Reading Affiliations: Decentring Identity in Grieg’s *Four Psalms*

In passages throughout the *Four Psalms*, Grieg reveals how a break in ideological coherence can serve not as a problem to be overcome, but as a creative potential to be exploited. This central tenet is brought into greater focus by his response to the cosmopolitan condition that circulated throughout Norway at the end of the nineteenth century. Grieg’s attempt to reconcile his opposing political and spiritual affiliations emerges through a juxtaposition of different harmonic realms, which are brought into a new relationship through the symbolic interaction of religious, national, and personal signifiers. These features firmly place Grieg’s work into the lineage of those composers identified by Michael P. Steinberg who have conflated the salience of sacred and secular identities through an appeal to individual subjectivity. In so doing, Grieg sets the stage for the future by unleashing the proprietary bonds imposed on folk material and placing Lindeman’s tunes within an unbounded temporal space. In short, processes such as chromatic juxtaposition provided the necessary sinew to bridge the gap between historical anachronisms and a modernist discourse. The resulting semiotic network endows the work of art with a

multitude of performative properties. In his preface to the collection, Percy Grainger explains how the *Four Psalms*

achieve dramatic power through vigorous counterpoint, rich expressive chromaticism, sometimes bold harmonies which anticipate the most modern choral styles. Yet an underlying simplicity expresses deep reverence at all times. Each psalm is large enough to stand alone if desired; together they form a significant major work with colourful contrasts. Appropriate for general liturgical use or concert performance [...] In order to extract the full richness of choral contrasts inherent in these scores conductors should endeavour to stimulate [...] a gamut of vocal variety (Grainger 1925).

Indeed, not only can the *Four Psalms* be performed in different spaces, they also *create* different spaces through the procedure of chromatic juxtapositioning.

While Grieg was not a prolific composer of choral works, his decision to turn to the choral medium in his last published works underscores the value he placed on the power of music to formulate identities distinguishable from the accepted norm of national belonging. Yet, by employing the baritone soloist as a tool for creating difference, he also enshrines the interdependence of individual and collective affinities as a unique response to the cosmopolitan condition. By deconstructing hegemonic authority, emphasising the interdependence of societal components within existing modalities, and rethinking identity categories, Grieg's *Four Psalms* challenge performers to forge an identity in ways that incorporate simplicity within complexity, universality within nationality, and collectivity within individuality. In turning to centuries-old sacred texts, Grieg defuses the exclusiveness of the national project of which he was a part in Norway. At the same time, he instantiates a process that Steinberg locates in the contemporary symphonies of Mahler as a 'divided consciousness' that is 'composed of the present and the past, of everyday life and history' (Steinberg 2004, 234). The *Four Psalms* thereby remain significant in their challenge to performers to articulate this divided conscious, which equally radiates between the acrimonious force of politics, redemptive power of prayer, and transformative role

of choirs to perform a hybrid identity that preserves the dynamisms of both belonging and dislocation.

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