LOVE, LUST, AND LUNACY



The Bible in the Modern World, 29

Series Editors
J. Cheryl Exum, Jorunn Økland and Stephen D. Moore

Editorial Board

Alison Jasper, Tat-siong Benny Liew,
Hugh Pyper, Caroline Vander Stichele

DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my artist father David Leneman (1906–1974), whose beautiful art has graced the covers of my books.

His love of life, art, the Bible, and music have been a continual inspiration to me.

Love, Lust, and Lunacy

THE STORIES OF SAUL AND DAVID IN MUSIC

Helen Leneman



Sheffield Phoenix Press 2010

Copyright © 2010 Sheffield Phoenix Press

Published by Sheffield Phoenix Press Department of Biblical Studies, University of Sheffield, 45 Victoria Street, Sheffield S3 7QB UK

www.sheffieldphoenix.com

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage or retrieval system, without the publishers' permission in writing.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Typeset by ISB Typesetting
Printed on acid-free paper by Lightning Source UK Ltd, Milton Keynes

ISBN 978-1-907534-06-5 (hardback)

ISSN 1747-9630

Contents

List of Musical Figures Preface Acknowledgments	vii ix xi
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 On Music and Literary Analysis	3
Chapter 2 The Composers and the Works	16
Chapter 3 Saul's Youth, before David (1 Samuel 8–15)	51
Chapter 4 Saul's and David's Stories Overlap, Part I (1 Samuel 16–17)	64
Chapter 5 Saul's and David's Stories Overlap, Part II (1 Samuel 18–22)	101
Chapter 6 Saul's and David's Stories Overlap, Part III (1 Samuel 24–26)	151
Chapter 7 Saul Visits the Necromancer of Endor (1 Samuel 28)	176
Chapter 8 Deaths of Saul and Jonathan, and David's Rise to Power (1 Samuel 31, 2 Samuel 1)	215
Chapter 9 David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11–12)	272
Chapter 10 David's Later Story: Tamar, Absalom, and the Death of David (2 Samuel 13–19, 1 Kings 1–2)	320

Conclusion	370
Appendix 1	
CHARTING THE MUSICAL RETELLINGS	371
Appendix 2	
Annotated Music Bibliography	378
Appendix 3	
LITERARY AFTERLIVES	384
Glossary of Musical Terms	386
Bibliography of Musical Works	389
Bibliography	391
Index	397

LIST OF MUSICAL FIGURES

Chapter 3	Fig.		
	1	Parry: Evil spirit	5′
	2	Gabriel: Saul	60
Chapter 4			
•	3	Gabriel: Saul	69
	4	Testi: Saul	8
	5	Parry: David	8′
	6	Brown: Goliath	90
Chapter 5			
-	7	Reissiger: 'Duettino'	113
	8	Parry: David–Michal	119
	9	Buzzi: David–Michal	12:
	10	Brown: David–Michal	133
	11	Nielsen: Saul	130
	12	Nielsen: David-Michal	139
	13	Milhaud: David–Jonathan	144
	14	Testi: Jonathan	140
Chapter 6			
•	15	Parry: Saul	15'
	16	Buzzi: Saul–Michal	16
	17	Buzzi: Quintet	163
	18	Nielsen: Jonathan–Michal	160
Chapter 7	('Wit	tch of Endor')	
•	19	Hiller	184
	20	Parry	19
	21	Gabriel	194
	22	Honegger	190
	23	Nielsen	199
	24	Milhaud	202
	25	Tal	200
	26	Tal	208
	27	Testi	212

Chapter 8		
2	8 Buzzi: Michal	241
2	244	
3	0 Brown: Lament	250
3	1 Nielsen: Saul's Curse	255
3	2 Milhaud: David's Lament	258
3	261	
3-	4 Milhaud: Michal Confronts David	266
3	5 Testi: Finale	270
Chapter 9		
3	6 Milhaud: <i>Bathsheba</i>	290
3	7 Milhaud: David to Bathsheba	292
3	8 Laderman: <i>Bathsheba</i>	298
3	9 Laderman: <i>Bathsheba</i>	302
4	0 Laderman: <i>David</i>	303
4	1 Laderman: <i>Uriah</i>	305
4	2 Laderman: David's Lament	312
4	3 Laderman: Finale	317
Chapter 10		
4	4 Tal: Amnon	339
4	5 Tal: Tamar and Amnon	340
4	6 Tal: Absalom	342
4	7 Reissiger: <i>Lament</i>	344
4	8 Honegger: Alleluia	357
4	9 Milhaud: Abishag	362

PREFACE

When I set out to explore musical settings of the books of Samuel, I was determined to focus exclusively or mainly on the women: Michal, Abigail, Bathsheba, possibly Abishag. I had read extensive commentary on these women, and had many ideas of my own. I approached Professors David Clines and Cheryl Exum of Sheffield Phoenix Press with a book proposal in Vienna during the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, in the summer of 2007. They had published my first book, *The Performed Bible: The Story of Ruth in Opera and Oratorio*, a few months earlier. They enthusiastically accepted my proposal on the spot, on the condition that it be written in the same format as the previous book.

I started work on this book immediately on my return to Rome, where I was living at the time. Most of the book was written while I was living in a village in the Swiss vineyards, near Geneva. When I started studying librettos and musical scores, I realised a book about the women in Samuel would be a slim volume indeed, so sparse was their representation. Michal actually plays a large role in virtually all the works I studied, but only as a prop to David and Saul, and not in her own right. She is sometimes a passionate lover (Nielsen) or a nagging wife (Milhaud), but more often just another pretty voice. Bathsheba is hardly ever represented in musical settings, most of which end with Saul's death. Abigail and Abishag appear only in Milhaud's opera, which includes far more biblical scenes than any other work I have found.

I began to find Saul the most fascinating character in the story, followed closely by David. These are portraits of complex, three-dimensional human beings with ambivalent feelings and motivations. Librettists and composers understood this complexity and ambivalence, and filled in the blanks left by the biblical writer in stirring and compelling ways.

My main source for musical scores while living abroad was the British Library. In addition, I did research at the University of California in Los Angeles, the Boston Public Library, and Tulane University in New Orleans. I wish to thank the librarians at those institutions for their helpfulness. The greatest amount of material that is discussed in this book can be found at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. I have now moved back to Washington D.C., but not in time to do more extensive research. This in part explains the 'Annotated bibliography' included here; many works discussed

in that Appendix were found and studied only in the final stages of writing this volume.

I wish to thank Professors David Clines and Cheryl Exum of Sheffield Phoenix Press for their continued support and enthusiasm for my work, both for my previous volume *The Performed Bible* and for this one.

I could never have written this book without the constant, unflagging support—both emotional and technical—of my partner Dr Sima Lieberman. She patiently read and commented on every page, offering special insights and prodding me to always think outside the box.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Professor Jeremy Dibble for his lengthy and helpful remarks about C.H.H. Parry. I thank Professor Christopher Brown for providing me with both a private CD and full score of his oratorio. I thank the Rome Opera for giving me the full score of Flavio Testi's opera. I thank the Hamburg Northern German broadcast service (Norddeutscher Rundfunk) for providing me with an extremely rare recording of Milhaud's opera. And I thank the anonymous friend of a friend of a friend in New York who provided me with a recording of the original performance of Laderman's opera.

Introduction: Love, Lust, and Lunacy

These three attributes and emotions—love, lust, and lunacy--run through the books of Samuel like *Leitmotifs*. They captured the imagination and inspired librettists and composers of every era to set different parts of the books of Samuel to music. In this book I will illustrate how librettos and music can alter or enhance our response to Michal's, Jonathan's, David's, and possibly Abigail's love, David's (and in some cases, Bathsheba's) lust, and Saul's lunacy.

The later life of biblical stories is complex and fascinating, and can be quite revealing of the societies that read them. The 'elastic, complex, ambiguous stories' continue to provoke readers to interpret them in ways that may dramatically illustrate their own agendas (Frymer-Kensky 2002: 348-9). Interpretations of the Samuel narratives vary, and most can be supported by certain elements in the text. The most imaginative retellings are usually based on the most ambiguous parts of the biblical text. In other words, the greatest amount of gap-filling is done to fill the largest gaps.

When we consider the richness and diversity of re-tellings of this story in other media, we might be tempted to see the original biblical story as 'little more than a sketch for innumerable orchestrations or realizations of the story' (Clines 1991: 61). Novelists and poets (and librettists) are not required to restrict themselves to pure interpretation, anchored in the text. Their speculation often draws our attention to gaps in the narrative that more 'scholarly' interpreters may not have noticed, while also providing interesting suggestions about filling these gaps (Clines 1991: 62). At the same time, they do not deviate so far from the original texts as to not be recognizable to the audience and readers. This book will highlight imaginative gap-filling in librettos and music.

My focus is on the characters from 1 and 2 Samuel who are encountered in musical works discussed in this book. This book is not concerned with dating of the texts, debates about different versions of the same story, or social, historical or political settings of the different events. My interest here is in what we can glean of the characters through the biblical text, and what recent and ancient commentators had to say about them. In some ways the biblical story is used as a palimpsest by many librettists. The story is about leaders and political intrigue, universally recognized themes used by writers and librettists as a frame on which to place their own national

history, or stories of kings or other rulers. I do not deal with the aspect of social history, because that focus would require far more than one volume to describe these numerous musical settings. It is a worthwhile endeavor, however, that hopefully other scholars will consider studying.

My discussion throughout this book will centre on how the biblical portraits of these characters are altered by the librettos and music from how they appear in the original narrative. A chart will indicate which biblical incidents are included in which musical works, clarifying which are the most and least commonly depicted. Scenes that are altered or expanded will also be discussed (Appendix 1).

I will begin each chapter with a discussion of the biblical text, as the starting point and inspiration for the musical works.

Contents: A Summary

Chapter 1 introduces the themes of love, lust, and lunacy in the books of Samuel. In the first part, I discuss music's ability to suggest emotions and character traits that can only be read between the lines of a text. The second part is a brief literary analysis of the main characters, highlighting the three main themes in the title of this book.

Chapter 2 introduces the composers and the works. Chapters 3–10 all follow the same format:

- A summary of the biblical chapters indicated;
- Commentary on those chapters;
- Discussion of the musical works (in chronological order) that set these biblical chapters to music.

Listeners cannot remain unmoved by the portrayals found in these musical works. They will hate, pity, or fear Saul, be afraid for David, embrace Michal's passion. The biblical characters cross the stage as if behind a scrim, in silhouette, leaving behind more questions than answers. In these operas and oratorios, the scrim has been raised by their writers, revealing the characters in vivid colours, living, loving, lusting, and mourning in full expression of their humanity.

The librettos may contradict traditional versions or interpretations, but the music makes the words real and the actions convincing. Familiarity with these operas and oratorios will allow the reader to go back to the books of Samuel and visualise the scenes leaping off the pages. The themes of love, lust, and lunacy run through the story, and the music gives each its own tune.

Chapter 1

On Music and Literary Analysis

Prologue: Why Music?

I discuss music throughout this book as a form of midrash or retelling. Music has the ability to delineate emotions beyond what mere words can do. Certain musical elements evoke an almost universal response: low drumbeats signal danger, sighing phrases suggest sadness, a major key stands for happiness as surely as a minor key represents sadness. In fact, numerous studies have shown that listeners—particularly non-musicians—experience different physiological responses to major versus minor chords and keys (Levitin 2006: 273). But there are many more complex ways in which music can underline a text, and I will be pointing to those techniques throughout this book. A glossary of musical terms can be found at the end of the book.

Music's power to evoke and manipulate emotions is harnessed by advertisers, filmmakers, and others. Film directors, for example, use music to make us react a certain way to scenes that might on the surface seem ambiguous. Audiences accept and even enjoy this use of music (Levitin 2006: 9). Composers who set a libretto to music are not writing background music, so the techniques they use for their setting are more complex and varied. But music, I will show throughout this book, is a far more effective tool for arousing feelings and emotions than language is. Opera and oratorio are still more powerful tools, because they combine music and language. In the case of opera, the theatrical element creates additional drama.

Music is different from most other human activities in two particular ways: it is ubiquitous, and it is ancient. Some of the most ancient physical artifacts uncovered in archaeological excavations have been musical instruments. In fact, the earliest known instruments, a bone flute and fragments of two ivory flutes, were discovered in a German cave in 2008. These represent the earliest known flowering of music-making in Stone Age culture, since carbon dating has established that these instruments are 35,000 years old. These finds suggest the existence of a well-established musical tradition as early as the era when modern humans were first colonising Europe (Conard in *Nature*, quoted by Wilford in *International Herald Tribune*, 25 June 2009). We know of no culture at any time in history that lacked music.

When humans congregate for any reason—particularly life cycle events-music is usually present: weddings, funerals, graduations, marching off to war, and prayers are only a few examples. Making music is as natural an activity as breathing or walking, and has been so for most of human history. There was more general participation in making music (as opposed to listening passively) before the advent of concert halls, which only arose in the past few centuries. Since their spread, music making has become more restricted, and listening to music is more popular than making it (Levitin 2006: 5-7).

The question of why music affects us so deeply has interested scientists, who have conducted innovative research into this question in recent years. There is nothing about notes, scales, chords, or chord sequences that intrinsically causes us to expect a certain resolution, or that creates the rich and emotional associations they often do. Our brains respond this way because they have learned a musical grammar that is specific to our culture (Levitin 2006: 108). There is a certain implicit understanding of musical 'rules', such as how a cadence should resolve, learned from merely listening to music (Sacks 2007: 211).

In addition, certain parts of the brain have been shown to become activated when music is being heard. The cerebellum is involved in emotion, since it has massive connections to the emotional centers of the brain—the amygdala and the frontal lobe. Music stimulates these connections. In fact, listening to music has been shown to activate numerous brain regions, ultimately increasing dopamine levels. So music clearly has the ability to improve people's moods (Levitin 2006: 175, 191). The emotional response to music is not only cortical but subcortical. It is not necessary to have any formal knowledge of music or even to be particuarly musical to respond to music at a deep level. Music is a fundamental part of being human (Sacks 2007: 347).

Music is unique among the arts because it is at the same time completely abstract and deeply emotional. It cannot represent anything concrete or external, yet has the amazing power to express inner states or feelings. Music can 'pierce the heart directly' without mediation (Sacks 2007: 301). A particularly relevant example from Samuel is the power of David's music to soothe Saul's disturbed moods. Among many examples of musical settings that enhance particular sections of the narrative is the deeply moving music to which David's laments for Saul and Jonathan or for Absalom are set in many scores.

The two forms of music I discuss in this book are oratorio and opera. There are also many musical settings of particular verses in Samuel, especially David's lament for Absalom. I am discussing only full works, which cover large parts of the narrative and thus provide better opportunity for character development. A list of individual song settings is found in Appendix 2.

The oratorio is a work for chorus and soloists based on a sacred text, and is generally not staged. Operas, even when based on religious texts, are staged. Both forms originated in Italy in the late sixteenth century but evolved continually over time and spread across Europe and beyond. Because of the basic nature of these two mediums, character development is more prominent in opera than oratorio.

Certain elements of character are immediately suggested by voice type, in both mediums. The highest female voice, soprano, conventionally stands for youth and is generally the voice of the romantic heroine. The lower, mellow female voices of mezzo- soprano, alto or contralto, represent age and authority, or seductiveness and mystery in some cases. The highest male voice, the tenor, is a heroic and romantic sound. The baritone voice is darker and suggests more authority and age than the tenor but can also have a romantic sound, while the lowest voice, the bass, inevitably stands for authority and age.

In the nineteenth century, David is cast as a tenor in all but one oratorio and in the one opera discussed here. The one exception is Macfarren's work, which opens relatively late in David's life (see chapter 8), probably explaining his casting as a baritone. This may also be the reason David is a baritone in two twentieth-century operas, Milhaud's and Laderman's. Though the Milhaud opera covers David's entire story, the baritone voice is more convincing for David as an older man. In some performances, the younger David has been portrayed by a lighter voice. In another twentieth-century opera, Testi's, David is a tenor because he is young throughout the opera. He is a tenor in Gabriel's twentieth-century oratorio, to portray his heroic qualities.

There is no variability in the casting of the other characters. Saul is always a baritone or bass; Michal is always a soprano, though of varying weights of that voice. Jonathan is always a tenor (except in Buzzi's 1852 opera, which casts the role *en travesti* as a mezzo); Bathsheba is seldom represented in musical works, but she is cast both as a soprano and a mezzo, the latter in a sultry and seductive portrayal (Laderman; see chap. 9). The necromancer of Endor is invariably a contralto or alto (except in Handel, where the part is sung by a counter-tenor, which has a similar but more eerie timbre). Samuel is invariably a sombre bass or bass-baritone.

In my analysis of the librettos and music, three questions will be addressed:

- Ambiguities: Do the libretto and music draw our attention to particular textual inconsistencies or ambiguities, and if so, how are these resolved?
- *Gaps:* Do the libretto and music highlight a specific aspect of the story or fill a gap in the original narrative?
- *Message:* Can we determine what message a particular composer wanted to convey?

Ambiguities

The most obvious textual difficulty is in David's first encounter with Saul. He is brought to Saul to soothe him (1 Sam. 17.21) and then when he offers to fight Goliath, though this would seem to be later in the story, Saul does not know who he is (1 Sam. 17.58). Librettists smooth over these inconsistencies by simply ignoring them or choosing only one of the two episodes to introduce David.

Other difficulties are those of double episodes: Saul is anointed twice—privately (1 Sam. 10.1) and publicly (1 Sam. 11.15); Saul does not follow Samuel's orders in two different instances and is condemned by Samuel both times (1 Sam. 13.13-14 and 15. 26); Saul is overtaken by an evil spirit the day Samuel anoints David (1 Sam. 16.14), and then again when he is overtaken by jealousy (1 Sam. 18.10); David sneaks up on Saul twice (1 Sam. 24 and 26) and does not use the chance to kill him either time. These episodes, when included in a libretto, are conflated to create a single event, thus resolving the ambiguity.

Gaps

A gap not necessarily evident to the reader of the biblical narrative is the missing sibling relationship between Michal and Jonathan, who love the same man. Though they never speak in the Bible, many librettos create lengthy scenes between them. It is not implausible to imagine a brother and sister who love the same man sharing their feelings with each other, but this dynamic is absent from the original narrative. They are often portrayed as allies trying to help David and to persuade their father Saul to stop pursuing him. This creates a different dynamic and gives new dimensions to the story. Another gap filled in musical works is the root of Saul's madness. In some cases his paranoia is represented by a singing voice, taunting Saul; in one work, his attraction to David drives him mad.

Michal's role is greatly expanded in most librettos. She often appears at the battlefield when David fights Goliath, or in later battles, even sometimes at Endor where she tries to dissuade her father from consulting a necromancer. Her love for David, mentioned in one biblical verse, is the central element to the plot in many librettos. Contrary to the biblical story, her love is reciprocated, leading to lengthy and passionate love duets between the two. These scenes are imaginative additions.

The rationale for God's rejection of Saul is never fully given in the biblical text, and this can be considered the largest gap in the story. Most librettos and music greatly amplify Saul's madness and anger, partly for dramatic impact but also to fill the gap. The more unsuitable Saul is for the kingship, the more justified God's (and Samuel's) rejection becomes. This may have been either a conscious or unconscious motive of the librettists and composers discussed here.

The Message

The message most musical works want to convey is how great and glorious a ruler David was, and how beloved of God. As a consequence, Saul is generally portrayed somewhat negatively, since both God and the people chose David over him. Almost all works end with a triumphant chorus proclaiming these ideas. David is portrayed as in love with Michal as well as Bathsheba, but the stress is generally more on David the singer of Psalms than on his romantic side. There is a deeply entrenched association of David with the book of Psalms, in biblical and later traditions. Amos, the eighth-century prophet, parodies people who consider themselves musicians like David (Amos 6.5). This assumes that even at this early date everyone would know David was a musician (Isbell 2008: 12). He is described as a skillful musician in Samuel itself (1 Sam. 16.18).

Almost half of the canonical psalms (73 out of 150) are linked to David by the Hebrew phrase לדוֹד. This phrase may be translated either as 'deriving from' David or 'dedicated to' David. If David himself did not actually write these psalms, it is possible that a guild associated with him, which he may have even founded, composed them (Isbell 2008: 25). Psalms predominate in many librettos, usually some of the 73 linked to David. They are often sung by David, but even more commonly by the chorus. This reinforces the strong connection in the public's mind between David and the Psalms.

A composer who chose to set a text in a particular way was trying to say something. His choices were deliberate and conscious, and had a particular intent. When I discuss compositional devices, I assume in most instances that these were used deliberately by the composer. We can no more know a composer's intent than a writer's (unless the composer is living and willing to respond to questions), but we can make certain assumptions based on the final result of the music produced and its likely effect on the listener. Composers have a multitude of choices for every measure of music they write. The four most basic of these are volume, duration, pitch and tone. Ultimately, these four qualities define the emotional content of the music; and through them, music can be used to create worlds, stories, and most of all, feelings. Beyond these four basic musical elements, there are other layers: melody, harmony, rhythm, tempo, tonality, and texture. The interaction of all these elements creates music.

A Brief Literary Analysis

The appeal and attraction of the Samuel narrative is the challenge it offers to understand and harmonize the conflicting aspects of David's and Saul's characters. Once readers start to explore their personalities, the story passes from the hands of the biblical writer to those of the readers (O'Kane 1996: 318). For example, some librettos create a relationship between Michal and

Jonathan. It is not implausible to imagine this brother and sister sharing their feelings with each other, but this dynamic is absent from the original narrative. Another gap filled in musical works is the reason for Saul's madness. In some cases his paranoia is represented by a singing voice; in others, his attraction to David drives him mad.

The literary analysis in this chapter is general and broad. Much more detailed discussion of all the characters will be found in subsequent chapters, relating to specific parts of the narrative.

Michal: Love

Michal is notably the only woman in the Hebrew Bible to be described as loving a man. But her portrait in the books of Samuel is fragmentary and filled with ambiguities and gaps. There are two possible reasons why Michal's story was preserved and recorded in the Bible. Bodi thinks it represents both a critique of the monarchy and a deconstruction of the royal ideology, exposing the abuses and power struggles generated by the monarchy in Israelite society. Her story also represents the views of Yahwists who may have felt some unease with the Canaanite features introduced into the official cult by David. Bodi sees the Michal tradition as an inner-biblical attempt at deconstructing royal ideology in ancient Israel. The redactor used the story of Michal's tragic fate as a way to denounce the abuses introduced into Israelite society by the monarchic institution. Use of a woman's story to criticize patriarchal society is unique in ancient Near Eastern literature. It has been noted that female figures throughout the David narrative often play an important role as catalysts of change (Bodi 2006: 62-63, 144).

Abigail: Love?

The scene between David and Abigail includes the lengthiest conversation between a man and a woman in the Bible, according to McKay: Abigail has seven verses, while David's response is four verses (McKay 2009: 2). Her eloquent speech is described by Fewell and Gunn as 'voluble, meandering, and brilliantly persuasive' (Fewell and Gunn 1993: 156). After her dramatic entrance, Abigail employs a rhetoric of humility, calling David 'my lord' 13 times in her speech and herself 'your handmaid' (קמתא) five times and 'your maidservant' (קמתא) twice (1 Sam. 25.24, 25, 27, 28, 31, 41). In addition, after she falls on her face before David, she bows to the ground and falls at his feet. These extreme gestures might be interpreted as 'muted signals of sexual availability' (McKay 2009: 5). Abigail's strategy seems to combine sexual daring and sexual appeasement.

Commentators all attempt to understand Abigail's motives for approaching David in this scene. Aschkenasy surmises Abigail was motivated by the possibility of marrying the future king, as well as having feelings for David, the exciting opposite of her boorish husband. This scholar offers interesting

insights into character motivation, but 'Abigail...has probably fallen in love with David' (Aschkenasy 1998: 96) is a statement absolutely unsupported by the text. Abigail understands what is happening and prepares herself for the inevitable.

Her words to David indicate her understanding of the way power works in an androcentric world. Certain aspects of her language have particular significance, especially her use of the word DDD in 25.28, 'Pardon your maid's boldness' (JPS translates the word thus; more accurate would be 'transgression'). The term DDD is used for the transgression of covenants taken under oath (Hos. 8.1; Jer. 3.13), while in Amos 5.12, one commits a DDD turning away a needy person at the gate (Bodi 2006: 33). The word is found 93 times in the Hebrew Bible, usually in reference to a sin or wrong. So the writer seemed to be suggesting that Abigail was acknowledging more than mere boldness.

This apparently brave and clever woman disappears into David's household after their marriage, never to be heard from again.

Abishag: Love?

The meaning of the term used for Abishag, חבט, is not certain. The verbal stem from which this noun comes means 'to be of use or service, benefit' (BDB: 698), hence the common translation of 'attendant' (JPS). There is only one other occurrence of the word in the Bible (Isa. 22.15) where it seems to stand for a male court official and is translated 'steward' in JPS. It also appears as a verb in Job 22.2, where it has the sense of being useful or profitable.

Abishag remains a cipher, more than any other woman in the books of Samuel, because she never speaks and is described only as very beautiful. This may account for her strong presence in later literature: her biblical character is a blank slate, only waiting to be filled in.

Jonathan: Love

The issue of whether or not there was real love or just political maneuvering between David and Jonathan has preoccupied many commentators. Jennings is convinced that the love binding David and Jonathan is not strictly an alliance used for political advantage. Since Jonathan continues to serve his father and even dies fighting by his side, while David refuses to ever lift his hand against Saul despite many provocations, the love and loyalty between David and Jonathan could not have been grounded in a political alliance. In addition, when David says that Jonathan's love surpassed the love of women, Jennings points out that the love of women is an erotic one, not political or merely friendship. He takes this as another indicator of the nature of Jonathan and David's love (Jennings 2005: 29-30). This topic will be covered extensively in other chapters.

David's Wives: Love?

Though the era of David's reign was often described by later writers as a golden one, Bellis points out that 'it was not golden for the women who were most closely associated with the king' (Bellis 2007: 123). One way of discovering more about the women in Samuel would be to read them out of their context, basing our response on their language or action (limited as they are) rather than always reading them alongside David. The writer, however, probably intended them to be read only as foils for David's development, even though this amplifies the fragmentation of their character.

It has been common to call Michal the wife who brings political connections, Abigail the wife who brings land and wealth, and Bathsheba the wife of pleasure and sin. This kind of description ultimately deprives the female characters of individual portraits (Bach 1997: 129; in a footnote she cites all the authors who have engaged in this sort of analysis). This description may be accurate, but it robs the portraits of the women of any depth or complexity. Bach calls this a failure to construct a 'subject position' for Abigail, Michal and Bathsheba. Interpreters have viewed them only as wives, binding them by their gender to the overpowering figure of their husband David. But it is a difficult task to describe characters who are rarely if ever seen interacting with people other than David.

Gender politics has played a role in some traditional scholarly interpretation of David's wives. Seen through the stereotyping lens of male authority, each woman typifies one particular aspect of 'wife.' Though their lives may have intersected, the narrator chose not to describe this. The writer describes the wives simply ceding to male domination. Bach attempts to rectify this portrayal by taking the women out of their context within the story. Instead of being forced to see each woman as a mere shard in the Davidic mirror, it is possible to re-vision them each as a whole body (Bach 1994: 113). Some librettos and music attempted to flesh out the women in a similar way. For example, women characters might sing arias which give them new text and depict their character through the music. In addition, readers and listeners of every era engage in their own gap-filling. The behaviour of people, Bodi points out, can be compared to prismatic reflections. Each relationship brings out a different facet of someone's personality. Seen in the 'Davidic mirror,' the study of David's numerous relationships with women can give us insight into his character (Bodi 2006: 11). Sternberg points out that David's character seems to be reflected in different stages of his life by the female company he keeps, and the terms or consequences of the involvement. For example, he sees the beautiful 'but disloyal' Bathsheba in opposition to Abigail, who is intelligent as well as beautiful. The switch from one kind of woman to the other can indicate a change from harmony to disharmony. But the reader does not know, as Sternberg emphasizes, if David's acts of adultery and murder are in or out of character. They either

signal a temporary lapse from virtue, or reveal his true self (Sternberg 1987: 357-58). Using the women to understand David has been the primary interest of commentators—as Bach has stressed. It is a different and challenging endeavor to understand the women as characters in their own right, since the writer probably never intended them to be understood this way.

Frymer-Kensky notes that women in the books of Samuel were never close enough to the power structure to become enmeshed in it, and being on the fringes gave them the advantage of distance for perspective. Because women in biblical Israel were liminal, they had to know both the customs and behaviour modes of their own birth family as well as those of the family into which they married. Learning multiple systems increases perspectives and could explain what is often called 'women's intuition' (Frymer-Kensky 2002: 330). These observations would hold true for women in many other societies and eras, but they provide an interesting perspective on David's wives.

Bach asserts that the chronological order of named wives in David's life points to a particular set of priorities of male ambition. First is the connection with the royal house (Michal), followed by the acquisition of personal wealth and assurance of kingship (Abigail), and finally a pleasurable sexual relationship (Bathsheba) (Bach 1994: 117). The problem with this scenario is that the reader knows nothing of David's sexual relationship with the other two wives. We cannot assume he did not enjoy sex with them merely because the writer doesn't tell us about each encounter.

Alter sees a progression of violence in the three premarital episodes (Michal, Abigail, Bathsheba), reading the texts with David at their center (Alter 1981: 61). Bach believes he misses the critical difference in interpretation when the women are placed at the center: Abigail's actions actually *stop* violence, while the other two women are not even participants in the episodes leading to their relationship with David. They are merely prizes. Interestingly, the Abigail episode is the only one of the three that does not depict 'sexual violence leading to marriage' (Bach 1994: 122 n. 1). It is not clear what violence Bach sees in David's relationship with Michal.

David: Lust

David takes up more narrative space and raises more questions about himself, as well as about the continued well-being of Israel, than any other character in the Hebrew Bible. In fact, he fills more textual space than any character in ancient literature, according to Borgman (Borgman 2008: 38). The character of David remains inaccessible, like most or all of the figures in the Samuel narratives and elsewhere in the Bible. But David is less accessible than others, and yet he has retained his fascination for readers of every era. Halpern considers him 'the first human being in world literature... human, fully, four-dimensionally, recognizably human' (Halpern 2001: 6).

Halpern also notes an interesting feature of David's character: he 'relies consistently on hearsay, on words of others.' This is seen in his responses to Nathan, the Wise Woman of Tekoa, and to Amnon's and Absalom's ruses. He even must be reminded by Bathsheba and Nathan (or lied to) that he had promised Solomon the throne (Halpern 2001: 362).

David's motives and feelings remain opaque throughout the story, which is more typically seen in the biblical treatment of women's stories. The reader is not told David's reaction to Jonathan's gestures of love, to Saul's threats, or to Michal's love. It is left to the reader, the midrashist, to later writers, librettists and composers to interpret. The writer describes Saul's emotions and even gives him interior dialogue, but never reports David's reactions to other characters' feelings or gestures. The first interior monologue David has is only in chapter 27, when he realizes that he will eventually be killed by Saul (1 Sam. 27.1). The reader wonders if David might be afraid of Saul—who after all threw a spear at him. But the writer does not tell us.

The only emotion attributed to David is grief, when his sons Amnon and then Absalom are killed. David seems to mourn while his infant son with Bathsheba is dying, in an apparent effort to prevent the inevitable death. But once the infant dies, he stops mourning immediately. Some commentators see this as his acceptance of God's punishment for his adultery and murder. But what they do not take into account is how common the loss of an infant was in that era, whether seen as God's punishment or not.

Much of David's speech is for public consumption, leaving his true feelings unknown. But because so many characters seem to fall in love with him, we have to imagine what qualities would elicit this frequent response from those around him. The general impression, at least in the non-scholarly world, is of the great and noble king David. This could be partly due to the fact that in the later Book of Chronicles, most of the stories about David from the Books of Samuel were omitted. These omissions, plus alterations and additions, created a one-sided image of a just monarch who followed God's commands. This image has frequently been re-created in later popular culture, including films, librettos and music. Both the taking of Michal from a man who is not an enemy and the taking of Bathsheba from another man who is also loyal to the king are episodes omitted from Chronicles and most librettos. Both episodes suggest lust as David's motivation.

Since the portrait of David that emerges from the books of Samuel is not a basically positive one, many commentators have theorized about the writer's motive for creating such a multi-dimensional but often negative portrait. Alter argues convincingly that there is no certainty about either the social location or political motives of this writer. His educated guess is that the writer considered himself a historian, but he was more than a mere chronicler and he was certainly not an apologist (Alter 1999: xxi). On the

other hand, we do not know this either—perhaps the reality was even worse than what is portrayed in the biblical account.

Alter considers the writer additionally a 'formidably shrewd observer of politics and human nature...who manifestly delights in the writerly pleasures of his craft' (Alter 1999: xxii). Borgman, in a different view, thinks that the writer stresses David's continual willingness to consult God as the reason he was chosen. This is a crucial part of David's portrayal in all his complexity. Ultimately, the writer reveals God's particular rationale for choosing David. The story was written for an audience that needed hope and a belief that the future could be better than their present. The character of God of this story, considered inscrutable or mysterious, even arbitrary, by modern readers, is actually a God that would have made perfect sense to the original audience (Borgman 2008: 193, 243).

David has a lot in common with Ruth. He left his parents' home as a young boy to become a member of Saul's household. Like Ruth, he married into his new family and formed a close relationship with a family member of the same gender. David and Jonathan's is the only other close same-sex friendship portrayed in the Bible besides Ruth and Naomi. In spite of this interesting parallel, there are probably far more differences than similarities between the two stories.

Though there is no straightforward physical description of David, the biblical writer seems to be suggesting that he is not tall, since Saul is always described as being of tall stature in contrast to David. Since Saul's armor was much too large to fit David, this is also an indication of his smaller stature. David is also described as handsome, and this is one of only two places in the Hebrew Bible where male beauty is mentioned (the other is the protagonist in the Song of Songs). Significantly in David's story, his beauty is offered to the 'eroticizing gaze...of male warriors—Saul and Jonathan' rather than to the gaze of women (Jennings 2005: 8). Women's gazing at David is remarked upon, however, when he is dancing wildly and presumably displaying much of his body (2 Sam. 6.20).

Bathsheba: Lust?

It is quite possible that the account of David and Bathsheba is a case of layering a story on top of a historical reality. Determining Bathsheba's motives is difficult, since the author consistently withholds her point of view, creating an ambiguous portrayal. In the crucial scene, the initial sex encounter with David, neither she nor David is given a voice.

The question of Bathsheba's guilt or innocence in this encounter has preoccupied many commentators. We are not told why Bathsheba trusted David to do the honourable thing; telling him of her pregnancy could have led to her death. Does her decision to inform David imply panic, naiveté, cleverness, or courage? Up to this point, the narrator has not given

Bathsheba enough words to tell us anything of her character, leading the reader to assume she is quiet and passive. But her later actions (in 1 Kgs 1, 2) seem to contradict that picture.

It is clear from the description that the affair was not clandestine. The narrator eliminates the possibility of sympathy for the character by withholding Bathsheba's reactions. The narrator either wants the reader to think Bathsheba does not speak, or he withholds her words from us because they were of no interest to him (Fewell 1993: 157). Withholding Bathsheba's point of view is what has made it possible to accuse her of seduction in different eras of interpretation. It is the biblical narrator—or the writer, actually—who has made Bathsheba 'the object of the male gaze', using David as his agent and making us all voyeurs (Exum 1996: 23, 25).

Virtually all painters of later eras depicted Bathsheba as a seductress, fully in control of the situation. These paintings had their impact on the public imagination, and most people today cannot separate the artistic renditions of the story from the biblical account (Leneman 2000: 232), which is unfamiliar to the public at large.

Saul: Lunacy

Saul's failures remain unclear. He may be the only character in the Bible completely abandoned by God—who originally chose him. Why the writer had God make this choice is never answered, because the writer is not interested in answering it (Borgman 2008: 13). Saul is guilty, but not wicked, and this is the core of the tragic vision. He brings about his own downfall by incurring divine wrath, but the unanswered question that remains is, why is there no forgiveness in this story? (Exum 1996: 40). In Gunn's view, God is arbitrary and also obscure, his motives unknown. Gunn condemns God for his 'jealous persecution' of Saul. If God's will is inscrutable, how can Gunn be so sure? And in any case, explaining mysterious or difficult texts by ascribing them to an inscrutable divinity often misses the subtlety of a text that actually may elucidate rather than hide God's thinking (as described by the writer) (Borgman 2008: 281 n. 31).

Since Saul becomes crazed by fear and jealousy, some commentators conclude that he is obviously not a suitable leader, which leads to God's rejection (Borgman 2008: 273 n. 15). On the other hand, the writer seems to suggest that Saul's madness may be a result of God's abandonment—it is impossible to tell which came first. The reader knows only what the narrator relates, and ultimately it is too little in the case of Saul to keep the reader from being both confused and sympathetic.

The punishment seems out of proportion to the crime, similarly to Moses and his punishment for striking the rock. Fokkelman, who wrote a conclusive four-volume commentary on the books of Samuel, concluded that 'Saul is the victim of a God whose rationality is beyond our ken and, secondarily,

whose possible reasons are kept concealed by the narrator, the creator of the character 'God' (Fokkelman 1981: 4: 691). Borgman believes that Saul is his own worst enemy, not only the enemy of God; he is ultimately defeated by his own destructive choices (Borgman 2008: 73).

Saul is portrayed as mentally unstable and paranoid, which could well reflect the cultural memory of a king who fits that description. On the other hand, as the old saying has it, 'Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they aren't out to get you', and McKenzie (along with other commentators) suggests that David really *did* attempt to usurp the kingship, justifying and explaining Saul's paranoia (McKenzie 2000: 87-88). This approach, however, is as completely biased as the one McKenzie is trying to discredit. It is true, as McKenzie notes, that the writer frequently voices Saul's thoughts and intentions to intensify his portrayal of madness, though he could not have known what those thoughts were (McKenzie 2000: 86). But any good writer embroiders from time to time, and in this case the writer may have been particularly inspired to describe the inner thoughts of a king commonly believed to have been mad.

All of these characters are given vivid afterlives in the musical works featured in this book. These portraits will allow us to return to the original biblical narrative with a new and fresh perspective on the puzzling gaps and fissures found there.

Chapter 2

THE COMPOSERS AND THE WORKS

I chose the 16 works listed below based on two main criteria: the originality and quality of the music and libretto, and the accessibility of a recording and/or of the score to the public. Several scores that I considered (Appendix 2) did not meet both these criteria. I included as many works as possible that have been recorded, either commercially or privately. I do not claim this to be a definitive selection of musical works based on the books of Samuel.

My analysis and discussion of the musical works is based on a reading of the score—either full orchestral, piano-vocal reduction, or both (the only exception is Handel). In addition, I base my interpretations on recordings. When these recordings are easily obtainable, I include my personal recommendations. Two scores can be viewed in an online archive (Nuhn and Macfarren). Translations of all librettos are my own.

Nineteenth-Century Oratorio

Most librettos of nineteenth-century oratorios based on the Hebrew Bible were newly-written; in other words, the text was not taken directly from the Bible. The root of this tradition probably lies in Handel's oratorios, virtually all of which were set to newly-written librettos. Smither lists 13 German, eight English and four American oratorios based on Saul and David in the nineteenth century (Smither 2000: 100, 304, 446). For the twentieth century, he discusses Gabriel's and Honegger's works.

Handel's oratorios were considered classics in nineteenth-century England, and both the music and librettos were viewed as ideal models for religious oratorios (Smither 2000: 287-89). Composers may have felt they would be unfavourably compared to this model. Music critic George Bernard Shaw was one of the few voices to opine a negative view of the trend to imitate Handel. He wrote about

...sham religious works called oratorios...which when not dull imitations of Handel, are unstaged operettas on scriptural themes, written in a style in which solemnity and triviality are blended in the right proportions for boring an atheist out of his senses or shocking a sincerely religious person into utter

repudiation of any possible union between art and religion (G.B. Shaw 1981: 2: 998-99).

Shaw additionally comments on the 'dreary fugue manufacture' found in oratorios of his time (G.B. Shaw 1981: 1: 788).

Twentieth-Century Oratorio

There are fewer twentieth-century than nineteenth-century oratorios based on Hebrew Bible narratives, but a greater number of stories from the Hebrew Bible are represented. The story of David is among the more popular (Smither 2000: 634-35). A chart will indicate which biblical incidents are included in which musical works, clarifying which are the most and least commonly depicted. Scenes that are altered or expanded will also be discussed (Appendix 1).

Musically, most twentieth-century biblical oratorios are fairly traditional and tonal. Their musical language derives from late romanticism, impressionism, and neoclassicism. Important characteristics are chromaticism, dissonance, parallelism, polychords (two or more chords placed one on top of the other, often heard in Stravinsky), and modality. Honegger's *Le Roi David* utilizes these musical devices.

List of Works

Eighteenth-Century Oratorio

1. Georg Friedrich Handel, Saul (1738)

Nineteenth-Century Oratorio

- 2. Carl Reissiger, *David: Oratorium in Zwei Teilen (Oratorio in Two Parts)* (1852)
- 3. Ferdinand Hiller, Saul (1858)
- 4. Friedrich Nuhn, Die Könige in Israel (The Kings in Israel) (1867)
- 5. Sir George Macfarren, King David (1883)
- 6. C.H.H. Parry, King Saul (1893)

Nineteenth-Century Opera

7. Antonio Buzzi, Saul: Tragedia lirica (1852)

Twentieth-Century Oratorio

- 8. C. Hutchinson Gabriel, Saul, King of Israel (1901)
- 9. Arthur Honegger, Le Roi David (1921)
- 10. Christopher Brown, David: A Cantata (1970)

Twentieth-Century Opera

11. Carl Nielsen, Saul og David (1902)

- 12. Darius Milhaud, *David* (1954)
- 13. Josef Tal, Shaul b'Endor (1957)
- 14. —, *Amnon and Tamar* (1959)
- 15. Ezra Laderman, And David Wept (1971)
- 16. Flavio Testi, Saül (1991)

Eighteenth Century

Though my primary focus in this book is nineteenth- and twentieth-century music, I am including Georg Friedrich Handel's oratorio *Saul*. It would have been familiar to most if not all the composers discussed in this book, and it has been both an example and inspiration for composers of every era.

1. Georg Friedrich Handel, Saul (1738)

Libretto: Charles Jennens

David—counter-tenor; Saul—bass-baritone; Jonathan—tenor; Michal—soprano;

Merab—soprano; Witch—tenor; Samuel—baritone (See Chapters 4, 5, 7, 8)

Handel wrote this oratorio in a period following his recovery from recent health problems. Because these included mental problems, some commentators have suggested Handel saw parallels with Saul, the protagonist of this oratorio. This, one of his most successful oratorios (of which he wrote 29), is among the few that never dropped out of the repertoire. *Saul* has been performed regularly since the early part of the twentieth century, sometimes even in a staged version (Pierre Degott, CD liner notes: 14).

Though oratorios are not generally staged, very precise stage directions are found throughout the libretto. Librettos were made available to the public at performances. British audiences would follow the printed text along with these stage directions while listening, enabling them to conjure up a full staging in their minds. Handel also uses numerous musical devices to portray elements of the action. This, of course, is done by all composers whether or not the works are staged.

David is cast as a counter-tenor, which at this stage in Handel's writing represented the heroic. According to Handel specialist Deborah Rooke, tenors were not special in this period, because people were more interested in the *castrati* as the real vocal impresarios. The 'Witch of Endor' is sung by a tenor, apparently a common convention for this type of woman, a bit like the 'pantomime dame' in British 'Panto' tradition. It would have presumably underlined her infernal, unnatural nature (Deborah Rooke, pers. comm.). Possibly the tenor voice was meant to represent an old woman.

Charles Jennens (1700–1773), Handel's librettist, reflects the predominant tendency in England at the time of this libretto's writing, which was to tone

down the biblical text and to humanize the biblical characters (Degott: 18). The libretto is based on 1 Samuel 9–31 as well as on two plays: Abraham Cowley's incomplete epic *Davideis* of 1656, and Robert Boyle's poetic drama *The Tragedy of King Saul* of 1703. Jennens's libretto evokes Shakespearian figures such as Othello, Macbeth, and Lear, whom the audience of the time were rediscovering. It is probably not coincidental that Jennens had produced critical editions of several Shakespeare tragedies.

The libretto also stresses David's musical skills, which emerge as a form of heroism, since David's music alone has the power to soothe Saul. Through the music, the libretto is proclaiming that music has greater power than words, that only music can convey powerful emotions.

The oratorio form in general does not allow for much character development, and the chorus is the most important musical element. But within these strictures, and within the limits of Baroque music's conventions, Handel created a remarkable portrait of the mad king Saul. Saul's music is by far the most compelling of all the characters. Handel also stretched the bounds of musical norms of his day to create a 'transvestite' witch of Endor. The notion of a man practicing necromancy in the guise of a woman is a common one in certain parts of the world, but this was unlikely to be known to Handel. He was trying to create a sound that was even more otherworldly than that of the counter-tenor, which at the time of *Saul* was as commonly associated with a hero as the tenor was in the late nineteenth century.

The other characters—Michal and Merab, David and Jonathan—are not as unusual or individualized as Saul and the witch. The musical palette is similar to the one employed by Handel for so many of his other works. But the libretto and music succeed in exalting David and convincing the audience not only of his greatness and humility, but of the adoration he inspired in his people.

My analysis is based on an excellent recording of the work (Harmonia Mundi, HMC 901877.78). I did not consult a score, and therefore my music analysis is somewhat less technical than for other composers. Handel's music has been so extensively analyzed by musicologists that I have limited myself to general comments.

Nineteenth Century: Five Oratorios, One Opera

2. Carl Reissiger, *David: Oratorium in Zwei Teilen (Oratorio in Two Parts)* (1852)

Offenbach (Germany): Edition mf, c.1998. Words from the Bible.

David—tenor; Jonathan—tenor (See Chapters 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10)

Carl Reissiger (1798–1859) was a German composer, conductor and teacher. A child prodigy, he performed piano recitals at the age of ten. After several

years of music studies, he began studying theology in Leipzig. He was encouraged, however, to continue his music studies, and he was awarded a bursary to study in Vienna to study theory with Salieri. His first opera was performed in Dresden in 1824. The King of Prussia funded Reissiger's further studies in France and Italy, and appointed him Hofkapellmeister in Dresden on his return in 1828. Reissiger held this position until his death. A very prolific composer, he wrote numerous piano solos, vocal solo music, chamber music songs, masses, and eight operas. *David* (1852) was his only oratorio. It is believed that Reissiger altered the biblical texts to pay tribute to the King of Saxony (John Rutter/Manfred Fensterer in *New Grove* 21: 171). The oratorio premiered in the Dresden Hofkapelle in 1852 and was performed there again in 1859 (pers. comm. Dresden opera archives).

Most of Reissiger's music has been forgotten or lost. According to Rutter and Fensterer in *New Grove*, some of his best music is found in his masses and in *David*, which 'although often retrospective in style (especially in their frequent recourse to strict counterpoint) often reveal considerable harmonic imagination' (Rutter in *New Grove*: 171). Many of the highly lyrical solos in this work recall Schubert, Schumann, and Mendelssohn. This oratorio does not shed new light on the characters of David or Jonathan, but contains very melodious arias that highlight their feelings for each other. David's trust in God, his grief, and other moods and sentiments are convincingly portrayed in the music. The oratorio does not include many parts of the biblical narrative, though, and there are roles for 'Deborah' and 'Sulamith' that remain puzzling and unexplained.

I include this work minimally because I had very limited access to the score.

3. Ferdinand Hiller, Saul

Leipzig: Fr. Kistner (1858). Libretto: Moritz Hartmann (1821–1872)

David—tenor; Saul—baritone; Jonathan—Heldentenor; Michal—soprano; Samuel—bass-baritone; witch—contralto

['pv' is the piano-vocal score; the other page numbers are from the orchestral score]

(See Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)

Ferdinand Hiller (1811–1885), was born in Frankfurt to a wealthy Jewish family. He showed great musical talent at an early age. Mendelssohn, whom he met in 1822 when Mendelssohn was 13 and Hiller was 11, was one of his closest friends and encouraged him to pursue a musical career.

After studying in Germany for several years, in 1828 Hiller went to Paris where he gave successful concerts. He befriended Berlioz, Chopin, and Liszt, and on his return to Germany, he also befriended Schumann and Wagner (Reinhold Sietz/Matthias Wiegandt in *New Grove* 11: 509-511).

Hiller's *Saul* is a dramatic 'neo-Handelian number oratorio,' meaning that each musical selection is numbered. The librettist Moritz Hartmann was a well-known Jewish writer and poet. The oratorio was first performed at the Niederrheinischen Musikfest in 1858 and became one of the most popular nineteenth-century oratorios based on Saul and David (Smither 2000: 99).

This oratorio brings many parts of the biblical narrative to life. The music is especially vivid and effective in portraying the moods of the chorus—whether elation, aggression, or grief. Michal is given a large role, though her primary function is to praise David or express her love for him. Yet she is also the first to hear the news of Saul's and Jonathan's deaths on the battlefield, making her more a part of the plot than her biblical counterpart.

Jonathan has a very small part, yet Hiller specifically requested he be sung by a dramatic tenor (*Heldentenor*). David is also a tenor, but a more lyric one. As in most oratorios, he is portrayed as a humble, self-effacing, flawless God-fearing hero. Saul is portrayed in this oratorio as angry and bloodthirsty but also pathetic, more than merely mad. The composer and librettist depict a necromancer with a warm heart, and Hiller uses fewer musical devices to create an atmosphere of fear and other-worldly elements in that scene than other composers. This is one of only two librettos I found which includes the end of the scene, in which the necromancer offers Saul food (the other is Josef Tal's work). This may reflect the strong Jewish tradition of hospitality to strangers, which has led to comparisons between this scene and Genesis 18 (where Abraham offers hospitality to three strangers). In this and several other scenes, the characters express real feeling in their music, bringing them to life as people of flesh and blood.

4. Friedrich Nuhn, Die Könige in Israel (The Kings in Israel)

Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1867. Libretto by the composer.

[This score can be accessed at an online archive: http://www.archive.org/details/dieknigeinisra00nuhn]

David—tenor; Saul—baritone; Michal—soprano; Samuel—bass-baritone; Witch—contralto

[The comments found inside brackets throughout my discussion are Nuhn's own, found in the score.]

(See Chapters 4, 7, 8)

In 1881 Nuhn was appointed 'Königlicher Musikdirektor' or Royal Music Director in Burgsteinfurt, near the city of Steinfurt in Westphalia, the region of the North Rhine. He wrote several choral works, particularly for women's chorus. I have been unable to locate further biographical information on this composer.

The point of the oratorio is clearly to praise God and David. This is one of the few works that does not include a love interest between David and Michal. Michal has a big part, but her major role (apart from praising God)

is urging Saul to pray. All the characters are mouthpieces for the composer's religious message, rather than fleshed-out personalities, which is common in oratorio.

This is a melodious work and a vocally challenging one. It would be interesting to know when and where it was performed, since it demands highly skilled soloists and chorus. Saul is depicted not so much mad as sad, and at times defiant. The music depicting grief is sharply differentiated from that of praise, effectively setting the different moods of the story. Some familiarity with the biblical text seems to be assumed on the composer's/librettist's part, common to oratorios of the period.

5. Sir George Macfarren, The Oratorio *King David*London: Stanley Lucas, Weber & Co. (1883). Text from the Bible
[This score can be accessed at an online archive: http://www.archive

[This score can be accessed at an online archive: http://www.archive.org/details/kingdavidoratori00macf]

David—baritone; Nathan—tenor; Widow of Tekoa—soprano; Absalom—tenor

(See Chapters 8, 9, 10)

Sir George Macfarren (1813–1887) first studied music with his father, a London dramatist and musician. He began studying composition at the Royal Academy of Music in 1829 (Smither 2000: 339). He was active in the founding of the Society of British Musicians in 1834, and of the Handel Society in 1844. He became principal of the Royal Academy of Music in 1876. Macfarren achieved more success later in life with his cantatas and oratorios, which were in great demand at provincial festivals. 'Few composers had written better for massed choral voices' (Nicholas Temperley quoting Nigel Burton in *New Grove* 15: 471).

Macfarren began losing his eyesight early in life, and was totally blind at the age of 47. This did not diminish his musical activities, which included writing, lecturing, composing, and teaching, all of which he did until the end of his life (Temperley in *New Grove* 15: 471). He was one of Victorian England's most prolific composers, and received honourary degrees from the Universities of Cambridge, Oxford, and Dublin (Smither 2000: 340). He was knighted in 1883, the year he wrote his oratorio *King David* for the Leeds Festival.

Two contemporary reviews of the premiere of this work were pasted into the score. Both are dated 1883, but neither the name of the reviewer or publication are legible. Nonetheless, the contemporary response to a new work is of historical interest:

The libretto introduces the chief events in the career of David in a concise and effective manner, and the composer has set them to music of a masterly kind...he has produced a work which will do honour to musical art, and win respect for English music. Some of the solo passages are very successful...

Probably there is but one composer, Brahms, who is so deeply versed in the more abstruse qualities of music as Sir George Macfarren...Very melodious and flowing are some of the vocal combinations for the principal voices, the part writing being singularly fresh and graceful...at the close of the oratorio...the [blind] composer was led forward...and most enthusiastically applauded (Eva (?), 'The Leeds Musical Festival,' Oct. 20, 1883).

A slightly less favourable review appeared when the oratorio was repeated by the Sacred Harmonic Society at St. James's Hall:

The event naturally aroused considerable interest and...curiosity, owing to the divergent opinions about the merits of the oratorio pronounced after its production at the recent Leeds Festival. While some writers characterized it as the work of an exceedingly clever but...uninspired musician, others unhesitatingly averred that it would take its place among the masterpieces of art.

After admitting to being in the former camp, the reviewer goes on:

[The oratorio] is written throughout in accordance with accepted models and traditions...yet...instances may also be quoted where the composer has adopted a felicitous mode of expression, as in the duet between David and the woman of Tekoa, where the detached notes in the soprano part admirably suggest the suppliant's simulated grief and agitation. A still more striking example occurs in the chorus 'Give ear, O ye tribes of Israel.' The rustling of the muted strings and the whispered utterances of the people convey a vivid idea of the growing, but as yet secret conspiracy of Absalom and his followers...the fatal defect in the oratorio is its hardness of style and the want of spontaneity (*Atheneum*, 'The Week,' Nov. 24, 1883).

The text is entirely biblical, mostly the books of Chronicles and Samuel but interweaving texts from Psalms, Proverbs, even Matthew and Luke. This is typical of the era, when most oratorio librettos were patched together from widely separate parts of the Bible, suggesting reliance on a concordance; and psalms were often used, as in this oratorio, for reflection. In addition, quotes from the Bible were usually modified (Smither 2000: 303), certainly the case in this oratorio. Macfarren also made a conscious break with earlier oratorios by greatly diminishing the role of Narrator (who appears only three times: in Nos. 9, 15, and 23). This puts his oratorio in the class of the new type of 'dramatic' oratorio (Smither 2000: 306). To keep the drama flowing, Macfarren eliminated almost all narrative introductions and retained only first-person accounts. In some cases this meant altering the biblical text.

Musically, the influence of Mendelssohn predominates. Mendelssohn's *Elijah* was first performed at the Birmingham Festival in 1846 and powerfully influenced musical style in oratorio (Smither 2000: 289). According to one writer, in Macfarren's oratorios 'Mendelssohn is still the primary force' (Ernest Walker 1952: 302, quoted in Smither 2000: 340). Smither does not entirely agree with this statement, but I find it to be generally true.

This is one of the only works I am discussing in this book which does not include Saul, Jonathan, or even Michal. On the other hand, unique to this oratorio are scenes with the Widow of Tekoa, with Nathan, and an aria for Absalom. Interestingly, Nathan is sung by a tenor, the voice usually reserved for heroic or romantic roles. But these rules are not as strictly adhered to in oratorios as operas. David is a baritone, making him seem more authoritative, and Nathan may be cast as a tenor for musical reasons, for the contrast of voices. In Bach's oratorios, the tenor had special significance and was usually the voice of the narrator proclaiming God's word, so Macfarren may have been adhering to this tradition. Absalom is a tenor because he is a heroic and sympathetic figure in this oratorio.

Many different moods are depicted in the numerous choruses, but some of the most heartfelt and moving music is reserved for David. His pleas to God and lament for Absalom stand out as particularly appealing arias. Little action is portrayed in the oratorio; even in the scenes with the widow and with Absalom, the stress is entirely on trust in God, repentance and forgiveness. Every scene leads to a musical homily about these themes. Following the Lutheran tradition started by Bach, texts are interpolated that theologically and personally interpret the biblical texts.

In spite of several dramatic choral scenes and moving solos, this work remains primarily a mouthpiece for the Christian message. This is in keeping with the trend of Macfarren's time. In spite of growing secularization and religious doubt in Victorian England, vast numbers of people still attended church. Many of the upper and middle class also frequented performances of oratorios, widely considered religious occasions. One of the purposes of oratorio was to foster feelings of devotion. Victorian music journals testify to the religious perception of oratorio performance, for example by their frequent image of oratorio as sermon (Smither 2000: 261-62). In that sense, Macfarren's *King David* was a work for and of its time.

6. C. Hubert H. Parry, King Saul

London and New York: Novello, Ewer & Co. 1894. Libretto: Biblical text and Parry

David—baritone; Saul—baritone; Michal—soprano; witch—contralto; 'evil spirit'— contralto

(See Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)

English composer Charles H. Hubert Parry (1848–1918) completed a Bachelor of Music at Oxford in 1867 and continued to study music privately. While working at Lloyds Insurance, he studied composition for two years with George Macfarren (Smither 2000: 354), whose work is also discussed in this book. He resigned from Lloyds in 1877 to devote himself exclusively to music. Parry wrote three oratorios: *Judith* in 1888, *Job* in 1892, and *King Saul* in 1894. His esteem and popularity during the 1890s were so great

that he was considered the nation's 'unofficial composer laureate' (Jeremy Dibble in *New Grove* 19: 153). He was knighted in 1898 and became Professor of Music at Oxford in 1900 (Smither 2000: 354).

The main role of Saul was written for Georg Henschel, the German-born baritone, conductor and composer who lived in England. Henschel was known for his commanding voice and his performance was said to be impressive. Parry was trying to create something approaching a form of sacred opera or tragedy for which Henschel was well known (Jeremy Dibble, pers. comm.). The choice of a baritone voice for David is unusual, although Macfarren had also made this choice in his oratorio only 11 years earlier. Very few of the works discussed in this book have a baritone David. It is possible that Parry's choice was governed not only by the availability of a famous baritone, but also inspired by his former teacher's utilization of this voice.

Parry's musical style is complex, reflecting the aesthetics of Anglican church music and the oratorio-centered repertoire of British provincial music festivals at that time. According to Dibble, Parry was first introduced to the music of Brahms and Wagner in the 1870s. Both these composers exerted a powerful influence on his developing technique. Parry's musical style often conveys passionate yearning and melancholy, while remaining reserved and showing respect for technique and moderation. He also uses a wider range of *Leitmotifs* in *King Saul* than he had before (Dibble in *New Grove* 19: 154). Smither calls Parry's music 'distinctive and original,' noting the similarity between the use of motifs in his oratorios and Wagner's treatment of motifs in his early operas (Smither 2000: 354).

King Saul was written for the Birmingham Triennial Festival. To receive a commission from Birmingham was considered a major indication of musical stature. The Birmingham model of the oratorio was a large one, an epic experience taking up a whole evening. This goes back to the earlier nineteenth-century tradition of Handel oratorios at Birmingham, but even more so to Mendelssohn's St Paul and the British premiere of Elijah in 1846 which Mendelssohn conducted to tremendous acclaim. Elijah was performed at every Birmingham Festival thereafter until the Festival came to an end during WWI (Dibble, pers. comm.).

The Birmingham oratorios tended to be based on dramatic Hebrew Bible stories such as Judith, and Parry's *King Saul* fits this mould exactly. Victorian society considered singing to be good for people, socially and intellectually as well as in terms of promoting faith. Handel's Old Testament oratorios were ideal for such social values because there was so much choral music for people to sing. *King Saul* was performed after Birmingham by numerous choral societies and at various festivals, which was not the usual path for big oratorios of that era (Smither 2000: 311). Nonetheless, it was never as popular as either *Judith* or *Job*.

Saul is depicted in Parry's oratorio as a man in torment, similarly to many of the operas and oratorios discussed in this book. He emerges as a complex character with many mood swings. David comes across mostly as a mouthpiece for biblical texts, also true of most oratorio treatments. He is additionally portrayed as an amorous lover to Michal, completely omitting his ambiguous relationship with Jonathan in the biblical narrative. Parry avoided portraying this relationship by omitting Jonathan altogether. This is not only a condensation, but also a whitewash of the story, possibly to be expected in Victorian England. It would seem that the character of Saul and his relationship to the witch, and his madness as portrayed by an external voice of the evil spirit, inspired Parry more than the story of David and Jonathan.

Michal has a major role, at least as far as pages of music sung. Parry probably made this choice in order to highlight a love story between Michal and David. Michal's text and music shed no interesting or new light on her character, but she emerges from the margins of the story more than her biblical counterpart by the sheer quantity and quality of her music. She is also present in many more scenes of the oratorio than the biblical narrative.

The 'witch' of Endor and the invented 'evil spirit' are both sung by contralto voices, with interesting text and dramatic music. They are strong women's roles with original text, even though the 'evil spirit' is not a woman or even a person—only a voice. The witch's role is greatly increased and embellished, as she becomes a 'seer' who describes the entire battle scene in which Saul dies. Her lengthy solos feature strong mood changes and musically paint a complex character. She expresses anger at God for his unjust treatment of Saul, which could reflect the composer's own feelings.

The evil spirit's role is an extension of Saul, representing his inner voices. So it is not actually a 'woman's part', but does offer the contralto a juicy role to sing. The externalizing of Saul's inner voices, and the dramatic musical depiction of battle scenes, are musical highlights of this work. They bring new colours and excitement to the biblical narrative. In many ways, musically and in its psychological portraits, this work was ahead of its time. This makes it all the more disappointing that it completely dropped out of the repertoire several years after its initial success, was never performed again and never recorded (Dibble, pers. comm.).

Opera

7. Antonio Buzzi, *Saul: Tragedia lirica in quattro atti di Camillo Giuliani* Ricordi: Firenze, Milano, 1852

Saul—bass; Jonathan—mezzo; Michal—soprano; David—tenor; Abner—tenor

(See Chapters 5, 6, 8)

Antonio Buzzi (1815–1891) worked in Italy most of his life, but for a short period he also lived in Chile. His opera *Saul* utilized a play by Camillo

Giuliani for its libretto. The opera was written in 1843 and published and first performed in 1852, in Pistoia, Parma and elsewhere in Italy. In some performances, certain acts were omitted.

The unusual printed score is pasted together from what were obviously individually-sold numbers, since the title and full information about the opera appears on the first page of each scene, along with a price. There are also occasional notations of what to omit when the work is being performed in its entirety. The singers for whom the opera was written are also listed in this published score.

This is the only opera to cast Jonathan as a 'trouser role' (a man's role played by a woman *en travesti*), but this is typical casting for that era. The action covers only a small part of the story of Saul and David: roughly from 1 Samuel 21-31, with many creative additions. This is the only musical work I have found based on these narratives that does not end triumphantly, with David hailed as the saviour of Israel. The focus throughout is more on Michal and Saul.

Early in the opera, Michal refers to David as her 'consort' and sings of how she loves his music. She spends much of the opera trying to persuade Saul to forgive the renegade David. She and David sing one love duet, but after that, the focus shifts to her relationship with Saul. She constantly tries to alleviate his suffering, often together with Jonathan. Near the end she is searching for David on the battlefield, but finds a raving Saul instead and becomes completely engrossed in helping him. The audience knows David is looking for Michal, but is left hanging at the end as to whether he finds her. Michal curses God (as Saul does in some other works) and seems to have forgotten about David. The lack of a real plot resolution is unusual for opera.

The entire balance of relationships has shifted from the biblical narrative, with the father-daughter one being primary. This reading does not contradict the biblical text, but it is certainly reading more 'into' than 'between' the lines. The biblical Michal seems more devoted to David, at least initially, than to her father. But the longstanding Italian tradition of loyalty to parents is reflected in this opera and the play on which it is based.

My access to this score was very limited, accounting for the lack of deeper musical analysis.

Twentieth Century: Three Oratorios, Six Operas

Oratorios

8. Charles Hutchinson Gabriel, Saul, King of Israel: A Dramatic Cantata for Choirs and Choral Societies

Libretto by Willis B. Perkins. Published by Fillmore Brothers (1901)

Saul—bass; Samuel—baritone; David, tenor; Jonathan—tenor; Michal—alto; 'Witch'—contralto

(See Chapters 3, 4, 5, 7, 8)

Charles H. Gabriel (1856–1932) was an American composer, editor and hymn writer best known for creating or collaborating on numerous gospel songs including his most famous one, 'His Eye is on the Sparrow' (1905). When he was 15, inspired by Civil War songs he had heard, Gabriel announced that when he grew up he wanted to be a songwriter and was encouraged by his mother. He thought of melodies during the day when he was plowing and planting, and then wrote them down at night after his chores were finished. The family had a small reed organ and acquired a piano when Gabriel was 14. When Gabriel was 16, his father died, and the teenager followed in his footsteps as a singing-school teacher. He left home the next year, and taught singing for the next 15 years (Tom Longden, *Des Moines Register*). Gabriel's first hymn was published in 1873. One of his most successful hymns, 'Glory Song', was translated into 17 languages and sold at least 30 million copies.

Gabriel moved to Chicago in 1892 and established a studio. In the next 23 years he became one of the most prolific and successful writers of gospel hymns. He often used the pen name Charlotte G. Homer (Mel R. Wilhoit in *New Grove* 9: 383). This is an interesting twist, since it has historically been more common for women to use a man's name in order to be published. Gabriel wrote over 8000 works and edited 35 gospel songbooks; eight Sunday school collections; 19 anthem collections (Wilhoit in *New Grove* 9: 383); seven cantatas for children; 38 Christmas cantatas; and three secular operettas. *Saul, King of Israel* was his only sacred cantata, and he considered it his best work. His music is highly melodious. Since he was essentially self-taught, he has a style peculiarly his own (J. H. Hall, *Biography of Gospel Song and Hymn Writers*, New York, 1914, 349-52; found at http://www.angelfire.com/ks/landzastanza/gabriel.html).

The musical style of gospel hymns is evident throughout this cantata. Yet Gabriel transcends it at key moments, clearly finding inspiration in the drama of the story. Those moments stand out in a work that for the most part is not of great musical interest.

The libretto is very interesting for its gap-filling changes. This is the only libretto that does not add a love interest between Michal and David. David is almost a Christ-like figure, oblivious to romantic feelings and attuned only to God. Michal is also very pious. Gabriel wrote this work to be performed in and by churches, so his agenda is not a hidden one. It is nonetheless interesting to see how he alters the story to put across his religious message, sometimes in inexplicable ways. The depiction of Saul is not greatly altered, in fact he is shown to be slightly more sinful than his biblical counterpart, and Samuel is far more critical. All of this works to make David even more perfect and messianic, the shining light of the cantata's vision.

In his 'General Directions', the composer writes that this cantata may be given as an oratorio, without dramatic action or costume, but would be much more effective 'rendered with complete stage accessories' (score, 2).

He describes the desired staging and acting for each scene. I include these directions in the body of my discussion.

9. Arthur Honegger, Le Roi David

Lausanne: Foetisch Freres, 1924–1925. Libretto: Bible and René Morax Voices: David is variously taken by boy alto, soprano, or tenor. Most solos are the narrator.

(See Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

Arthur Honegger (1892–1955) was born in France in a family of Protestant Swiss merchants. Honegger was very influenced by this double identity. He called himself a 'double national,' and he attributed his familiarity with the Bible to his Swiss origins (Keith Anderson, CD liner notes: 11). He enrolled in the Paris Conservatoire in 1911 and became familiar with the music of Debussy and Fauré, who remained major influences throughout his life. Honegger was later a member of the avant-garde group known as Les Six, together with Milhaud, Poulenc and others (Milhaud wrote his own opera *David*; see p. XX). Honegger wrote a great deal for the theatre, including 43 film scores, 18 ballets and 26 varied stage pieces, including for Gide's *Saül* (Spratt in *New Grove* 11: 678). This play was set to music much later in the century (see p. 46).

In 1921, Honegger was approached by the Swiss poet René Morax (1873–1963) to compose the incidental music and set some of the words to music for his stage play based on the life of King David, just weeks before it was to open. Morax had written a 'biblical drama in several scenes,' which he called a poetic re-writing, depicting the life of David. He wanted to write a drama on a biblical subject that would be an allegory for the current struggles of post-war Europe (Clark, programme notes 2003). Honegger completed the work in two months. Honegger was probably the only composer of his era and generation who possessed a deep religious feeling. To turn to the Bible at a time of 'music-hall aesthetic' was an 'audacious choice' (Landowski 1978: 100).

His setting included a small ensemble of 17 musicians, plus a hundred-voice chorus. He began with the choral parts, which he sent regularly by mail to allow the chorus, primarily amateurs, to rehearse. The play opened in June of 1921 in the Théatre de Jorat at Mézières, a small country village in French-speaking Switzerland. Honegger arrived in Mézières less than two weeks before the opening. The performance included amateur actors and extras, mostly students, as well as a troop of dancers. The dress rehearsal lasted 10 hours, forcing Morax, the evening before the opening, to cut several scenes (Landowski 1978: 102).

Honegger himself conducted the orchestra. Lasting over four hours, the drama was nonetheless a crowning success. Honegger was conscious of having composed music that wasn't simply an avant-garde experiment. Rather, he said,

If your melodic or rhythmic arrangement is precise and establishes itself in the ear, the dissonances that accompany it will never scare listeners away. What puts people off is to drown in an aural quagmire from which they cannot see the shore and in which they are quickly engulfed. So they get bored and stop listening.

It seems to me it is necessary, to move forward, to be solidly attached to what came before us. We must not break the chain of musical tradition. A branch separated from its trunk dies quickly. We must be the new player of the same game, because to change the rules, is to destroy the game...we don't need to smash doors we can open (quoted in Landowski 1978: 104).

Elsewhere, in a letter to Paul Landormy (reproduced in Landowski), he said:

I have an exaggerated tendency, perhaps, to seek out polyphonic complexity. My great model is Johann Sebastian Bach. I'm not looking for a return to harmonic simplicity. On the contrary, I think we should take advantage of the harmonic materials created by the school that preceded us, but as a base for line and rhythm. Bach used elements of tonal harmony the way I wish to use superimposed modern harmonies (Landowski 1978: 119).

Following this success, Honegger was pressured to adapt the work for the concert stage. Because it was originally conceived as incidental music in 27 movements to accompany the play, it had been scored for a small pianocentered orchestra, which included woodwinds, brass, a harmonium, celesta, timpani, a double bass, and percussion including a gong, various drums, and a tambourine. For the oratorio version, Honegger added strings and deleted the harmonium and piano (Smither 2000: 659 n. 24). This is this version most often heard today. The original, staged version was only heard in Paris in 1924 and Cambridge in 1929, following its Swiss premiere (Loewenberg 1955).

Honegger was given the chance to have the newly-orchestrated version performed in Paris. Transferring a stage work to the concert hall posed the problem of the action. Morax suggested introducing a narrator, and this change had an unexpected effect: almost by accident, Honegger revived the oratorio form. The work was so successful that it was performed in Paris every night for three months in 1924 (Spratt 1987: 51). It was subsequently performed throughout the 1920s in Brussels, the Hague, New York, Rome, Zurich, Vienna, Leningrad, and in English in London in 1927 (Loewenberg 1955).

The libretto includes two kinds of text: newly-written poetic versions which paraphrase psalms; and lyric verses modeled on psalms or other biblical texts. Musically, the work as a whole has a noticeably 'Oriental' coloring, heard right in the opening measures.

Honegger's affinity with Baroque music is evident in the frequency of contrapuntal choruses (in which two or more voices are heard simultaneously), *ostinato* passages and fugal sections. The musical language is essentially

tonal but stylistically eclectic, including references to Gregorian chant and Protestant hymns, with the frequent use of complex polyphony (Spratt in *New Grove* 11: 681). There is a fascinating juxtaposition of old and new styles, with Stravinsky-inspired sections spliced with Bach chorales. Many choruses are unison and monumental in effect, while others feature a polychordal harmony. They are described by Smither as 'simple, strongly rhythmic, diatonic, and modal' (Smither 2000: 661).

Honegger's *Le Roi David* has remained in the repertoire and is performed fairly frequently. It could not be described as a traditional or 'tuneful' work, yet it is accessible to listeners with varying degrees of musical sophistication. It may be the most familiar work treated in this book, yet its libretto is primarily a re-writing of numerous Psalms and a capsule history of the rise of David. The oratorio form does not allow for midrashic re-telling or character development, my primary interests in this book. However, the music creates an atmosphere, and because it is so appealing to audiences, this oratorio could be considered a gateway to enhancing the public's interest in the story of David. It might even stimulate some to explore the story further, and a biblical scholar can ask no more than this.

My analysis of this work is based on two live performances I attended in addition to recordings and scores. Numbers in brackets are the scene numbers, as they appear both in the score and libretto. Numbers in parentheses are page numbers in the orchestra score.

There are at least ten recordings on the market today. The two I used in my analysis are: Naxos 8.553649 and EMI Classics CDC 7 54793 2. There are pros and cons to each recording. The lack of a libretto with the full text is a major flaw of the EMI recording, but the singing of the soprano and mezzo soloists—Alessandra Marc and Sylvie Sullé—is thrilling and dramatic. The Naxos recording includes the libretto, but I found the solo singing far less exciting. The spoken part of the Pythonisse (sorceress) is enacted far more melodramatically on the Naxos recording, by a longtime member of the Comédie Française, Christine Fersen; no information is provided about the singers on the EMI recording, but the Pythonisse, Martine Pascal, does not make much of her role.

10. Christopher Brown, David, A Cantata (opus 21)

London: J. & W. Chester (1970)

Text from the Old Testament and from 'A Song to David' by Christopher Smart (1722–1771)

(See Chapters 4, 5, 6, 8)

Christopher Brown (1943–), like many English composers, has excelled in writing choral music. He was a chorister at Westminster Abbey, and in 1962 won a choral scholarship to King's College, Cambridge. From 1965 to 1967 he studied at the Royal Academy of Music with Lennox Berkeley. His style is essentially lyrical and vocal, and he has written a wide range of choral and vocal music in all genres (Chester Novello Publishers: http://www.chesternovello.com/default.aspx?TabId=2431&State_2905=2&comp oserId 2905=181).

Brown's choral training and early career as a singer had a strong and lasting influence on his composing (Matthew Greenall in *New Grove* 2: 438). Besides his work as a composer, he has also taught composition at the Royal Academy of Music since 1969, and is still active as conductor of the New Cambridge Singers (Chester Novello Publishers).

This unusual work does not focus on character depictions, but brilliantly portrays several of the more dramatic scenes in Samuel. Typically for British oratorio of any era, the primary interest is the chorus, and lengthy choruses dominate. The narration and occasional solos almost seem part of a different work. The use of the same two soloists, a mezzo and a baritone, to sing the narration and also assume the different parts of Saul, David, and Michal, lessens the dramatic impact. The listener is always aware of this as a story being told rather than acted out. In spite of these limitations, the musical depictions of joy, fear, excitement, love, and grief are consistently exciting and filled with the unexpected.

I wish to thank the composer for providing both a score and privately produced CD to aid me in my analysis.

Operas

11. Carl Nielsen, Saul og David (1902)

Copenhagen: W. Hansen, 1931 (Danish/German). Libretto: Einar Christiansen Saul—bass; David—tenor; Mikal—dramatic soprano; Jonathan—tenor; 'Witch of Endor'—contralto; Samuel—bass (See Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)

Carl Nielsen (1865–1931) was born on the small island of Funen in Denmark. His father showed him how to play trumpet when he was 14 and he was accepted in a military band. He began violin and piano lessons with a local musician, and then began composing. He studied at Copenhagen Royal Conservatory from 1884 to 1886, and was first recognized as a promising composer in 1888 when his suite for strings premiered. His first symphony premiered in 1894 and was received rapturously. After his graduation from the Copenhagen Conservatory, he went to Germany to study Wagner's operas.

Nielsen only composed two operas in his life, *Saul og David* in 1901 and *Masquerade* in 1906. Both were successes in Denmark, though *Saul og David* had a mixed reception at its premiere. It never became as popular as *Masquerade*, a light drawing-room comic opera. Nielsen has been called

'one of the most important and free-spirited of the generation of composers who straddle the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' (David Fanning in *New Grove* 17: 887).

The librettist for *Saul og David*, Einar Christiansen (1869–1939), a personal friend of Nielsen's, was a journalist and playwright who had written several other librettos. Nielsen began to consider setting the story of Saul and David as early as 1896, and asked Christiansen to create a libretto from 1 and 2 Samuel. The score was completed in 1901 and premiered a year later with Nielsen conducting.

This period in Nielsen's life was a difficult one. He had married a sculptor in 1891 who was determined to pursue her own career. Even after they had three children, she frequently spent long periods working on location, and Nielsen was left alone with their children while also composing and conducting the opera orchestra. His anger and frustration led him to suggest divorce in 1905, and some critics believe that his state of mind is reflected in works written between 1897 and 1904. This is often called his 'psychological period', when he showed great interest in the forces that drive human personality (Fanning in *New Grove* 17: 889). This interest is reflected in *Saul og David*, with its riveting portrayal of Saul's instability and madness.

Nielsen focuses on the conflict between divine will and human freedom. Though not an orthodox Christian or regular church-goer, he had great respect for religious texts. His Saul not only is forsaken by God, but also curses God. The opera, in some critics' views, is 'almost symphonically self-sufficient' and this limits the opportunity for character interaction. The chorus, also, is deployed almost as in an oratorio, making the work difficult to stage (Fanning in *New Grove* 17: 893). Another critic says the music 'ranges from the ethereal and lyrical to the savagely dramatic...and is symphonic in scope' (Bill Parker, CD liner notes).

This is not the only Danish work that treats the subject of a king's downfall. A novel published a year before *Saul og David* was premiered, *The Fall of the King* by Johannes V. Jensen, has as its subject the capricious King Kristian II, whose character resembles Saul's. The opera by Peter Heise, *King and Constable* (1877), is considered the most important Danish opera before *Saul og David*. Its subject is a king who becomes a victim of his own actions and who challenges the established norm. So the fallen king could be seen as a kind of *Leitmotif* in the Danish tradition (Jorgen Jensen, CD liner notes).

Saul og David was a success in Denmark, where it was performed in every decade of the twentieth century. The work has remained in the repertoire in Denmark but is rarely performed elsewhere. It was performed in Swedish in Sweden, where in 1928 Michal was sung by the noted Wagnerian soprano Kirsten Flagstad. Christiansen drew his libretto from 1 Samuel 13–31, 2 Samuel 1 and fragments of Psalms and the Song of Songs. The action is

telescoped and the chronology is altered. The relationship between Michal and her brother Jonathan is an interesting dramatic addition, while the mutual love between David and Michal is standard for operatic renditions of the story.

Musically, influences of Wagner and Verdi can be heard in the continuity and pacing (David Fanning in *New Grove* 4: 191). David and Jonathan are both tenors, their mostly lyrical music contrasted to Saul's dark bass voice. Samuel is also a bass, but sings in a much lower range than Saul. Michal is cast as a dramatic soprano, giving her a maturity and gravitas not found in other musical works.

The most obvious and dramatic change in this libretto from the biblical narrative is the character of Saul. In this opera, he rarely evokes the audience's sympathy. He is defiant, angry, and power-hungry. Though the biblical Saul orders his own son Jonathan killed (1 Sam. 14.24), and frequently tries to kill David, in this opera he does not hesitate to order the killing of Samuel, David, and even his own daughter Michal. This shifts the listener's sympathy entirely to David and Michal.

David is depicted, typically, as virtually without blemish, trusting in his God and loving Michal. Biblical chapters featuring a more flawed David are simply not included. Michal's role is greatly expanded in this opera, as she appears in many more scenes than her biblical counterpart. In some of these scenes, when not simply singing of her love for David, she is depicted as a strong person in her own right. Because Michal is sung by a dramatic rather than lyric voice, the listener has the impression of a strong and mature woman. Scenes from the biblical narrative with a more negative portrayal of Michal are not included.

David and Michal emerge as blameless victims of Saul's madness and rage (even if David ultimately benefits from it), and the ambivalence of God's punishment of Saul is no longer an issue. Nielsen's Saul clearly deserves the punishment he gets, and David (and Michal) clearly deserve happiness and victory. The music and drama of this opera are riveting and thrilling, but the erasing of ambiguity diminishes the genius of the original biblical narrative.

My analysis is based on the piano-vocal score and two recordings. The Chandos recording (1990) is sung in the original Danish, with Aage Haugland as Saul, Peter Lindroos as David, Tina Kiberg as Mikal, Kurt Westi as Jonathan, Anne Gjevang as the 'Witch of Endor', and Christian Christiansen as Samuel; Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra and Choir; Neeme Järvi conducting. The English translation provided in the libretto included with the CD is from Roger Clegg's thesis *The Writing of Carl Nielsen's 'Saul og David'* (Leeds University, 1989). The singing is uniformly excellent on this CD, and it is a plus to hear the opera sung in its original language.

The second CD is on the Allegro 'Opera d'Oro label' (1972, a live performance in Copenhagen) and is sung in an English translation by Geoffrey Dunn, which is traditionally used in English-language performances of the work. The role of Saul is sung by Boris Christoff, David by Alexander Young. Michal by Elisabeth Söderström, Jonathan by Willy Hartmann, the 'Witch of Endor' by Sylvia Fisher, and Samuel by Michael Langdon; Danish Radio Symphony Chorus and Orchestra, John Alldis Choir; Jascha Horenstein conducting. The biggest plus of this recording is the fact that it was a live performance, so it is more dramatic and immediate than the other recording. No libretto is provided, and since two of the lead singers are not native English speakers, the text is often hard to decipher. Christoff (1914–1993) was a world-famous Bulgarian bass, particularly noted for his interpretation of Moussorgsky's Boris Godunov. His performance is powerfully dramatic; in fact, he even improvises in spots, seeming to inhabit his role. But his heavily Slavic accent renders the text virtually incomprehensible and unfortunately, his attempts can seem almost comical at times. Swedish soprano Söderström (1927–2009) is also a major international star, and though her English is accented, it is easier to decipher than Christoff's. The other singers are less satisfying than those on the Chandos label, for this listener.

12. Darius Milhaud, David

Libretto: Armand Lunel

Tel Aviv: Israeli Music Publications, 1954

David—baritone; Jonathan—tenor; Michal—soprano; Bathsheba—soprano; Abigail—mezzo; Abishag—coloratura soprano; Necromancer—contralto (See Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

Darius Milhaud (1892–1974) was born in Marseilles but grew up in Aixen-Provence, which he regarded as his true ancestral city. His was a long-established Jewish family of the Comtat Venaissin—a secluded region of Provence—with roots traceable at least to the 15th century, and perhaps even to the 10th century if not earlier (Jeremy Drake in *New Grove* 3: 675). Milhaud began violin studies at the age of seven, encouraged by his cultured home atmosphere, and began composing as a child. In 1909 he entered the Paris Conservatoire, where it was immediately recognized that he had discovered a harmonic language of his own. He explains his motivation for writing music:

I have no aesthetic, philosophy, theory. I love writing music, I do it always with love, otherwise I wouldn't do it. And what would I do with my life if I didn't have music?...a composer should do everything using all the current technical possibilities available (Milhaud 1982: 159).

In the 1920s Milhaud met and befriended Arthur Honegger (whose oratorio *Le Roi David* is also discussed in this book). Milhaud, one of

the twentieth century's most prolific composers, was one of a significant number of European Jewish émigré composers who took refuge in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s from the anti-Semitic persecution that culminated in the Holocaust. The Chicago Symphony had invited him to conduct a new commissioned work, and that invitation enabled him to receive visas from the consulate in Marseilles for himself and his family. They made their way to neutral Portugal and to the United States.¹

A conductor friend organized a teaching position for Milhaud at Mills College in Oakland, California. Beginning in 1951, Milhaud taught every summer at the Aspen Music School and Festival (in Colorado) for twenty years. Though he returned to France two years after the end of the war to teach at the Paris Conservatoire, he continued to teach alternate years at Mills College. Milhaud is known to have cautioned his students against what he called 'overdevelopment' as a pretension to the profound. 'It is false,' he told them, 'that the profundity of a work proceeds directly from the boredom it inspires' (quoted in Milken Archives online: http://www.milkenarchive.org/artists/artists.taf?artistid=76).

Over the course of six decades Milhaud produced a vast amount of music, with a catalogue of nearly 450 numbered works. He is often called the champion of polytonality. He neither invented the technique nor was the first to employ it, but he consistently found ingenious ways to use its potential to the advantage of his expressive goals, and often to the service of melody. Perhaps because he so clearly understood its possibilities, it became the harmonic language most commonly associated with his music. Milhaud's approach built upon a particular concept of polytonality derived from Stravinsky's early ballets (Milken Archives online).

Both Milhaud's personal Judaism and his heritage informed a number of his prewar works, and after his move to America in 1940, his Jewish identity and roots became even more significant parts of his overall expressive range. In addition to the works recorded for the Milken Archive and his many general works, Milhaud's biblically related pieces during a thirty-four-year period include *Cain and Abel*, for narrator, organ, and orchestra; *David*; *Saul* (incidental music); *Trois psaumes de David*; *Cantate de Job*; and *Cantate de psaumes*. His final work, *Ani maamin* (subtitled *Un chant perdu et retrouvé*, 'A Song Lost and Found') on a text by Elie Wiesel, received its premiere in 1975 at Carnegie Hall (Milken Archives online).

His opera *David* was commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation of the Library of Congress in 1952, on the occasion of the 3000th-year anniversary of the founding of Jerusalem. Milhaud felt 'proud and at the same time deeply concerned' about the enormous responsibility this entailed

1. Author's note: My mother, also a Jewish refugee, followed this same exact route less than one year later.

(Milhaud 1987: 248). He dedicated the work to the people of Israel, and it received its world premiere in concert form in Jerusalem in 1954, and as a staged work at La Scala in Milan in 1955.

Darius Milhaud's *David* is one of the rare operas based on the story of David that includes a role for Bathsheba (as well as Abigail, Michal and Abishag), because it covers more chapters of 1–2 Samuel than any other work discussed in this book. It is Milhaud's longest opera, though he completed it in the amazing time span of only six months. Since both he and his French librettist Armand Lunel were Jewish, they were very serious and scrupulous about creating a dramatic form to depict David's life. Lunel was apparently an expert on biblical subjects (Drake 1989: 306). They visited Israel (each for the first time) in order to acquaint themselves with the country, its landscape and particularly those places where the various events of David's life took place. Milhaud and Lunel had discussions with religious authorities in Israel, who had been appalled by the recent Hollywood movie *David and Bathsheba* (1951). Lunel and Milhaud wanted to ensure the authenticity of the opera, to be faithful to both biblical and Talmudic traditions (Drake 1989: 306). Milhaud's intention was

...to exploit the parallelism of David-shepherd and David-king, thus rooting the majesty and glory of David firmly in the soil of Israel and the lives of the most humble Israelis (Drake 1989: 307).

Milhaud describes the problems the librettist faced for this opera:

It was a delicate issue, given the diverse character of David. He had to show David the singer, poet, chief of state, patriarch, lover—to evoke Bathsheba without shocking certain religious parties! (Drake 1989: 307).

The opera has many characteristics of an oratorio because of the importance of the choruses. In addition to the traditional chorus inserted into the action, such as soldiers and townspeople, there is a second chorus made up of modern Israelis singing from onstage balconies. They follow and comment on the story of their ancestors, thus creating an ideal bridge between the ancient and modern state of Israel. This idea apparently came to Milhaud during his visit to Israel: when the guides related the history connected to different sites, they always linked that history with episodes in the recent war of liberation.

Liturgical and folk Jewish melodies were popular with Israeli composers in the newly-independent country. Recordings of these had been made by Israeli radio and provided to Milhaud, but he did not incorporate this style of music, nor did he employ 'orientalisms' which were also popular in that era (Milhaud 1987: 251).

The imposing score contains a vast range of emotional and dramatic situations, from lyrical love duets between David and Michal and Bathsheba, to the excitement of the Ark scene, to the heroic warrior sounds of the different battles. Milhaud uses constantly new musical elements without extensive thematic development. One brief descending musical motif, usually associated with David, becomes the closest thing to a *Leitmotif* found anywhere in Milhaud's works. The musical style is very personal and lacks the dissonances and polytonality found so abundantly elsewhere in his work.

David represents the apotheosis of Milhaud's choral style, which from his earliest works had been used to represent a collective point of view during the development of the action. In this work, the chorus appears offstage, onstage, and on balconies; it sings, screams, speaks, claps its hands—in other words, expresses itself with every means possible. The chorus thereby illustrates how the characters' individual fates make sense only if they are developed together with that of the people.

This chorus is simultaneously inside and outside the action: in its memory of the recent adventurous establishment of national unity and the difficult struggle for independence, it feels itself transported into the heroic era of David. While reliving that era's episodes and celebrating its triumphs, it also sees that age foretelling a future of peace and prosperity.

Performance History

The 1954 premiere in Israel was done as an unstaged oratorio. This was not the original intent, but the hall that was being specially constructed for the festival was not ready in time (Drake 1989: 308). The performance turned into a veritable 'folk festival', employing exclusively amateur or semi-professional singers whom Milhaud chose through auditions. The only exception was the role of David, taken by Heinz Rehfuss, a prominent Swiss bass-baritone who however did not arrive until the night before the concert. The chorus was also comprised of amateurs: office workers, shopkeepers and kibbutzniks, all of whom came to rehearsals irregularly. A police band augmented the brass section of the orchestra. In spite of all the difficulties, Milhaud noted that the 'remarkable ensemble interpreted my work—which essentially belonged to them!—with great passion' (Milhaud 1987: 251). He continues:

That evening was one of the most moving of my entire career. The singers seemed transfigured, as they sang 'their' history; the public participated in the glorification of its national hero. When David, at the close of Act III, decides to make Jerusalem the capital—as the Israeli government had done not long before—a collective emotion took hold of the audience and when the chorus of 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem!' was sung, one had the feeling everyone there was breathing as one (Milhaud 1987: 252).

The next performance—the first staged one—was in December 1954 at La Scala in Milan. Subsequent performances took place in Hamburg, Paris and Brussels. The original French libretto was translated into Hebrew in Israel (by Aharon Ashman), Italian for La Scala (by Claudio Sartori), into German

(by R.G. Wolfsohn), and into English (by Rollo Meyers) for the American premiere.

American Premiere: Los Angeles Hollywood Bowl

The original 12 scenes were reduced to nine for the Hollywood Bowl version. According to one reporter, the original opera required 22 different sets and took five and a half hours to perform (Audrey Kearns, *Entertainment Citizen News*, Los Angeles, September 24, 1956). The opera's conclusion includes a 100-voice children's chorus, which Milhaud meant to express the 'fresh sounds and new hopes of every new generation' (*Los Angeles Times*, September 16, 1956).

A cast of 400, including the famed Roger Wagner Chorale and a ballet, performed *David* on the largest theatre setting ever built on the stage of the Hollywood Bowl. Several of the soloists were from the Metropolitan Opera, the most famous being Giorgio Tozzi in the role of Samuel. Soprano Marni Nixon, who was to become quite well-known in her later career as the dubbed voice of several non-singing movie actresses (in *The King and I* and *My Fair Lady*, among many others), played the small part of Abishag. Asked about her recollection of this performance of over 50 years ago, she responded:

It was a huge process and a great deal of fun to see it and experience it put together...What I remember most about the performance is that it was a huge, huge, cast and the elements were that of pageantry and it was amazing that it all came together! (pers. comm.).

President Eisenhower sent a telegram to the chair of the Festival of Faith and Freedom Committee of the American Association for Jewish Education which sponsored the event, expressing his congratulations and best wishes for a successful premiere (Los Angeles Times, September 13, 1956). The Los Angeles City Council lauded the event as a milestone in the artistic life of the city and urged people to attend (Los Angeles Times, September 19, 1956). This reflects the post-war, post-Holocaust sentiment of the time. About 20,000 people heeded the invitation, practically filling the huge outdoor amphitheatre and causing a traffic jam which delayed the opening. Milhaud tells an anecdote about a friend who took a taxi to the event and was amused to hear the taxi driver comment, 'That Milhaud, quite a guy! Over 80 years old and working in three places at the same time'. Milhaud was not so happy to hear himself described as over 80 when he had actually just turned 60 (Milhaud 1987: 253). But it is interesting that a Los Angeles cab driver would have known who Milhaud was, and that he worked in California, Colorado and France. It suggests that there was a great deal of advance publicity for the event.

One reviewer comments:

...the impressively massive sets, lavish and colorful costumes, and dazzling lighting effects...[The costumes were] faithful to some of Rembrandt's Biblical paintings or the fashions of 1000-and-one nights.... The music cannot be considered tuneful and ingratiating in the conventional operatic tradition, [but] it is nevertheless grateful for the voice, full of deeply lyrical passages, in which the composer's sure hand evoked an atmosphere of uncanny realism without indulging in actual tone-painting (*Los Angeles Times*, September 24, 1956).

The critic, identified only as W.A., comments that the 60-piece orchestra was far too small for the masses of sound coming from the large onstage forces, even if, contrary to custom, onstage microphones were used. Another reviewer commented on Milhaud's superb use of muted strings, cymbals and harps (Kearns, *Citizen News*, Los Angeles, September 24, 1956). These are in fact very striking throughout the score.

Milhaud was in the audience and acknowledged the great success of this premiere (*Los Angeles Times*, September 24, 1956), called 'one of the most memorable and elaborate presentations in all of West Coast history' (L.A. Times: September 23, 1956).²

David is unusually cast as a baritone, a voice with more authority but less romantic timbre than a tenor. Jonathan is the only tenor in a lead role; though Michal and Bathsheba are both sopranos, Michal's is a lighter voice.

The music, when analyzed from the page, reveals subtleties and intricacies that when heard might not be particularly if at all audible. This is true of any music, yet more so of Milhaud's because of its density and polytonality. Certain patterns are utilized throughout the score: for example, parallel sequences of thirds and sixths in several bi-tonal passages accentuate the tonal centre of each separate part (Collaer 1982: 231). A bi-tonal passage is one in which each character is singing in a different key, which creates a somewhat dissonant sound. But with chords in the orchestra underlining each of the different keys, the effect is of hearing the two voices simultaneously with the understanding that they are not singing in harmony (or homophonically).

Another frequently used device is the orchestra playing in their two most extreme registers: very high and very low, with a void between them. This is used to depict mystery or anguish (Collaer 1982: 232). An example is the opening of the scene between Saul and the necromancer of Endor (see p. XX).

My analysis of this opera is based on a reading of the piano-vocal score, with the original French text and Hebrew translation; the English-language libretto; and a recording kindly provided by the Norddeutscher Rundfunk

2. Author's note: Since I lived in Hollywood at the time of this performance, and my father David was particularly enamored of the story of David and had lived in Israel (then Palestine) in the 1920s, I am convinced my parents would have attended. As an 11-year-old, I would have been considered too young to come with them—what a pity.

dating to 1954 and sung in German. In this recording, the part of David is taken by two different baritones, one for the young and one for the old David. The role was taken by only one baritone in the Los Angeles, Milan La Scala, and Brussels La Monnaie productions. This recording cuts 45 minutes of music, as the Los Angeles production also did. Unfortunately some of the most interesting pages to a feminist biblical scholar—notably Abigail's duet with David and Michal's first duet with him—were cut.

This is the only opera, to my knowledge, that encompasses virtually the entire narrative relating to David's story. Very few scenes are excluded, which accounts for its great length and also its disappearance from the repertoire. Many scenes that are only dry narrative in the Bible are enacted, greatly heightening the drama and interest.

Through an amazingly rich variety and range of musical styles, each character comes vividly to life. Women who are mere sketches in the biblical story emerge as flesh and blood characters, even if they exist only in relation to David. Characters acquire many more dimensions than their biblical counterparts, through both text and music. The music is demanding and never simple; it would need more than one hearing to appreciate its complexity and effectiveness. The opera's rich tapestry of drama and sound can be appreciated on many levels, and is an astounding example of opera as midrash on a biblical story.

When describing the stage directions, I credit either the notes in the score or, in many cases, the English 'script' (it is a loose translation). Though the Los Angeles production used only one set, the notes (in the English script) spell out a great deal of action not found in the original score. That score was intended for the Israel premiere, which was not staged. The translator and director in Los Angeles may have had access to notes by the composer, or may have even conferred with him before the premiere. I have no way of knowing the origin of these stage instructions, but it is likely that they were approved by Milhaud himself.

13. Josef Tal, *Shaul b'Endor* (*Saul at Endor*) Libretto in English, German, and Hebrew (biblical text) Tel Aviv: Israeli Music Publications, 1957 Saul—baritone; Samuel—bass; Woman—alto³ (*See Chapter 7*)

14. Josef Tal, Amnon and Tamar: Opera in One Act

Libretto: Recha Freier

3. Tal does not indicate the voice types; I gleaned this information from the vocal range of the characters, but it is possible he did not want to insist that only a certain voice category could sing the part. Saul could be taken by a tenor, and the woman by a contralto.

Wiesbaden: Impero-Verlag, 1959 Tamar—mezzo; Amnon—tenor; Absalom—bass-baritone (See Chapter 10)

Josef Tal (1910–2008) was born Joseph Gruenthal in Pinne (now Poland). His family moved to Berlin in 1911. From 1927 to 1929, he studied at the Staatliche Akademische Hochschule für Musik in Berlin, where one of his teachers was Paul Hindemith. In 1934, after the Nazis rose to power in Germany, he immigrated to Israel. After a period of adjustment and residence at two kibbutzim (Beit Alpha and Gesher), he settled in Jerusalem in 1937, and taught composition and piano at the Jerusalem Academy of Music. He was the director of the Academy from 1948 until 1952. In 1965 he joined the faculty of Hebrew University and eventually became the first head of the musicology department (Jehoash Hirshberg in *New Grove* 25: 27-28). In 1969 he became a corresponding member of the Berlin Academy of Arts in West Germany; in 1971 he received a full membership in that organization (an ironic turn of history).

The many honours bestowed upon him include the State of Israel Prize (1971), Art Prize of the City of Berlin (1975), the Wolff Prize, Israel (1983), Verdienstkreuz I Klasse, Germany (1984), Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, France (1985), Johann Wenzel Stamitz Prize, Germany (1995), and others (Israel's Blog, 14/10/2008: http://www.iamic.net/news/israel/josef-tal-%E2%80%93-memoriam).

Many of Tal's works were based on a biblical subject or on epic events in Jewish history, or were influenced by the Bible. In his musical style, however, Tal remained faithful to his European background and was not affected by the trends which dominated most Israeli compositions in the 1940s and 1950s. These were largely based either on the folklore of the various Jewish communities in Israel or on the Eastern musical traditions of the region. By that time, Tal was already deep into writing 12-tone music and with the passing years, his use of the dodecaphonic elements became less and less constrained (Israel's Blog, 14/10/2008: http://www.iamic.net/news/israel/josef-tal-%E2%80%93-memoriam). Tal directed the Centre for Electronic Music in Jerusalem, which created a stir at the time. In an interview, Tal discussed his approach to opera:

The theatrical part of my operas is equal to the musical part, absolutely equal. So I saw to it...always to have a stage director who understands that music and stage are not two different things but are going together and inspiring each other [sic] (quoted in Fleisher 1997: 71).

He also commented on music in general:

Music is a communication, and if you communicate you speak to somebody. If somebody can't make any sense of what you are speaking then you are speaking to the walls, right? Music is not an abstraction of spoken language.

It is a language in itself. It has its own grammar, its own rules, its own organization. It has its own feelings. It creates its own emotions as any language does...over the hundreds of years, in music, certain expressions have been accepted as general (quoted in Fleisher 1997: 72).

Tal also comments on the use of ancient Jewish modal scales, such as Dorian and Phrygian, which are considered exotic and as belonging to ancient times. But he points out that 'we don't know what King David really sang', and that there is no real 'Israeli' music, modal or otherwise (Fleisher 1997: 73).

These two scores are completely atonal, and my efforts to obtain a recording of either were unsuccessful. Patterns and musical effects can be gleaned from the printed page, but it is difficult to imagine how the music would actually sound.

Saul at Endor (1955) is entirely based on 1 Samuel 28. Tal described the work as an 'opera concertante'—not intended for stage performance. The story is told by a Narrator, and the dialogue sung by the characters. The use of a narrator would put it in the category of oratorio, but the dramatic solos of the named characters are more typical of opera. That is probably why Tal chose to call it an opera to be done in concert form.

Amnon and Tamar. Tal's librettist Recha Freier (1892–1984) founded the Youth Aliya in Berlin, Germany in 1932, saving thousands of Jewish lives. She was a multi-talented woman, a poet and musician, a teacher and social activist. In 1958 she established the Israel Composer's Fund to encourage musical creativity by commissioning works from local composers, who had to eke out a living by giving private lessons, instead of devoting their time and talent to composing (Jewish Women's Archive online: http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/freier-recha). Tal thanks this Fund for their support in his Preface to the opera.

The same year this fund was established, Josef Tal was invited by conductor Hermann Scherchen to write an operatic work of about 20 minutes duration, with a cast of no more than four soloists and a small chorus, and an orchestra of under 15 players. Tal searched for a libretto in which the story could be fully developed within these limits, but which would also allow him to clearly define the four characters. He also 'wanted the libretto to use the word only for the purpose of hinting at the lyrical or dramatic content, in order to enable the music to develop in complete freedom'. He believes this opera fulfills those goals (Composer's Preface).

Tamar is cast as a mezzo, traditionally the voice of a seductress or older woman in opera. Amnon is a tenor, the romantic lead in opera. Both these voices may have an ironic intent. Absalom is a baritone, a voice reflecting more authority than the tenor.

15. Ezra Laderman, *And David Wept* (1971), a sacred music drama Librettist: Joe Darion. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971

David—baritone; Bathsheba—mezzo-soprano; Uriah—bass-baritone (See Chapter 9)

Ezra Laderman (1924–) was born in New York and attended the High School of Music and Art there. He was visiting composer and later dean and professor of composition at Yale University (1988–1995). He has received three Guggenheim fellowships (1955, 1958, 1964), the Prix de Rome (1963) and the American Academy of Rome fellowship (1982–1983), and he has received numerous commissions. In his early studies, he was introduced to the techniques of atonal and 12-note composition, but later freed himself from these rigid techniques to develop the long lyrical lines that became typical of his style. His combined use of tonal and atonal materials is a particularly striking element of his music (James Cassaro in *New Grove* 14: 104).

Laderman wrote ten operas, on a variety of biblical, historical and fantastic subjects. He collaborated with Joe Darion (1911–2001) several times. His best known work is *Galileo Galilei* (1978), a revision of his earlier oratorio *The Trials of Galileo* (1967). Besides *And David Wept*, other biblical operas are *Sarah* (1959) and *The Questions of Abraham* (1973), which is described as an 'opera-cantata' like *And David Wept*. All three works were commissioned by CBS TV (Cassaro in *New Grove* 14: 104).

And David Wept was first performed live on CBS television, on April 8, 1971, conducted by Alfredo Antonini and choreographed by Jose Limon. The stars of that production were Sherrill Miles (David), Rosalind Elias (Bathsheba) and Ara Berberian (Uriah), all well-known singers from the Metropolitan Opera. It was repeated several times on television (Ericson, New York Times, May 25, 1980). The fact that CBS considered the broadcast of an opera based on a biblical narrative a good commercial venture is indicative of a different era and way of thinking. It is difficult to imagine such a production being funded and shown on television today, in the U.S. or elsewhere.

In a New York Times interview, Laderman states that the work was not intended to be performed with dancers, but the television producer 'felt that it needed the color and movement' of dance. Dancers were used again for the first staged performance, though Laderman feels this work can be done without dancers and in fact, without staging, as a cantata (*New York Times*, 1980). In an interview a few days before the stage premiere, Laderman talks about his and the librettist's motivation for choosing this subject:

The subject fascinated us because we were interested in the fallibility of great people, not to lessen their greatness but to show their humanity...We did not write 'And David Wept' as a specifically Jewish work, although I'm Jewish, and certainly David is one of the great Jewish heroes. It may even be that our psychological treatment of him will offend some people (*New York Times*, 1980).

The first live staged performance was on May 31, 1980 at the 92nd Street 'Y' in New York, as part of the series 'Jewish Opera at the Y.' This performance was reviewed by Peter G. Davis in the *New York Times* on June 2. He comments:

In its essentials, 'And David Wept' is a restatement of the eternal triangle as found in the biblical story of King David. After falling in love with Bathsheba [sic], the wife of his general Uriah, David sends Uriah into battle and certain death. The plot unfolds in a series of static flashbacks as the three characters offer comments on their individual dilemmas and dancers mime the events.

By distancing the principals from the action in this fashion... Mr. Darion is able to give the tale a timeless quality. Even the best people are liable to fall in love with their friends' wives, he tells us, and the situation is always going to be a deplorable one in which everybody experiences pain... Mr. Darion... presents the inevitable conflicts of passion, outrage and guilt succinctly, theatrically and with a minimum of cliché.

Mr. Laderman's music goes down very easily, and for this opera he has smoothed out the dissonant edges of his musical language considerably. The score is tonal, melodic and clearly the work of a craftsman who never makes a false step. While the style is quite eclectic—Bloch and Vaughan Williams frequently come to mind with more than a hint of the popular side of Kurt Weill—it is all blended skillfully. 'And David Wept' does not take many risks, nor does it dig into the subject with much power or originality, but the piece works efficiently enough on its own modest terms.

There is as much talking over the music as there is vocalizing—always a danger in opera (Davis, *New York Times*).

The story of the opera is taken from 2 Samuel 11, but is told entirely in flashback, and from three different viewpoints: David's, Bathsheba's, and Uriah's. David is cast as a baritone, but in quite a high tenorial range. Bathsheba is uncharacteristically a mezzo-soprano, suggesting maturity as well as seductiveness. Uriah is a bass-baritone, which lends his character more gravitas than David's. Though this version is a love story between David and Bathsheba, their voices are not the conventional choices for depicting a love relationship, which would be tenor-soprano. This is probably to suggest their more advanced age: the characters are remembering events that took place many years earlier. Uriah is actually speaking from the grave, a very unusual and effective device. Every scene in the opera is a flashback account of an earlier event.

This was not the only time Laderman collaborated with Joe Darion, who is most known for the musical *Man of La Mancha*. Darion wrote many Broadway musical librettos, so he seems an unusual choice for an adaptation of a biblical story. Yet the two also collaborated on other biblical operas. How well did the composer and librettist know the story? They seem to have been influenced by the 1951 film in some of their interpretations, but

they may have also been following the dictates of the CBS producers. (The composer declined to respond to questions I posed to him on this and other points.)

The singers alternately speak and sing their lines. There is great variation between very dissonant passages and accessible, almost Broadway-like tunes. For the spoken passages, the composer indicates that 'the notes indicate an approximate pitch; accentuation should be that of normal speech' (score, 2). No discernible pitch is audible for the spoken parts on the recording.

This opera would be an exciting addition to the repertoire of musical theatre, and could create renewed interest in the biblical story. An artificial patina of holiness and religiosity found in the final two scenes almost neutralizes the dramatic effect of all that preceded them. This shift in mood may be related to the conditions given by the work's commissioners, which is a factor in any era. The vulgarity and lust depicted in the early scenes had to be somehow neutralized by a 'religious' conclusion. The end result is an opera seemingly written with two different audiences in mind, neither of which would be fully satisfied with the complete work.

My analysis is based on the piano-vocal score and a recording obtained from a private collector.

16. Flavio Testi, *Saül*. Opera, based on the play by André Gide Milan: Casa Musicale Sonzogno di Piero Ostali, 1993 Saul—baritone; David—tenor; Queen—mezzo; Sorceress—mezzo (See Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)

Flavio Testi (1923–) is an Italian composer and musicologist. His earliest musical studies were in Turin and Milan, but he is primarily self-taught. His most important works are part of the sacred repertoire (i.e. *Crocifissione*, 1953, and *Stabat Mater*, 1957), though he has also written many stage works (Pozzi in *New Grove* 25: 317). The opera *Saül* premiered at the Macerata Festival in 2007 (Sferisterio di Macerata) and this production was subsequently performed in January 2008 in Rome, a performance I attended.

The orchestration is very unusual: there are no violins, because Testi considered them too lyrical and sentimental for his conception; there is a small number of violas, cellos and basses, several winds including three kinds of clarinet, brass, harp, celesta, piano, and most unusually and prominently, xylophone and vibraphone. This chamber orchestra underlines the intimate, non-spectacular nature of the work and offers a very specific *timbre* or tone.

This choice extends to the voices, none of which sings in its highest range. The roles of the Queen and the Necromancer were taken by the same singer in the 2008 production, the same one the director had requested for the premiere in Macerata, though one is written for a mezzo and the other a contralto. Jonathan and David are both cast as tenors, the voice usually used for the most romantic and heroic characters. But they sing in a limited range,

mostly around c', and their musical lines rarely extend beyond a range of more than five notes, less than half the normal range of an operatic role. Saul and all the other male characters are cast as baritones or basses. Because the range of all the male voices in this opera is almost identical, Testi's choice of voice type seems to be based on vocal colour and timbre rather than range.

The play by Gide, which Testi utilized as his libretto, spans the biblical narrative from 1 Samuel 16 to 2 Samuel 1, but with a large part of the action deleted. David does not age from start to finish, Jonathan is never presented as a warrior, and Gide invents several characters. The overarching theme is one of longing that leads to madness, and a sense that nothing can ever be made right as long as everyone has secrets they can never reveal.

André Gide (1869–1951) wrote his play *Saül* in 1898, but was not able to have it produced directly after writing it. It was first published in 1903 as dramatic literature and premiered on stage only in 1922. For the play's premiere, the background music was composed by the 30-year-old Arthur Honegger, who had written his own oratorio *Le Roi David* only a year earlier (see p. 29).

Gide wrote this play after having his first homosexual experience, in Tunisia, and he himself considered *Saül* his great contribution to homosexual literature. The play confronts the issue of homosexuality by introducing the element of Saul's attraction to David as well as including a very suggestive relation between David and Jonathan. The writer or editor of the biblical narrative obviously did not feel a need to censor anything in the story of their relationship. Their mutual love is described as faithful and passionate, but no allusions to 'forbidden practices' are made, neither negative nor positive (Nissinen 1998: 56). Emotional closeness was not forbidden in the writer's mind, and if the men went beyond that will always remain for the reader to decide. Women have minor roles in David's story, as adjuncts to the male world of battle and court intrigue. Because of this, the social context almost seems to require a kind of 'homosociality' and homoerotic attachments (Jennings in Stone 2001: 39, 47).

Gide took many liberties with the original narrative. Because the play focuses on the early history, none of David's wives is included. In fact, David remains young from start to finish. Gide has added a character—the Queen—without naming her. Gide makes her evil and duplicitous, and has her killed by Saul. The only wife of Saul named in the Bible is Ahinoam of Jezreel (1 Sam. 14.49-50). In general, the power of the queen mother would be based on her ancestry plus whatever territorial, commercial, and diplomatic connections she represented. The relationship between the queen and Saul is portrayed as hate-filled. The queen loves her own power as much as she hates both Saul's and Jonathan's weakness.

The biblical David is a very ambiguous and multi-faceted character, but Gide turns him into 'a two-dimensional figure, a very devout servant

of the monarchy and of God' (Downey 2004: 136). This description would serve for many librettos' treatment of David, even though none of them is as homoerotic as Gide's play. Gide portrays spiritual thirst provocatively as homoerotic desire, whose ultimate goal is reuniting with God, who has disappeared.

Testi cut a few minor characters from the Gide play, but maintained the core in twelve scenes, cut from the original five acts. Several scenes from the original play are telescoped. The libretto changes hardly a single word of the Gide text. David emerges as two-dimensional yet also ambiguous, as in the original narrative. He is portrayed as unambitious, repeatedly refusing offers from Jonathan to take the crown; and religious, often depicted praying and frequently making references to his God. Though he displays and proclaims love for Jonathan, his declarations lack ardor. His character is in marked contrast to virtually all the other characters, who are depicted in various stages of torment.

The music of Saul and the queen has a wide range, since they are depicted as the most complex characters. Saul frequently sings two successive phrases in two different octaves, and some of his lines lie in a tenor range. He also frequently sings wide interval leaps, which represent his frenzy. The style of the singing is not lyrical, but dry and often unaccompanied recitation. The occasional lyrical singing thus underlines particularly emotional moments.

Testi's musical language is dry and simple, recalling early twentieth-century styles such as Stravinsky and Bartok, as well as Debussy and Ravel. His style 're-elaborates and reflects, without eclecticism, certain crucial twentieth-century achievements, from Stravinsky and Bartok to Schoenberg' (Pozzi in *New Grove* 25: 317).

The music of this opera conveys the impression that there is no true happiness to be found, only sadness and the inescapable sense that something is not right and cannot be made right, no matter who wears the crown. Gide's play explores the psyche of his characters as no other work based on the books of Samuel has done. Testi's music amplifies Gide's depiction of Saul's pain and anxiety, Jonathan's longing and anguish, and David's cool confidence. Gide's creation of a manipulative and scheming queen, and of a necromancer terrified for her life and yet kind and generous to Saul, are also given many additional dimensions through Testi's music. The love, lust, and lunacy in the title of this book are nowhere so vividly constructed and depicted as in this opera and the play from which it took its libretto.

My comments are based on a reading of the Gide play (*Théâtre, André Gide*; Paris: Librarie Gallimard, 1942); attending the Rome performance of the opera; listening to the CD ('naïve' label; Radio France 2003); and the piano-vocal score kindly provided by the Rome Opera.

Additions and Aberrations

The most common addition found in these musical settings is Michal's presence in many more scenes than her biblical counterpart. She is sometimes even present at David's encounter with Goliath, though in those cases David is generally portrayed as older than a teenager. She is most unusually present in one work at the 'coven of witches' in the Endor scene (Gabriel), and at the battlefield in several works. She teams up with Jonathan on many occasions to help David or Saul. Her relationship with all three men—David, Jonathan, and Saul—is embellished in almost every work regardless of era or genre. Rather than a feminist motivation to expand Michal's role, her greater presence is more likely due to the need to include a soprano's voice in many scenes, making a work more musically interesting.

The biblical texts most often used in addition to the books of Samuel are various Psalms, mostly those attributed to David. They are sung both by David and, more often, by the chorus. This is a continual, subliminal way of reminding the audience of David's role as a writer of psalms, even though this is not based on historical evidence, merely on tradition. The Song of Songs is frequently used in love duets. Other texts found less often are Proverbs, Chronicles and a few New Testament passages.

Additional characters are not found in many works, but the most notable are Saul's wife, the Queen (Testi), Merab (uniquely in Handel), and Sulamith and Deborah (Reissiger), whose presence is not explained.

The most extreme deviations from the biblical plot are found in librettos based on plays: Saul kills both his wife the queen and the necromancer in Testi's opera, which is based on a play by André Gide. Michal is alone on the battlefield as Saul dies, and she curses God, in Buzzi's opera based on a play. The oddest deviations are certainly those found in Gabriel's oratorio, in which Michal sings a lullaby to her baby and Jonathan announces Saul's death and anoints David king. These are so counter to the original narrative that it would be interesting to explore the American Baptist culture of the early twentieth century to understand Gabriel's possible motivations.

Conclusion

The three motifs of love, lust, and lunacy are woven into all of these works. Musical elements highlight and underline these themes dramatically in every era, language, and musical genre. Saul's madness is suggested with such musical devices as dissonance, unexpected vocal leaps and declamatory singing. Lust and love are represented by similarly lush, passionate and languid music, heard in duets between David and Michal or Bathsheba. In more modern works, the love duets are markedly more tonal and romantic

than the rest of the score. In works of the Romantic period, music depicting love is particularly passionate and soaring, featuring many high sung notes, chromatic passages, and thrilling homophonic singing.

Many works employ orientalisms to create a sense of the biblical setting. This colourful background brings the characters into sharp relief. The characters inhabiting the pages of the Bible are brought to life vividly and provocatively in the pages of these musical scores. Music depicts their powerful emotions, which are found mostly between the lines or in the margins of the biblical text. From the imagination of these librettists and composers, the cast of characters in the books of Samuel springs forth as if newly created. These librettos and musical settings shed new light and colour on the biblical text, offering insights and possibilities never before imagined.

Note: Throughout the book, round brackets () indicate a page number, while square brackets [] indicate the number given to this selection in the score.

The key signature is always given in capital letters, i.e. 'this aria is in A major'. If the key is followed by another word, it will be hyphenated, i.e. 'an A-major chord'. Notes themselves are always in lower case, i.e. 'the final note is a" (explanation of a', a", a"', is found in the Glossary).

Chapter 3

SAUL'S YOUTH, BEFORE DAVID

Summary of 1 Samuel 8–15

- **8** The elders ask Samuel to appoint a king. He tries to discourage them, but they insist.
- 9 Saul is introduced, looking for the lost asses of his father. His servant suggests they visit a famous prophet. On the way, they meet girls drawing water and ask for directions. God had told Samuel the day before that he was sending a man to Samuel to be anointed. When Samuel sees Saul approaching, God lets him know this is the man. They converse, eat together, then ascend to a roof.
- 10 Samuel anoints Saul privately, gives him lengthy instructions about his return home, tells him to wait seven days and also foretells that he will speak in ecstasy with the prophets. After this private anointment, Samuel anoints Saul before the people, who hail their new king.
- 11 After Saul is victorious in battle, Samuel publicly inaugurates the monarchy at Gilgal.
- 12 Samuel gives his farewell speech to Israel (not included in any musical work).
- 13 Saul is king. He wins a battle and is supposed to wait for Samuel at Gilgal before giving burnt offerings. He doesn't wait, and when Samuel arrives, he tells Saul that God will no longer favour him. Saul and his son Jonathan (his first mention) go into battle.
- 14 Jonathan goes into battle with his troops. Saul is also fighting a battle, and he makes an oath to destroy any man who eats before nightfall, and before Saul has taken revenge on his enemies. Jonathan did not hear this oath, and he tastes some honey. His men tell him about the oath, but he disagrees with his father. Eventually Saul finds him and wants to put him to death, but the troops remind him of Jonathan's great victory over the Philistines, so he is spared (this scene is not in any musical work).
- 15 Samuel orders Saul to attack Amalek and proscribe all that belongs to him. Saul instead spares the Kenites, Agag, and the best of the animals. ['They proscribed only what was cheap and worthless' (15.9) is a disturbing statement that lumps together older animals and human lives.] Samuel tells

Saul that God is angry about this. Saul grabs and tears the corner of Samuel's coat as he is leaving, and Samuel tells him that this is how the kingship will be torn away from him, to be given to a worthier man. Samuel kills Agag, and he and Saul never meet again.

Commentary

A general principle of biblical narrative is that the first reported speech of a character is usually a defining moment of characterization. Saul's first words show him to be uncertain about finding his way, and this uncertainty is continually underlined throughout the scene. This characteristic of Saul's will surface throughout the narrative. Saul's father sent him to look for the lost asses with a servant, rather than letting him go on his own, possibly suggesting a lack of trust in his son's reliability. And most of the initiative during the search comes from the servant rather than from Saul. Samuel was known to all of Israel (3.20) but apparently not to Saul. So a prominent trait in this early portrait of Saul is a lack of awareness of his surroundings, contrasted with Samuel, a prophet who sees and knows all.

Saul is also consistently depicted as anxious and ambivalent. Both Alter and Borgman propose that the writer was trying to mirror this psychological condition by frequently using paired or even tripled episodes: three coronation scenes, two tales of Saul among the prophets, two incidents of his hurling the spear at David, and others (Alter 1999: 47, xix; Borgman 2008: 19ff.). The paired and tripled episodes are generally conflated into one single scene in musical works, for the sake of simplicity. Saul's fundamental uncertainty is not generally the most predominant trait found in his musical portrayals. It is a subtle characteristic to depict, and less appealing dramatically than his anxiety and ambivalence, or his anger and madness. These latter traits, therefore, are much more predominant in musical works.

The verse found both in chaps. 10 and 19, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' could be interpreted as a comment on the inadequacy of Israel's reliance on charismatic leadership, since it suggests Saul's paradoxical inability to control the conditions of his inspiration (Rosenberg 1987: 128).

The beginning of Saul's downfall is usually considered to be in chap. 13, when Saul disobeys Samuel's orders for the first time, either out of hubris or impatience. Though he carries out the required sacrifice before Samuel has returned, he had good reasons for doing so. Borgman believes Saul's character flaw is not the wrongdoing so much as his fear and uncertainty, and his response of defensiveness rather than acceptance (Borgman 2008: 24-25). Sternberg sees Saul's failure to carry out the orders as both a lack of faith and a loss of nerve (Sternberg 1987: 355).

The second episode of wrongdoing is Saul's failure to utterly destroy the Amalekites and Agag (chap. 15). When Samuel accuses him, Saul is defensive again, and Samuel tells Saul to act like a king in spite of his lack of self-esteem. Borgman highlights this as the core of Saul's character flaw. Saul does finally confess to obeying the people's voice instead of God's, because of his insecurity (Borgman 2008: 27-28).

The Music

Different musical settings highlight different flaws in Saul's character. Samuel is often depicted as a powerful and wrathful figure, fleshing out his personality. No musical work I analyzed includes action from all of these chapters, but several include parts of them. The three different anointment ceremonies are generally conflated into one, in musical works, simplifying the plot. The episode in chap. 14 in which Saul wants to kill Jonathan because he defied his oath, shows Saul in a very harsh and negative light. Probably for that reason, it is not included in any musical settings.

Musical works to be discussed here include three nineteenth-century oratorios, one twentieth-century oratorio and one opera.

Nineteenth-Century Works

Carl Reissiger's 1852 oratorio *David: Oratorium in Zwei Teilen (Oratorio in Two Parts)* opens with a chorus, after which Nathan tells Samuel to prepare to anoint Saul. This version conflates Nathan with God, and the composer does the same much later in the story, when Nathan has a role in the anointing of Solomon (1 Kings 1.39).

Ferdinand Hiller's German oratorio *Saul* (1858) is interesting for its alteration of the chronology. The oratorio opens at chap. 18, but in No. 9, Samuel sings a recitative and aria based on chap. 15. The libretto adds psalm-like language to Samuel's text. The aria is marked *allegro con fuoco* ('fast and fiery') (in the piano-vocal score [pv]; *allegro energico* in the orchestral score). It is one of the most dramatic arias in the oratorio (72-76, pv; 150-67). Samuel is describing God's powers, and Hiller pulls out all the stops to depict this power musically. The vocal range of the aria is wide, spanning *A#* to *e'*. In the closing measures, Samuel tells Saul that 'Jehovah's wrath is so great that the crown will melt with one breath from him' (76, pv; 165-166). A lengthy chorus proclaims the great power of God's voice (No. 10).

Saul was rejected by Samuel at this point in the biblical narrative because of his non-compliance with God's/Samuel's order after his defeat of the Amalekites and King Agag. As elsewhere in the oratorio, Hiller and his librettist appear to be assuming audience familiarity with the story, because that incident is never depicted here. The motivation for Samuel's tirade is left unexplained, and as mentioned above, the chronology of the narrative is altered.

Samuel is musically portrayed as both powerful and wrathful. He is described only through his words and actions in the biblical narrative, and

the musical portrayal turns him into a towering figure of flesh and blood. This adds drama and interest to the story and to the Samuel-Saul encounters.

Sir Hubert Parry's 1894 oratorio *King Saul* includes large parts of chaps. 8–10 and 15, along with many creative additions to the narrative.

In Act I, Scene 1, Samuel is responding to the Israelites who are asking him to appoint a king over them (8.5). In the biblical account, only the elders approach Samuel, and the primary reason they give for wanting a king is 'to govern us like all other nations' (8.5). In this oratorio, all the people are clamoring, and in their opening chorus they give their reasons for needing a king:

Toil and weariness! Hunger and want...
Forsaken is Israel, forsaken!
The Gentiles oppress us
And we have no leader;
Amnon and Amalek,
Moab and Philistine,
Swarm o'er our borders
And slay without hindrance.

Samuel reminds the people that they have turned 'unto Baal and Ashtaroth' in the past, and were not helped, while their God has always helped them. He reminds them that God is their king, and then warns them of what having a human king will entail (quoting 8.11-18). The people do not want to heed his warnings. In the biblical text, God tells Samuel to give them what they want, and Samuel simply sends the elders home. In the oratorio, instead, Samuel describes who the new king will be:

Lo! From the hills of Ephraim he cometh, and from the land of Shaalim!
His face is as the sun for brightness, his presence like the cedar on the mountain.
God hath called him to be your lord!

Describing the king-to-be in these glowing terms, of course, completely defeats the point of Samuel's previous arguments. He does praise Saul to the people briefly in the biblical account, when he says of him that 'There is none like him among all the people' (10.24), but this is after he has anointed him king. So the praise heard here is out of sequence.

Scene 2 opens with the 'maidens at the well,' a women's chorus praising water in Victorian poetic style. They notice Saul approaching (9.11), a 'comely youth' who is singing 'a joyous strain,' with lyrics like this:

Free on my way,
Free as the day,
Through Israel's joyous land I fare...
With joy of life each passing day o'erflows.

This may well be the least melancholy young Saul depicted in any oratorio or opera. After the aria, he asks the women 'Where dwells the prophet of God?' Surprised that he would not know 'where dwells the seer, the prophet of the Lord,' they give him directions.

After a brief orchestral interlude depicting his journey, Saul approaches Samuel. The libretto dispenses with much of Samuel's speech to Saul in the remainder of chap. 9 and instead sums it up briefly before Samuel anoints Saul with a vial of oil (10.1). In the biblical version, this is a private ceremony; the public proclamation takes place in Gilgal (11.14-15). In the oratorio, by contrast, the chorus of Israelites responds immediately with:

Behold the anointed of the Lord!...
The Lord hath regarded the prayer of His people, and hath granted unto Israel a king!

It could be argued that most of these changes are for the purpose of simplification and brevity, rather than presenting a radical new vision. Parry also wanted to create as many choruses as possible, since that was what his audience came to hear. In addition, a public anointing ceremony was far more dramatic than a private one.

In Act II, Scene 1, Samuel has anointed Saul king (11.15). The libretto fast-forwards to chap. 15, when Samuel sends Saul to battle Amalek. Saul is ordered to slay every man, woman and child and all the animals belonging to Amalek (15.2-3). Saul's response in the biblical account is simply action: he musters the troops and goes to battle. In the oratorio, he first sings a lengthy battle cry (47-51):

Come forth, ye that hide from the fierce hate of Amalek!... Lift up your eyes, and be glad for the deliverance that cometh of God.

No more shall the Gentiles lay a reproach upon Israel... for ye shall trample them under your feet, and they shall be your slaves... Their might shall be vain at the will of the Lord.

Jehovah shall fight for you...and they that seek the hurt of Israel Shall bow before you in the dust.

This is a rousing anthem in C major and a fast 3/4 time. The *tessitura* is relatively high in the baritone range, hovering around c', projecting power and passion. Phrases are often repeated in increasingly higher ranges; for example, the first 'Lift up your eyes reaches b; a repeat of that phrase ends on d', and 'be glad' reaches e' (48, 2nd staff, m. 5). This is a musical way of depicting steadily increasing excitement.

The section beginning 'No more shall...' is less heavily accented and a little more lyrical (48, m. 5 after Reh. C), highlighting Saul's more caring side. The phrase 'their might shall be vain' ends on a sustained d' which is held for four beats. It comes at the end of several measures of constant

harmonic modulations, but the closing words 'at the will of the Lord' lead to a strong G major chord and a new section (49, Reh. E).

The rhythm is now less stately and more excited, with many dotted 8th -notes and triplets, to depict the speed of the army. The final section, beginning with 'Jehovah shall fight' is broader and the orchestral part is denser, building to Saul's climactic high e' on 'bow' (50, Reh. F). The chorus of male Israelites responds with enthusiasm, as the women Israelites recount the battle with the Amalekites which they are watching 'from the heights.' When the battle is won, the full chorus praises Saul, 'Israel's chosen king.' Saul's rousing music, combined with the chorus's praises, portray a heroic and powerful Saul not obvious from the biblical narrative.

In Scene 2, the libretto invents a scene not found in the Bible. The biblical account relates that Saul did not strictly follow Samuel's orders, because instead of killing every living creature, he spared Agag (the leader) and the best of the animals. At this point in the oratorio, while Saul is deciding what to do with the spoils of victory, the 'Evil Spirit' (sung by a contralto) taunts Saul into disobeying Samuel's orders by taking everything from the defeated Amalekites. The 'evil spirit' is found in the biblical version, but not until the next chapter, in 16.14, after 'the spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul.' This evil spirit is said to 'terrify' Saul in the biblical account, never to taunt him, but it has a different role in this libretto and is represented by a female voice:

Saul, thou art king indeed! Great is thy might! Who shall dare hinder thee From what is thy right?

This dramatic aria, marked *maestoso* (majestic), is in a slow 6/8 time and in E-flat minor, an unusual key featuring many flats and therefore having a very particular timbre. The orchestra opens in several hesitant, low rumbling and rhythmically unstable measures before the spirit's entrance. Her first phrase starts on *b flat*, rising in steps to *c flat'*; the next phrase also starts on *b flat*, but rises quickly through an octave plus a fourth to *e flat''* (61, 1st and 2nd staves). These large vocal leaps musically suggest power and drama. The note sung on the word 'might' is held for several beats. The next two phrases are strong, sounding like a challenge to Saul (61, 3rd-5th staves) (Fig. 1).

The next section, in G-flat major, is softer and initially has a more regular, gentle rhythmic pattern:

Knowest thou nought Of the ransom of kings? Heedest thou nought Of the wealth that it brings? Sparest thou nought Of the sheep and the oxen?



Figure 1. Parry, 'Evil Spirit'.

Carest thou nought
For the gold and the treasure?
These are the prizes of war,
The meed of thy power!

Each of the first three stanzas is sung to the same melody, but the accompaniment becomes increasingly heavier and more complex. The music builds in tempo and volume, until the climactic phrase 'These are the prizes...' when the spirit reaches her highest pitch in the aria, f'', sustained on 'war' (62, m. 2, 3rd staff). This relatively high pitch in the contralto voice can have an otherworldly sound. The softer beginning musically projects a seductive or persuasive intent.

With a slight variation from the opening stanza, turning the statements into questions, the spirit repeats at the end:

Saul, art thou king indeed? Where is thy might?

Musically, there are no major differences in these measures from those heard in the opening. But the statements posed as questions have a taunting quality. Following the spirit's final words, the orchestra plays several frenzied measures that effectively depict Saul's confusion—his response to the taunts. Rising to the spirit's challenge, Saul issues these orders to his troops (63, 2nd staff):

Stay ye the slaughter of the helpless flocks and herds, Mine are they and none others!

The troops readily obey, praising Saul and God and preparing to go to Gilgal to offer the spoils to God as a sacrifice. Samuel enters and immediately asks why he hears the sounds of animals around him and sees people bearing spoils (15.14), to which Saul responds that the troops took the spoils to sacrifice to the Lord (15.15).

In this part of the biblical chap. 15, there is a dialogue between Samuel and Saul, with the one making accusations and threats while the other defends himself. Saul says he was afraid of the troops (15.24), suggesting weak character. Samuel rails against him, even when Saul pleads for forgiveness and another chance.

None of this dialogue is included in the libretto, where Saul was clearly listening to an inner voice, represented by the Evil Spirit. In this version, his madness, represented by hearing voices, began before David ever came into the picture. It is not clear if Saul understands what motivated him, but this interesting re-telling attempts to fill the 'why' gap, while also possibly minimizing Saul's guilt with 'the devil made me do it' argument. Saul makes no excuses to Samuel in this version, apparently accepting his guilt and punishment. In a sense, this makes him stronger and more sympathetic than his biblical counterpart.

Samuel's final words to Saul are an invention of the librettist, but convey the same idea as 'God has rejected you as king over Israel' (15. 26):

He that shall overcome the Philistines shall not be of thine house.

Parry's addition of many choruses adds interest and drama to the story. His portrayal of Samuel amplifies his harshness and severity, while Saul is portrayed as a complex and troubled man.

Twentieth-Century Works

Charles Hutchinson Gabriel's 1901 oratorio *Saul, King of Israel* includes several of these early scenes. In the opening scene (No. 2), Saul is on his throne and the chorus sings 'Hail O King,' announcing the conquest of the Amalekites. The music is in a square 4/4 time, with the sound of a conventional anthem (6-7). At the end of the chorus, the key changes to G major, and the time is 3/4 in a dotted rhythm (7). This dance rhythm introduces the 'chorus of damsels.' The stage directions indicate that this chorus, carrying timbrels and other instruments, should be 'prominent and visible.'

A female chorus was also included at this point in Parry's oratorio. It establishes a particular mood in both works.

After this chorus, the opening chorus of praise to Saul is reprised (9). These choruses establish the exalted position of Saul.

In 'We are thy people' (No. 3), Saul sings solo lines alternating with short responses from the chorus. The directions indicate that Saul must stand to sing. The tune is an incongruous lilting 'Gilbert and Sullivan'-like

melody to text about vanquished Philistines and Amalekites, with choral interjections (10).

Samuel enters and berates Saul for disobeying (12, No. 4):

Saul, Saul! Why all this boisterous revelry? The Lord is sore displeased with thee! Thou hast broken His commandments, Thou hast followed thine own pleasure, Thou hast disobeyed thy Lord.

The opening measure is in G minor in the third inversion, a dramatic and unsettled sound. These opening lines are sung as a recitative. They are followed by an aria in B-flat major (the relative major to the G minor just heard), in 3/4 time, tuneful and lyrical (12-13):

As the prophet of the Lord I didst [sic] anoint thee king of Israel (10.1, but in third person). He didst [sic] command that thou the Amalekites shouldst slay, and leave not one to curse this hallowed land (15.18)... To gratify thine own desire, I know, And thine own coffers fill, Thou [sic] didst forget the Lord's commands to you...

The music covers a wide range, up to f' and down to B flat (14, 3rd staff, m. 2), making this a highly dramatic aria. (Alternate notes are suggested throughout for the baritone with a smaller range.) The chorus repeats Samuel's final words in a few breathless-sounding a cappella measures (16, 2nd staff). The stage directions for these choral responses indicate that they should be sung with 'bowed heads, reverently' (2). While Gabriel adheres to the biblical plot, he injects an air of piety into almost every scene. This work was written to be performed by and for church groups, and this setting is clear throughout.

The most notable textual change is Samuel's accusing Saul of greed. In the biblical version Saul is never accused of plundering the enemy spoil, only of impatience and misjudgment, and of disobeying God's command (15.23). In addition, this oratorio amplifies Samuel's role and creates a towering and dramatic figure, similarly to his portrayal in the Parry oratorio. Saul, however, is accused of being both greedy and self-serving. Though this was only Samuel's judgment, the composer's agenda may have been to justify God's rejection of Saul.

In the next scene (No. 5), Saul sings 'O Samuel,' a recitative with a conversational rhythm:

Though all the enemies of Israel fear me I shall obey the Lord, whate'er the price; 'Tis true that He commanded me to slay the sheep and cattle of the enemy, But these you hear are brought for sacrifice (15.20).

Samuel responds:

Saul, thou dost but thine own self deceive; The Lord would not thine offerings receive! 'Twere better to obey thy Lord's command Than sacrifice the best of all the land (15.22).

Saul sings an 'obligato' solo together with a male chorus, unaccompanied. He and the chorus sing different texts and melodies (18-19). Saul's part in this section spans a large range, from G to d', projecting much emotion. The stage directions instruct him to 'exhibit nervous anxiety' (2), clearly underlining that the work was intended for amateur performers. Saul pleads with God not to rebuke him, confesses he has sinned and begs God to accept his offering and to abide with him. This emotional text sung by unaccompanied male voices would have a very devotional sound, and Saul's emotional music would create sympathy for him (Fig. 2).

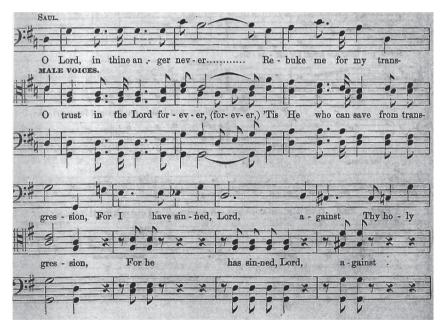


Figure 2. Gabriel, Saul.

An unaccompanied choral anthem 'Trust in the Lord' closes the first act (20-21, No. 6). Gabriel injects hymns throughout the oratorio, to reinforce the religious message he wants to convey. Though this agenda is never subtle, his portrayals of the individual characters are nonetheless compelling.

Carl Nielsen's 1902 opera *Saul og David* opens with the action of chap. 13, conflated with chap. 15. A very short orchestral introduction replaces the standard opera overture. The dramatic music vividly portrays the worry

and uncertainty of the warriors, echoing that of Saul and Jonathan. Jonathan was not included at this point in the narrative in the other works discussed in this chapter, but this is an opera and therefore features more characters to set up more dramatic confrontations.

The warriors continually ask where Samuel is, as they look for him and repeatedly call out to him. Saul is finally convinced he needs to make the offering himself, urged on by the priests and people. Only Jonathan urges him to wait, worried about the consequences. In the biblical narrative, Saul's only words are the order to bring him the burnt offering and sacrifice. In the opera, Saul justifies and explains his actions to Jonathan:

Am I then Samuel's boy, that he alone shall rule? He shall beware, that old man, Who tests my patience and urges my people to turn away. Did he himself not make me king?

Saul's resentment of Samuel's power is not even suggested in the biblicalnarrative, yet this sentiment is not contradicted by the text. Calling Samuel 'that old man' shows disrespect, and referring to himself as 'Samuel's boy' reflects how Saul feels he is treated by Samuel. The text fills in gaps in Saul's character in an unfavourable but believable way, as shall be seen throughout the opera. When Jonathan continues to urge his father to wait, Saul continues in the same vein:

Was I anointed a slave? Did I get the scepter in my hand To break it over my knee?

Saul's anger and defiance are dimensions of his character made evident right from the opening of the opera. The music for the chorus, which sings to God with Saul while presenting the offering, begins very dramatically, punctuated by brass. The music becomes much softer and more lyrical when the women sing their prayer alone, and then the chorus closes dramatically.

Samuel enters and rails against Saul. His music is very stately and measured, contrasting with Saul's nervous interjections. Saul's excuse for not waiting, in the biblical version, is that he made the sacrifice to defend his people. He argues with Samuel more in this libretto, and defends his actions:

The Lord is not angered at my sacrifice, for it was offered according to the word of the Law.

Samuel tells Saul that obedience is more important than any offering, so Saul asks Samuel to remove his sin. He grasps the corner of Samuel's cloak begging him to turn back to him. He repents for what he has done. This exchange is based on a later incident, when Saul disobeys Samuel's orders a second time about killing Agag (15.22-31). The two incidents are conflated in this libretto, and their drama is heightened when Jonathan and his men

also plead with Samuel to take away Saul's sin. Samuel, in front of all the people, tells Saul:

Because you broke your word
The scepter shall fall from your hand
And the Lord's spirit shall depart from your mind...
But a troubled spirit from God
Shall be in your soul like drought and fire.

This is sung like a curse, in unaccompanied declamatory phrases punctuated by measures of heavily accented chords in the brass. The biblical Samuel never prophesies to Saul about either the departure of the Lord's spirit or the presence of a troubled spirit, nor does he curse Saul. He simply tells him, twice, that God has rejected him as king. This operatic Samuel has greater prophetic powers than his biblical counterpart. In this libretto, Saul's madness is clearly God's punishment.

The men hearing this curse recoil and sing 'O horror!' Everyone leaves the scene, murmuring in horror, after Samuel exits; only Jonathan remains with his father. He tries to calm him, repeating that God is merciful and will pardon Saul's sin if he repents sufficiently. But Saul, portrayed here negatively as angry, vengeful and depressed, responds:

The Lord does not know me! My strength is a withered reed Which his tempest has broken.

When Jonathan tells Saul to think of his people, his response is very strong:

Let the people perish!
Let enemies drop like a grasshopper...
Let thistles swell where the honey flowed,
Let the wilderness stretch its stonehard hand
Over the flowing waters of the valleys.
See, I give my land
To the Philistines' might.

The biblical Saul is never vengeful or defeatist, and this portrait is less sympathetic and more dramatic than that found in most other librettos. The term 'drop like a grasshopper' could be a reference to the biblical verse 'we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves' (Num. 13.33) spoken by the spies reporting back to Moses about the land of Canaan. It would be appropriately ironic just before Saul says he is relinquishing the land to the Philistines.

When Jonathan leaves, Saul sits in silence, then clenches his fist and looks up to heaven. He sings an aria of defiance, which some commentators believe is based on Iago's famous 'Credo' aria from Verdi's *Otello* of 1887 (David Fanning in *New Grove* 4: 191). The text is certainly similar, speaking of a cruel God who made us in his own image. Saul begins by singing softly

and pensively of the serpent who said we could all be like God. Then he rises and continues in dramatic music:

The Lord is evil and evil am I
Because evil has he made me!...
Vengeance is the Lord's
Because vengeance is death.
Death is Jehovah's glory and might!

He ends by proclaiming the serpent's words were lies, because no one can be like God. The opening few lines are proclamatory, and passages of repeated trumpet and trombone calls with rapid descending passages in the strings strongly echo the Verdi aria. The second half of the aria (starting on 'Vengeance') is much softer, almost completely dying out by the end. Iago's aria has similarly contrasted sections, but the major difference is that it ends on a defiant note, with Iago proclaiming that Heaven is an old lie. Saul, instead, sounds completely defeated at the end, in contrast to the defiant opening. This Saul is a dramatic and complex operatic figure.

Conclusion

These portraits of Samuel and Saul have a few commonalities. Samuel is a more fleshed-out character than his biblical counterpart in many of these works. He is also much more severe in some of these portraits—for example, Gabriel and Nielsen. Saul exhibits various traits. He undergoes the greatest transformation in these few chapters in Parry's oratorio, where he enters as a carefree youth, then after being anointed becomes warlike and aggressive. After his victory, he is immediately possessed by an evil spirit who is uniquely and vividly portrayed in this work by a contralto voice, externalizing Saul's madness. Saul is helpless and anxious in Parry and Gabriel. In the Nielsen work, instead, the portrait of Saul is largely negative. This may have been an attempt to explain his downfall. The character portrayed here would hardly have been an appropriate choice for a ruler, justifying God's rejection of Saul

Chapter 4

SAUL'S AND DAVID'S STORIES OVERLAP: PART I

Summary of 1 Samuel 16–17

16 God tells Samuel to get over Saul and head out with his anointing kit to Jesse, where he will find a new king. Samuel goes and looks over Jesse's sons but God says it is none of these. Samuel asks Jesse if there is another son, and he says the youngest is out tending the flock. David is brought, God approves, and Samuel anoints him on the spot.

At this point 'the spirit of God left Saul' (suggesting he can only be with one at a time) and an 'evil spirit' from the same God begins to terrify Saul. His courtiers notice and tell him they will find a lyre player to soothe him. Someone has heard of a good musician named David, so he is brought to court as one of Saul's arms-bearers and lyre-players. Saul is very pleased with him—in fact, he loves him—and asks Jesse to leave David at the court. David's music is soothing when Saul is possessed by the evil spirit.

17 Goliath appears, taunting the Israelite soldiers. Suddenly David is introduced as the son of Jesse. He is the youngest son, and his father tells him to bring provisions to his older brothers who are in the camp. David hears Goliath's challenge and the troops tell him the victor over Goliath will be given the king's daughter in marriage. David's brothers are angry that he has come.

David is brought to Saul (who doesn't know him) when he offers to fight the Philistine giant. He says he has fought off wild animals while shepherding, and he knows God will always protect him. Saul gives David his armour but it is too heavy, so David rejects it. He goes out to face the Philistine with his slingshot and the rest is history...

When Saul asks who 'the boy' is, David approaches Saul with Goliath's head still in his hand, and tells him he is the son of Jesse.

Commentary

Saul is a tragic hero, haunted by demonic forces from within and without. The 'evil spirit' tormenting him (sometimes portrayed by a woman's voice or treble voices in musical works) and driving him to desperation is described

as the agent of Yhwh.¹ Both the narrator and the characters describe the evil spirit in this way. It is our responsibility as readers to distinguish between the narrator's words and what the characters seem to know (Raphael 2007: 11). Not all Saul's irrational actions are attributed to this 'evil spirit.'

Saul's violent streak is first suggested when God instructs Samuel to go to Bethlehem and anoint a new king. Samuel says, 'How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me' (16.1-2). This implies not only that Saul is prone to violence, but also that this propensity is well known. God's only response to Samuel's fears is to instruct him to keep the mission secret; he does not deny the possibility of Saul's violent reaction.

Though Saul is the first character to be described as loving David (16.21), his ambivalence is evident in his feelings since he subsequently attempts to kill him more than once, revealing his violent nature. The relationship between Saul and David is always described as emotionally fraught. Their relationship clearly involves love, passion and jealousy (Schroer and Staubli 2000: 24). These two commentators are among the first to suggest a possible sexual relationship between the two men.

David first speaks in 1 Sam. 17.26, when he asks what the reward will be for the man who defeats Goliath. These first recorded words suggest a calculating person, not a naïve young boy from the country. The first recorded words of a biblical character are a defining moment of characterization. David is asking a question that has already been answered, in 1 Sam. 17.25. Why does he want to hear the details repeated? Bodner suggests two theories: David wants a public guarantee of the reward, and the writer wants to underline the importance of reward and political advantage in David's thought even at this early stage of his life (Bodner 2008: 17). These are insightful suggestions, and offer a glimpse of the writer's early portrayal of a flawed David.

This scene, the second account of David's debut, has a folkloric background inserted into a more 'historical' account. The familiar tale has been historicized and reveals individual character traits. David's brother Eliab is angry that David left his flock to join his brothers, and refers to David's 'impudence and...impertinence (lit. 'badness of heart' דע לבבך, a description of David often overlooked by commentators. These, the first and only adjectives ever applied to David apart from his physical appearance, suggest that even at this early age (probably around 17), David was not the angelic personality so familiar from artistic representations and films. Bodner considers this introduction to David an early warning about David's heart, which foreshadows potential flaws (Bodner 2008: 2).

Other commentators have generally suspected Eliab of simply holding a grudge against his younger brother, but I believe it is equally plausible

^{1.} The 'evil spirit' or רוח רעה is found in only one other place in the Bible: in Judg. 9.23, God sent a 'spirit of discord' (JPS) between Abimelech and the Shechemites. In that narrative, there is no suggestion of madness, only justified anger.

that the writer is suggesting another side of David through Eliab's words, a position Bodner also takes. David's next words, in v. 29, are part of a dialogue with his older brother which also reveals David's character. He says 'What have I done now? I was only asking!' which sounds like a typically petulant response of a younger to an older brother. David immediately goes to another person to ask the same question.

The depiction of David as a musician may suggest more than musical talent. In the ancient world, music also served a religious and magical function, and could be used to induce prophetic trances (McKenzie 2000: 56). The lyre David plays, ¬CLP, often translated as 'harp' and in modern Hebrew meaning 'violin', appears 42 times throughout the Bible, from Genesis through Chronicles, usually in association with other instruments. This underlines the important role music played in ancient Israel. David's lyre-playing would have been meant to relieve Saul's anxious and tormented spirit because of its magical powers which, it was believed, could keep away or even exorcise demons as well as evil spirits. McKenzie suggests that David was not only a musician, but also a kind of 'magician' (McKenzie 2000: 56). This could be one explanation of David's apparently charismatic power over everyone he meets.

David's victory with his slingshot has traditionally been viewed as a triumph of the weak over the mighty, but its use also portrays David as a trickster right from the start, achieving this first victory through sleight of hand. It is even possible that:

The text may be subversively undermining the beginning of [David's] accession...by rendering his battle as a result of trickery on the part of a dishonourable and simple slinger (Nikkels 2008: 28).

The Music

Both chaps. 16 and 17 are retold in several musical settings, though the encounter with Goliath (chap. 17) appears far more often than incidents in chapter 16. In the first part of this chapter I will discuss musical settings of chapter 16, and in the second part I will discuss chapter 17. The works to be discussed are two nineteenth-century and three twentieth-century oratorios, and three twentieth-century operas.

1 Samuel 16

Nineteenth-Century Works

As discussed in the previous chapter, **Ferdinand Hiller**'s German oratorio *Saul* (1858) is interesting for its alteration of the chronology. This alteration is found for both chaps. 16 and 17.

In a short scene sung entirely in recitative, Jesse sees Samuel approaching (No. 13). The unusual chronology in this oratorio places this scene long after David's victory over Goliath and arrival at Saul's court. There is no attempt to rectify the resulting inconsistencies.

Samuel tells the shepherds that God has told him to stop grieving over Saul, whom he has rejected. God has instructed Samuel to fill his flask with oil and set out for Bethlehem where he has chosen one of Jesse's sons to be anointed king (16.1). This is out of sequence, since it is only after Saul chooses David that Saul begins to be haunted by an evil spirit. In this oratorio, his madness begins even before David is chosen, suggesting it was part of Saul's nature.

The librettist also changes and compresses the narrative here. Instead of having each son approach Samuel and be rejected, Jesse asks Samuel which son has been chosen and Samuel says 'the youngest, David.' Samuel then sings a short and solemn *arioso* (No. 14;110, pv; 218). Its measured tempo and solemnity give it the sound of a hymn or anthem. After Samuel anoints David, David sings (No. 15; 111, pv; 222):

Your will, O Lord, be done, I humbly bow before you, Pour a drop of oil over my head, From your gracious spirit.

The music for this short solo also has a hymnal sound. The chorus echoes David's melody. In the biblical narrative, David does not speak in this scene. His words at this point in the oratorio portray a very humble and pious David.

Friedrich Nuhn's 1867 oratorio *Die Könige in Israel (The Kings in Israel)* opens with an introduction marked *allegro maestoso*. [No musical figures will be included, since this score can be accessed at an online archive: http://www.archive.org/details/dieknigeinisra00nuhn.]

Several sustained chords are heard above a *tremolo*, all marked *pp* except for an occasional intrusive loud chord. As the volume continues to build, the music imparts a feeling of anxiety. Saul sings his opening words as a recitative (1, 5th staff):

My heart is bleak. Play the strings, I thirst for their sound.

Right after Saul sings these words, the key modulates to C major from C minor, suggesting a happier mood as Saul describes the effect of the music on his spirit (2):

Let your moving fingers strum melting murmurs for my ears. When hope has left your heart, the endearing sounds awaken it. He goes on to describe how in spite of the music he still cries, because his heart is breaking in his constricted breast (3). The biblical Saul never speaks of the effect of David's music on his mood; only the narrator informs the reader that Saul was relieved and soothed. It is logical for composers to write lengthy scenes in which David sings and Saul comments on the wonderful effect of his music. Musicians in every era have used the opportunity this story offers to praise their own art.

Several measures of harp arpeggios introduce David's song (4). The text is Psalm 121, 'I will lift up mine eyes.' The very melodic music recalls both Schubert and Mendelssohn. David and the chorus sing alternately. In the climactic moments, David reaches the high note of *a-flat'* and his voice soars over the chorus. This is also his final note, to be sung softly and sustained for two full measures (10, bottom), a difficult feat requiring an accomplished tenor.

The music is designed to maximize the impression of David as a wonderful singer of beautiful melodies. This, of course, is the aspect of the books of Samuel and David's story that is most adaptable to musical settings. What better than music to describe music?

Twentieth-Century Works

Charles Hutchinson Gabriel's 1901 oratorio includes many scenes depicting Saul in distress and soothed variably by Jonathan, Michal, David and the Chorus. Scene No. 7, entitled 'Tis from the Heart,' bears a subtitle: 'Saul is disturbed in mind.' A tuneful song in B-flat major is sung by Abigale (whose identity and relationship to Saul remain unexplained) and the female chorus. The anthem, in conventional 4/4 time, is a devotional text unrelated to the story. Such unrelated anthems appear throughout the oratorio, predictably from a composer whose output was primarily Baptist hymns. Some of the anthems seem to be substitutes for David's singing of psalms to Saul, since their purpose is often to calm Saul's spirit.

Saul sings 'Take not thy love from me' (No. 9) with choral responses. The stage directions indicate that 'Saul's distress should be apparent' (2). After a short recitative, the chorus responds to Saul:

O Lord, why has thou forsaken me?

[Chorus: What to our king can comfort bring?]

O Lord, take not Thy love from me.

[Chorus: thine anguish, Saul, gives grief to all.]

The opening line is well known to Christians as Jesus' final words on the cross, subtly (or not) equating Saul's anguish with Jesus' at a moment when they are forsaken by God. Saul now sings a tuneful anthem in 3/4 time in which he tells God he still loves him and begs God to save him from his sinful will. The chorus reassures Saul that he is sad because he has

sinned, in an upbeat major key signifying hope and optimism (25-26). The strong focus on sin and repentance are hallmarks of this work, which has an undiluted religious message.

When Saul answers 'Away!' the tonality shifts to a minor key (26, 3rd staff). He tells them that only God can restore his peace. He sings an aria 'O Lord thou hast forsaken me' to be sung 'prayerfully.' Though in a major key, it has a lyrical and sad quality, filled with descending musical phrases (27) (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Gabriel: Saul.

After an orchestral postlude, Jonathan enters. 'Tis he alone can give thee peace' (28, No. 10) is another anthem in 6/8 time. In the directions, Jonathan is to watch his father with 'expression of pity' (2). Jonathan brings Saul 'a message from the Lord':

O king of Israel.

Not far away there dwells a lad,
Who joy can bring to hearts, tho' sad,
For he with God hath stood.

With soul as spotless as the light
With eyes that beam like stars at night...
But let me bring him hither, lord,
And he will lift by song and word
Thy soul into the light...
Thy grief will take its flight.

The opening verses are sung to the same anthem tune that opened the scene, in B-flat major with some phrases in G minor. At the description of

David, starting with 'with soul as spotless,' an unexpected sustained E-flat major chord is heard, and Jonathan sings several verses on a single repeated note. This pattern is repeated in the next few verses, giving a particular colour to that text (30, staves 2-3). At the text 'But let me bring him hither,' the tuneful anthem resumes.

Saul tells Jonathan his heart is filling with hope; the directions indicate that Saul becomes calm as the song progresses, since Jonathan's voice is soothing to him. This is an interesting conflation of the roles of Jonathan and David. In the biblical text, Jonathan does not introduce David to Saul, nor does he ever sing to his father. He introduces David in several other musical works. As Jonathan continues to sing the anthem, Saul joins him and echoes his words (32).

Scene No. 12, 'Dear Father,' includes Michal, Saul, Jonathan, and David. Michal opens (37):

Dear Father, God above can take away thy care; O seek to win his love, by faith and holy earnest prayer.

Saul asks Jonathan:

Will David come, my son? Then why so long delay?

Jonathan responds (38):

Ave, father, he will come, for he a promise made.

Michal apparently has already met David, based on her next line:

So true, so kind, so fair, he is God's messenger.

The directions instruct her to sing this line as an aside, or soliloquy. This might suggest to the audience that she has met David only secretly, or that his reputation preceded him. Jonathan and Michal now sing a harmonious duet, urging Saul to pray to God to find strength and peace. Saul joins them for a trio in which they extol prayer and urge each other to kneel (39). The chorus echoes these words, and everyone kneels.

The music for this scene does not vary throughout from the formulaic 6/8 anthem. The composer's agenda is clearly to glean a message from the story that would work as a Sunday sermon, even if this scene has no basis in the biblical narrative. Though Jonathan and Michal are urging Saul to pray, the fact that everyone on the stage is kneeling makes the injunction more general and seems directed at the audience as well as at Saul.

Scene No. 13, 'Return O God,' is a trio between Michal, Jonathan and Saul, with full chorus. The directions indicate that the three characters are not aware of the presence of the chorus. The time is 4/4 and the key D-flat major. The unusual choice of key—one with five flats—indicates an attempt to somehow distinguish this from other ensembles. The sound is much less bright than keys with fewer flats. The text is a plea to God to accept

Saul's repentance and return to him. The final chord is A-flat major, and David's first entrance emerges out of the chorus (44). His voice is heard unaccompanied, singing a plaintive half-step interval (*b double flat'* down to *a flat'*) twice, each time echoed by the chorus. This descending interval is known as a 'seufzer' or 'sigh' because of its poignant sound. The poignancy is amplified when sung by a single unaccompanied voice.

David continues with another conventionally tuneful anthem, 'Thy favor grant, O Lord,' which is repeated by the chorus. The solo is differentiated from earlier similar solos by the accompaniment, composed of single sustained chords that lend the music solemnity. The chorus is instructed to remain kneeling until after this solo. David approaches Saul and kneels before him (45):

I am thy servant, Saul, I here obey thy call.

Saul responds in a recitative:

Arise! If thou indeed hast come as God's own messenger of light, These evil spirits, every one, Dispel and drive them from my sight.

David's response is a melodic anthem:

Ah Saul, it is not I thy soul can purify, Thy comforter must be the Lord God Almighty, O trust in Him alone, From Him thy peace must come!

Saul asks David to continue. In a change to 4/4 time, David sings to Saul together with Michal (46), to an accompaniment of 8th-note groups. As they continue to extol God in flowery biblicized language, Saul listens and injects phrases like ''tis true' and 'Ah yes, yes' under their voices (47). A 'Ladies' chorus' with cloying lyrics follows. Michal's role is more that of an ally of David, than a love interest.

The next solo, 'What joy it is' (No. 16) is sung by David. The tune bears a striking similarity to a Johann Strauss waltz. It is in a lilting 3/4 time and in A-flat major (52, bottom):

What joy it is to live, to breathe The air of heav'n and to receive The love of father, mother, child A love so pure, so undefiled.

At moments like these, one can easily forget the subject of this oratorio. The second part of the solo is still in 3/4 waltz time, but with slight alterations (53, bottom). After this solo, David sings: 'O Saul, dost thou forget thou art a monarch yet?' and Saul answers that he knows he is a king. David then sings a rather ambiguous line:

Thy sun is up, but shall it set, and all thy fame depart?

Saul sings 'O let it not depart!' and the chorus sings of the fleeting nature of life's mortal comforts. Then they sing a more rousing chorus 'Awake!' and Saul echoes their words, singing to himself 'Awake my soul, awake!' A sudden shift to 4/4 time leads to a rousing duet between David and Saul, a veritable hymn to life and the Lord. The chorus reprises the hymn in unison to close the act (56).

Though many oratorios have a religious subtext, this particular one has a very clear agenda. In spite of their exaggerated piety, however, the characters take on particular colours through their music.

Part One of **Arthur Honegger**'s 1924 oratorio *Le Roi David* opens with the action of chap. 16. Drums are heard first, followed by the opening music [1] in oboes and clarinets. They play *orientalisms*, short melismatic phrases that sound improvised. Augmented intervals predominate, including modal sounds such as the augmented second known as the *Phrygian mode* prominent in Jewish (Ashkenazi) liturgical music. Parallel harmonies and exotic percussion capture the Oriental spirit the librettist, Morax, was striving for. A mood and place are immediately established by combining the 'shepherd' sound of the oboe, the improvisational and 'Jewish' sound of the modes, a rhythmic *ostinato* of percussion, harp, and low strings, and drum sounds suggesting battles.

The opening words are spoken by the narrator, who relates that the Spirit of God had left King Saul (16.14) and that God spoke to 'the seer' Samuel, telling him to prepare to anoint a new king, a shepherd and a son of Jesse (16.1). David is next heard singing a psalm [2], which opens with the first line of Psalm 23 but continues with a paraphrase of that psalm, commonly known as 'A psalm of David.' The chant-like and repetitive music, with its light and transparent orchestration (11-13), is written for contralto, but can also be sung by a boy soprano.²

The narrator next announces Samuel's choosing and anointing of David. His words are followed by a choral praise of God [3]. This unison chorus represents David himself singing, with greater power than he had in the previous psalm. The music has a 'traditional' sound, very upbeat and with quick repeated figures in the trumpets, bassoons and other brass (14). The contrapuntal conclusion is an homage to Bach, whom Honegger always called his greatest model. The text borrows imagery from various Psalms.

2. In a performance heard in Geneva (27 May 2008), the part was taken by a mezzo. In a London performance heard in 2003, the part was taken by a boy soprano, as it is on at least two CD-ROMs (Naxos and EMI Classics). I find the boy soprano much more effective, as it suggests David singing as a young boy.

The madness of Saul is barely touched on in this oratorio, whose focus is David. Having David sing a psalm before he is even chosen or anointed is a good example of his glorification. David sings psalms throughout the oratorio, his voice taken variably by boy soprano, soprano, and chorus.

In **Christopher Brown**'s 1970 *David, A Cantata*, the narrator's part is sung alternately by a mezzo and baritone soloist, and for the more dramatic moments, by the chorus. The mezzo sings a description of David (16.12) in an accompanied recitative marked *senza misura*, without bar lines (10, 3rd staff). This is meant to resemble speech. When she stops, the tempo is marked *Lento e un poco misterioso* (very slow and slightly mysterious). To create a sense of mystery, trumpets repeat a single note in a high register while very soft notes are played several octaves lower (10, bottom). The otherworldly sound suggests an extraordinary event is about to occur.

This leads into the baritone narrator's recounting that God commanded Samuel to find David and anoint him (16.1). The words 'Arise, anoint him, for this is he,' are sung mostly unaccompanied, with only the opening sung c' doubled in the horns. The final words are sung on a wide ascending leap of an augmented seventh, f-e', sung ff (11, 3rd staff). These musical devices are used to suggest the voice of God. The voice drops when the narrator relates what Samuel did, in a much more measured and speech-like pattern intended to contrast with God's voice (11, bottom).

The words 'The spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward' (16.13) are sung more lyrically, with sinuous oboe passages under the voice (12, top). Trumpets join the oboe, changing the mood as the tempo also picks up. Oboe is paired with the mention of David throughout the oratorio, to recall his shepherd origins. The mood changes abruptly again for the words 'But the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul' (16.14), introduced by several frenzied measures (12, m. 2). The chorus sings in unison over quick and dissonant descending figures. Their final phrase descends rapidly from g'' down to f#' (12, last measure).

A very soft, buzzing and sharply dissonant *tremolo* (C-E, C#-D#) that sounds like a trill is heard in the next narrator's passage, sung by mezzo and naming the evil spirit that troubled Saul (13, top). The baritone narrator introduces Saul, and on the mention of his name, loud unison trumpets play (13, bottom). All these musical devices depict Saul's disturbed mood. Saul asks to have a man who can play well brought to him (16.17; 14, top).

The narrator (chorus) announces that David arrived in Saul's court and played the harp. The text of the song that follows is an amalgam of psalm-like text, and is sung by a mezzo. This may be meant to represent David as a very young man. Unlike virtually every other musical representation of David's singing, there is no harp in the orchestra. Instead, oboes and trumpets are prominent, along with oriental-sounding bells. The vocal range

is quite high, on climactic phrases reaching g''(15, 2nd staff), g#''(15, Reh. 10), and on the word 'glory' in the final phrase, a ff a''(17, m. 1). After this phrase, a long trill followed by a tremolo (17, m. 2-4) is heard, similar to what was heard earlier to represent Saul's evil spirit (13, top).

The baritone narrator now announces, in another unaccompanied recitative imitating speech, that the evil spirit departed from Saul (16.23). These final words are sung very slowly and softly on e'(17, 3rd staff, m. 1), effective in a baritone voice and suggesting a peaceful mood.

Similarities in these two twentieth-century oratorios highlight the focus on David, on mythologizing and praising him. Brown uses musical devices to effectively depict Saul's changing moods, while Honegger's focus is more exclusively on David.

The next two works to be discussed are twentieth-century operas.

In Carl Nielsen's 1902 opera Saul og David, David, dressed as a shepherd, is introduced to Saul by Jonathan. Jonathan tells David that Saul is 'weary and downcast' and begs David to play his harp and comfort Saul, as he has often comforted Jonathan. This implies they already have a relationship. When Jonathan mentions the harp, a poignant oboe solo is heard, followed by short solo violin and then flute passages, all introducing David's song.

David sings of coming from Bethlehem's valleys, and tells Saul he brings the song of the birds and the flowers, the day's joy, the garments of heaven with its stars. The music is in a fairly quick 3/4 time, marked by dotted rhythms. This upbeat rhythm creates a sense of momentum. There is a gradual buildup to the final phrase, 'heaven's garments.' The orchestration is fuller and the volume increases. The climactic 'garments' is sung on a sustained g', held for a full measure, followed two measures later by an a' from which the voice then descends (45-46). These high notes in the tenor voice project ardour and passion. Saul looks up and asks who is singing, while the orchestra plays hesitant and breathless phrases, suggesting Saul's confusion (46, 2nd staff, m. 2-4).

David comes closer to Saul and continues singing, in a faster tempo and in a still more marked and excited dotted rhythm. The accompaniment is steadier than the earlier section (46-47). The music creates a very upbeat mood:

If the night oppresses your thoughts
Under the heavy dew of darkness...
The day is a gift of the Lord...
In the early morning,
Pick garden roses for your uneasy mind.

Saul begs David to continue singing, because it has become 'light and still.' He sings these words almost breathlessly, indicated how affected he has been by the music (47, bottom). The tempo slows, and trombones

introduce a new, slower song. The predominant brass creates a triumphal sound. Harp becomes prominent in the course of the song, which sounds hymnal, appropriate to the biblicized lyrics:

Praise the Lord, my soul!
In rays his might he clothes.
He stretches heaven's tent over earth...
Praise the Lord, his mercy is great
Like manna which descends from the clouds.

The concluding note of this aria is a loud, sustained g', a very triumphant sound. Saul responds in similar lyrics:

Like dew over the valleys, So falls your voice on my mind.

Michal enters the scene at this moment, unnoticed. David continues singing, more and more rapturously. This aria is initially accompanied only by harp, but as it intensifies, solo oboe passages are heard and strings also join for the ecstatic ending (49-53):

Rejoice for life!...Rejoice for the fields' poorest sheaf And for the grapes from the king's garden! Rejoice for man's strength, for woman's tenderness! Rejoice because the Lord is good and in all I his mercy behold!

Tempo and volume continue to build, up to the climactic final sustained *a'* under which Saul sings (53, bottom):

It is as if I hear the mountains singing And streams clapping their hands.

The word 'rejoice' appears in dozens of the Psalms, so it would resonate with a biblically literate listener, even if the rest of David's text is invented. Saul's text is a very close paraphrase of Psalm 98.8, 'Let the rivers clap their hands, the mountains sing joyously together.' This suggests that Saul is experiencing what the psalmist wrote about, without having heard the psalm itself-- thus attributing almost magical powers to David. The orchestra plays a passionate and rapturous conclusion over the voices of David and Saul (54). The fact that their voices are heard together is indicative of an emotional bond. The music quiets down to almost nothing, followed by a measure of sustained silence.

The presence of Jonathan and Michal in this scene is not unusual for musical settings. Many librettists and composers embellish the biblical narrative by creating a 3-way or 4-way bond between the four main characters, especially in operas.

Saul tells David that when their eyes meet, he can only think of what is good. Violins play lyrical passages above his voice. This is almost a veiled declaration of love, or at least infatuation. When in response to Saul's

question, David tells him his name, the music abruptly shifts from 4/4 time to 6/8 and the tempo virtually doubles (56, top). Both text and music depict an unbalanced Saul:

David, oh David!
I lie and scream on the earth
Where an evil spirit has called me down.
The stone is rolled before the grave
Which shuts tight like a wall
And nobody in the world can shake its gate,
Except you...
You blow it away like a feather
When you sing.

The music changes at 'except you' into C major, 4/4 time and a much slower tempo. This ringing endorsement of David's effective music therapy is followed by a plea to David to come and play for Saul's soul, to stay in his house and sit at his table. Saul's call is echoed immediately by both Jonathan and Michal, who in perfect sync with each other sing the same words, 'Yes, stay!' Jonathan sings c'-e' and Michal picks up on e''-g''; they are building a chord together, musically suggesting they are in harmony (58, 2nd staff). Their presence here offsets the impression of a possibly homoerotic attachment between Saul and David.

Saul's own description of his torments in this libretto is particularly vivid and powerful. In most librettos, his madness is described by others more than by himself. Saul's own words are more effective because his self-awareness implies greater suffering.

In **Darius Milhaud**'s monumental 1954 opera *David*, the action begins with Samuel's visit to Jesse's farm to choose the next king. The opera embellishes and expands the scene to create a realistic re-enactment. Samuel is described thus: 'His long hair and beard, cloak and sandals are covered in dust' (14, Reh. 45). The measure introducing him prominently includes bassoons and horns (14, Reh. 45), establishing his gravitas.

A chorus of Jesse's children and the farmers sing of all the riches they harvest-- wheat, olives, grapes, and their flocks. In the midst of this rejoicing, Samuel appears on top of the mountain. He announces who he is, and everyone falls to their knees. He tells them not to fear, but to bring Jesse to him. He then covers his head with a shroud (prayer shawl) and sings a soliloquy to God, with interjections from the chorus (15, top):

Oh my God! From the day of his birth, his mother Hanna vowed him to you for all his life!

Then Samuel sings (15, reh. 60):

O my God, you speak through my mouth and I see through your eyes. Since Israel asked me for a king, in your name I sanctified Saul the Benjaminite.

He goes on to relate the story of Saul's disobedience, God's rebuttal of Saul, and his own pain. But he recognizes that God has spoken to him, and told him where he must go to anoint one of Jesse's sons (1 Sam. 16.3). It is effective to have Samuel himself relate what is only narrated in the biblical text. This is also the only libretto in which Samuel's mother Hanna is mentioned, giving him a back-story.

The librettist, in a departure from the biblical text, includes women in this scene. The inclusion of David's mother in particular humanizes both David and the family. Women are completely absent from the biblical account. All the women of the house come in from the vineyards together with the men, and Jesse's wife supervises the preparation of dinner. Samuel tells Jesse to bring all his children. The voice of God that guides Samuel (16. 6-10) is spoken by the chorus, not sung, over the orchestra, an eerie effect (20). The depiction of each son's disappointment at being rejected personalizes the scene (and was also seen in the 1983 film). When Samuel asks if Jesse has only seven sons, he is told about David and sends for him.

While they are waiting, Samuel asks the crowd to tell him more about David. Jesse's wife eagerly steps forward, and 'with passionate affection' she tells Samuel that David is not yet 16 years old (24, Reh. 185). Jesse tells Samuel that David is 'in spite of his youth, the strongest and the best shepherd in the land...a champion in the art of the slingshot, a piercing gaze like that of the falcon' (25, Reh. 195). While they are describing David, the women of the household eagerly move forward and agree with the family's praises of David, whom they obviously like very much. Jesse's wife brags how David has killed several prey animals with his slingshot, even from a hundred yards away. When Samuel asks if he is handsome in addition, the girls all respond, over lyrical and transparent orchestral passages predominantly featuring harp:

He is! His hair is curly, golden like the wheat. His eyes, blue as the sky reflected in the fountain...his body slender like the stalk of a wild rosebush.

Their voices follow and overlap one another, reflecting their eager impatience to sing David's praises. These gap-filling additions are like forecasts of the action to come. They foretell the drama of the encounter with Goliath, by describing David's prowess with the slingshot. The women enamoured of David, and the physical descriptions, all lay the groundwork for his later conquests. In the biblical version, David himself describes some of these exploits. In a way, the libretto portrays a more modest David.

[In the Los Angeles stage directions: While the women are describing David, he is seen on a higher level of the stage, together with his farmhands. They are an exuberant and happy group, laughing and fighting for a skin of water. Then they stop to listen to a song David plays for them on his simple harp. This is another forecast, showing David the singer before he is introduced into Saul's court.]

Samuel asks the women if David is universally loved. They respond that God gave him every gift, that of a poet and singer, dancer, even maker of his own harp, and that he learned to sing and dance from the curly-haired lambs. Therefore they could not help but love and cherish him. Samuel says he knew all this, but wanted to hear his praises from their own lips. As David approaches, God (represented by a chorus) tells Samuel that this is the one he will consecrate. This six-part *a cappella* chorus has a transparent and unearthly sound (31, Reh. 260).

When David realizes who Samuel is, he falls to his knees, and Samuel anoints him with oil. Everyone on stage remains motionless as Samuel embraces David. The chorus announces that David has been chosen by God to be 'the guiding shepherd of Jacob, his people, and all of Israel, his heritage.' This chorus starts softly and lyrically, then after a clash of cymbals, it becomes faster and louder and ends on a triumphant note and in a rare tonal C major conclusion (34, bottom).

The riotous orchestral interlude that follows has no tonal centre although it ends on a G-flat major chord (35, Reh. 25). [L.A. stage directions: David's family looks at him in awe; aware that he is no longer 'one of them,' they bow towards him as they exit. Only his mother approaches, hugging him and thus 'giving him confidence.' His mother withdraws, leaving David alone. The stage darkens, and David 'slowly wanders into an unknown future' with his harp. As in the biblical account, David does not speak in this scene. As he disappears, soldiers rush across the stage and as they put up barricades and take positions, the stage brightens.]

The setting for David's initial encounter with Saul is Saul's camp, at noon. [L.A. stage directions: Saul's tent is closed and there is a sense of depression among the soldiers. A second group of soldiers is huddled to one side, and they are seen to be modern Israeli soldiers crouching behind barbed wire.] Saul's royal guard complain of being even thirstier than they are hungry, and this is echoed by the modern soldiers:

It's hunger and thirst we feel, like them, a thousand or more years ago, when under this same sun, enemies encircled us—do you remember?' (37, Reh. 35).

This text evokes the Arab armies that encircled Israel during the 1948 war of independence. Saul's soldiers speak of Saul's restlessness and inability to sleep, and how he dreams when he is wide awake (39, top). The music under these passages reflects the restlessness they describe. The chorus then describes the evil spirit sent by God to torment Saul, and his need for a harpist who can soothe him (16.15-16).

This scene conflates two different scenes from the biblical story. In 16.14-23, David is sent by Jesse with provisions to serve Saul as a musician, while in 17.17-19, he is sent to bring provisions to his brothers who are serving in

the army. In David's opening words in the opera, he announces that he has brought provisions for the king and his soldiers from his father Jesse. He even describes all the provisions, which include cheese and bread (42, Reh. 80). This is an interesting foretelling of the provisions brought to David's own troops by Abigail much later on (25.18).

This low-key entrance is lyrical and accompanied by very few instruments, creating an intimate effect and musically describing a simple 16-year-old shepherd. When David appears with the provisions, his brothers laugh at him, this 'child' who is their brother, ironically calling him 'the man' as they laugh (41, Reh. 65). Then David is sent into Saul's tent.

Saul's gloomy appearance frightens the soldiers. The music suggesting Saul's madness, strikingly more dissonant than anything heard before, is played by strings in a high register (42, Reh. 95). The score's stage directions describe Saul barely visible in his tent, seated in a high chair in 'cataleptic immobility.' His right hand supports itself on his golden lance, and he holds his chin in his left hand. Everyone in the scene is struck with terror, recoiling and then remaining immobile as before. Only David takes a step towards the tent. The chorus vividly describes Saul's state:

Underneath his crown and his toga of purple, grown white, old and shrunken, bowed, broken, beaten, his eyes sparkle in his ravaged face.

Oh Saul...anointed by the prophet Samuel, first king of Israel, who now hears and sees only phantoms.

The male voices speak or shout these lines, while the women initially only wail 'Ah' before joining the male chorus (43-44). Having the people observe and comment on Saul's state is far more dramatic than a single narrator relating the story would be. Abner asks David if he is afraid of Saul, and David asks 'Why?' (44, Reh. 120). This conveys David's simplicity and ingenuity as well as his supreme self-confidence. Saul remains covered by his shroud as David takes his harp and starts to play, singing a psalm to Saul. A few measures of harp in the orchestra introduce the song, and harp is heard throughout. The stage notes in the score describe the scene (46-48):

At first Saul stares straight ahead, but then he begins to lean closer to David. He removes the shroud and dabs tears from his eyes, then sits beside David and caresses his hair with his left hand, before starting to softly repeat the verses he sings. At first almost inaudible, his voice gains more and more strength as they sing together, and the tone changes to one of triumph. They stand as they sing together.

The final words of praise are sung by the two in unison, as the tempo broadens (50, Reh. 205). It is then repeated by the chorus, and the scene concludes on a bright tonic G-major chord (51). Since very little in this score has a tonal centre, such a moment stands out as particularly significant and

positive. [L.A. stage directions: The soldiers realize a miracle has taken place, and they bow.]

In this re-telling, the scene verges on a tent revival meeting. On the other hand, it is a vivid gap-filling description of what it actually meant to soothe Saul's spirit. An interesting addition is Saul himself singing, never suggested in either the biblical narrative or later retellings. Saul is said to 'be among the prophets' when he throws himself on the ground in ecstasy (in chaps.10 and 20), and this may have been in the minds of the librettist and composer when writing this scene.

In this opera, the characters are brought vividly to life—even some who do not exist in the biblical account. This is partly the nature of opera, but Milhaud's opera is the most extensive and imaginative retelling of David's story discussed in this book.

Testi's 1991 opera is based on the André Gide play *Saül*, not the Bible. Very few scenes are closely enough related to the biblical narrative to include here. But David's first appearance has several unusual elements. The music introducing David's entrance is his *Leitmotif*, a descending harp figure (67, Reh. 44). Above this accompaniment, Saul comments, speaking rather than singing, on David's youth and terrible beauty ('Il est terriblement beau,' 67, m. 6). This scene follows David's defeat of Goliath.

David's first words to Saul are sung on the same notes as his first words to the queen (an invented character, Saul's wife, whom he met in the previous scene), e'-d', relatively high for opening notes. In both cases he is to sing *dolcissimo*, 'very sweetly' (68, last measure). When David speaks, Saul says in an aside, 'Ah! His voice falls upon my anger like water falls from the sky onto a cloud of dust!' and asks the guards to leave the two of them alone. The music accompanying Saul's lines is very nervous, contrasting with David's calm. Heavily accented groups of staccato 16th-notes sound like a rapid heartbeat (69, Reh. 46) (Fig. 4).

David tells Saul his name, once again on e', with one measure of his *Leitmotif* phrase played this time on xylophone instead of harp. Saul says, 'The Moabites say Daoud. May I call you Daoud?' David says no, because someone else already calls him that, and he will not say who that is. Saul's agitated response to David's refusal is clearly evident in the music, ragged and rapid ff descending dissonant phrases in the orchestra (72, Reh. 47).

Saul then changes his tone, and asks David if he loves God; David says it is God who gives him his strength. Saul asks if David is very strong, and David replies that God is. This text suggests a David who is more Godfearing than his biblical counterpart. The rest of the scene is spoken, not sung, over a soft *ostinato* on the vibraphone. When David says he plans to return to his home in Bethlehem, Saul asks him to stay. He mentions that the queen had found a harp-player for him whom he had rejected, and

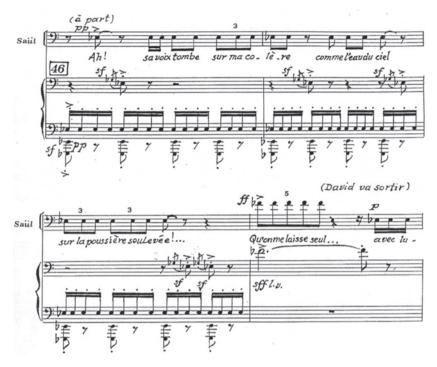


Figure 4. Testi: Saül.

David reveals that it is he. Saul is suspicious, and when the queen enters, he pretends to leave but instead hides (78).

The queen tries to enlist David as a spy against Saul. David says Saul was kind to him, and in the play she responds 'your beauty can only please' but also reminds David that he should not forget his debt to her for the honour of becoming singer for the king (Gide, 55). Then she tells him:

King Saul does not have the authority you believe him to have...his will is exhausted, it needs to be guided...often it is I who choose his decisions (80-81).

David does not respond. The queen continues to explain how distant she and Saul have become, how she needs to know what he is feeling and thinking. She tells David, in very low, soft music, 'almost whispered,' that the two of them together can try to erase Saul's sadness, that David will teach her how to do that. There is also sexual innuendo as she touches his cheek, calls him Daoud and says '..more delectable like this'. This infuriates Saul, who jumps out from behind the curtain, causing David to flee. He subsequently kills the queen with his spear.

The action, obviously, takes us far afield of the biblical narrative. Nonetheless, the suggestion of Saul's attraction to David, and the queen serving as

a foil who incites Saul's jealousy, are interesting midrashic elements. They can make the listener think twice about commonly accepted perceptions of the Saul-David relationship.

CHAPTER 17

The musical works discussed here include one eighteenth-century and four nineteenth-century oratorios, three twentieth-century oratorios and three twentieth-century operas.

Eighteenth-Century Works

Georg Friedrich Handel's 1738 oratorio *Saul* opens, after a chorus of praise, with the narrator (soprano) extolling 'an infant raised by thy command... [who] could fierce Goliath's dreadful hand superior in the fight oppose [2].' A trio continues praising the young hero, interestingly describing Goliath as a 'monster atheist' [3]. The music vividly describes the stride of a giant, with large leaps in the orchestra.

The next scene opens with Michal singing [6, 7]:

He comes, he comes!
O God-like youth! By all confessed,
Of human race the pride!
O virgin among women blest,
Whom Heaven ordains thy bride!

This is followed by a Saul–David recitative [8]. Saul asks David who he is, then tells him to remain and marry his daughter as a reward. In the biblical story, the offer precedes David's killing of Goliath. In this libretto, the reward sounds like a spontaneous idea, suggesting it was not David's motive. Fighting Goliath was done for Israel, which makes David more of a hero. David thanks Saul [9]:

O King, your favours with delight I take, but must refuse your praise. For every pious Israelite To God alone that tribute pays.

The music is appropriately gentle and soft, and the text portrays an overly-modest and God-fearing David. Jonathan responds to David [10]:

Oh early piety! Oh modest merit! In this embrace my heart bestows itself; Henceforth, thou noble youth, accept my friendship, And Jonathan and David are but one.

The presence of both Michal and Jonathan in this scene is a feature of many musical works. Merab, Saul's eldest daughter, who never speaks in the biblical text, has a vocal role here. Her inclusion is unique to this oratorio

among all musical settings of the biblical story that I have found. The purpose could be to fill in the gap of why she as the elder daughter did not marry David. She responds to Jonathan's infatuation with David by reminding him that David is 'In rank a prince, in mind a slave...poor in fortune, and in birth how low!' [11-12] Her music is forceful, with strong rhythm and wide vocal leaps. Jonathan responds to Merab that he despises birth and fortune, and repeats these thoughts to David [13]. His music is also strongly accented, expressing his firm convictions.

An invented character, the High Priest, blesses the 'illustrious pair' [14], which is an interesting ironic moment since the listener has just heard Merab speak so scornfully of David, her intended. After the priest's benediction, Saul officially gives David to Merab [16], who responds in an aside 'Oh mean alliance!' and then sings another strongly accented aria [17]:

My soul rejects the thought with scorn, That such a boy, till now unknown, Of poor, plebeian parents born, Should mix with royal blood his own!

She knows she cannot go against the king's command, but plans to find a way to subvert it. Michal overhears her sister and in two arias, proclaims her own feelings [18-19]:

See, with what a scornful air She the precious gift receives... Ah, lovely youth, wast thou designed With that proud beauty to be joined?

These arias are immediately followed by an orchestral interlude filled with the sounds of bells, effectively and vividly representing the women dancing to celebrate David's victory [20-21]. The confrontation with Goliath is not highlighted as much as these human interactions. Handel's librettist focuses far more on the prize David is to be rewarded, than what he did to earn it.

Nineteenth-Century Works

In Carl Reissiger's 1852 oratorio *David*, David sings an *arioso* standing before Goliath, to the text of 17.45-46. The arioso is marked *con moto*, in a brisk 3/4 time felt almost as one beat per measure. It opens in C minor but after a few measures it modulates into the relative E-flat major (24, m. 21). The major key introduces David's confident announcement to Goliath that this day he will be placed in David's hands, that David will kill and behead him. On those actual words, several chords are heard in the orchestra, interrupted by very effective quarter-note rests (25, m. 36-39). These brief dramatic pauses lead to a triumphant *ff* G major chord in the orchestra, played while David sustains his final *d'* for 9 beats, three full measures (25, m. 40-42).

In **Ferdinand Hiller**'s 1858 oratorio *Saul*, David's confrontation with Goliath is not depicted. But after his victory, Michal's women sing of David's glory and heroism (No. 3). There is no suggestion in the biblical text that Michal, or Michal with her women, were present at the battlefield when David slew Goliath. But since Saul has offered her hand to the victor, composers and librettists often felt that her presence on the stage was necessary for dramatic effect. At the end of the chorus, Michal sings a lengthy solo, opening with a recitative:

Hail David, the liberator! The boastful fiend lies in the dust. The shepherd's slingshot brought him down. The people are liberated through the strength of this heroic brave youth.

The orchestra plays strongly rhythmical, upbeat passages between Michal's dry and declamatory phrases (78-80). Then she continues in a lyrical aria:

We praise God's power.
The cedars and palms,
The hills and valleys,
They whisper in the Psalms
With joyful echo.

The section starting 'the cedars' has a more flowing sound, with the cellos and other strings playing flowing 8th-note groups over the sung eighth- and quarter-notes. Michal continues:

We have loudly sung God's praises, Since it was He who raised us from disgrace. From [David's] locks I will make a wreath of flowers...

The section beginning 'From his locks' switches from a rather quick 3/4 time to a much faster 4/4 rhythm. The excitement builds throughout the section (87-93) up to the conclusion of the aria. Michal twice reaches a'', sung ff both times. The first time it is sung off the beat and sustained only for two short beats (92, m. 5) but at the conclusion, she ascends a scale up to this note, and sustains it for six beats (93, m. 3-4). This is a convincing musical portrayal of Michal's excitement and affirmation.

David is apparently listening to Michal's words, for he tells her to take the wreath from his head and place it on God's altar (No. 4). He then sings (40, pv; 94):

I do not deserve the glory,
My mind seeks quiet joys.
Sweet joys in my cottage
Are what my soul longs for.
The little lamb going through the valleys
Calls me to the green earth of my homeland.
The harp and the forgotten song
Call me back to my father's flock.

This text suggests a very humble David who has no ambitions, who in fact only wants to return to his homeland and his flocks. The aria is marked *cantabile*, 'singing,' and is in a conventional 'pastoral' rhythm of 3/8. Over the harp accompaniment, the pastoral melody is highly melodic and lyrical. This is the musical portrayal par excellence of David the shepherd singer.

One of Saul's servants tells David to stop singing because the king is approaching and has a frightening aspect—an evil spirit has possessed him. Saul sings an interior monologue (No. 5; 43, pv; 104):

What lies so heavily on my breast and my brow, what weakens my pulse? Am I not still king, and a father? What sounds did I just hear? O, grim images, leave me, do not push me into greater confusion.

Before the second line, rapid 16th-note passages musically suggest Saul's agitation. The agitation continues to build up to the third line, in which Saul sings 'leave me' (weicht von mir) twice, each time on a higher pitch, and 'flee' (entflieht) on a sustained f', quite high in the baritone range and thus suggesting agitation (44, pv; 108, m. 3).

In an immediate change of mood, David approaches Saul very humbly, bowing at his feet and calling himself 'a poor shepherd servant.' This could be interpreted as a portrayal of a humble David, or equally as a manipulative one. Musically it is impossible to differentiate these. He sings several measures of highly melodic music, in sharp contrast to the jagged recitative Saul had just sung (44, pv; 109).

Saul, now singing in the same lyrical style as David, comments on David's pleasing voice, which has calmed and cheered his turbulent heart. David, accompanied by harp, sings that he wants to bring Saul peace, and Saul finds David's voice is 'like balsam on a fresh wound.' In some of his most lyrical passages, accompanied by harp (46, pv; 113), Saul asks David to sing out, because his woes vanish at the sound of his voice. This leads to a chorus, which sings with Michal, Saul, David and Jonathan (47, pv; 120). Michal asks God to heal Saul's wounds. When David joins in, the chorus comments that God speaks through his mouth.

The major change from the biblical narrative is the presence of Michal and Jonathan in a scene between David and Saul. This is also found in other works. There seems to be an impulse to create a family bond between the siblings Michal and Jonathan, and between them and their father. In this oratorio, they often reinforce David's words to Saul.

In **Friedrich Nuhn**'s 1867 oratorio, a Chorus of Praise (No. 3), featuring Michal's maidservants and David's warriors, sings of David's victory. The music is in a very upbeat and fast 3/4 time, a triumphant sound. They sing (11-17):

Hail David, the ruler, son of Jesse.
We greet you as king, since God rejected Saul.
We hail you, who defeated the monster,
We hail you, the consecrated and anointed one.

It is interesting that the people openly proclaim that God has rejected Saul. This is never stated so bluntly in the biblical text, certainly not by the people. An element of secrecy and subtlety is lost in this version.

In a short recitative, David responds to the chorus's praise and sings of his humility before God (20, No. 4):

I would have had no strength or courage without the Almighty behind me. God fulfilled his will through my weak arm.

David's humility is highlighted in most oratorios, as it is here.

In **C. Hubert Parry**'s 1894 oratorio *King Saul*, a chorus of Israelites sings about the Philistines and the giant of Gath, wondering who will save them from him. This very agitated music, in which the voices echo one other, effectively mimics a terrified crowd. After their final words 'Send us help!' (72), David enters singing:

Who is this Philistine, who defieth the armies of the living God? This day will the Lord deliver him into mine hand...
The dead bodies of the Philistines
Shall be given to the fowls of the air;
The wild beasts of the field shall devour them.
That all nations may know there is a God in Israel,
Who saveth not by sword and spear alone.
For the battle is the Lord's,
and He shall deliver our enemies into our hands.

After David's first line (above), the orchestra plays several measures of triumphal, almost martial music in 4/4 time, contrasting in mood with the chorus just heard (Fig. 5). David sings similar music, changing in mood only at 'the dead bodies.' This is softer and accompanied by steady 8th-notes, with a two-note *ostinato* in the orchestra a foreboding sound (74, bottom). The section starts softly but builds to a climactic g'' on 'devour' (75, m. 1 before Reh. L).

The mood changes again at 'that all nations,' sounding both prayerful and triumphant (75, m. 3 after Reh. L; it sounds a great deal like Judith's prayer in Parry's oratorio of that name). The climactic high note is on the word 'Lord's', a g" held for six beats over a *tremolo* C (75, 4th staff, last measure). The final words 'into our hands' are sung over sustained chords in the orchestra, up to an optional high *a-flat'* for the tenor able to sing it (76, top). The style of the music combined with the high range depict a strong, bold David.



Figure 5. Parry: David.

The defeat of Goliath is described by the chorus of Israelites, followed by a lengthy aria sung by Michal, who like David is not introduced. For the audience of Parry's days, both the story and characters would have been so familiar that they needed no introduction. Michal sings:

Arise and sing, ye daughters of Israel! Let all the people rejoice in the noble acts of the Lord.

The rhythm is a stately 4/4, and the bright, upbeat music has the sound of a triumphal march. The vocal line is marked by large leaps: a descending octave on 'Israel' from g'' to g', and sustained high notes: on 'rejoice' an a'' is sustained for seven beats while the orchestra modulates continually underneath the voice (81, 3rd staff). In the next section Michal sings:

By the hand of the stripling,
By the hand of the shepherd,
By the hand of one
That knew not shield or spear,
Hath the Lord o'erthrown the mighty one
That made us afraid.

The first few measure of this section, though still in 4/4, feature a strong accent on the second beat, preceded by a 16th-note leading tone (82, top). Each phrase takes the voice higher, leading to the climactic *b-flat*" on 'o'erthrown', which immediately descends an octave. The orchestra modulates away from the home key throughout this section, only returning to C

on the final note (82, Reh. S). Though she is only present to sing David's praises, Michal is depicted as strong and confident.

In the next section, the music switches to a tuneful anthem-like melody in A-flat major (82, last 2 measures):

The shepherd came up from the care of the sheepfold, The stir of the armed thousands made him not afraid. He put his right hand to the sling, And his left hand to the smooth stone from the brook, And with that stone he slew the Philistine; At his feet he bowed, he fell; Where he bowed there he fell dead

At the words 'and with that stone' the tempo increases and the accompaniment becomes more excited, with *marcato* chords accentuating her words (83, 3rd staff, m.2). The orchestra plays several measures of a D-major *ostinato* under Michal's F-minor phrases (83, 4th staff). This is remarkable dissonance for Parry's time, used effectively to highlight this very dramatic moment. The text echoes Judges 5. 26-27, the account of Jael's slaying of Sisera found in the Song of Deborah. The word 'bowed' is sung on a descending octave, an example of musical word-painting, but followed in the next measure by a leap up to *a-flat*" on the word 'dead' (83, bottom) with an unexpected diminished triad chord under this note, rather than the more predictable A-flat major. This unsettled chord dominates the next few orchestral measures, modulating into E-flat7 and then C minor for the next section (84, top). The text of this final section also echoes Judges 5:

The women of Gath shall cry at the gate:

'Why linger the feet of the warriors?'

The children shall wait for the host that went forth:

'Why come not the chariots from the battle?'

They shall gaze from the watch towers across the plain.

Arise and sing, ye children, of Israel;

For they that disquieted you are fallen and brought to nought.

The reference to Gath is a foretelling of 2 Sam. 1.20, David's lament for Saul and Jonathan, where he says 'Tell it not in Gath.' The next few lines substitute 'the children' for Sisera's mother in Judg. 5.28, where she asks 'Why is his chariot so long in coming?' The Judges text was probably very familiar to Parry's audience, though it does not make much sense in the context of David's conquest of Goliath, which was not a battle and involved no one except David. Parry may be suggesting that David's victory was equivalent to that of a full army, since by killing Goliath he conquered the Philistine army as well. Parry was also clearly comparing Jael's killing of Sisera—the weak conquering the strong—to David's killing of Goliath.

The key changes to C minor in this section with a stress on the descending augmented second interval of B to A-flat found in that scale, a mournful

sound. Other interesting musical features are meters shifting every few measures, from 4/4 to 3/2 and back to 4/4, and the presence of chromaticism and even momentary dissonances. These musical features combine to create a very unsettled mood, rather than the expected sound of victory. This is victory tinged with sadness, perhaps subtly suggesting that death in battle still brings sadness to those left behind.

Twentieth-Century Works

Charles Hutchinson Gabriel does not include a full scene about Goliath. Instead, David's victory is only briefly described much later in the oratorio. Jonathan describes David's victory over Goliath (No. 22), but with no mention of the slingshot, only 'With one strong blow, unerring,' an unusual omission. Gabriel probably assumed his audience would be familiar with the story. The time is 4/4 and Jonathan sings much of the text to single repeated notes, with the orchestra playing more melodic lines under him. The forward momentum and sense of excitement are somewhat diminished by the conclusion, in which Michal joins Jonathan in a lilting Strauss-like tune in 3/4, singing of David's bravery and valiant deed. After their last note, trumpet calls are heard, first loud and then soft, suggesting a battle in the distance.

In **Arthur Honegger**'s oratorio, a quick 'Fanfare' [3 bis] underlined by suggestive steady timpani drumbeats (15) is heard when the narrator relates Goliath's challenge to Israel.³ After another very short fanfare, 'The Entrance of Goliath,' the narrator announces David's victory over Goliath. The victory chorus that follows [4] opens in F# minor, sung in four parts with only a *tremolo* F# in the orchestra (16). (Honegger rarely indicates a key signature, but some sections are clearly in one key). This key, with six sharps, has a very particular, bright timbre to contrast with the darker music just heard for Goliath

Christopher Brown's oratorio devotes an entire section to David's slaying of Goliath. The section opens with four off-the-beat low chords per measure, which continue like an *ostinato*, joined by occasional trumpet calls, cymbals and snare drums (17, bottom, 18). This combination creates a strong sense of foreboding. The text for this scene is a slightly paraphrased version of select verses from 1 Samuel 17. The chorus sings as a narrator, in jagged and largely *a cappella* phrases punctuated by occasional snare drum (18, starting at Reh. 12). The chorus sings about Goliath in unison, over a very low *tremolo* (20,

3. There is a small difference in the French text in the two CDs I heard: in the Naxos text, Goliath 'a défié l'armée,' 'defied the army;' on the EMI recording, Goliath 'se moquait des Juifs,' 'made fun of the Jews.' It is not clear why this alteration was made.

Reh. 13). Several loud dissonant phrases are heard in the orchestra, after which the chorus sings 'Goliath of Gath' in B-flat major followed by C major (21, top). The orchestra echoes the C-major chord, followed by a *diminuendo* and a low rumbling *tremolo* (21, m. 3). This *tremolo* continues throughout the chorus's description of Goliath (21-22, top).



Figure 6. Brown: Goliath.

Initially the chorus does not sing together: the men follow the women, singing different text and music (21, bottom). This strongly suggests their terror and excitement and lends immediacy to the scene. They start very softly, sounding frightened, and the volume builds slowly. In the third measure, they introduce Goliath on a *ff* C-major chord with a sharply dissonant chord under them (22, top). Goliath enters singing 'I defy the armies of Israel this day' on a repeated e' (22, Reh. 14). This is one of the few musical works that gives Goliath a singing role.

His defiant words are to be sung *ad lib*. to sound like a shout (the composer notes that 'The tempo here should be quite free;' 22, bottom). Goliath's voice is doubled by bassoon, to differentiate the sound of his (baritone) voice from that of the narrator's (23, m. 3-4). A brief horn call is played, then Goliath sings his last line *a cappella* and *ad lib*., first ascending on 'if I slay him' up to e'. He sings 'then shall you be our servants' much lower, down to B#, and then 'and serve us' rises up to a ff d' as the tempo abruptly changes from 4/4 to cut time—almost double the speed (23, Reh. 5). The chorus begins humming on 'Mm' with their mouths closed (Fig. 6).

The sections come in one by one and hold their note. This creates an eerie and frightened sound. On their last note, they sing an ascending *portamento*, sliding their voices up to a higher note on 'Ah!' followed by a descending *portamento* (24, top).

The next short section of narration is sung by the baritones of the chorus over a very low *tremolo*. Low in their range, they sing: 'And all the men of Israel fled from him' (24, m. 5-8). Then the narrator introduces David's words to Saul: 'Let no man's heart fail because of him' (17.32). This text is sung to a very soft and lyrical line (25, top), with oboe echoing and doubling the voice. The mezzo voice representing David underlines his youth. Saul tells David to go (25, Reh. 17), and the women's chorus relates what David did next (17. 40; 26). As they recount his actions, the music grows faster and faster, leading up to a section in cut time, marked *Doppio movimento* (double time) (27, m. 3).

The narrative is briefly interrupted as the full chorus sings Psalm 3.1 in unison (known traditionally as the psalm sung by David when fleeing from Absalom). Their melodic line is simple, while the orchestra underneath is frenzied, creating a strong contrast between their prayer and the action (27, 1st-2nd staves). This pattern continues through the remainder of the scene: the full chorus sings psalm settings while the narrator continues to recount the David–Goliath encounter. Sometimes the voices are heard separately, sometimes all together.

This is a brilliant modern innovation to the traditional practice in British oratorio of interweaving psalms with the narrative. Brown includes the psalm settings, but they are often sung simultaneously with the narrated action rather than as set choruses. This dense texture of layers suggests that the crowds watching would be praying while David approached Goliath.

As the chorus continues singing the psalm in unison, the narrator is sung by mezzo and baritone soloists in unison. They recount David's approach to Goliath, and when Goliath's words are related, the baritone sings alone to represent Goliath (29, Reh. 20). Even while Goliath is singing his solo line, the chorus continues to sing Psalm 3.1, although now they sing in harmony, in C minor with a sustained C-minor chord under them plus an F# which adds an unsettling tritone (29, Reh. 20).

David enters and sings 'You come to me with sword and spear and shield' (17.45), and when he sings 'but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts,' a tonal D-major chord is heard. David's voice, the chorus and orchestra are all in this tonality for one measure (30, m. 5), which goes by quickly but has a noticeably lyrical quality. In music that generally has no tonal centre, a moment like this stands out, projecting a sense of calm and resolution. Musically it suggests the power of David's faith.

The D-major tonality continues for a few measures, though with some intrusive dissonances. When David sings 'Lord of Hosts,' the mezzo reaches a sustained f#'', and the chorus under him sings a D-major chord—but the orchestra plays discordant notes under them (30, 2nd staff, m. 3). The words 'Whom you have defied' are sung loud and sustained on unusual descending intervals: g''-c#''-g#'-d#' and up to c#''. The chorus repeats this final note, although they are still singing a psalm text: 'O God, make haste to deliver me' (Ps. 70.1) to dramatic, declamatory music.

The tempo slows for the next few measures, as the chorus continues singing the psalm and David sings his defiant words (31). The mezzo reaches a climactic *a flat*" at the end of the phrase 'the earth shall know' (31, bottom). The chorus drops out and David finishes the phrase, 'that there is a God in Israel', unaccompanied.

The tempo speeds up again, and to the sound of loud drums and cymbals the chorus in unison now sings another verse of Psalm 3 (v. 3), 'For thou O Lord art a shield for me' (32, Reh. 21). At the same time, the baritone and mezzo as narrator continue recounting the story, singing in unison up to the last few notes (32, bottom-33, top). After a few rapid descending and ascending slurs, only a high trill is heard, as the tempo abruptly slows and the mezzo begins to narrate the final section, followed a few beats later by the baritone. The only accompaniment is a high and eerie trill, and occasional tambourine and drum sounds.

Their voices come together on both the text and music at the words 'took out a stone, and slang [sic] it' (17.49). The mezzo sings the last two words on a ff high A-flat (a-flat'') while the baritone sings e'. Over an insistent tremolo, they sing 'and struck the Philistine in his forehead' on a softer unison E (e and e'), ascending an octave and accenting 'forehead' (34, Reh. 23). This is effective word-painting music.

A very soft trill is played for a sustained measure, signifying a moment of uncertainty. Then the tempo slows dramatically for a few measures of very loud unison chords, cymbals and drum (34, bottom). The opening note is a unison D, played in several octaves. A low D drum roll continues to be heard even when the chorus enters on a dissonant unison *e-flat'*, singing 'and he fell on his face to the earth' (35, top). The E flat is echoed in the orchestra, and this dissonance continues for a few more measures until the section ends on a soft D as the drum and cymbal rolls die out (35, m. 4).

A new section, marked *Allegro con spirito*, is a choral setting of Psalm 47, with the text only slightly altered (starting on 35, Reh. 24). This very fast and rhythmically complex chorus sounds spontaneous and upbeat, amplified by the predominance of loud trumpet calls playing single notes or intervals of seconds. The word 'praises' is repeated many times in several identical measures to underline its importance (39, top).

The narrator announces that David took Goliath's head to Jerusalem (17.54; (45, top). This is followed by a slow orchestral interlude, marked *Alla Marcia*.

This is one of the lengthiest, most complete and vivid depictions of the entire David–Goliath scene. The music brings the scene to life as few other works do, particularly the participation and reactions of the crowd.

Carl Nielsen includes the David–Goliath encounter in a lengthy scene that opens Act II. The act opens with an orchestral prelude, setting the scene for the splendour of the royal palace. When the curtain rises, Saul is seen on the throne, surrounded by David and Michal. David is singing for Saul, a hymn similar to the one heard earlier.

Warriors enter and in very rhythmical and martial music tell Saul the Philistines have pitched camp, and they describe the giant Goliath who has challenged them. They ask Saul to arise and erase their shame with his sword, ending on a notably dissonant chord which musically suggests their fear and anxiety (84, bottom). The music abruptly grows quieter, and under only sustained chords, Saul tells them that the Lord has deserted him in anger and his spear has been shattered in his hand (85, top). Michal is distressed that 'even the anointed one is fearful' and the warriors repeat her words, 'woe upon us' on descending octaves, dramatically depicting their distress (85, m. 5; 86, m. 1). Suddenly trumpets and a bright C-major chord are heard as David steps forward. To an upbeat melody punctuated by trumpet calls, David says he will risk his life against Goliath (86, 2nd-4th staves).

This entire scene, of course, is completely out of sequence in the story. David had not yet even met Michal when he offered to fight Goliath, nor was he already resident in Saul's palace.

Michal sings, before he has finished, 'David, my beloved' twice, on two descending octave leaps, the first starting on g" and the second on a-flat" (87,

m. 4-5). Saul also protests, claiming it would be an unequal fight between 'a 20-year-old lad' and Goliath, 'a warrior since childhood' (87, 2nd-3rd staves). This is the only libretto I have found that gives Goliath a back-story. It would be interesting to know how the librettist computed David's age.

David protests and describes how he has killed wild beasts when guarding his father's sheep (88; 17.34-36). The warriors hail David, while Michal cries out 'For our love's sake!' but is ignored (89, bottom). The fast and upbeat music stops as Michal kneels at Saul's feet and begs him not to let David go, because she 'has given her soul into his hands.' Her line is sustained, soft and heartfelt, a great contrast to the rest of this scene (90, 3rd-4th staves).

Saul, listening to the warriors' repeated calls to battle over martial trumpet sounds, agrees to let David go. With his hands on the kneeling Michal's head, he tells David she will be his if he brings back Goliath's head (92, top). The section ends with Michal singing 'My father' on a dramatically large descending leap of a 10th, from e'' down to e', while David at the same time sings 'My king' on the same leap, from e'' down to e', while David at the same time sings 'My king' on the same leap, from e'' down to e', while David at the same time sings 'My king' on the same leap, from e'' down to e', while David at the same time sings 'My king' on the same leap, from e'' down to e', while David at the same time sings 'My king' on the same leap, from e'' down to e'', while David at the same time sings 'My king' on the same leap, from e'' down to e'', while David at the same time sings 'My king' on the same leap, from e'' down to e'', while David at the same time sings 'My king' on the same leap, from e'' down to e'', while David at the same time sings 'My king' on the same leap, from e'' down to e'', while David at the same time sings 'My king' on the same leap, from e'' down to e'', while David at the same time sings 'My king' on the same leap, from e'' down to e'', while David at the same time sings 'My king' on the same leap, from e'' down to e'', while David at the same time sings 'My king' on the same leap, from e'' down to e'', while David at the same time sings 'My king' on the same leap, from e'' down to e'', while David at the same time sings 'My king' on the same leap, from e'' down to e'', while David at the same time sings 'My king' on the same leap, from e'' down to e'', while David at the same time sings 'My king' on the same leap, from e'' down to e''

There are several changes from the biblical text here. David was not yet in Saul's household and did not even know Michal when he went to fight Goliath. He asks to fight Goliath in the army camp, not within Saul's palace. Saul offers the hand of his eldest, Merab, to the man who will defeat Goliath, not specifically to David.

There is no mention of bringing back the head, but this adds melodrama to the story.

Though the love duet heard in a previous scene portrayed a passionate mutual love between David and Michal, in this scene David seems much more dedicated to Saul and to the challenge of defeating Goliath, to the extent that he ignores Michal's pleading. He wants to fight Goliath even before knowing of the reward, which is not the case in the biblical narrative. This makes him either more of a hero, or more bloodthirsty and aggressive.

Saul offers David his sword, armour and helmet which David rejects as too heavy and awkward (17.39). Then in upbeat phrases, David says he will meet Goliath with only his sling. Michal cries out that Goliath will run David through with his spear. Her single measure is sung in a minor tonality, contrasted with David's major key (94, 3rd staff, m. 3). David reassures her that he will strike first, in music that expresses confidence and strength. Against the background of the warriors, Abner, and Saul all hailing David in upbeat music, Michal interjects several highly dramatic phrases. Calling David her 'life's delight,' she sings 'I hold you yet, even yet' in a phrase that ascends up to *b-flat*" and then descends in an E-flat minor arpeggio down to

d-flat', almost two octaves (97, m. 3-5). This is a musical display of extreme emotional distress, and the orchestral music is full of pathos.

In a subsequent phrase, once again calling David her 'life's delight,' Michal begs him not to die. In a similar descending phrase, her line goes from g" down to b-flat, then closes with the words 'my husband!' on a descending octave g"-g' (98, m. 3-6). Calling David her husband indicates her hope that he will be victorious and thus win her as his wife. Though she is not depicted in the opera as a particularly multi-dimensional character, Michal is certainly vividly portrayed as a passionate and determined woman. After David and the warriors leave, she sings an extensive aria to her maidens, describing David in verses from, and inspired by, Song of Songs.

Apparently now that David has gone off to fight the giant, Michal accepts it, because the aria she sings—with interjections by the chorus of maidens—is upbeat and quick:

Did you see him, maidens? Did you see my beloved? Proud as a town under arms! Triumph grows in his steps!

The maidens sing 'Happy you among maidens' in several unaccompanied measures, in four-part harmony (99, bottom). Similar measures are interjected throughout the lengthy aria. Michal goes on to sing of David, whose 'neck is strong like a tower' (paraphrasing Song 4.4). In a more flowing vocal line, she sings:

Happy shall I be when he comes back And night locks him in! His breath is like dew...

The music suddenly becomes darker and more dramatic, as Michal fearfully considers David's not returning:

But if he does not come back
And they lay him with bleeding temples
Before my bed tonight...
Then I shall smash my head
Against the gates of the Kingdom of Death.
Then shall my life be like the dead lake
Which closes pale and heavy
Over the birds which sink down in its waters.

Staring ahead in terror, she continues to imagine David advancing towards Goliath, whose spear 'like a vulture' swoops down on David, who waits for the death-blow. She then imagines him bleeding and dying. The music in this section is at first slow and soft, with ominous timpani beats. When Michal imagines David before Goliath, the tempo is much more agitated and she sings many of her lines unaccompanied, with heavy chords in the intervening measures (104, bottom).

As she continues to imagine the confrontation, the music becomes suspenseful and rhythmical, with repeated chords played off the beat (105). This pattern continues until Michal actually believes she sees David bloodied. After a few very loud and heavy chords, she sings 'my beloved, he is dying' starting on g" and ascending to *c-flat*", which is sustained for seven beats while the orchestra plays heavy loud chords beneath her. After this highly dramatic and frenzied outburst, Michal faints.

The music quiets down and the maidens enter singing very softly. Michal interjects to sing a passionate phrase, 'Never till now did I know how a heart can long' (108, 2nd staff). The maidens continue to tell Michal they love her, and will strew her bed that night when her beloved approaches. They repeat the light 'Happy you among maidens' phrase, but this time more emphatically, singing ff instead of the earlier pp (109, 2nd staff, m. 5). Michal tells the maidens they should all go together to seek David, to call him with a shout. Textually this does not make sense, since David was never lost and there was no need to search for him. But the text recalls *Song of Songs* and that seems to be the reason it was inserted here.

The maidens now see a horseman approaching. They recognize him as Jonathan, and comment that he can only be riding so fast if he had good news. This is an interesting intertextual reference to 2 Sam. 18 when David is waiting in the gate for news of Absalom and comments on the runners who are approaching. The music becomes increasingly excited as the women's chorus and Michal ask and answer each others' questions. Michal calls out 'Jonathan!' and 'Jonathan, my brother' several times. In the biblical text, the siblings never meet and she never refers to him as her brother. Many of Michal's phrases in this section start in her highest range—on g'', a-flat'' and a'' (112-113). When she and her maidens see that Jonathan is swinging a palm branch, they realize this means David was victorious. Michal sings:

Yes! It is joy which gives wings to his horse...
Jonathan, brother!
Rejoice with me for my beloved!
He is formidable in the fight,
God has girded his loins.

This final line ends on a *ff b-flat*" which is sustained for seven beats over an accompaniment of heavily accented chords, an ecstatically triumphant moment (113, bottom). Jonathan enters and announces Israel's victory by David's hand, and the slaying of Goliath. This is followed by heraldic trumpet music. Then Michal and her maidens sing a few hymnal measures in praise of the eternal God (114, 2nd staff).

Jonathan relates the David-Goliath encounter, which in the biblical account is told by the narrator. Several verses from chap. 17 are quoted directly. There are some highly dramatic moments, with dissonant chords

and rapid piccolo passages to depict the 'birds of the air' (17. 44; 115, m. 4), and a rapid descending passage to represent the throwing of the stone (116, m. 4). The narration is vividly depicted with such musical touches.

The changed chronology allows Michal and Jonathan to take an active part in the scene. Michal's passion for David and her extreme distress add melodrama, suitable to an opera. Michal and Jonathan portrayed as allies, both in concern for their father and love for David, adds an interesting human element to the story. The original David—Goliath encounter is transformed almost beyond recognition here, yet the extensive modifications add a great deal of passion to the story.

Milhaud's account of the David–Goliath episode follows immediately after the scene from chap. 16 (above). A battle scene is depicted, with Israelite and Philistine soldiers at opposite sides of the stage. Distant horn calls are heard, and the reflection of spears and shadows of battle equipment moving into position is seen. To frenzied and chaotic music, the Israelite and Philistine soldiers taunt each other (53). Conflating the biblical account with the modern Israeli battle, a chorus of modern Israeli soldiers sings:

Their swords, our swords, were bent and old. Because in that time, to better oppress the newborn state, the enemy had destroyed our forges and deported our blacksmiths, leaving us arms only good for scrap iron.

Suddenly a giant shadow appears and the Jewish armies withdraw. Introduced by low notes in the brass, Goliath, a ten-foot tall giant, sings in a voice droning over the others as he pushes back all the barricades and climbs up the steps of the wall: 'Here I am, champion of my people ...giant, greatest of them all' (56). He taunts the Israelites to send someone to do battle with him, as trombones and tubas play rambunctious 'taunting' music. He says he will wait as long as it takes, forty days, months, even years. He growls several times during this tirade ('Il grogne': 57, m. 1 before Reh. 100, 110 for one measure; 58, Reh. 115, 120 for several measures each time).

Saul exits his tent, accompanied by Michal and Merab, and offers his daughter in marriage to the man who kills Goliath (without specifying which daughter). The chord played in the measure after he sings this offer is G major in the low and high registers with an intruding G-minor chord in the middle range (60, m. 1 after Reh. 160). This loud chord is sustained for 2 beats, and musically suggests a dissonance in what Saul has just said. David steps forward and offers to go. [In the L.A. stage directions, he is watching Michal the whole time; this is not indicated in the score.] At David's entrance the music suddenly is soft and sustained as David sings single notes, simply and confidently (60, m. 2 before Reh. 170).

His brothers laugh at him and call him impudent. David only now says he has heard the king's promise, but marriage to Michal does not seem to be his

primary motivation in this opera. Saul tells him he can't go because Goliath is a dangerous veteran soldier (he doesn't mention his size) and David only a child. David admits he is a child, but insists that with God's protection, he has always been able to fight off wild animals who threatened his flock, and he is confident that God will be behind him today as he fights the Philistine. These lines are sung lyrically and accompanied by soft violins (62, 3rd-4th staves).

Jonathan puts Saul's armour on David as Michal takes his harp and watches. David rejects the armour as too heavy, and Jonathan gives him back his sling (17.38-39). Goliath is heard laughing in the background, his laugh punctuated by trombone. This is one of the few works that gives Goliath a voice, which is far more effective than pure narration.

This scene deviates from the biblical version inasmuch as neither Jonathan nor Michal is present at the battle front, nor do the two of them ever appear together. This opera is not the only work to make this change. In this case, the intent may be to explain the strong attraction David had for both of Saul's offspring, who witness his heroic victory over the giant.

David announces to Goliath that he is the one coming to fight him. Goliath asks if he is a dog, that David comes to him with a stick (17.43, 64, bottom; 65, top). David says he comes in the name of the living God whom Goliath has insulted. He proclaims that he will let the world know there is one God for Israel, that he will strike Goliath down and cut off his head (17.45-46). This last phrase is sung on steadily ascending 16th-note passages which slow as he sings, partly unaccompanied, up to f', high and emphatic in the baritone range (65, Reh. 275).

David comes to the stream and chooses five stones, which the chorus counts as he chooses them. No other libretto includes the actual number of stones, which is in the Hebrew and also in the KJV translation. Most newer translations simply write 'several stones.' This is an indication of the great attention paid to detail by Milhaud's librettist. The chorus of modern Israelis also mimics his actions. He then swings his sling and brings Goliath down, musically depicted by several high trills marked 'intense' (66, m. 1 after Reh. 295, 67, top).

When David cuts off Goliath's head and holds it high, the moment of beheading is depicted musically by trumpets blasting loud chord clusters. The Philistine chorus shouts their dismay over drums in the orchestra. The Israelite chorus, in contrasting triumphant music and in a rare moment of clear major tonality, describes Goliath as he lies there (67, bottom):

Six full cubits and a span (17.4). He had on each hand, and on each foot, six toes and six fingers' (2 Sam. 21. 20 and Chron. 20.6, describing 'the brother of Goliath'), his shield of armor, weighing many thousand shekels and a spearhead weighing 600 shekels more (17.7).

While they are singing these words (in the score they are marked as spoken, not sung), in the L.A. stage directions, not the score, David is lifted in triumph and carried towards Saul. David puts on Saul's helmet and carries his shield. Saul blesses David as Michal bows before him, then the armies of David and Jonathan march off in pursuit of the Philistines. Throughout all this action, modern soldiers are singing a very upbeat, relatively tonic chorus which ends on an upbeat, tonic chord and a cymbal crash (69, Reh. 330; 72, bottom):

We, just yesterday, were fighting the same battles for the reborn homeland, with the same faith as our forefathers. We too were reduced before the most terrible of coalitions, with only the most miserable equipment. They advanced on five fronts, in their tanks and armor, like Goliath the giant. Then all we sons and daughters of Israel, with bottles and grenades we crushed them as they sat in their tanks, in memory of David, with his sling and stone. Armies of the living God, forward, forward!

The defeat of Goliath in this opera takes on additional significance because of the inclusion of a chorus of modern Israeli soldiers. The comparison of the battles of historical Israel with the recent battles for the new state adds layers to the story not present in any other work. There is deeper meaning to many of the events related, and at the same time the biblical narrative comes to life vividly in the music and action.

In **Testi**'s 1991 opera, David's first appearance has several unusual elements (this short scene merges chaps. 16 and 17, which are reversed). David appears, and the queen (Saul's wife, an invented character) immediately comments on how handsome he is. A two-measure *Leitmotif* of descending 8th-notes in harp announcing David's entrance (50, m.4 after Reh. 32) will be heard several times later in the opera, especially when David sings to Saul. David tells the queen he has been looking for her to gain permission to fight the giant. She expresses doubt, and he asks her if she doubts his abilities. She says 'You are a child.' David says he is 17 and describes some of his previous exploits in the mountains (17. 34-37). Much of David's vocal line consists of single repeated notes or very small intervals, almost like speaking and void of emotion or lyricism.

The queen (rather than Saul as in the biblical version: 17.38) offers him Saul's armour (56). David rejects it as too heavy, saying he will fight as he is (1 Sam. 17.39). The queen says this is madness, and as the music slows dramatically, David calmly tells her that he fears nothing, knowing the God of Israel will protect him. Jonathan offers him his own sling, which he also refuses. The queen tells the High Priest they should leave the two 'children' alone (60) and a love scene ensues. David and Jonathan do not meet in the biblical account until chap. 18, but Jonathan is present earlier in most of the works discussed in this chapter. The David–Goliath scene is not depicted, but Jonathan tells David he will watch him from the terrace.

The biblical narrative is changed almost beyond recognition, yet David's heroic quality, supreme self-confidence and faith as seen in many other works remain intact. His character is the element of the original narrative that has been changed the least, both by Gide and Testi. Perhaps the David of tradition was simply too sacrosanct, well-known and loved to change.

Conclusion

There are interesting similarities in the retelling of chaps. 16 and 17 in these disparate works. Common to most of them is a fluid treatment of chronology. In some works, David challenges Goliath after meeting Jonathan and or Michal. In some, this is his first encounter with Saul. Because of the paired biblical episodes, librettists perceived a need to harmonize these stories in some way. They also telescoped the action, or suggested different motives for David's actions.

Common to all works is the inclusion of particularly beautiful music for David to sing to Saul. Oboe and harp, the sounds associated with a shepherd singer, are almost always used to represent David. The effect of this music on Saul is also graphically portrayed, most notably by Nielsen and Milhaud. In their versions, Saul is so carried away that he sings along with David.

In some works, Jonathan introduces David to Saul. Jonathan is included in chap. 17 (the biblical Jonathan first appears in chap. 18) in several works (Handel, Hiller, Nielsen, Milhaud and Testi), while Michal is included in all of these as well as Parry. A fraternal bond is suggested between Michal and Jonathan that can barely be read between the lines of the biblical narrative, but it creates greater dramatic tension and interest. Michal is depicted as already in love with David, and in Nielsen's opera the spotlight is more on her anxiety as David fights Goliath, than on David himself.

Goliath is given a voice only in the Brown oratorio and Milhaud's opera—in which he is instructed to 'groan,' a highly dramatic effect. Common to almost all works that include the David–Goliath scene are extensive choral responses. Hearing the crowd's fear, amazement, and finally exultation paints the scene far more vividly than dry narrative can.

By the end of these two chapters, the focus begins to shift away from Saul and onto David. Qualities of humility, piety, and self-confidence are almost universally ascribed to David through text and music. This trend will continue throughout the retellings of his story.

Chapter 5

SAUL'S AND DAVID'S STORIES OVERLAP: PART II

Summary of 1 Samuel 18-22

18 After David's conversation with Saul, Jonathan's soul 'became bound up' with David's. Saul brings David into his service that day, and Jonathan and David make a pact. David goes out and is victorious in battle, so on his return the women sing 'Saul has slain his thousands, David his tens of thousands.' Saul becomes jealous, and the next day an evil spirit of God grips him. He begins to rave while David is playing for him and throws his spear at David. Then he sends him out to fight more battles. He offers his oldest daughter Merab to David but she is given in marriage to Adriel instead.

Michal, Saul's younger daughter, falls in love with David, and Saul decides to use this to his benefit. He tells David to capture 100 Philistine foreskins to win Michal, thinking David will be killed in this attempt. David instead brings 200, and is married to Michal. David continues winning victories, as Saul's fear of him grows.

19 Saul tries to get Jonathan or his courtiers to kill David, but they remind him of David's many successes. Saul, convinced, allows him to return to court. David wins another battle, after which Saul flings his spear at him again. Saul sends messengers to find David at home and kill him. Michal finds out somehow, and helps him escape. She uses a household idol in the bed to fool the messengers, and tells Saul she did it because David threatened to kill her if she didn't help him. David escapes and finds Samuel. Saul again sends messengers to kill him, but each group he sends is overcome by the spirit of God and starts speaking in ecstasy. Saul finally goes himself, and is overcome the same way, even stripping off his clothes. This may be where the saying 'Is Saul too among the prophets?' originated (1 Sam. 10).

20 David asks Jonathan why Saul has it in for him and Jonathan promises to find out. They concoct a plan whereby David will hide in the countryside and Jonathan will report to David by the third day. At the new moon meal and the night after, David is absent. Saul asks Jonathan why, and as planned, Jonathan says David left to see family. Saul flies into a rage ('son of a perverse, rebellious woman!') and rants that Jonathan is taking David's side, and that he wants to kill David. The next day Jonathan goes to the

assigned meeting place and tells David to get far away. They kiss and weep together, 'David the longer,' and swear eternal fidelity.

21 David, on the run, uses his wiles to get bread from the priest Ahimelech at Nob, and then protects himself by feigning madness for King Achish of Gath

22 David, still on the run, asks the king of Moab to protect his parents (never mentioned elsewhere). Saul hears about David's exploits and the pact he made with Jonathan, and rails against his own men. Doeg, one of his courtiers, tells Saul about David being helped at Nob. At Saul's command, Doeg is the only one willing to strike down all the priests there—85 of them, then the whole town, men, women, children, animals. One man escapes and goes to David, who swears to protect him.

Commentary

Many commentators see an element of political calculation in David's actions. He is portrayed as a 'rational and farsighted architect of kingly institutions long before his attainment of actual kingship' (Rosenberg 1987: 129). David's forbearance toward Saul could be interpreted as politically motivated. Yet David's first relationship depicted in 1 Samuel is with Saul, in a nurturing role. This tells us either that David was a caring person, or that this is what the writer wanted us to think.

The verse comparing Saul's and David's 'thousands and ten thousands' seems to be the trigger for Saul's jealousy. For this reason, it is included in a majority of the musical works. Borgman argues that Saul was fearful and anxious even before he was possessed by the 'evil spirit,' that it was his own character that brought him down (Borgman 2008: 73). Saul's disobedience seems to result in his madness, and his madness then leads to his erratic and aggressive behaviour towards David. But Saul's disobedience itself, and his 'propensity for odd behaviour' which was obvious before his disobedience, both remain unexplained (Raphael 2007: 8).

Some of Saul's character traits become more evident when compared with David's, as opposite sides of a coin. David is marked by divine election, military prowess, and effective actions, contrasted with divine rejection, military failures, and ineffective action. God is behind all of this, but in opposite ways (Raphael 2007: 12). David is characterized by his total faith in God, which gives him great power and confidence. Saul, by contrast, does not experience God's presence. According to the narrator, God speaks to David but not to Saul. David's steadily increasing self-confidence, freedom, joyousness and wisdom are in marked contrast to Saul's confusion, paranoia, and insecurity. The writer's portrayal of David suggests his harmony with God and his perfect trust in him. As one writer describes this difference:

David's radiant imagination of God is the direct antithesis of Saul's, as the living God's immanence in him is the direct antithesis of the ever-expanding void at Saul's center (Levinson 1994: 135).

Many biblical commentators diagnose Saul as a depressive, manic-depressive or paranoid personality. Depression, however, is anger turned inward, while Saul constantly displays his anger outwardly. His rage becomes uncontrollable after Samuel's rejection. According to one analysis, the 'evil spirit' represents Saul's murderous rage. Because he cannot vent his rage on its real object—Samuel—he becomes demented by its suppression. He continues to resist the prophet's prediction of David's ascendancy to the throne, and this increasingly intense resistance literally drives him to madness (Levinson 1994: 134, 137).

Jonathan appears in the narrative primarily in relation to David, the only exceptions being when he is introduced (before David enters the scene), in battle scenes, and at his death. But basically Jonathan is in a similar situation to Michal: both have little or no textual autonomy from David. The same Hebrew word אהב is used to describe the love both Michal and Jonathan feel for David, though many English translations use 'fell in love' for Michal but not for Jonathan, betraying a heterosexist prejudice.

A careful reading of the text shows Jonathan to be the one with the greatest and most abiding love for David (Fewell and Gunn 1993: 149). The reasons for Jonathan's attachment to David are never explicitly stated. Borgman wonders if we are to imagine he loves David for all the wrong reasons, or the contrary, that he completely grasps David's importance just as God does (Borgman 2008: 48). The deliberate gap creates a more interesting reading.

Jonathan's devotion to David is described in chapter 19, but no speech of David's to Jonathan is recorded until chapter 20. And even there, his words are not so much a personal communication as a kind of political statement (Alter 1999: 123). Some commentators have suggested a sexual or at least homoerotic relationship between the two. This was explored by playwright Andre Gide in *Saül*, which was then the basis for a later opera (Testi's *Saül*, 1991). Such a relationship is not overt in the narrative, but it can be read between the lines. For example, in Saul's outburst at Jonathan over David's absence from the table, he uses violent words (20.30-31): 'Don't I know you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame and the shame of your mother's nakedness?' Alter believes the term 'nakedness' here virtually means 'your mother's cunt,' though the language is not obscene (Alter 1999: 128). Saul could be suggesting an erotic relationship or attraction through his use of this kind of vulgar language.

Jennings points out that, in Leviticus (20), one uncovers one's mother's nakedness by uncovering the nakedness of the father. The only way Jonathan could do this would be by having a relationship with someone who has had sexual relations with his father. In that way, he is exposing

his father's nakedness as well as the nakedness of someone with whom his father had sexual relations--his wife (Jonathan's mother). Only with this understanding can Saul's outburst make sense (Jennings 2005: 18). Nissinen points out that the word Saul uses in reference to Jonathan's friendship with David, TID (chose), indicates a permanent choice, which points to a strong relationship (Nissinen 1998: 55). Though not conclusive, these compelling readings strongly support the existence of a sexual relationship between Jonathan and David

Alter refers to the 'repeated, unconvincing attempts' to read a homoerotic implication here. He admits that David's attachments to women are not emotionally motivated, but insists this tells us little about his sexual orientation. 'The bond between men in this warrior culture could easily be stronger than the bond between men and women' (Alter 1999: 201). This is certainly true of other warrior cultures, such as the ancient Greeks. That culture, however, condoned and possibly even encouraged homoeroticism. Homosexual love was often associated with heroes in the cultures surrounding Israel. Horner suggests it is implausible to believe Israel would not have been influenced by these cultures, and would have adopted an entirely different sexual ethic when it lived so close to foreign influences (Horner 1978: 20). The discomfort with the idea of a sexual relationship between David and Jonathan in part explains why Gide's play had to wait over 20 years to be seen on a stage (see p. 47).

The writer or editor of the biblical narrative obviously did not feel a need to censor anything in the story of the relationship between David and Jonathan. Their mutual love is described as faithful and passionate, but no allusions to 'forbidden practices' are made, either negative or positive (Nissinen 1998: 56). Emotional closeness was not forbidden in the writer's mind, and if the men went beyond that will always remain for the reader to decide. But at the time these stories were written, it would not have been considered a scandal if King David had matured through homosexual relationships. In that regard, the books of Samuel are ahead of our allegedly more enlightened times. The writers of the David narrative were probably familiar with the *Gilgamesh Epic*, in which explicitly homosexual motifs are found in the description of the friendship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu. When Enkidu dies, Gilgamesh mourns for him in language very close to David's lament over Jonathan's death (Schroer and Staubli 2000: 35-36).

Schroer and Staubli suggest that the use of the word will suggests more than just friendship between the two men. They consider the usual translation, 'soul,' to be inadequate. In its original sense, they say:

It means 'the yearning throat and, in a derivative sense, the craving, drivelike and life-seeking aspects of human existence...or the sex drive...and yearning desire. Jonathan desires David and loves him as his own life (Schroer and Staubli 2000: 28). The woman in the Song of Songs uses similar terminology for her beloved, including שב" (Song 1.17, 3. 1-4). Another word suggesting an erotic element to Jonathan's love is אָבוּק, 'delight in,' (19.1). This term has sexual connotations in Gen. 34.19 and Deut. 21.14 (Schroer and Staubli 2000: 28).

The relationship is not described as completely one-sided. In 20.41, the two men kiss one another and both weep—though 'David the longer.' This is subtly suggestive of David's feelings, which in the case of women are never described at all. The arena of feelings, of course, was never of particular interest to the biblical writer.

Both Jonathan and Michal are caught between loyalty to their father and love or covenant friendship with Saul's rival David. It is not made apparent why either of them loves David. The reader must fill in all the gaps surrounding their actions, gaps which are both suggestive and meaningful.

The fact that Michal's love for David is the only instance in the Bible (except the Song of Songs) where the love of a woman for a man is mentioned, is highlighted by many commentators. Only Bodi points out that this is not unique in ancient Near Eastern literature. He discusses a literary motif in Sumerian literature in which a woman expresses her choice of the man she wants. The word 'love' is key in this part of the narrative. It reappears in v. 22, where it is said that all the high-ranking members of the court love David. Bodi believes this points to a double meaning of the word 'love': as an emotion and as a political allegiance. He believes this double meaning is crucial to a proper understanding of the story (Bodi 2005: 12).

In the first part of Michal's story, the term 'love' appears three times at key moments. Why is her love for David important? Exum suggests it is 'convenient but otherwise largely gratuitous' from Saul's perspective and basically gratuitous from David's. Men's political considerations are paramount; all we know of Michal is that she loves. This perpetuates the familiar stereotype of men motivated by ambition and women by personal feelings (Exum 1993: 22). (David, however, is motivated by lust and not ambition in the case of Bathsheba.) No motivation for Michal's love is given, indicating that the writer wanted readers to guess the reason. It is clear that the people love David for his success in battle, but no reason is given for Michal's feelings (Alter 1981: 119).

Commentators have offered a variety of possible reasons, but many of these are 'speculation' in Clines' words, because they are not rooted in the text. For example, to suggest Michal loved David because of his heroic killing of Goliath is rooted in the text. We know she knew about this event, and that all the people loved him for it, so by logical extension, Michal too could have loved him. But to suggest that it was David's rustic simplicity that she loved, as for example Steinsaltz does (in 'The Princess and the Shepherd', p. 281) is simply not based on the text (Clines 1991: 35).

In later re-tellings of the story, such as films and librettos for operas or oratorios, David is depicted as loving Michal. In the modern era, a David who married for political reasons rather than out of love would have little appeal (Exum 1996: 64). It is possible to interpret the text both ways, with David loving or not loving Michal, because his feelings are never described by the writer. Librettists felt no need to offer a motive for Michal's love. By making the love reciprocal, they created oratorios and operas the public would enjoy, filled with lengthy and flowery love duets.

Michal, like many women in the Bible, is never described physically. The rabbinic midrash, though, depicts her as a beautiful woman with unusual strength of character who inspires burning desire. Her strong character is evident in her choice of a husband for herself, her defiance of her father, and her display of open contempt for David (Bodi 2006: 138).

It is interesting that the rabbis assign great beauty to Michal but not to Bathsheba, when it is Bathsheba who inspired lust in David while Michal never did. But Bathsheba's beauty is already in the biblical text itself. Possibly the rabbis wanted to suggest that David chose Michal for her beauty rather than out of political ambition. The rabbis also give great value to Michal's role in contributing to David's grandeur as a future king. She not only saves David's life, but also the entire line of the House of David, which includes the Messiah (Bodi 2006: 101, quoting Qil, *Shemuel 1–2*, Preface, n. 2).

Michal's tragic love for David appears in the shadow of political meaning of the term 'love.' Saul's daughter loves her father's rival, despite the increasing tension and even outright animosity between the two men. Love as an emotion felt by Michal will be sacrificed and exploited by her father, who uses it to get rid of his political adversary. The happiness of his daughter is apparently 'a trifling thing' for Saul, and she is trapped in their power struggle (Bodi 2006: 14, 16). The daughter's femininity is clearly the father's property, which he can use as a bargaining chip, and this cultural reality is behind the story (Aschkenasy 1995: 140).

Michal is never mentioned without being further identified as 'the daughter of Saul' or 'the wife of David.' In the first three instances where Michal is mentioned (14.49; 18.20; 18.27) she is identified as Saul's daughter. Yet there is only one reported conversation between father and daughter (19.17), at a point in the story where she is both wife and daughter, yet not identified as either by the narrator. This is in great contrast to many of the musical works, which amplify the Saul-Michal relationship.

The attitude of the writer towards Michal seems to be ambivalent. In Bodi's view, Michal is portrayed as an 'energetic and cunning wife who comes to the aid of her husband' (Bodi 2006: 26). She is also depicted as a devoted wife, renouncing allegiance to her father out of devotion to her husband. Like Rahab, Michal is courageous and resourceful, even willing to take a risk to help David escape.

The scene with the *teraphim* (19.12) is an allusion to Rachel, who hid Laban's *teraphim* under the pillow when he came to search her tent (Gen. 31.34). The allusion reinforces the reader's sense of Michal as a woman who has renounced allegiance to her father in favour of her husband (Alter 1981: 120). There has been much commentary on Michal's use of *teraphim* in her ruse to save David. Rabbinic tradition considers such objects abominations and not permitted, yet they were in David's house. Some commentators place blame on Michal for using them, yet the fact remains that the objects were in the house she shared with David.

It is not clear if the plan that helps David make his escape is Michal's or David's. The text's ambiguity makes it impossible to know the plan's origin. It is also not possible to know whether or not Michal is telling the truth when she claims that David threatened her. Michal is in a double bind, that of conflicting loyalty to father and to husband. She cannot show loyalty to both houses. As Exum points out, 'The female character is a male construct whose narrative entrapment reflects the limitations imposed by gender' (Exum 1993: 48-49).

While Michal has vigorously proven her love by words and actions in this moment of crisis, David is silent. But Saul, after realizing he has been tricked, addresses Michal directly for the only time in the narrative. He asks her why she deceived him. David's only direct address to Michal is at a similar moment of rupture in their relationship (2 Sam. 6). This reflects a perception of Michal as a woman acted upon but rarely addressed. At the same time, Michal seems to always appear at crucial points in David's career, underlining her importance to him (Bodi 2006: 27, 36).

Michal's inner turmoil is never explained. On the other hand, neither is Jonathan's. Nor are the two of them ever depicted in a relationship, as they are in musical settings. Why did the writer choose to never show them together, since they shared the love of the same man? Is there a suggestion of competition between them? The reader can read between the lines and imagine any of these scenarios. But in the end, all the characters are planets circling around the sun that is David.

The Music

Musical works to be discussed include Handel (eighteenth century), three nineteenth-century oratorios and one opera, three twentieth-century oratorios and three operas.

Eighteenth-Century Works

In **Handel**'s oratorio, Scene 3 follows immediately after David's defeat of Goliath. A women's chorus sings a variant on the well-known biblical verse (18.7) that seems to spark Saul's jealousy:

Saul, who hast thy thousands slain, Welcome to thy friends again! David his ten thousands slew; Ten thousand praises are his due!

Saul expresses his dismay at this 'upstart boy' being praised more than he is [23, 25-26]. The highly dramatic music covers a wide vocal range, ending with a descending 2-octave scale:

With rage I shall burst his praises to hear! Oh, how I both hate the stripling, and fear!

In the next scene (4), Jonathan tells the women their 'ill-timed comparisons' have upset Saul, whom they had meant to honour [27]. Michal explains to David that it is merely Saul's 'old disease' which she knows David can cure. She asks him to take his harp as he has often done to 'expel the raging fiend' from the king, and 'soothe his tortured soul with sounds divine.' These words seem to imply that David had started playing for Saul earlier, but this is never elaborated. The chronology in this, as in many works, is skewed. Jonathan defending Saul, and Michal explaining his 'disease' to David, are both interesting additions also found elsewhere. It would make sense for the two siblings to protect and defend their father, even if this dynamic is completely missing in the biblical narrative.

In an aria filled with trills, representing 'soothing' music, Michal sings of how David's music has soothed Saul in the past [28]. The High Priest sings of the higher meaning of 'harmony' [29-30]. This is only one example of Handel's praise of music within the oratorio. David is not the only musician, so the healing qualities of music in this libretto are inherent in music, not only ascribed to David's special powers.

In scene 5, Abner (acting here as narrator) explains how the king is 'racked with infernal pains' and 'mutters horrid words' [31]. David prays to God to relieve Saul's suffering 'if his sin be not too great' and to 'heal his wounded soul' [32]. The music is slow and moving, a convincing heartfelt plea. It is followed by a harp solo improvising the melody just sung by David, obviously meant to represent David himself playing [33]. Jonathan comments that it is in vain, because Saul's 'fury still continues' and he seems intent on harming David [34]. Everyone around Saul is obviously aware of his condition, a variation from the biblical text in which his madness is not so blatantly discussed.

Saul sings an angry aria, comparing David to a serpent warmed in his bosom [35]. The aria features many rapid runs, expressing anger and madness very effectively in a bass-baritone voice. At the conclusion of the aria, Saul throws his javelin at David. When he realizes he has missed, he sings an even angrier recitative in which he orders Jonathan to destroy David, 'this bold, aspiring youth' [36]. The singer almost shouts some of the

words. Merab sings an aria to her father [37], calling him 'Capricious man' who 'set his vassal on the throne, then low as earth he casts him down!' and further comments on Saul's extreme moods. It is an interesting description of a manic-depressive, who also experiences no middle ground.

In scene 6, Jonathan sings a recitative in which he wonders how to reconcile his 'filial piety' with 'sacred friendship' [38]. Calling David 'Godlike' and 'Israel's defender,' he ultimately justifies disobedience to his father as an act of duty to God. In an aria featuring two contrasting moods, sadness and resolve, he expresses his decision [39]:

With my life I must defend Against the world my best, my dearest friend.

Jonathan's conflict between loyalty to his father and to David has been discussed by many biblical commentators. It is not so evident in musical works, but Handel's librettist highlighted it for its dramatic interest. Making David 'God-like' simplifies Jonathan's choice.

The High Priest and the chorus ask God to protect David from the irrational hatred of Saul [40-41]. Everyone around Saul seems aware of his jealousy, and they all side with David against him.

Act Two opens with a dry and rhythmical chorus, singing that 'Envy! Eldest born of hell!' should no longer dwell in human breasts [42]. This is a commentary on Saul's envy of David, which is clearly obvious to everyone.

In the next scene (2), Jonathan tells David that his father's rage was caused by an 'evil spirit' [43], the first time this expression has been heard in the oratorio. Here too, the chronology is changed. Jonathan adds that he has been ordered to execute his father's vengeance. But, Jonathan tells David, he will never hurt him [44]:

Sooner Jordan's stream, I swear, Back to his spring shall swiftly roll, Than I consent to hurt a hair Of thee, thou darling of my soul.

What sounds to modern ears like the language of love between Jonathan and David would have been seen as expressing friendship in that era. Rooke considers this text a perfect example of the (sexual) language of non-sexual male love/friendship in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Deborah Rooke, pers. comm.).

David describes his confusion at Saul's changing moods [45]. Jonathan tells David that Merab was given to Adriel (18.19). David had noted her scornful attitude and therefore does not mind, but he now tells Jonathan of his love for Michal. This is, of course, an addition, one made by every libretto discussed in this book. No librettist could tell a story that portrayed a one-sided love. David contrasts Merab's 'haughty beauty' with Michal's

mildness and gentleness in an aria [46]. Jonathan tells David to leave, as Saul is approaching [47].

In Scene 3, Saul asks Jonathan if he has destroyed 'the son of Jesse,' his 'mortal enemy,' and Jonathan reminds his father of the service David has done for them and for the nation, by slaying Goliath [48]. In a lovely, gentle tune, Jonathan pleads with his father not to sin against David, to think of his loyalty [49]:

Think, to his loyalty and truth, What great rewards are due! Think with what joy this God-like man You saw, that glorious day!

Jonathan's words obviously sway Saul—although there is a subtle suggestion that it is the music that moves him. Calling David 'God-like' is a more elevated and less subtle description than found in other librettos. Saul responds in a similar and equally gentle tune that he will no longer pursue David [50]:

As great Jehovah lives, I swear, The youth shall not be slain: Bid him return, and void of fear Adorn our court again.

To round out the scene, Jonathan expresses his gratitude, as well as some anti-war sentiments. He proclaims David's ability to soothe Saul as the greatest value [51].

In Scene 4, Saul reassures David that he will not harm him. He also tells him that if he defeats the Philistines, he will receive Michal as a reward. But in the middle of this promise, Saul sings in a soft aside 'O hardness to dissemble!' letting the audience know of his duplicity [52]. This is based on the biblical text which states that 'Saul intended to bring about David's death at the hands of the Philistines' (18.25). David sings a dazzling coloratura aria now [53], musically depicting his strength and resoluteness. He proclaims that 'the great Jehovah' is his shield. Saul, speaking to himself [54], expresses his hope that the Philistines will kill David. These musical asides are a fine example of the ability of music to project a character's inner thoughts. In the biblical account, these thoughts are dryly related by the narrator.

Scene 5 opens as Michal proclaims her love for David to a flowery accompaniment. She can now proclaim her love openly, since Saul has authorized it [55]. A sweet and pastoral-sounding love duet follows [56]. After Michal and David each sing their individual parts, their voices unite and interweave in perfect harmony, trilling and singing cadenzas. There is more sweetness than passion here, but that is the nature of Handelian music:

Michal: Oh fairest of ten thousand fair,

Yet for thy virtue more admired!

David: Oh lovely maid! Thy form beheld,

Above all beauty charms our eyes.

A chorus closes the scene, proclaiming the power of love over all [57].

In Scene 6, David relates to Michal how duplications her father had been, because when David returned from slaughtering the enemy, Saul threw the javelin at his head. He still feels he is safe, but Michal nonetheless warns him that he must escape (19.11) [60]:

David: At persecution I can laugh;

No fear my soul can move. In God's protection safe, And blest in Michal's love.

Michal: Ah, dearest youth, for thee I fear!

Fly! Begone, for death is near!

The music is quick and rhythmical, almost breathless. They sing one after the other, not in harmony as before, because they are expressing different thoughts. The biblical David often expresses his trust in God's protection, but in this oratorio he has the further reassurance of Michal's love to protect him.

In Scene 7, Saul has sent his courtier Doeg to find David, and Michal tries to hold him off by saying David is sick [61]. In the biblical version, Saul sends courtiers; Doeg only appears later, in the incident at Nob. When Doeg discovers the household idol in the bed, he warns Michal that the king will be even angrier. Michal sings an aria of defiance [62]. Like David, she trusts in God's might, and believes her innocence will protect her. She does not use the defense that David forced her to put the idol in the bed, as in the biblical story.

In Scene 8, Merab is more favourably disposed towards David, since he is now Michal's husband: 'Mean as he was, he is my brother now' [63]. She is sorry for him because of her father's irrational cruelty. She sings a heartfelt prayer begging the 'Author of peace' to cause her father's 'cruel wrath' to change to 'soft persuasion' [64]. In this oratorio, as in later ones, everyone gradually comes to love David and to both fear and pity Saul.

In Scene 9, the Feast of the New Moon, Saul proclaims his plan to take revenge on 'Jesse's son' [66]:

He dies—this blaster of my fame, Bane of my peace, and author of my shame!

The accompaniment is jagged and heavily accented, underlining Saul's anger. As in the biblical account, no reason is given for Saul's hatred of David, though in this text he seems to still be referring back to the earlier verse comparing his thousands to David's ten thousands.

The next scene (10) follows the biblical account very closely (20. 24-34). Saul asks Jonathan where David is, and Jonathan replies that he asked to go

to his father's house in Bethlehem [67]. Saul bursts into a rage, at the end of which he throws his spear at Jonathan. A chorus follows [68], commenting on Saul's madness in the manner of a Greek chorus, in very chromatic music. The extensive use of chromaticism here 'musically represents rage and lawlessness, for the sense of a tonal centre is lost' (Raphael 2007: 18):

Oh fatal consequence
Of rage, by reason uncontrolled!...
From crime to crime he blindly goes,
Nor end, but with his own destruction, knows.

The choral commentary, along with the other characters' constant remarks on Saul's sad state, establish Saul's madness more in this work than Saul himself does through self-description.

Nineteenth-Century Works

Reissiger includes few scenes from the biblical narrative, but there is an extensive David-Jonathan duet (No. 9: 'Duettino David und Jonathan'). The most interesting musical feature of this duet is the high range in which both voices sing, mostly 'above the staff' (higher than *c'* or middle C). David's part frequently extends to *g'*, while Jonathan's reaches *b flat'*. Jonathan opens (38):

O friend, my soul's delight, your grief is the grief of my own heart, Ah, let not the fury in your heart consume you.

The Lord your God lives, your fortress.

The music is very lyrical, and bears striking resemblance to a Schumann song (Reissiger's contemporary Robert Schumann, 1810–1856). David continues, to a completely different and more tentative melody (38, bottom):

O Prince, your lovely glance is like balsam on a fatal wound for me, There is only a step between me and death.

While David is still singing his final cadence, the key abruptly switches from B-flat major to B-flat minor (39, m. 35-36), introduced by a *tremolo* over which Jonathan sings of his wish to let David become king:

May your blood become part of me and my dynasty.

David interrupts, and for several measures their voices 'step on' each other (40, 1st staff):

Neither life nor death can sever our union ('Bund,' German word also associated with wedding vows)

The *tremolo* continues under both voices, stopping when the key suddenly modulates back to B-flat major (40, m. 43), which transmits a feeling of great calm. This effect is amplified by the change from *tremolo* to steady repeated 8th notes in the orchestra. The voices now sing homophonically,

representing two beings in perfect harmony as they sing to God (40-42) (Fig. 7):

And when my pilgrimage ends, then O God, let my soul sing of your love, played on eternal harps before your throne.



Figure 7. Reissiger: Duettino.

This section recalls Schubert (Franz Schubert, 1797–1828), the steady 8th-note accompaniment an echo of 'An die Musik,' and the constant modulations and several cadences echoing numerous other Schubert songs. The voices continue repeating these words to a melody repeated in steadily higher keys up to Jonathan's climactic *b flat'*. The voices end together a few measures later singing this note in unison (42, m. 72).

The words portray love for God more than for one another, but the music suggests deep feeling between the two men more than words alone could.

Hiller's oratorio opens with a chorus singing the pivotal verse 'Saul has slain his thousands, David his ten thousands' (18.7; No.1: 18, pv; 41). The chorus is in C major, very fast and filled with excited dotted rhythms. This is the only work I know that opens at this point in the story. It presumes fairly thorough knowledge of the biblical text, since this libretto offers no explanation or context for the singing of this verse. In the biblical story, David has already slain Goliath and won a battle against the Philistines prior to its appearance.

After the chorus, Saul rants in a lengthy aria about David and his situation (No. 2; 27, pv; 56). A short orchestral section filled with very fast 16th-note runs introduces Saul's dry and declamatory recitative:

How they rejoice, the thoughtless ones, how they praise him! Truly all he needs now is the kingship (18.8).

Then Saul continues in an aria:

His is the blaze of victory, His is the glory in war! The thousands that I slaughtered, They lie deep underground. No mouth sings of my deeds, They are forgotten and scorned.

The tempo switches from 2/4 to 3/4, marked *allegro energico* with three groups of triplets creating a driving, forceful sound. When Saul sings of being forgotten, the music is softer, and the triplets stop for this section (28-29, pv; 62-63), but resume when he reprises the first part.

Saul then sees Michal with her women. Two short measures marked *Tempo di marcia* (marching tempo) introduce the upbeat melody of the women's chorus that will shortly be heard (30, pv; 67). Hearing them participating in the crowd's jubilation, Saul sings in very expressive passages:

Oh the shame, oh the disgrace!
To forget her father has a child;
Only David's name do they celebrate with songs,
My glory vanishes, like mist in the wind.

The first phrase is sung on a descending octave, d'-d, and much of the accompaniment contains slurs or descending passages to musically depict sadness. The final phrase is sung very softly, with only short chords under the breathless-sounding words (31, pv; 68). The suggestion that Michal's allegiance to David elicits feelings of shame and sadness in addition to jealousy in Saul, is unique to this libretto.

In No. 7, Saul begins raving again:

God's ear is closed to your prayers:
He has put shivers into my heart,
And filled me with fear.
My royal name will be wiped out.
And sinful and disgraced my seed wanders
Without a crown through our native country (Vaterland).

The last two lines contain measures of expressive slurs of varied intervals: fourths, fifths, octaves, and diminished sevenths, some of which Saul echoes in his lines (53, pv; 128). The effect is one of great pathos. Saul grieves because he thinks if David gains the crown, his line will not continue. This is implicit in the biblical narrative, but never explicitly expressed.

The chorus enters immediately, with the basses starting on Saul's last note. There is a continuous *tremolo* throughout the first half of this very fast and agitated chorus (54-56, pv; 129-130), which sings that the night spirits have awakened again and filled Saul's heart with rage and fury. In a more lyrical section, they ask David to ease Saul's pain with his godly voice (56-57, pv; 131-133). When Saul sees David, the mood changes again and over a *tremolo*, Saul says this is the 'lying servant' who wants to steal the crown from his head. He tells David to come closer, so he can pierce him with his lance.

David sings that he is 'the predestined one' (*erkoren*) and asks God for protection. In a very quick and agitated 6/8 time (59, pv; 135), the chorus together with Michal and Jonathan, all repeat that David is the predestined one whom Saul has threatened with his lance. There is a very slight change in one word, when both Michal and Jonathan say David is predestined for *them* (or 'chosen by their hearts'), while David says he was predestined for *God*.

Saul, in a solo line under sparse accompaniment, repeats that God predestined David and yet he tried to kill him. He starts on *d-flat'*, on the word 'God,' before descending a diminished seventh to *e*; he repeats the same phrase one step higher. Then he sings 'and yet' twice, with long pauses between the repetitions, musically depicting his doubt and fear (62, pv; 139).

After many intervening numbers, Michal sings a lengthy aria declaring her love for David, in verses either from the Song of Songs or paraphrases of such verses (No. 18):

Let me hear your voice, how sweet is your voice And your form is lovely (Song 2.14)... Return, O David! Remain with me... For my love is strong as death (Song 8.6). My loyalty is steadfast as Heaven.

The expressive and lyrical melody is introduced by clarinets before Michal sings it (242). The key is G minor, so although it is a love song, the minor tonality gives it a wistful quality. The tempo is marked *andante un poco agitato*, 'moderate and slightly agitated,' in 2/4 time. The flutes echo Michal's opening phrases, a very expressive effect (243-244). The mood becomes more excited at 'Let me hear your voice' and the measure before her repetition of David's name is in 3/4 time with scant orchestration; this natural broadening of the tempo leads to the *ritardando* (slowing) in the next measure when she repeats David's name a second time (247).

After a long pause, Michal sings a quicker aria, 'Remain with me,' marked allegro con anima (quickly with feeling). Dotted rhythms create a more assertive sound (248). The orchestration is fuller and much more animated, and much of the vocal line is ascending. The text 'my love is strong as death' is one of the most dramatic measures. Michal sings the third repetition of 'strong' ('stark') on g'', then slowing down, the words 'as death' ('wie der Tod') are sung on d#'-e'-b (250, m. 1). This descending leap of an octave plus a diminished fourth is highly dramatic, especially with the word 'death' painted vividly in the low register of the soprano voice.

The next section is very upbeat, with the voice continually rising and falling, and another climactic a'' at the end of the phrase 'is steadfast' (251, m. 7). On the reprise of the first part, the text 'strong as death' is once again sung dramatically. This time the leap on 'strong' is from g'' down to e', a 10th (254, last measure). The words 'as death' descend to c#' (255, m. 1), not quite as dramatically low as the previous time this was sung. The final section features excited 16th-note phrases in the orchestra, and a steady buildup in volume and excitement up to Michal's climactic a'' (257, m. 5). The orchestra drops out as she sustains this note, then re-enters playing triumphant G major arpeggios over her final g'' (257, m. 7). This music portrays the excitement and passion of a woman in love.

Following this, Saul's warriors sing a chorus (No. 19) marked *allegro feroce* ('fast and ferocious'), about the profane city of Nob, whose priests supplied David with bread. They curse everyone who mocks their king and swear to kill them all. The fast tempo and very marked rhythm reinforce the ferocity of this chorus. The text refers to the action of chapters 21–22, but the warriors never speak in the original narrative. Hiller creates a dramatic scene based on the dry biblical narrative. This is one of only two works to include this biblical scene, which portrays Saul in a very negative light. The other work is the Buzzi opera, which deviates a great deal from the biblical text.

Saul calls the inhabitants 'Samuel's slaves' and curses them for having opened the door to the 'fiend' whom Saul had sworn to kill and who was grabbing the crown from his head (No. 20). The people wail that the king is going to kill the holy congregation. Saul sings that his sword will be red with the blood of his enemy, the 'sacrilegious shepherd' to whom they opened their door. This text suggests a much more violent and even bloodthirsty Saul than his biblical counterpart.

The priests sing that David came to them in flight, and they fed 'the wanderer.' In the biblical narrative, none of Saul's warriors agrees to slaughter the priests and other inhabitants of Nob when Saul orders them to (22.17). In this libretto, they sing 'Warriors, kill, kill!' and the people comment on the priests praying as they die. The women sing that the sword is already red, presumably with blood. There were no women present at Nob in the biblical account—it was a sanctuary for priests. But the biblical text describes the slaughter of not only 85 priests, but also 'men and women, children and infants' in Nob (22.19). Women observing and commenting on the bloodshed creates a more harrowing scene and reminds the listener that they were also victims. Two measures of furious music with heavy off-the-beat accents suggest the actual killing.

The music shifts when the priests reassure each other that they need not protest, because their death is God's will and God will redeem the souls of his servants. They sing these lines in unison, and repeat 'Quiet' (*Stille*) three times unaccompanied on a descending slur, echoed by the orchestra (137, pv; 274). Their next line is also sung unaccompanied and in unison, but the key has suddenly shifted from F minor into C major, musically suggesting hope rather than tragedy. They repeat the lines mostly *a cappella* but in harmony, like a liturgical chant. It is a highly effective moment coming in the middle of the frenzied and warlike chorus. As the priests die praising God, Saul remarks on how they die without protesting.

This scene greatly amplifies the brief and dry biblical account. The priests have no voice there, and having them continue to chant as they accept their own fate accentuates the disturbing violence of the scene (this was also done in the 1983 film). The biblical Saul does not comment on their killing and this libretto's speculation that he would notice their calm acceptance of death is interesting.

Hiller's Saul is not a sympathetic character. An unusual innovation is the suggestion that he is jealous of Michal's attachment to David. This seems to be a substitution for Saul's jealousy of Jonathan's relationship with David. Perhaps the librettist and composer were trying to avoid the homoerotic connotations in that friendship.

In **Parry**'s oratorio, the chorus singing about the slaying of Goliath leads directly into a *fugato* victory chorus (86, 2nd staff):

Lift up your voices, ye children of Israel! Saul hath slain his thousands; David his ten thousands.

The chorus recounts the shepherd's victory over the giant. Clearly the audience would have to know the full story to understand why killing one giant would be equivalent to killing 'ten thousands,' which is based on 18.5 where David goes into battle against the Philistines. But this verse (18.7) triggers Saul's jealousy of David and therefore had to be included.

There is a subtle change in the harmony of the chorus when they switch from praising Saul, in clear C major tonality (95, Reh. BB), to praising David. The chorus here sings in A minor, but an orchestral *tremolo* on F# creates a troubling dissonance, suggesting discord to come (95, bottom). This *tremolo* continues even after the chorus has stopped, together with an open fifth chord of A-E. This dissonant chord is sustained and then finally modulates into E major for the Evil Spirit's final words, which close the act:

Saul! Are thou king indeed? Say they nought of thee but thousands? And of David say they ten thousands? What shall he have more, but thy kingdom?

Her opening note is *b*, instead of the *b-flat* in the opening scene (see ch. 3, p. 57). The key there was E-flat minor, now it is C major, but the pattern of phrases rising in pitch and volume is the same here. Before the final line, the orchestra plays two *staccato* C-major chords, followed after a rest by two *staccato* A-minor chords (96, 3rd staff, m. 2). The Spirit enters on *c'* over an open fifth of A-E with an intrusive F, and her closing word 'kingdom' is sung on a descending diminished fifth (*a-flat'-d'*). The orchestra plays an F-minor chord with a D in the bass (3rd staff, last measure). These unusual and completely unsettled chord combinations continue in the orchestral conclusion, though the final chord resolves into C major.

This short scene is clearly inserted here to explain the seeds of Saul's jealousy. The use of an external voice goading Saul will be found again a century later in the 1991 opera by Testi, based on a play by André Gide in which 'demons' taunt Saul in a similar way.

The next scene (Act III Scene 1), 'The Evening after the Battle', opens with the chorus singing of the rest they are enjoying after warfare. Then David sings a very close paraphrase of Psalm 121 'Let us lift up our eyes unto the mountains,' a lovely and tuneful anthem in 3/4 time (101-103). It is not clear if he is singing this to someone, or just for himself.

Michal and David now sing an extensive duet (10 pages) featuring verses from, or mimicking, the Song of Songs, a common device for portraying love in biblical oratorios (seen in other oratorios in this book as well as in many oratorios based on the book of Ruth: Leneman 2007: 119, 131 and elsewhere). Michal opens (106, top):

The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh! Behold, he standeth at the door! (based on *Song* 2.8-9)

Michal's opening phrase, marked pp, is an octave leap, e' to e'', and in the second phrase, 'Behold' takes the voice up an octave again, f#' to f#'', musical depictions of increasing excitement. David's first words are 'Michal, beloved,' starting on an e', the same as Michal's starting pitch (106, bottom). This musical device subtly establishes a close emotional connection between the two. David's second phrase, 'Beloved,' is sung on e'-g', immediately imitated by Michal, who sings the same words and pitch an octave higher (107, top).

David sings more verses from the Song of Songs, such as 'Rise up my love, my fair one, and come' (Song 2.10), to which Michael responds 'I arise, I come, my loved one' which imitates the language of the Song of Songs. The difference is that in these verses in the Song of Songs, the woman is relating what her beloved said to her. She does not respond to him as she does here, and modifying the verses this way depicts a Michal that is more passive and obedient than her counterpart in the Song of Songs. The voices overlap constantly in this opening section—one enters while the other is sustaining a high note, showing eagerness and excitement. Much of the music lies in the high range for both voices, to convey ardour (Fig. 8).



Figure 8. Parry: David and Michal.

In the next, slower section, David opens with 'The winter is past, and the rainstorms are over and gone' (Song 2.11; 107, m. 4 before Reh. Q). He sings solo for another page, his final measures including a g' sustained for seven beats (108, m. 3 before Reh. R), which in the tenor voice conveys rapture. After this (Reh. R), the voices follow one another every few measures, only occasionally overlapping. In one spot, Michal holds a g'' for two measures while David sings under her voice (109, 2nd staff, last measure). In the next section, Michal proclaims David's greatness in a short solo (110, top):

He is chiefest among the thousands, He is great as an army with banners (Song 6.4). His head is like most fine gold (Song 5.11)... Come, my beloved.

This part is more proclamatory, reflected in the accompaniment which is no longer soft and flowing. The word 'Come,' is sung on a sustained *a-flat*". The last phrase is repeated, and ends much lower, on d' (111, top). The contrast musically reflects a combination of tenderness and passion. This is followed by another, faster solo for David. The mood shifts in the middle of this solo, when he sings of Michal's eyes:

They are like to the pools in Heshbon (Song 7.5), And deep as the depths of the waters. The hair of thine head is like purple (Song 7.6). In the tresses thereof I am captive.

The previous section was stately, while this part is more lyrical. Steady groups of 8th notes in the accompaniment musically depict flowing water (112, 2nd staff). At the end of this solo, the accompaniment begins to build, with several measures of dramatically ascending chords which then descend and lead into a faster section (113, top two staves). The time signature is now 4/4, creating a new mood, though there is also a return to the home key of A major.

Michal now sings 'Set me as a seal upon thine heart' (Song 8.6), the final word on a" sustained for six beats. For the first time in this long duet, David sings exactly the same phrase as Michal immediately after her (113, Reh. X). The same pattern is repeated with the next phrase, 'For love is strong as death' (Song 8.6), accompanied by a *tremolo* and repeated by David one step higher (114). Following this, they sing the same phrase as a *fugato*. Musically this section indicates an increasing closeness between the two lovers.

The next section slows down, back to the opening tempo (114, Reh. Y), and the accompaniment changes into four groups of 8th notes, a rolling pattern imitating water similar to what was heard previously in Michal's solo about the pool of Hebron. The voices follow each other as they sing 'Many waters cannot quench love' (Song 8.7). On the climactic word 'Lord,' David sings a sustained a' followed by Michal singing a sustained

a" on 'love' (115, Reh. Z). On the final page, they sing the phrase 'Love is strong as death' in *fugato* form, singing over each other's sustained notes above a dramatic *tremolo* in the orchestra. Several beats of silence precede the climactic unison high A that concludes the duet (116, bottom). The chord under them is in F major in the 1st inversion, creating a moment of suspense; but the next few measures modulate into the final A-major chord.

Love duets between David and Michal are part of every oratorio and opera I have studied (which include Michal). The very lengthy love duet appears in the middle of this oratorio and would certainly be a highlight of a performance. How many in a biblically literate audience would find a love duet at odds with the biblical story, in which David never even suggests he loves Michal? Perhaps Parry perceived this as a lack in David's character, and wrote the duet to remedy it. Surely he also knew that an audience always enjoys a good love duet. After hearing such passionate declarations of love, memories of the original account would probably fade, or people might doubt their memory of the biblical story. The use of Song of Songs lyrics is common to biblical oratorios that include love duets. The librettists wanted to maintain an appropriately 'biblical' feel, so they either wrote original lyrics or simply borrowed from the Song of Songs, the quintessential biblical expression of love and passion.

The Evil Spirit continues to torment Saul, pointing out how Michal has abandoned him in favour of David:

Saul! Doth thy power decline
Even in thine own house?
Heedest thou Michal,
Thy soul's delight,
How her faith waneth?
She who ador'd thee,
Forgetteth thy worth
To her now is David
Kingliest on earth...
Whom did thy people's voice,
answering, praise?
Whom to the kingly throne
Now would [thy people] raise?
Thee or her lover?

The music is dramatic, with agitated orchestral passages between unaccompanied recitative phrases. A sinuous 16th-note passage is repeated in the orchestra several times, in different registers. The lines starting 'she who ador'd thee' are sung over several measures of a *tremolo*. The rhythm constantly switches between 3/8 and 6/8, creating instability. Each line beginning with 'Whom' starts a note higher than the last, building to the climactic and *ff* final 'lover,' sung on a descending octave leap, *e*" to *e*' (118, Reh. B). This is a perfect musical representation of taunting. It is interesting

that the Spirit is taunting Saul with losing Michal's love and adoration, a psychologically plausible explanation for his jealousy of David. This motive is never explored in the biblical text or in other later versions, which hardly touch the father–daughter relationship. It was suggested, however, in the earlier oratorio by Hiller.

The orchestra concludes with a dramatic variation on the sinuous 16thnote passage heard earlier, this time played with loud and clashing chords. Saul takes the bait offered by the Spirit's taunting. The music builds to Saul's outburst, where the tempo increases:

Death to the traitor, death to David! Shall there be two kings in Israel?... Shall a slinger shame the leader of armies? Death shall be his portion, He shall not triumph more.

These phrases are sung over a bass *tremolo* and agitated chord sequences. 'Shall there be two kings in Israel?' is sung in a fast 3/4 time passage (119, 3rd staff). Wherever Saul was supposed to be during this tirade, apparently he could be heard (if we are looking for consistency in gap-filling) because Michal's 'maidens' immediately warn Michal that she must save David, 'the sweet singer of Israel' (120, Reh. D). Michal warns David in very rapid, excited music:

Fly, O beloved! The King doth seek thy life. E'en now, his messengers are come. If thou save not thy life this night, Tomorrow shalt thou be slain (19.11).

Michal starts on g'' and after several strongly rhythmic measures, she reaches that note again on 'come,' sustaining it for five beats (121, top). Then the tempo slows (121, Reh. E) on 'If thou save not...' which is sung unaccompanied, and the next words are sung to very sparse accompaniment, heard mostly between her words. There is an effective moment of silence, a rest following a D7 chord in the orchestra, before the final words 'be slain' (122, top). Musically this passage suggests that Michal had to swallow hard or take a deep breath before uttering those frightening words.

On her final word 'slain,' the tempo becomes *tranquillo*, the time shifts to 4/4 and the key to E-flat major instead of the expected G major following the D7 chord in the previous measure (122, top). This striking shift, technically known as a 'deceptive cadence' precisely because of its unexpectedness, introduces a prayerful David. In a mix of psalms and amalgams of psalmlike poetry, he sings an anthem (122-123). In similarly prayerful language, the chorus sings farewell to David.

Michal and David's farewells to each other are woven into the richly polyphonic chorus. The melody and continual accompaniment of arpeggiated groups of 8th notes powerfully recall Mendelssohn (124-126).

Saul, upset to find David has fled, sings a dramatic recitative (127, m. 3 after Reh. J):

Fled is mine enemy!
As a bird from the fowler (Prov. 6.5),
As a hind from the leopard
Free and unscathed.

Saul's opening phrase is sung *a cappella*. On the word 'enemy,' the voice drops from *b-flat* to *c#*, a diminished seventh. After another quick orchestral passage, the last word of his next phrase, 'fowler' is sung on a diminished fifth (127, bottom). These are all unsettled and unconventional intervals, depicting a slightly deranged Saul. He sings the word 'Free' on a *d'* sustained for five beats. In steadier music, with repeated *staccato* notes in the orchestra creating an ominous undertone, he sings (128, 2nd staff, last measure):

They whom I trusted, Have basely betrayed me, And they shall perish in their treachery.

This is completely invented text; nowhere in the biblical narrative does Saul swear revenge on his family. He does throw a spear at Jonathan (20.33) but this does not seem premeditated. The music of this text is steadier and more determined than the previous recitative. In the final section, Saul orders his soldiers to pursue David (129, top):

Arise, ye men of the sword, Ye warriors of my guard... Forth and pursue! Though he hide in the desert... My wrath shall o'ertake him...

This section alternates between 2/2 and 3/2 measures, an effective rhythmic device for portraying a lack of balance. At the same time, the rhythm is strongly accented in the orchestra, highlighting the constant meter shifts (129). The meter is firmly established in 2/2 in the orchestral buildup to 'Forth and pursue', as Saul becomes firmer and firmer in his resolve (130, top). The mood changes again at 'Though he hide,' with a shift to 3/4 time, a much more resolute and steady sound. The remaining phrases are sung mostly unaccompanied, as the orchestra echoes each of Saul's sung phrases in strongly accented chords (130, 4th-5th staves; 131, top). This, Saul's most determined music, depicts anger and strength more than madness.

Parry's Saul is not much more sympathetic than Hiller's. He, too, is jealous of Michal's attentions to David. A very lengthy love duet between David and Michal establishes their mutual love, and creates audience sympathy for them both.

In Buzzi's opera, both the action and chronology are altered almost beyond recognition. Nonetheless, the creative retelling offers interesting insights. Michal says she wants to beg forgiveness from her father for her fugitive husband (Scene 3). David is on the run from the opening of the opera, yet this scene ends with his escape from Saul.

Michal's servants hope paternal love will triumph. The traditional fast cavatina follows, in 2/4 time and marked con brio (37). Michal opens on a trill in this bright aria in which she sings of feeling renewed hope. This bravura aria for coloratura soprano is filled with runs and trills. The text is of little importance and is very repetitive. Her servants join her in the conclusion

In the next scene (No. 5), the women see warriors approaching and wonder who they are (44). Michal sings that her heart is jumping, hoping it might be David. As David enters, the music becomes agitated, with accented offthe-beat chords. Rapid 16th-note passages accompany the joyous reunion of David and Michal. David's text 'Oh joy' is to be sung 'transported', and they both sing in a high range reflecting their ecstasy. David tells everyone to leave (46).

Michal tells David she is not only surprised to see him, but also frightened. David asks if Saul is still his enemy, and she says he is. In Verdian passages she sings (48):

Flee, fly from a king who calls you a traitor. Wander, and remain only with the one who loves you, But never let Saul's fury fall upon you.

David tells her to calm down, in slightly less dramatic music (Fig. 9).

Michal says that the symbols of betraval will make her father irate. David says that even if he is reduced to poverty (svenato), he will fall at his wife's feet. They then sing a *cantabile* duet in 3/4 time (50):

Rather than running through the forest, defying the bolt of David:

lightning... I would live here to my last day.

Michal: Ah, don't make my torments greater, don't pierce me with

these words! Do you want to lose me forever this way?

The music for David's last line is marked 'with passion'. The tempo increases and the time changes to 4/4 with a 16th-note argegiated accompaniment, as they each sing their own words (52). Musically they are in harmony—passionately so—though still in their own thoughts.

The warriors call out that it is dawn and they must go out for a final battle. Michal again pleads with David, more and more passionately, to flee from the vengeance of the implacable king. Then they sing a cavatina duet, marked allegro con brio (55) and filled with conventional trills, runs, and sustained high notes. They sing that the oath of their eternal love is inscribed on the altar of a potent God (56). The concluding section is an



Figure 9. Buzzi: Michal and David.

'Addio' (Farewell) in which they sing of their hope that heaven will reunite them.

The scene at Nob is recounted roughly halfway through the opera—not in chronological order. The scene is an army encampment. David and Saul seem to have reconciled, until Saul notices David's sword and asks where it came from. David tells him it is the one he took from Goliath, and Saul asks if it hadn't been in Nob. When David says yes, Saul asks who gave it to him (based on 21.10). David says he asked the priest for it, but he refuses to tell Saul who exactly gave it to him. Saul is furious, Jonathan tells David to flee, and Saul says 'He must die.' While the others are exclaiming, Saul says David is still a rebel, and must fall at his feet. He pulls out his sword but Michal and Jonathan beg him to be calm and to stop. They ask Saul what he is talking about and tell him to surrender to his children (143).

After a short chorus and duet, Abner and the chorus relate how a Levite was moving and trembling furtively in the camp (No. 17). They comment cryptically, 'Whoever doesn't find the salvation he is looking for, will never find it' (144-147). They caught him and he wouldn't speak, but he froze at the mention of Saul's name. Ahimelech interjects 'Trembling?' then sings:

The God of Abraham has accompanied my footsteps;

Through him I would know how to confront the most adverse and wicked fate

How can you think this heart trembled with terror?

Saul asks him if he really does not tremble before him, and adds 'woe unto you if my suspicion is correct, O traitor'. Ahimelech protests, saying he has faithfully served Saul (149).

A solo entitled Maledizione (Curse) follows (No. 18). Saul asks Ahimelech who of them (the priests) took the sword from the mystical *ephod* which was forbidden to everyone. Ahimelech says it was he. Saul says 'You wretch!' and says that he will watch Ahimelech die with other wretches who betrayed the king. At this, Michal and Jonathan and the chorus all sing:

Ah! Respect the Levites and the temple! Do not oppress the Ark. If you threaten the just, God's vengeance will come down.

Michal's voice soars above the ensemble, several times in harmony with Jonathan but at times on her own. In one spot she sings a lengthy trill starting on g''(154, top), very dramatic above so many voices. They all sing different texts: Ahimelech sings of the vengeance of blind anger at the doors of the temple. At this moment, all the other singers drop out and he sings a solo line accompanied only by *tremolo* (155):

I will die, but the massacre and destruction of Nob, No, Saul will not see that. Cursed by God, the father will fall, dead, on his sons.

Ahimelech's prophecy in the last line replaces that of the biblical Samuel's when he is brought up from the dead by the necromancer of Endor. As Ahimelech sings 'maledetta' (cursed), the soloists, David, and the chorus all join him for the conclusion. The tempo quickens as Saul orders Abner to take Ahimelech to a 'rough and long death.'

These scenes retell the incident of David taking refuge in Nob and receiving provisions and Goliath's sword from Ahimelech, who was subsequently killed by Doeg the Edomite along with 85 other priests (22. 9-10). Saul comes to Nob and orders the killings, so Ahimelech's curse is imaginative retelling. Doeg did the killing, and Abner was not involved in the incident. These chapters are rarely included in musical settings.

The ensemble sings 'Tremble for your fate!' (158) and Saul sings 'Tremble? Saul?' He commands everyone to tremble at a sign from him. He then launches into a dramatic aria, marked *declamato*, *maestoso* (declamatory, majestic):

Impious ones! Prostrate yourselves at my feet. Today it is I who am the warrior. I want only to fight, and all triumph is mine.

The ensemble comments on the unusual flame that seems to have invaded Saul's heart. The chorus asks God to calm Saul. Meanwhile Saul sings that he wants no one at his side for this next battle: not David, Jonathan or his other sons, for he will triumph over the proud enemy (161). This entire

number—solo and chorus—is then reprised to close the act. Michal's voice in this finale once again rises above the ensemble in several repetitions of *b-flat*".

The most striking changes in this imaginative retelling are Michal's active presence and Saul's aggressive and warlike nature. He seems less mad than bloodthirsty, and the focus is far more on Saul than David.

Twentieth-Century Works

Gabriel conflates several scenes in this section of the narrative. The Herald announces the enemy's approach (No. 19). The directions indicate that 'great excitement should characterize [his] entrance' (2). Both the announcement and Saul's vigorous response are accompanied by continuous trumpet calls. Saul's response marked by ascending octave leaps (61, 3rd staff). Right after his call to battle, the chorus kneels in prayer; the directions say 'the prayer...should be duly reverenced' (2). The purpose of the prayer is to remind the audience that God is behind everything.

Act 4 opens with Michal singing 'Till he returns' (No. 21), in which she proclaims her love for David. This is almost a ballad, in 6/8 time like so much of this score. Her expression of love differs from that found in other librettos (65):

O heart of mine, why for him yearn? What ne'er can be, thoud'st better learn. His life, his love art Thine, O Lord, For me he hath no voice, no word. His love—alas! 'tis not for me Why should I hope his own to be... Ah David, thou art fair, divine. Thou'rt brave and true...

She goes on to express her wish that David also yearned for her. Then she begs God to shield David from the enemy, and expresses the hope that all will be well. The absence of a clearly reciprocal love relationship is a major difference from all other musical treatments of Michal and David. The reason for this change seems to be a desire to make David a 'man of God' who cannot be in a normal love relationship (though this libretto elsewhere suggests that Michal had a child with David). The casting of Michal as an alto (uniquely in this work) also makes her less appealing as a love interest than a soprano.

In an earlier scene, Michal had sung a 'Lullaby' (Scene 2, No. 17). The directions suggest a small child rush onstage and into the arms of his mother Michal. She sings:

Thy shepherd father soon will come to hold his darling child His sheep he watches all day long, thro' storm and tempest wild... O tender Shepherd, guard thine own, And may they shelter find; Tho' some have from Thy sheepfold gone, Restore them, Shepherd kind.

The opening measure is the melody of 'It came upon a midnight clear,' whether by intent or not. That text would be as much a part of the David story as the one found here. Once again, Gabriel is preparing a Sunday sermon, conflating David the shepherd with Jesus leading his flock. It is hard to believe that a Baptist would feel comfortable altering a biblical text in this way, unless he was simply using the story as a frame on which to hang his own views. Surely both he and his intended audience were well aware of Michal's infertility, the result of her confrontation with David. Was he so disturbed that he decided to 'correct' that text? Or did he just decide to rewrite the whole story? In any case, David was no longer a shepherd once he was with Michal, so this entire scene simply does not fit.

Jonathan sings at the end of the lullaby, 'And a little child shall lead them' (Isa. 11.6). This reference to David son of Jesse is commonly understood by Christians to be a reference to Jesus. After this divergence, the libretto returns to the biblical story.

The victorious returning soldiers sing a bright C major chorus (71; No. 24), followed by a 'Chorus of Damsels' proclaiming victory and praising David (No. 25). David proclaims that it is God, not he, who leads the people and brought them victory. This is the only libretto that includes the victory scene yet omits the crucial verse 'Saul his thousands, David his ten thousands' (18.7) that sets off Saul's jealousy. Here his jealousy seems illogical, since David has just finished praising God and refusing credit for his victory. Yet Saul sings (77):

And is it thus I am dethroned? A king! Yet by my own disowned! Away! I care not what may come, Thy life must pay for what is done.

He threatens David and is stopped by Jonathan and Michal. Jonathan expresses distress at Saul's attitude. 'The king is mad' is sung by the chorus in very strongly articulated phrases (No. 27). But they almost immediately change their mood and become prayerful. They express their trust in God, who has given them victory, and after a few slow measures of praise, they close with a bright Hosanna chorus (78).

In the next scene (No. 28), David is seated in meditation at the place he and Jonathan arranged to meet (20.35). A 'comforting messenger' dressed in white sings a pastoral tune in 6/8, though David is not aware of his/her presence (the part is indicated for either a soprano or tenor). Then David speaks his next lines (No. 29) over an orchestral interlude. He recounts that Jonathan asked to meet him in this place, and praises him for his faithful

friendship. He also wonders why Saul pursues him and wants to kill him. He asks God to stay Saul's hand and to move his cold heart (82, bottom). A scene between David and Jonathan follows. Jonathan opens:

Ah David, art thou here so soon? For thee my heart with rapture thrills, Here let us wait till yonder moon Sinks to her rest behind the hills.

It would be easy to misconstrue the second line as amorous, but the language of friendship was very different and much more flowery at the turn of the century. No Baptist, of any era, would have portrayed the relationship as more than friendship.

Jonathan tells David that Saul is coming after him, and before they part they sing a paean to friendship in a homophonic (not to be confused with homoerotic) duet (84):

Whate'er may come, whate'er may be, 'tis time will show my constancy, For thee I live, and watch and pray That hate and wrath may turn away!

Michal enters and tells David her father is coming after him (No. 31). She says she came to warn him out of her love for him. Jonathan—but not David-- thanks her. This is completely out of sequence, since only after Michal helps David escape does he meet with Jonathan. Gabriel has reversed events in chaps 19 and 20.

The three bid each other farewell, calling each other 'friend' or 'friends' (No. 32). In this libretto, there is no discernible relationship between David and Michal, and the David-Jonathan friendship is ambiguous. It is portrayed as a three-way friendship.

Saul suddenly enters (again conflating chaps 19 and 20) and asks Michal and Jonathan if David has been with them (No. 33). They admit he has, but will not tell Saul where he fled. Together they tell Saul that David loves him, but he still insists David is his enemy. Jonathan and Michal's interjections are lyrical moments contrasted with Saul's very rough-sounding recitative phrases (88). He orders his men to continue searching for 'Israel's foe... dead or living.' Jonathan and Michal kneel and sing a heartrending plea to Saul to spare David, but he answers gruffly, calls them 'faithless children' and orders them to take his men to David. He also tells them not to appear before him until David is found (90).

There are some interesting variants on the original text in this work. The relationship between Michal and Jonathan is never developed in the Bible. It is logical that they would form an alliance if they loved the same man, and that is convincingly depicted here. Saul seems even more irrational than his biblical counterpart. He says similar things to both Michal and Jonathan in

the Bible, but in completely separate incidents. This interesting conflation seems designed to depict a more godly David who is less concerned with his human relationships than his relationship with God. His duet with Jonathan is more about friendship than about his love for Jonathan, and he does not proclaim any feelings for Michal.

In **Honegger**'s oratorio, the narrator announces that David meets Michal, his betrothed (18.27), and that 'Jonathan smiled on their love'. (It was previously mentioned that Jonathan 'was joined in friendship with David'.) The Jonathan-Michal connection is invented, as in many other oratorios and operas. The total lack of any relationship between sister and brother in the biblical text was often seen by librettists as a gap in need of filling.

The narrator continues to relate that Saul is now tormented by jealousy and suspicion, since he is old and David is young, and David has gained the heart of the people. One day while David is singing for him, Saul tries to kill David with his javelin (18.11, with some variations). This narration is immediately followed by David's singing of a psalm [6]. He is now a tenor, indicating the passage of time. The text is an amalgam of different psalms and psalm-like language, opening with 'Fear nothing and put your faith in God,' sung to traditional-sounding music like the previous one. The singing is accompanied by evocative oboe and flute *melismas* and clarinet trills. When David obliquely refers to Saul's throwing his javelin, the incident is evoked musically by a rapid ascending arpeggio figure in the flute and a harp *glissando* (21). After the psalm, the narrator relates that David

...fled to the prophets and the happiness of his youth faded in the desert air. He bade farewell for ever to Jonathan, who loved him as a brother.

Following this is the singing of another psalm [7], opening 'O had I the wings of a dove' (Ps. 55.7). This is not necessarily sung by David, since it is written for soprano and this would make David very young again; the choice of this voice is not explained. (A highlight of the EMI recording is the beautiful dramatic soprano voice of Alessandra Marc, although the lighter soprano on the Naxos recording is more suggestive of a young David.)

The tempo is very slow and broad, in 12/8, and is one of the most lyrical and plangent solos in the oratorio. Melodic interludes for oboe, flute, clarinet and bassoon are interwoven with the vocal part, along with a repeated phrase in harp (22-24). On the text 'Morning and night I cry and sigh', the harp plays a *glissando* passage while the flutes play rapid passages 'Flatterzunge', or 'with fluttering tongue', creating an unearthly sobbing sound (24). The lyric quality of this aria recalls the music of Honegger's teacher Gabriel Fauré. Though these interjected psalms do not advance the narrative, they establish a mood and are a convincing display of David's gifts as the singer of psalms.

As the music dies out, the narrator announces that when Saul sent soldiers to Samuel to take David (19.19), they found David in the midst of the seers who were prophesying. In the biblical narrative, the soldiers never reach David because they are overcome by the spirit of God on the way. This part of the story is left out, as is the story of Michal saving David from Saul's soldiers by hiding the household idol in his bed and helping him escape (19.11-17).

A chorus of male prophets follows [8] with biblicized text that includes elements from numerous psalms:

Man is born of woman and has few days to live. The path he must follow is arduous and full of grief for his soul.

He is born like the flower,

Which falls when it is cut.

The chorus is accompanied only on the first beat, by bass clarinets and a tam-tam drum. The drum continues under the chorus, which sings *a cappella* in a very low range. They are later joined by the sinuous tones of the contrabassoon and bass clarinet (26-27). There is a liturgical and ominously dark feel to this chorus, unlike anything that has preceded it. The narrator speaks over the closing measures:

He must wander in the desert, his heart assailed by distress, in need and in tears.

These words seem to refer both to 'man' in general, and to David. Another psalm follows, sung by tenor [9]. The text is a blend of lines from one psalm mixed with newly written text. For example, the opening few lines, 'Have mercy on me, O God!', are quotes of Psalm 57.2. Later in the same psalm are the words 'Awake, O harp and lyre!' (Ps. 57.9) which are paraphrased here.

The aria opens with plangent cor anglais melismas and features chromaticism and modality throughout. The first part is very slow and sad, marked *lento* and in a broad 12/8 time (28). The *Phrygian* mode and other augmented or diminished intervals predominate, and the effect is that of a dialogue between the tenor and the wind instruments. The second part changes tone completely, marked *allegro marcato* and switching to the quicker 2/4 rhythm and a major-key sound, to the text 'My heart is strong, I want to sing to the Lord' (29). The section opens with fast and upbeat phrases in the brass and winds, which continue over the vocal line.

The narrator begins speaking while the music continues, a device used in several places in the oratorio. The music stops before the narration ends, but the overlap sustains the mood and creates continuity between the musical and spoken parts. This aria projects two entirely different moods for David: sad and resigned, and upbeat and hopeful.

Honegger's oratorio tells the story using either Samuel text or Psalms, or a combination of these plus biblicized verses. As a result, there are no

additions to the story itself. But Honegger establishes many different moods with his music, which adds a colourful background to the telling.

In **Brown**'s oratorio, the narrator (mezzo) relates that the women sang and danced to celebrate the Israelite victory (18.6-7). The narrator sings 'Saul has slain his thousands, David his ten thousands' (46, Reh. 33), which the chorus repeats numerous times, underlining its importance (46-50).

The first part of this chorus is sung mostly in *fugato* form, with sections of the chorus following one another. This suggests they are all making the comment independently of each other, possibly implying spatial separation. For the conclusion of this chorus, the voices sing a unison *d*" with several *fff* D's hammered in the orchestra. This completely tonal, upbeat ending is followed by a long silence, and then a change of mood and tempo (53, Reh. 38).

The narrator (baritone) describes Saul's displeasure at the suggestion of David's greater prowess and the beginning of his distrust of David (18.8-9). The first phrase rises from d up to e', depicting Saul's rising rage. When the narrator describes Saul's suspicion, these passages lie low in the range, around c. A low G is heard rumbling in the drum throughout the recitative, while violas play low murmuring slurs, a vivid musical portrayal of suspicion and anxiety.

In sharp contrast, the mezzo narrator next relates the love and covenant between David and Jonathan (18.1,3), which is slightly out of sequence here. The orchestral range is two octaves higher in these measures than in the previous section, musically suggesting the difference between Jonathan and his father. A very high *tremolo* plays throughout the recitative, while flutes and oboes play melismatic phrases (54). The vocal part, infused with emotion, is like a duet with the oboe. The oboe has represented David throughout the cantata, because of its pastoral and plangent singing sound. An oboe sustains the final note until completely dying out—marked *pppp*, virtually inaudible (54, last measure).

The narrator now relates Michal's love for David (18.20) and immediately after this phrase, announces that Saul gave Michal to David as a wife (18.27). The narrator here is sung by the sopranos of the chorus, accompanied by a high sustained chord in muted violins (55, top). Two short and poignant solos, for violin and then cello, introduce the love duet, establishing a tender and romantic mood (55, 2nd staff).

A duet for mezzo and baritone follows, presumably here representing Michal and David since they sing love verses from the Song of Songs (Song 2.10-13). The use of these well-known verses as lyrics for a Michal-David duet has been noted elsewhere in oratorios of every era. But this is a more unconventional duet because it is not homophonic, even if the voices sing together. Their opening note is introduced by a held chord, a second (G-A), which they sing: Michal an a' and David g (55, Reh. 39). Their voices often



Figure 10. Brown: David-Michal.

move in opposite directions, coming together in unison before separating again. Other measures are sung as a *fugato*, the voices following one another with the same text and rhythmical pattern but different notes (56, 1st-2nd staves). There is a light and playful quality to this music (Fig. 10).

Very lyrical and harmonic measures appear at 'The flowers appear on the earth,' when a clear B-minor tonality is heard in both the orchestral and vocal parts (56, bottom). High trills at the mention of 'the singing of birds' and almost impressionistic orchestral passages are a rich and colourful portrayal of nature. The mood changes again at 'The fig tree', where a solo cello interwoven with the voices creates a trio. At these verses, a passing C-minor tonality is heard (57, bottom, m. 2). Several measures later, F# major is heard briefly, both in the orchestra and voices (58, Reh. 42). These fleeting tonalities give the duet a more romantic sound than other parts of the cantata, even if most of the music even here has no tonal centre.

Near the end of the duet, the mezzo sings a modal-sounding *melisma* (58, 2nd staff, m. 4-5). The music grows faster and louder building to the final phrase, 'Arise, my love, my fair one', which is sung by both singers to the same sighing rhythm. The final text, 'and come away', is sung in unison and much more softly, ending on a harmonic third, f'-a'. This soft and high note in the baritone voice has a caressing sound. In the final measures, a clarinet plays a variation on the opening solo heard in cello and violin, and as the clarinet ascends, the violins almost imperceptibly take over and sustain a high C(c''') with unresolved and dissonant notes underneath. The end is very soft, eerie and unresolved.

The mood and tempo change immediately, to *Allegro agitato* and *ff*. This is a new section, III, 'David in the Wilderness.' The narrator recounts how Saul recognized that the Lord was with David and that Michal loved him. Saul became more afraid of David and considered him his enemy, so he sent messengers to David's house to kill him (18.28-29; 19.11). The orchestra's opening measures are loud and harsh dissonant chords punctuated by drums, followed by rapid ascending 16th-note passages, ending in another loud chord (59, bottom). When the narrator relates Saul's sending the messengers, occasional soft chords in trumpets are heard, suggestive and ominous (60, 2nd staff, and bottom). This is followed by another long ascending passage in the orchestra culminating in a very loud trill (61, top).

Michal sings 'If you save not your life tonight, tomorrow you shall be slain' to David (19.11) in an unaccompanied recitative, until the word 'tonight' when her voice is doubled by trumpet (61, bottom). The music immediately becomes much faster and more dramatic, and over a low *tremolo*, the chorus (as narrator) relates how Michal saved David's life by letting him down through a window ahead of Saul's men (19.12). The chorus sings these lines in unison and in a relatively low range (61, starting at Reh. 46), suggesting soft speech or even a whisper.

When they stop, a rapid 16th-note run ascends to a high trill, which continues for several measures while the narrator (mezzo) relates how David remained in the wilderness of Ziph (23.14). This is a fast-forward in the narrative, skipping a David-Jonathan scene and the incident at Nob. At the end of the recitative, the trill descends on rapid 16th-notes, down to a lower trill and then a *tremolo* (63, 1st-2nd staves). The tempo slows dramatically, punctuated by steadily descending notes in the bassoon.

A drum accentuates the low C in the orchestra, and over a C-minor tremolo the chorus sings on a low unison C 'Out of the depths have I cried to thee' (Ps. 130.1-2). The tonal moment passes quickly, as they sing the word 'depths' on B, a dramatic diminished octave leap (63, 3rd staff). They are joined by David, who continues singing the psalm in a passionately pleading solo line (63, Reh. 48). The chorus interrupts with a low, almost

murmured 'Give ear, O Lord' which David repeats as a solo. This moving musical plea represents David's feelings after he had fled to the wilderness.

The tempo abruptly speeds up again, as David sings more agitated music to 'For strangers have risen up against me' (Ps. 54.5; 64, bottom). Under his voice, the chorus 'hums with mouths closed,' an effect used earlier in the cantata, and suggesting terror. There is a continual *tremolo* throughout these measures, and drumbeats grow louder and more insistent leading up to the end of the humming section. At the climactic moment, the chorus sings descending octaves on a *portamento* (65, Reh. 49), virtually a cry or sigh. Then only a soft and low *tremolo* is heard, along with a prominent bassoon doubling David's voice as he repeats lines of the psalm (65, 2nd staff).

Although he remains within the strictures of the oratorio form, with no named characters, Brown succeeds in depicting a wide range of moods—fear, triumph, tenderness—in both the choruses and the solos. Michal and David are convincingly portrayed as lovers, Saul as consumed by jealousy, David overwhelmed by sadness when he is exiled.

In **Nielsen**'s opera, Saul joins the hands of Michal and David as the chorus equates David's love for Michal to that of Isaac for Rebecca or Jacob for Rachel. A lengthy love duet between David and Michal was heard much earlier in the opera (discussed below). The victory chorus ends with 'Saul slew his thousands, David his ten thousands' (18.7), which in this context makes no sense since David has just come from slaying Goliath, not from a battle. Saul immediately starts brooding over the comparison while the chorus continues. He hears their comparison as equivalent to 'I am great, but he is the greatest' and complains that the shepherd is considered greater than he. There is great musical contrast between the victory chorus and Saul's brooding, which is more extensive than in the biblical version:

Thousands of flies for David's ten thousand lions...
If he lives any longer
Then my kingdom will surely be his.

Comparing 'flies' to lions' is Saul's hyperbolic way of demeaning his own victories; it is also a subtle intertextual reference to David's calling himself 'a single flea' that Saul is pursuing (26.20). Finally Saul rises and tells Jonathan to stop the singing. Jonathan tells the crowd that the king is sick with his 'old affliction' and tells David to calm Saul with his harp. Saul sings:

Yes, play your strings!
But play them carefully.
Do not touch the wound that is in me.
Woe to you if I see blood on your hands.

David tells Jonathan he is delirious, but Saul insists David sing. To the strumming of the harp, he sings:

Lord, I go into your courts
With downcast eyes and with thanks on my lips...
And haughtiness is not my aim....
All that your servant has wanted,
O God, he asked for in your name.

This is one of the most lyrical and expansive melodies David has sung. It is in the unusual key of G-flat major, with six flats (138, 2nd staff). The sound of a key with many flats is different than a simpler key such as C major, and lends this hymn a distinctive quality. David also reaches the highest notes of the opera in this aria: *b-flat''* sustained for five beats on the repetition of 'All' (140, 3rd staff), and *c-flat'* on a quarter note in the next passage (141, m. 4). On the final note, the key reverts back to E-flat major, the home key before David's song. The tempo immediately increases, as Saul leaps up and sings, almost shouting:

You lie! Hypocrite! You praise the Lord But mean yourself! Falsehood dwells in your eyes And lies in your mouth.

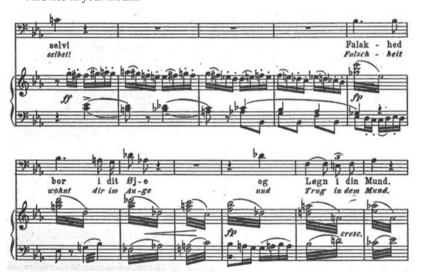


Figure 11. Nielsen: Saul.

He sings the opening lines unaccompanied, with very loud and rapid passages between his measures (Fig. 11). The chorus, David and Jonathan sing that the king is raving, has foam on his mouth and blood in his eyes. To project their horror, the chorus lines are sung to a rapid *crescendo*, starting the two-measure phrase *pp* and concluding *forte*, a moaning effect. Saul sings that they are all planning evil, and Michal falls at Saul's feet singing 'Father, Father' on descending octave leaps, *a"-a'*.

Saul proclaims that the king's daughter will never honour David's house or bed, and orders David out of the house as he throws his spear at him (19.10, but there Saul never orders David out). The final word 'house' is sung on a loud and sustained f', high in the bass register and sounding almost like a shout (144, 3rd staff, m. 2-3). The tempo and volume of this very Wagnerian music continue to build up to David's final words:

Vengeance is the Lord's! We shall meet again, King Saul.

This is prophetic language: the first line is a paraphrase of many verses found in Isaiah, Jeremiah and elsewhere. The word 'again' is sung on a sustained *b-flat*', a highly dramatic conclusion. Saul falls to the ground surrounded by a frightened group.

David's love for Michal was proclaimed much earlier in the opera, out of sequence. David now tells Saul that his son is brave and his daughter fair. On the word 'daughter', there is an unexpected shift—a deceptive cadence-from A-flat major to C major, over which David sings 'daughter' on g'. This puts a musical spotlight on the word and hints at David's feelings about that daughter. Saul thanks God for the day David entered his house, and is then called away to battle by Abner. Martial music accompanies Saul as he exits, asking God's protection in very strong and confident phrases. Jonathan comments on how David has soothed Saul's spirit, saying the Lord sent him. He embraces David and leaves. David and Michal gaze at each other for a moment, then begin their love duet:

David: I have seen you once before today, in the cool of the evening

on the Mount of Spices.

There you stood among your maidens, tallest of all.

The wind carried across the stream The scent of incense from your veil... And the trembling sound of your voice.

And since then, O Mikal, Longing has been my pillow And night has been too long for me.

Michal: I saw you also!...

Your head was golden, your stance like a cedar's

Which stands up on Gilead's hill... I thought secretly to myself:

Proud as if he stood under the banner Against the enemy from Gath.

Though the text is original, words like 'cedar' and 'Gilead' evoke the Song of Songs. The two continue to share their thoughts at the time they first saw each other. The lyrics become increasingly passionate and several actual Song of Songs verses appear near the end, such as 'he is a seal for my heart, my desire is only for him' and 'love is strong as death' (Song 8.6).

The first section, David's solo, is marked *Andante amoroso* and is in a very broad 9/8 time. The lyrical theme is heard initially in oboe, then clarinet and violin (62, m. 3, 7, 11). It is repeated in constantly shifting keys, and together with chromaticism this creates both a passionate and unsettled mood. The final note of this solo is *d'*, signaling a shift from the previous A-flat major into D major (64, m. 1). Michal enters on *d''*, the same pitch as David and musically indicating they are connected. The tempo is immediately much faster, marked *Agitato*, and the time signature is now 3/4. The lyrical theme that was woven into David's solo is replaced by rapid groups of *staccato* 16th-notes in the orchestra. Michal sounds both breathless and ecstatic. There is a shift on her final lines: as she sings of David standing under the banner, military trumpet calls are repeated several times under her voice (65, 3rd-4th staves).

The next section returns to the original tempo and 9/8 time. The lyrical theme heard in David's opening solo predominates here, more in the vocal part now than in the orchestra, though they echo each other (66, m. 5-9). When David sings of wanting Michal's arms around his neck, the word 'neck' (Hals) is sung on the highest note up to this point in the duet, a sustained *a-flat'* (67, m. 3). That measure and the two following it switch into a quicker 3/4 time. When Michal responds, the tempo and time signature return to that of the duet's opening. Michal sings the theme for the first time, while the oboe echoes her voice. She sings here of imagining the two of them wandering alone 'like wild doves in the forest'. David asks her for her mouth. Their voices unite here for the first time, suggesting physical contact, as Michal rapturously sings 'O David' up to *b-flat''* while David sings her name on *g'* (68, 3rd staff). The tempo slows dramatically and a drum roll is heard when the singers briefly stop—probably to kiss. Though this is not indicated in the score or libretto, the music certainly sets the stage for it (Fig. 12).

The next section is much faster, marked *Allegro con fuoco*, fiery and fast (68, bottom), as if they were energized by their kiss. The love lyrics here are the closest to those of the Song of Songs, some actually being direct quotes. David and Michal each sing a very excited solo. Michal's music hints at the love theme without directly quoting it. At the end of her solo, there is a large *rallantando*, a slowing and broadening in the orchestra which is a huge buildup to the return of the love theme, sung here *ff* by Michal (70, last measure). David sings longer notes, ascending then descending, under Michal. This love theme was originally sung by David, but has now been 'taken over' by Michal, musically showing they are as one.

On the final line, 'Love is strong as death' (Song 8.6), David sings a long phrase starting on *a-flat'*, moving up a half-step to *b-double-flat'* and back down, then descending chromatically through several pitches, while Michal sustains an *a-flat''* which creates momentary dissonance (71, m. 6-7). This particular verse from the Song of Songs has inspired composers of biblical



Figure 12. Nielsen: David and Michal.

operas in different eras to write their most passionate music (Leneman 2007, 131). In the final two measures, marked *molto rit.*, slowing down greatly, David reaches *b-flat'* and ends on *a-flat'*, while Michal goes no higher than *d-flat''* and ends on *c''* (71, bottom). Musically this suggests David is the more passionate lover, or at least the dominant character, because his notes lie in a relatively higher range for tenor than do Michal's for soprano. The orchestral conclusion repeats the love theme in several instruments, then slowly dies out. David and Michal embrace, then 'stand for a moment watching the sunset' (note in score).

This is not the only extensive love duet written for David and Michal, but it is probably the most passionate and Wagnerian. This opera leaves no room for doubt of a great and reciprocal love between the two.

In **Milhaud**'s opera (Episode 3), crowds of curious villagers rush onstage as the army of David and Jonathan returns from their victories. The crowd is led by women beating cymbals and tambourines and strumming harps to a simple, deliberate marching rhythm punctuated by heavy drumbeats. Saul's tent is open and he is seen in the same morose attitude as in the earlier scene (73).

The chorus sings the key verse 'Saul slew them in the thousands...and David in the ten thousands' (18.7; 74). Saul's voice is heard singing near the end of the chorus, as they continue singing David's name while exiting the stage. Saul sings that he made David his rider (*ecuyer*) and Jonathan gave

David his mantle and shield, so all David needs now is the kingdom. These lines are sung softly and mostly unaccompanied (75, 2nd-3rd staves). [L.A. stage directions: Michal pushes forward to watch 'her returning hero' while Jonathan watches Saul's face, which has changed from pleasure and pride to insane jealousy.] Not included in this libretto are the verses describing Jonathan's love for David (18.1-4). Saul now relates events that happened later in the biblical text:

And now, it is him I fear, living and more terrible than my ghosts. I told him: if you prefer Michal to Merab the eldest, since you love each other, I only ask you to bring me a hundred Philistine foreskins, thinking Michal would be a trap and that the enemy's hand would strike him down instead of mine (18.25). But, he came back as a conqueror, with a double trophy. So now, Jonathan and Abner, listen! He must die!

The vocal lines are jagged and the accompaniment in the first few measures includes rapid groups of 16th-note and 32nd-note passages played in unison in the highest and lowest ranges of the orchestra (76). This music depicts anxiety and even terror.

Jonathan—in his first words in the opera--dissuades Saul from killing David. Saul's final phrase was an ascending octave, d#-d#', and Jonathan enters on *e-flat'*, an enharmonic of Saul's final note, which signals an unexpected event. Abner joins Jonathan in pleading with Saul. Jonathan tells his father that he should not shed the blood of the innocent, and reminds him that David had conquered Goliath (77, 2nd-3rd staves). At the same time, Abner tells Saul not to sin against someone who has not sinned against him, and also reminds him that David has been the only singer 'of all his singers' who can banish his black moods (77, 3rd-4th staves). This mention of 'all the singers' suggests that many others have been brought to Saul before David. This is an interesting midrash I have encountered nowhere else.

Saul, apparently easily convinced, promises 'by the living God' that David will not be killed. He then asks them to bring David back to play the harp for him (77, bottom, 78, top). When Jonathan and Abner leave the tent, Saul begins pacing, brandishing his spear and singing deliriously (78, m. 1 after Reh. 55):

By the living God, he will be killed! Why not? Why did you say no to me? Ah! Perfidious son, rebellious general! What, do you really not realize that as long as David is alive, my crown will always be in danger?

Saul sings the opening words to the exact same music as he had just sung the same text (78, m. 1 after Reh. 55), except then he had sworn that David would *not* be killed. There is a changed note after the word 'killed' ($tu\dot{e}$): in the first case, it is a G# (77, last measure); on the repetition, it is a half-step lower, G (78, 2nd staff, last measure). The beginning of the subsequent measure is also a half-step lower on the repetition. This subtle

musical signal of an important textual change is possibly more obvious on the written page than audibly, but is an amazing example of the caring musical detail Milhaud lent to every word of the libretto.

The rest of this ranting monologue is sung to very dramatic music, with two leaps from d'-d, and chromatic phrases leading up to repeated emphatic notes followed by an ending an octave lower (78, 3rd-5th staves). Saul grabs his spear and puts it next to him before Jonathan re-enters with David. [In the L.A. stage directions, Michal is also present.] Saul 'pretends not to see them, though he sends them a shifty glance, and takes his place on the throne where he sits quietly in a deceptive calm.' These stage directions suggest pre-meditation on Saul's part, but whether that makes him more insane or less is up to the audience. [L.A. stage directions: 'Everyone looks very anxious in Saul's presence. Michal takes the harp and hands it to David.' This production gave Michal a much more active role than both her biblical counterpart and the notes in the score.]

Jonathan warns David to go no further than the entrance to the tent, so David remains there, closely watching Saul. In lilting phrases in a pastoral 6/8 time, David offers to sing Miriam's or Deborah's song to Saul. Choosing the latter, he sings lyrical verses about Jael from Judges 5. This is the only libretto in which David sings texts other than Psalms for Saul. David's suggestion to sing the songs of victorious biblical women is interesting and unusual. It might imply an attempt on David's part to assert that the unexpected victories of women should be attributed to God as much as his victory over Goliath.

As David reaches the verses about Jael driving the hammer into Sisera's skull (Judg. 5.26), Saul leaps up and throws the spear at David, shouting 'Pinning him! Traitor! Me too! That is what I will do to you.' His quick and angular phrases are accompanied by wide interval leaps that sound violent and crazed (80, 4th staff, m. 1). As the music becomes even more agitated, David ducks and the spear ends up at the foot of the rampart, quivering. [L.A. stage directions: Michal pulls David away, saving his life, and with Jonathan's help, gets David outside.] Michal appears and takes David in her arms, pulling him away from the tent. As in every other opera and oratorio libretto discussed in this book, David is said to love Michal, even though this is never explicit in the original narrative. Their love duet, however, comes much later in the opera.

A trio follows (81-83):

Michal: O my husband, my husband!

David: Did he want to do it? Perhaps it is only the effect of his

madness.

Jonathan: He missed you once, he won't miss twice.

Michal: If you don't leave tonight, tomorrow you will be killed.

Farewell my love, we must separate. Tonight he will send

people to us to arrest you.

David: Why? Why?

Michal: But I will put the *teraphim* in the bed in your place and tell

them you are sick. And if to avenge himself he then gives me to another man, wherever you may be, remember that I have been punished for having saved you. Farewell, David.

Michal's first phrase opens on f#'', and the second short phrase starts a fourth higher, on b''—a very high pitch. There is no primary melody or home key. Each vocal part includes melodic phrases, but the parts clash with one another. Though the top notes in the accompaniment occasionally double the singers' notes, they are mostly unconnected to the singers' lines. The general impression is of three people singing their own distinctive phrases, lost in their own thoughts and not responding to each other.

During several measures of this trio, the violins play repetitive 32nd note phrases in a very high range, while the basses and cellos play the same pattern a third lower in their extreme low range (81, Reh. 105). This creates an ominous mood, though alternate measures feature more lighthearted-sounding phrases. David's repeated 'why?' is sung to short musical phrases, a 16th followed by 8th note, then an 8th followed by a quarter note. In most cases these words are sung under the other voices, and the final repetition is always on an ascending minor sixth, a questioning sound (82, m. 110-113).

This music, when analyzed from the page, reveals subtleties and intricacies that might not be particularly audible. There are too many strands to untangle, especially at this tempo. For example, at times Milhaud flirts with tonalities in the voices alone, as in Reh. 110 (82), where Michal seems to be singing in G major or its relative E minor, as does Jonathan in harmony with her. But the orchestra is playing both C major and A minor simultaneously, so the resulting sound would be dissonant even if each separate line by itself, read on the page, is not.

When Michal sings of her father's possible revenge, the phrase is introduced by several accented slurs (descending seconds), a standard musical expression of sadness highlighted by the introductory grace notes. Their final 'adieu' again flirts with tonality in the voices: Michal sings a descending fifth g#''-c#'', followed by a closing cadence d#''-b'; this sounds like a dominant C#7 chord resolving into B major. But David's ascending line includes an A, not part of this chord progression, and it then rises an augmented fourth to d#'. Though at the end of this section, their voices are in harmony—David's d#' against Michal's b'—the flutes and clarinets are playing a D-major sixth. At the same time, other parts of the orchestra are playing a C#-E broken chord, in dissonance against D major (83, m. 1 before Reh. 125). These chords are all played as slurs, a wistful sound. There is an illusion of harmony, especially between the lovers, but this music never gives in to complete tonality.

When Michal leaves, an accented pair of superimposed ninths introduces Jonathan's words to David (83, 2 bars after Reh. 125):

You must flee towards the south, your native land, to the hills of Judea, since there is only one step between you and death.

The vocal line is dry, over an accompaniment that fluctuates between rapid groups of unison 32nd notes in the extreme low and high ranges in the orchestra, and superimposed ninths in *pizzicato* strings, a strident dissonance (83, m. 127-128). The words 'between you and death' almost end on an F-minor cadence, the voice descending from *c-a-flat-f*, with these notes also heard in the orchestra—but with an intrusive D flat, an augmented seventh down from C. This, the final chord heard in the recitative, creates a very disquieting mood.

The aria for Jonathan that follows is a rare lyrical and almost tonic moment:

In the name of the Eternal, I beg you, as long as I live, keep your kindness towards me, and pass it on to my descendants, even after the Eternal has caused all your enemies to disappear.

He and David then sing together, with only a sustained B major chord under them:

May God be the immutable witness to our pact.

Although there is no clear home key, Jonathan begins in A minor, with an intrusive F# creating a modal sound (84, top). The vocal line is lyrical, in a rocking 4/4 rhythm, with gentle 8th-note chords and a sustained open fifth of A-E heard in the orchestra throughout the first several measures. It lies fairly high in the tenor range, reaching a' (84, Reh. 135). There are interesting modulations, for example from E minor to A major (84, m. 5-6). The oath they sing together opens with the two voices moving in opposite directions, then both descending, but not homophonically, which lends these measures a modal or even liturgical quality (84, Reh. 140).

The two embrace and cry before David exits. Jonathan looks after him and even climbs a watchtower to get a final glimpse. As the sun sets, Jonathan is seen saluting David from the tower. He then sings the final part of the aria, introduced in the orchestra by muted trumpets, a vaguely military but also unearthly sound (Fig. 13):

Go in peace! And may the Eternal be between you and me, between your house and mine, forever.

In the final few measures, a plangent oboe solo is heard together with the voice. Jonathan's final note is a sustained *pp e'* over an A major chord—an unexpectedly tonic conclusion, reached after two measures of descending *pp* high modal chords.



Figure 13. Milhaud: David and Jonathan.

In the first scene of Act II, David is a fugitive. Abiathar enters, and relates to David and Avishai that all the priests at Nob except him had been killed by Doeg on Saul's orders (summarizing chap. 22). David interjects comments several times (87-91). Abiathar asks David to protect him from Saul. David tells Avishai to guard 'this holy man' as if he were his own father (22.20).

This opera creates believable relationships between David, Michal and Jonathan. Many other works also include these three in a relationship, but in this opera the relationships are much more developed. Saul is convincingly portrayed as mad, more through his music and actions than through either self-description or the remarks of outsiders.

Testi includes very little of the action just discussed, but his focus, like the Gide play on which his opera is based, is the David–Jonathan relationship. In their first extensive duet, Jonathan asks David not to call him Prince, because no one—not even his parents—ever calls him simply Jonathan. The music of this dialogue is soft and the only accompaniment for much of it is long sustained chords. David tells Jonathan that his parents call him

Daoud, and asks Jonathan to call him by this name. Daoud is Arabic for David, and Gide may have been guessing at the Moabite pronunciation.¹

In Scene 3, Saul paces before David is brought to him. He resents 'Such acclaim for an accidental triumph! They never did this for me after my difficult victories.' The disparity Saul perceives between David's deed and his acclaim is represented musically by a dissonant second, C and D played together in three octaves as he sings these two notes in rapid succession, in a high range (65, m. 2).

In this version of the story, the love between Jonathan and David is unequivocally reciprocal; and in the director's vision, it is also blatantly physical. This becomes even more obvious in the second duet between the two men. David sings:

For you I would sing the most admirable hymns. Or prostrate myself, as I am doing now, at your feet (120-121).

He then rises, dashes towards Jonathan and kisses him. Jonathan wonders how David can be so frivolous while Jonathan wants to cry because the weight of the crown has bruised his head. He places the crown on David's head, and Saul, who is secretly watching them, mutters 'I wish I had not seen that', then falls to his knees and sobs (125-126). Meanwhile, the love duet continues, its music very muted relative to the lyrics. The vocal line is almost all on single repeated notes, mostly unaccompanied, with short soft *staccato* phrases in trumpets between the sung phrases. This creates a sense of apprehension and breathlessness rather than passion. Jonathan sings (Fig. 14):

Ah! Daoud! I would like to lie down on the ground and sleep...I am not like you, goatherd, naked under a fleece, in the fresh air. How handsome you are, David! I would like to walk with you in the mountains. At midday, we would bathe our feet in the cool water, then we would lie down amidst the vines. You would sing. I would prove my love for you... (128-130).

Saul follows this speech as if it were he giving it. Then David helps Jonathan remove his royal garments, which he says are suffocating him. Jonathan comments on the whiteness of David's shoulder under the royal robe, while he himself is shivering wearing only a tunic. In halting musical

1. According to Downey, who does not give a source, Daoud is the 'Moabite affectionate diminutive' for David (Downey 2004: 140). This claim is not far-fetched but also not exactly accurate. The Hebrew root of either David or Daoud implies that the name means something like 'beloved.' But the Arabic word 'Daoud' does not appear in Moabite; the two are not the same. Hebrew, Moabite, Phoenician, Edomite, and Ammonite are closely related but not identical West Semitic languages. A word appearing in the ninth-century BCE Mesha King of Moab inscription might be a form of 'David,' but not 'Daoud' (Professor Barry Gittlen, pers. comm.).



Figure 14. Testi: Jonathan.

phrases, Jonathan sings a slightly larger interval for each phrase: first a second, then a third, followed by a fifth, sixth, seventh, then starting again, to express his uncertainty:

I don't know—if it is—from joy—or cold—or a fevered anguish—or from love, that I am now shivering...in my linen tunic (132, #9).

David responds:

You are even more handsome in your white tunic...frailty lends grace to your body... Jonathan! You are crying? You are trembling?

These phrases are sung sweetly and very *legato*, with sustained chords under the vocal line suggesting a tonality of either F major or D minor, but with an intrusive heavily accented E flat in the middle. The opening measures mimic what Jonathan had just sung, indicating an emotional connection (134, #10). David takes Jonathan in his arms, while Jonathan, weakening, calls him 'Daoud'. Saul becomes crazed at this point, emerges from hiding and begins yelling 'And Saul? What about Saul?'

Jonathan shouts at David to run away, which he does, reluctantly, after throwing the royal robes behind him 'with horror' (136-137). Jonathan faints, and in very slow and soft music, Saul tries to calm him. Over almost whispered notes, the accompaniment is a repeated phrase of three descending notes played *staccato* in string bass, an ominous sound (137, #12). Jonathan does not respond. Saul comments 'Ah! He is weaker than a woman!' He asks Jonathan, 'Is it your love for David that makes you pale?', but receives no reply.

Testi's opera, like the Gide play on which it is based, basically ignores the chronology of the biblical narrative. After Saul visits the necromancer of Endor (see chap. 7), David has more scenes with both Saul and Jonathan. In Act III (Scene 8), David is singing a hymn to Saul, accompanied by harp. The opening measures have been heard several times in different keys and variations throughout the opera. They contain a subtle, interesting musical reference to a Schumann song (from the cycle *Myrthen*, op. 25) entitled *From the Hebrew Melodies* which in its turn was based on Byron's cycle of poems of that name. Both feature a progression of descending arpeggios, and the text in both refers to taking the lute from the wall, but the similarities end there.

The 'psalm' David sings to Saul is considerably longer in the play than in the opera. It is very effective to have David, after announcing 'the new hymn that I composed for Saul', strum the harp and actually sing a hymn. The music adds a dimension completely lacking in both the play and the biblical story. The actual psalm David sings is not melodious, but sounds more like a chant. Testi may have been trying to create a liturgical sound. The text is an invention, utilizing 'biblicized' language for effect:

Awaken, my lute! Awaken, my lute and my harp! May my song awaken the dawn. King Saul, climb onto your chariot. Defend truth, kindness, justice!

The song itself is one of the rare tonal moments in this opera, although dissonances intrude. Over steady 8th notes in the E-minor accompaniment, David sings the progression e'-b and then unexpectedly concludes this first phrase on c#. This C# is also heard in the descending arpeggios played by the harp, which echo the opening two measures but a half-step higher and on 16th instead of 8th-notes. The pattern of tonic harmony between the voice and the basic strumming 8th-note accompaniment with intrusive dissonances continues throughout.

Saul, embarrassed and annoyed by the song, gestures to David to stop, asking him to sing something 'more cheerful.' David doesn't understand, so Saul tells him to put down the harp so they can talk. Saul asks David how he looks without his beard (which he had shaved off in a previous scene), and David says he looks a bit less like a king. Saul wants David to say he prefers him this way, but David does not. This dialogue is accompanied only by short and heavily accented dissonant chords and chord clusters (237-238). When Saul tells David he shaved off the beard on his account, David is embarrassed and starts to play his harp again. But in the first measure, a repeat of the simple e'-g' pattern, a $marcato\ c\#$ intrudes, picked up by Saul when he shouts 'David!' (239, 1 m. before #4). Saul, furious, seems ready to strike David, but holds back.

Saul asks David if he prays to God, and when David says he does so frequently, Saul asks why, since God never grants prayers. David asks what

Saul could have asked for that God would not grant, and Saul avoids the question by asking David what he asks for. David's answer is 'Never to become king'. The measure following this response is a *ff* chord cluster in the brass (242, #6). Saul does not know how to respond.

Saul asks, in very plaintive music, if David wants to unite with him against God. He softly sings 'David' twice on an ascending second, each time echoed by a plangent oboe (242, m.3). Receiving no response, he tells David to continue playing, which David does till the end of the scene. The next two measures imitate the two that opened this scene, but then the accompaniment changes entirely. Ascending arpeggios in the harp change to descending patterns and then become more intermittent. This becomes background for Saul's raving:

I, too, once knew how to praise God, David. I sang hymns for him. But today, for fear of speaking, my lips are closed upon my secret (243-47).

He continues 'as if delirious' (247-54):

And my secret, alive within me, shouts inside me with all its force,

Horror! Horror! Horror!

They want to know my secret, and I do not know it myself.

It is slowly forming in my heart...

But the music is calling it forth.

Like a bird hurls itself against the bars of its cage,

It has risen...it is leaping and wants to dash out.

David, my soul is incomparably tormented...

Block your ears against his voice! Close, doors of my eyes.

Everything that I find tempting is threatening to me. Tempting!

The tone now becomes much softer, and against a regular 4/4 beat, Saul continues in a very low voice (254, #18):

Why am I not with him, near the streams, the goatherd?

Why am I not far away, in the heat of the desert...

I would then feel the burning of my soul quenched; may the song speed up, and leap from my lips toward you, delectable Daoud.

Saul is recalling some of the necromancer's words, and seems to understand their implication for possibly the first time. It still seems as if his 'secret' is so unfathomable that he cannot even put a name to it.

David does not seem to have been listening, but at these words, he throws his harp down and breaks it. On the final words, the music that opened this scene is heard briefly and then stopped by a rapid, violently dissonant arpeggio which signals the throwing and breaking of the harp (256, #19). Saul seems to awaken as if from a trance, asks 'Where am I?' and begs David to stay. David, however, says tellingly: 'From now on, this secret is no longer intolerable for you alone' (256, m. 2). This is the most blatant

statement in the libretto about Saul's feelings for David as well as David's awareness of those feelings.

In Scene 9, David and Jonathan are meeting secretly in a garden, after David has fled the palace. David tells Jonathan he must leave because Saul can no longer tolerate his presence. It is not clear if they both know the real reason. The text hints at intense feelings between the two, but the music is dry and brusque (259-260):

Jonathan: Ah David! When you are far away, my strength leaves me. David: Ah Jonathan! Do not be weak, I will see you again.

David tells Jonathan he is going to join the Philistines (chap. 23). Martial music in the brass underlines mention of the Philistines (260, #23). He tries to explain that this is not a betrayal, that he is doing it because Saul no longer seems capable of leading an army. He also tells Jonathan of a cave where they can meet on the second day of battle, under the full moon, when they can decide what to do. David's music briefly becomes softer and more lyrical, marked *dolcissimo*, 'very sweetly,' when he sings of the clear sky and full moon and their reunion (269, #28). They hear someone approaching, and say a tearful farewell in love lyrics:

David: Jonathan, my brother! My soul has sobbed with love...

More than my soul, oh Jonathan, more than my soul.

Jonathan: Enough, David! Or you will take my life away with you.

Though David speaks of love, the measures of music played when he stops speaking have a very martial tone, as if reminding him of the battle to come (271). The accompaniment throughout the scene is sparse. There is a single tonic moment: when David says 'Farewell,' a sustained C-major chord is heard, but it immediately modulates to A minor (271, m.4). A very long sustained G is heard under Jonathan's final words. On the word 'Enough' (Assez), Jonathan sings the highest note in the duet, g' (272, #30). Several measures that follow seem to be searching for a home key, periodically resting on a C, which is the closing note, held until it dies out (273).

These scenes are imaginary, so expanded and lengthened from the sparse biblical account of David and Jonathan's pact and friendship as to be barely recognizable. Yet the suggestion that Saul's madness stemmed from jealousy of their relationship is not completely implausible, nor is the theory that he was sexually attracted to David. The biblical account gives the impression that David was virtually irresistible to members of either sex. Gide simply expanded on that notion. This opera and the play that is its libretto force the reader and listener to look at the entire story through a completely different angle of the prism.

Conclusion

The most striking change in all the settings of these chapters is the shift of focus from Saul to David and the resulting change in Saul's portrayal. He was somewhat sympathetic in settings of the earlier chapters, but his negative traits come to the foreground now. Previously everyone was united in concern for Saul's state, but now they are united against Saul and interested only in protecting David. This is true of almost all the works discussed here. As David's succession becomes more and more imminent, his story also fills more and more of the narrative.

The crucial verse about Saul slaying his thousands and David his ten thousands appears in all but three of these works (Reissiger, Buzzi and Gabriel), establishing a motive for Saul's jealous outbursts. Jonathan and Michal are allies in many of these settings, a logical assumption though not found in the biblical narrative. Common to many of these settings is a lengthy love duet for Michal and David, creating sympathy for them and another motive for Saul's jealousy. He is portrayed as jealous not only of David's successes, but also of David's relationships with both Michal and Jonathan.

Saul is depicted as very angry, more than insane, in most works. In Handel and Nielsen, his moods and general mental state are described vividly by other characters and the chorus. Using others to observe and describe Saul is a less common way of depicting his state of mind than Saul's own ranting. When he sings of his uncontrollable rage, or grief, or jealousy, Saul becomes more human for the audience. The darker Saul's mood becomes, the brighter the light shines on David, who becomes virtually god-like. These retellings make it very clear why he is God's choice to replace Saul.

Chapter 6

SAUL'S AND DAVID'S STORIES OVERLAP: PART III

Summary of 1 Samuel 24-26

24 David is in En-gedi, and Saul brings 3000 men to find him. (The reader might well wonder at this point if his men ever questioned these orders.) Saul goes into a cave to relieve himself, and David's men tell him to use this chance to kill him. Instead David sneaks in and cuts off the corner of Saul's cloak. He tells his men he could not strike down God's anointed. When Saul leaves, David confronts him, showing him the piece of cloak, proving he does not mean to kill him. Saul is very penitent and begs forgiveness, breaking down and weeping.

25 Samuel dies. David is in the wilderness with his men, and asks for his men to be welcomed and given supplies at the sheep shearing festival being held by Nabal, the evil and stupid husband of Abigail. Nabal refuses, and David and his men prepare to kill him. Abigail gets wind of this, and quickly puts together an impressive care package with which she bravely approaches David and the men. She throws herself on his mercy, and he is so impressed by her that he agrees not to harm anyone.

Nabal, who knows nothing about this encounter, gets very drunk that night. The next morning, Abigail tells him what she did and he 'became like a stone.' He dies 10 days later. David finds out about Nabal's death and proposes marriage to Abigail. A second wife is now also mentioned, Ahinoam of Jezreel. Meanwhile Saul has given Michal to Paltiel (variably called Palti) son of Laish.

26 Saul is out hunting David again. David uses scouts to find out exactly where he is. David enters the camp at night—everyone is in a deep sleep brought on by God-- and he takes the spear and water jar at Saul's head. Then David calls out to Saul's troops and shows them what he took. Saul is contrite once again (his behaviour is starting to resemble the abusive husband syndrome), while David asks why Saul continues to pursue him. Saul promises never to pursue him again (which no one really believes).

Commentary

On the two occasions when David has the opportunity to kill Saul and does not, he says he cannot strike 'Yhwh's anointed' (משׁרוּם). It was never customary in Israel to accord either permanent or unconditional sacredness to an 'anointed' or charismatic leader. In fact, David's usage of this term sounds more like Canaanite or other non-Israelite ideas of kingship, which may indicate his farsighted view of dynastic kingship. David realizes that if Saul can be killed by an aspiring rival, so can any future Israelite king. The reader never knows if David aspires to the throne, because it is never stated explicitly. But his refusal to kill Saul illustrates his investment in the stability of any future regime (Rosenberg 1997: 129).

Another commentator, McKenzie, believes that the writer was completely biased in favour of David at Saul's expense, and that the entire narrative was written as an apologia for David. Whatever does not fit neatly in this scenario, McKenzie stretches to make it fit. He actually claims that '...the historical David would doubtless have taken advantage of the opportunity to kill Saul had it been presented to him' (McKenzie 2000: 96). There is no textual support for the assumptions in this counter-reading. As Borgman says of McKenzie's approach, it yields only 'historical possibilities' (Borgman 2008: 292 n. 7).

Saul's motive for marrying Michal to Paltiel while she was still legally David's wife, is not stated. Some rabbis believe Saul was responding to David's additional marriages to Abigail and Ahinoam (Malbim in Bodi 2006: 103). The rabbis were more concerned with the legal aspects of David's request to have his wife back than with the emotional aspects of Michal's relationship with Palti. In typical mental acrobatics, the rabbinic commentaries justify David's actions by arguing that the marriage with Paltiel was never consummated, so the David–Michal union remains valid and legal (Bodi 2006: 104, 116).

Though the story about Abigail and David seems to be about male authority, Bach notes that 'female presence shines through' (Bach 1990: 26). This is in part because Abigail is the only character in the episode who interacts with all the other characters. Traditional male interpretation sees Abigail as valuable to David because of her intelligence and also because of the land she inherited: Bach quotes both Kyle McCarter and Jon Levenson as examples of this attitude (Bach 1990: 31-32).

Frymer-Kensky considers Abigail a 'proven prophet' and 'wise woman' who in another time and place could have become David's 'trusted adviser and perhaps his official seer' (Frymer-Kensky 2002: 323). Instead, Abigail disappears into David's household and we never hear of her again. Bach also mentions Abigail's 'prophecy,' which echoes and elaborates Saul's (in

1 Sam. 24) about David's future kingship. The difference is that Abigail's words stop David from committing violence (Bach 1990: 27). Abigail has been called a 'moderating force that averts the clash of two extremes...and she is also the wise teacher...whose advice is heeded... She foils a potential carnage' (Aschkenasy 1995: 176). At the same time, by exercising power and speaking in her own, distinctive voice, Abigail may have been found guilty by the writer of the crime of female ambition. Her voice had to be stifled in order to restore male power. Her recorded moment of 'prophecy' was not to be repeated (Bach 1990: 28).

This last argument makes the least sense, because if the writer wanted to portray Abigail in such a positive light, why would he then have suppressed her voice? I also consider it arguable that Abigail is a kind of prophet. She was more likely just flattering David, and through a good understanding of character she could see the makings of a leader in him.

In order to meet David, Aschkenasy suggests, she has to leave the main road, acting in ways more typical of a man of that era than of a woman. Abigail, stepping out of her feminine role, in a sense is an 'ungendered, cerebral presence with the power to reason and persuade' (Aschkenasy 1998: 95). Another way in which she is not typically female, in Alter's view, is in her sheer courage (Alter 1999: 156). These views represent the misogynist assumption that courage is not a typically female trait. It is true that Abigail had no way of knowing that David wouldn't impulsively kill her when she approached, but she also knew her best chance at avoiding that fate would be to demonstrate total submission to him.

The writer may be suggesting that Abigail counted on both her husband's cowardice and ill health, and used both to bring about his death (Alter 1999: 160). This is reading into rather than from the text, yet it is not contradicted by the text and implies that Abigail is even more clever than other commentators have noted. Similar scheming and motivation have often been ascribed to Bathsheba. Alter also suggests Abigail had been aiming to become David's wife from the start, which makes her more devious than can be determined from the text. Abigail seems to have manipulated events in her own way to get what she wanted. She apparently has considerable power over the outcome of events, primarily by presenting herself as a totally humble and powerless maidservant (McKay 1998: 10).

Male commentators seem to have issues with clever women characters, frequently blurring cleverness with 'scheming.' For example, McKenzie suggests Abigail was complicit in Nabal's death. He bases this on the fact that she expresses her wish that Nabal were dead, and that Yhwh would fling all David's enemies away with a sling. Since Nabal's heart is described as dying within him 'like a stone,' McKenzie reads Abigail's words as foretelling the way he died, and therefore believes she had something to do with it (McKenzie 2000: 100). It is true that Abigail probably had motive to

kill Nabal, but there is no suggestion in the text that she had anything to do with his death.

Alter, basing his idea on an article by Meir Shalev, also considers that Abigail may have proposed a 'contract killing' of her husband to David. This argument is based on her repeated assurances to David that Yhwh would pay off David's scores against him (Alter 1999: 159). But she could just as well have said that only to calm David down or because she really believed it. Halpern also toys with the notion of Abigail as murderer, by coyly posing the question 'Did Abigail murder her husband to defect to David?' and then suggesting she might have been 'David's catalyst' (Halpern 2001: 77), a subtle way of implying that David himself was responsible for Nabal's death. These are all creative imaginings, not interpretations of the text.

The Music

The paired episodes of David's opportunities to kill Saul are generally conflated when they are included. The works to be discussed here include two nineteenth-century oratorios and one opera, and two oratorios and three operas of the twentieth century. Abigail appears in only one work, Milhaud's opera *David*, which spans many more chapters of the original narrative than any other work.

Nineteenth-Century Works

In **Hiller**'s oratorio, Saul sings that only in sleep he can find peace from his despair and woes (No. 22):

Where are you, master of singing,
Where are you, young shepherd,
Whose song calmed the spirits
Which darkly buzzed around my head.
With your godly songs
And your lute playing,
You came, until
sweet peace fell over my lids.
I feel your closeness,
I hear the melodies,
And all evil and woe
Waver and go to sleep.

The music is marked *cantabile mosso* and is to be sung *mezza voce*, or 'half voice'—extremely softly. This highly lyrical and emotional music underlines the enormous contrast between what Saul says about David to his warriors, and what he is feeling in his heart. Both the text and music stress this conflict. Saul's deeply conflicted feelings are highlighted throughout the oratorio.

David's warriors approach the sleeping Saul (No. 23) and sing a paraphrase of chapter 26.8. To suggest the tiptoeing of the warriors, the orchestra plays mostly *pizzicato* (plucked strings) and the chorus sings very softly (147, pv; 292). David tells them that his hand could never strike the anointed of God (No. 24). He tells his warriors to quietly leave this place, that he will follow (26. 9-10). This is an abridged version of David's speech in the biblical narrative.

This libretto does not include the taking of Saul's spear and water jug, which David shows as proof that he had spared Saul's life. Instead, the librettist conflates this incident with the earlier one in chap. 24, in which while Saul relieves himself in a cave, David cuts off a corner of his cloak (the two scenes are often conflated). In the oratorio, David now calls out to Saul (No. 25):

King Saul, awake, and see
If I am plotting revenge.
See the corner of your garment that I cut:
Your life was in my hand this day.
See, if my heart planned revenge.

Saul recognizes David's voice and realizes that David is not addressing him angrily but softly, as with his beautiful harp playing. David asks Saul why he is trying to snare him and bring him to ruin. He says he never sinned against Saul, and prays that God should be between them. Saul sees that David has proven himself, and shows David his flowing tears. He invokes God's blessing over David, and begs God to spare him. Both David's and Saul's lines in this duet are highly lyrical and recall Mendelssohn (151-152, pv; 303). Their voices never come together, but rather each passage builds on the previous one.

The chorus sings that the two men are crying, swords have been placed back in their sheaths, tents of peace are spread out in the fields. At the end of the chorus, David's and Saul's voices come together and repeat the line 'May God protect you'. David ascends up to a' at the climax, one of his highest notes in the oratorio. His ending note is an octave below that (154, pv; 310), projecting calm rather than heroism.

Saul says he hears a gloomy sound, and sees Samuel's followers pressing together in great swarms (No. 27). The 'prophet-youths' sing of their grief, of mourning shrouds to be worn by all Israel, since their great leader Samuel has died. At the conclusion of this short chorus, Saul sings 'He has died!' (*Er starb*) on an ascending octave *d-d'* (162, pv; 324). The next two measures modulate from G major into C minor, the key of the next chorus.

This lengthy chorus (No. 28) sings of placing ashes on their heads, tearing their clothing, bathing their faces in tears. The rhythm is traditional for a funeral march. This chorus is an expansion of the dry biblical account

of Samuel's death, which is limited to one verse (25.1), 'Samuel died, and all of Israel gathered and lamented him'. The lamenting music coupled with the emotional text humanize the story and make it very real.

After the mourning chorus, a warrior announces in a fast-paced recitative that 'one sad message follows another', that the bloody horde of Philistines has overrun their native country (*Vaterland*) (No. 29). Fast groups of triplets in the music suggest running soldiers (169, pv; 334). Saul rallies the troops, urging them to pursue the Philistines. The warriors respond enthusiastically and then plead with God for his help in the battle to come (No. 30).

Hiller's is the only oratorio or opera I have found that features a chorus mourning Samuel's death. Saul is portrayed as conflicted, but not completely disabled by madness as in other librettos.

In **Parry**'s oratorio, the soldiers declare their complete trust in Saul (132). Following this is a lengthy aria for Saul (139) in which he sings about being torn; he knows his enemy was close and spared him, and speaks of David 'the man I love, the man I hate'. At one point he says he will give up his power to David, at the next moment he claims he will remain king and not relinquish power. The opening words are about the 'spirit' Saul perceives within himself:

In the still watches of the night,
There came into the chambers of my soul
A spirit, grim and baleful...
Now it holds my inmost self,
My being vibrates with its mocking leer,
And strives in vain to banish it.

Saul sings short musical phrases either unaccompanied, or accompanied only by sustained chords. Between his measures, the orchestra plays a sinuous theme that uses an almost Wagnerian chromaticism to suggest uncontrollable love (139, top, 3rd and 4th staves). (There is a paraphrase from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (1865) in the orchestra, 140, m. 4 before Reh. H; see Fig. 15).

This *Leitmotif* is played between all of Saul's phrases (140-41), occasionally on 16th- instead of 8th-notes (141, top).

Saul then wonders what motivated David to spare his life:

Mine enemy was here close to my hand; Mine enemy, the man I love, and hate... Through all the host he passed unscathed, And gazed upon me as I, spell-bound, slept; And yet he spared and smote not.

Parry has altered the narrative slightly, because in chap. 26, David sneaks into Saul's camp at night and takes his spear and water jug, but Saul does not realize David had been there until David calls out to him the next morning. In this libretto, the 'spirit' to which Saul referred in the immediately preceding



Figure 15. Parry: Saul.

passages 'whispered' to him that David had come. This gives the librettist a chance to explore Saul's inner feelings, which the biblical writer never does. The words are sung in a recitative marked with several interval leaps, and the music grows increasingly agitated and loud until the final line, which is sung much slower and very softly (142, 2nd staff, last measure).

Saul continues to mull over David's motivation in sparing his life, and decides it was done to put him further under David's power:

Was it the spirit held his hand?
That I might live, and sink to blacker night,
That I might writhe within his power
And hear that whispered evil word—
What wert thou, and what art?

The key changes abruptly to C major at the start of this section, and the vocal line is more *legato* and gentle (142, 3rd-4th staves). When Saul considers that David's motive was to dominate him still more, the tempo increases and a *tremolo* is heard in the orchestra for several measures, involving more and more of the orchestra. This is a clear musical depiction of Saul's doubts and fears. This is one of only two librettos in which Saul attributes manipulative motives to David, rather than accepting David at his word (the other is Testi; see below, this chapter). The music builds in volume to Saul's climactic questioning of who he was and is. Those words are sung in a loud and declamatory way (143, top).

Even after concluding that David has won and will take over, in a moment of virtual megalomania, Saul convinces himself of his place in history:

Away, thou hideous source of hate!
I will not heed thy whispers more.
Let David rise, let me decrease,
Let me be lone, unloved, discrowned, disowned.
Not man, nor God shall change what once has been,
Nor dim the glory of the name I bear.
In Israel the first of kings was Saul!
Of all God's people chosen he, alone,
Next unto God; first among men,
King Saul!

The key changes again to mark off this new section, but there is no clear home key and many of the chords include dissonant notes, vividly portraying Saul's distress and confusion. The opening phrases are declamatory, with the orchestra echoing Saul's phrases to underline them (143, 4th-5th staves). When Saul begins to sing of his own importance, the tonality of the chords accompanying him becomes much more clearly defined—for example, 'God' is sung to a G-flat major chord, 'man' to D-flat major, 'glory' to B-flat minor (144, 2nd staff). These clear tonalities show Saul more in control. The final section, opening 'In Israel' is sung much more slowly, and most of Saul's lines are unaccompanied, with the orchestra playing pageant-like music in the intervening measures (144, bottom). The orchestra echoes Saul's final two unaccompanied declamatory lines (145, 2nd-3rd staves) and then plays a rapid and frenzied conclusion.

Parry pre-dates later psychological analyses of Saul's 'demons' which are found in twentieth-century commentaries as well as librettos. Parry perceptively portrays Saul feeling he is being mocked and sneered at by his 'evil spirit,' suggesting low self esteem and even paranoia, for which he overcompensates by inflating his place in history.

David calls out and asks Saul why he pursues him (26.18):

My lord and King, Give ear unto my voice, And hearken to the prayer of thy servant. What evil have I done? Why dost thou pursue me?... How have I sinned against thee?

This slow and lyrical aria is in the unusual key of D-flat major which has five flats. The presence of many flats frequently stands for sadness or pathos. Frequent suspensions in the harmonies add urgency to David's heartfelt plea. His final line is unaccompanied, and is marked *rit.* ad lib., signifying a slowing of the tempo and complete liberty in singing the arching line of music (150, Reh. X). This exposed musical moment underlines David's precarious situation.

There is a long silent pause after David's words, followed by a halting phrase in the orchestra. After this, Saul admits he has sinned. In very broad phrases, he pleads with David to return, sustaining the word 'return' on *e-flat''* for six beats, a dramatic sound in the baritone voice (151, m. 3). His pleas sound heartfelt and emotional, yet the audience cannot help but question Saul's sincerity after the previous monologue in which he expressed no love for or trust in David. It is hard to decide, based on the music, if Saul has changed his mind or is duplicitous. The music makes Saul's motives even harder to untangle than those of his biblical counterpart, because even the most heartfelt music can still be used to express insincere sentiments.

David departs. This scene is based on chap. 26, but Saul had previously referred to David's secret approach in his soliloquy, so there is a lack of sequence. Saul may doubt his memory, perhaps wondering if he had been dreaming. The chorus expresses sadness at David's departure. Michal enters looking for David, singing verses from Song of Songs that reflect a woman in love seeking her beloved:

```
Saw ye him whom my soul loved?...
I seek him and I find him not (Song 3.3; 5.3)...
His head is as the most fine gold,
His eyes are like doves beside the water-brooks;
His lips are like lilies dropping liquid myrrh (Song 6.11-13).
```

As in earlier sections that also utilized Song of Songs verses extensively, these lyrics evoke sensual love in a biblical context, and were most likely chosen for that reason. Because they are biblical verses, they can be used even to suggest even lust while remaining socially acceptable. The opening two lines are sung in several unaccompanied phrases with a free rhythmic style that mimics a liturgical chant (155, bottom). This music has a distinctly different sound than the rest of the score, and even after the orchestra joins the voice, the subtly 'orientalizing' sound remains. The orchestra echoes or doubles Michal's short phrases (156).

The second section opens on the words 'My beloved is chiefest among ten thousand' which subtly recalls the verse about 'David his ten thousands' (156, bottom). The tempo increases and the orchestra continues to echo the vocal phrases. The tone becomes more assertive on Michal's closing lines, all paraphrases of Song of Songs verses:

```
His aspect like Lebanon,
Excellent as the cedars (Song 5.15).
This is my beloved,
This is my friend!
I call him, but he giveth me no answer;
Whither is my beloved gone?
```

At the end of the line 'excellent as the cedars,' the orchestra plays several expansive measures leading into a short and highly melodic aria, ending with several unaccompanied measures of the same 'liturgical' sound as the opening (158, top). The chorus reassures Michal in biblical-sounding verses that 'David is in the Lord's hand and shall return at the appointed time' (158).

In the biblical account, of course, Michal is not present at the battlefield and after she helps David escape, she disappears from the narrative for many chapters. Here she is present, seeking David, and expressing her love for him at length. Parry is not the only composer to include Michal throughout the story. Parry's Saul exhibits signs of paranoia and delusions of grandeur, as well as extreme ambivalence towards David.

In **Buzzi**'s opera, Saul makes his first appearance in Act 2 (No. 7), and his first words, to be 'declaimed,' are 'to arms'(68). In a recitative, he remembers his earlier days as a warrior, which are now declining. Sounding terrified and battle-weary, he sings that everything is terror and struggle. He then sings an aria addressing Abner. It is marked *andante* (not too slow) and also *dolce* (sweet) (70-71):

Ah, to die among weapons, that is the wish of the strong,
And I would like to know how to fling myself onto the sword
When faced with death;
But in the end I am a father--ah my sons [or children: figli], born of my blood,
Ah, I can no longer separate myself from them.

The music reflects the very emotional text. Abner interrupts to warn Saul that he should hide his grief from the soldiers. This echoes similar advice given to David by Joab when he is mourning Absalom (2 Sam. 19.6-8). The biblical Saul never expresses this kind of attachment to his children, and it is not even clear here if he is thinking of Jonathan and Michal, or only his sons (*figli* in Italian can mean sons or children). The portrayal of a grieving father with a dysfunctional relationship to his children is very much in the Verdi tradition, and this may be why the play appealed to Buzzi as a libretto. Another inspiration may have been Verdi's recently performed, biblically themed *Nabucco* (1842), another opera with a central father-daughter relationship.

The warriors sing of the important battle ahead (No. 8), and how beautiful it is to die on the battlefield. Jonathan approaches Saul (No. 9), who warns him to stay back and be afraid. Then he says, cryptically: 'You trust in the future, but I see your and my fall'. He continues in a beautiful lyrical aria (78):

The oak that spread out its branches in the light breeze, Soon its roots will rise. It seemed to defy the centuries, seemed to rise to heaven, Yet that ignoble plant will fall to earth.



Figure 16. Buzzi: Saul and Michal.

Michal tells Saul to pray to God for forgiveness. Her music is still in 4/4 time but the accompaniment has shifted from eight 8th notes to four groups of triplets (79), a slightly more agitated sound (Fig. 16).

When Saul responds, the accompaniment shifts back to 8th-notes. He says to her:

You speak to me of God? Wretched girl! Don't you know how much I have offended him? I rebelled against him and he is deaf to my prayers.

Michal insists that God forgives human error and pleads with Saul not to give up. Saul is very affected by her words, and as though in ecstasy sings of the sweetness of hope running through his veins, the sound of pardon entering his heart. Jonathan joins them in a trio (81), in which the siblings plead with God to be moved by their warm tears. They also ask God to bring their father, trembling with sadness, back to them. Saul continues to sing of the effect of pardon on his heart.

Abner enters with the soldiers, proclaims victory over the enemy, and calls Saul the victor (No. 10). It is not clear where in the biblical narrative this scene takes place, because many different parts are amalgamated into one operatic scene. Saul takes Michal and Jonathan in his arms and tells them he loves them. Michal tells him to trust in the God of Abraham, who still smiles on him. Then she also asks him to forgive David, the fugitive. The music becomes very agitated, with rapid repeated *tremolos* as Saul tells her not to mention the name of that 'perfidious man,' a traitor who turned against his army.

At this moment, David enters and sings 'No, he is not a traitor' (87). Saul starts to unsheathe his sword but is stopped by Jonathan and Michal. The chorus sings 'David before the king!' The music becomes slow and deliberate, as David sings in a lyrical line:

David is faithful and intrepid, and offers himself to you. Do you want to cut off my head, Saul? I offer it to you: satisfy yourself, take it off. It's yours, O king.

David offering his head to Saul may be a subtle reference to his presenting the head of Goliath to Saul much earlier in the biblical story (not included in this opera). The chorus pleads with God to help both David and Saul (No. 11). Then a quintet starts, marked *adagio* (very slow) and in the interesting key of D-flat major, whose five flats lend it a very particular sound. The entire quintet in form and structure sounds as if it is modeled after the famous quintet in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lamermoor* (1835). Saul opens with a lyrical solo (89):

Who can adduce it from my look? Who enflames it, who inspires it? Love is confused with anger. To kill or to save him...

It is the hand of God who has brought him before me.

The others enter, each singing to himself—David about Saul who is trembling and seems to have calmed; Jonathan and Michal hoping their father will hold back his anger. This is the only time in the opera that Saul expresses his ambivalent feelings about David. In halting phrases reflecting fear and uncertainty, the quintet reflects the gamut of thoughts and emotions experienced by the characters. The chorus also joins in, echoing the different characters' words. This is in the finest tradition of ensemble writing of the period (Fig. 17).

Saul, confused, asks David to prove his faithfulness (No. 12). David shows Saul a piece of his coat which he had secretly cut off (24.12, one of the few references to an actual event from the biblical account). In another Verdian melody with a steady 4/4 beat, David relates how he secretly cut off this piece while Saul was sleeping, and tells him this proves he can be trusted. This conflates the biblical incidents in chapters 24 and 26. David tells Saul that if David falls, exhausted, Saul's son will fall (103). In this ambiguous phrase, either David is calling himself Saul's son, or is predicting Jonathan's fall. Saul is moved, and as the steady accompaniment stops, he asks David to embrace him, saying his heart can no longer hate him (103, bottom).

Apparently this was not a private scene, because at this moment Michal, Jonathan, Abner, along with David and the chorus all immediately sing 'Day of immense jubilation, without equal!' (104). When they stop there is a long pause, and then in a slower passage Saul sings of the Philistines, whom he

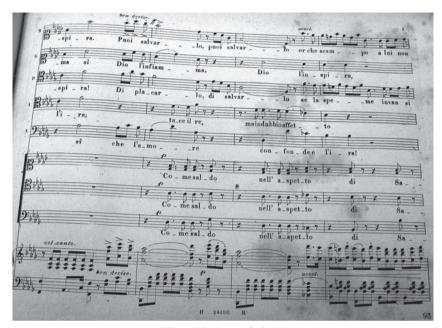


Figure 17. Buzzi: Quintet.

will finally be able to dominate (106). The implication is that when Saul is not using his energy fighting David, he can fight the true enemy. This very interesting concept is touched on in other librettos but never quite so explicitly.

The chorus excitedly repeats Saul's words. The whole ensemble then sings a militaristic chorus, opening with Saul's strongly sung call to 'God of the armies' (in Hebrew אדוני צבאות) accompanied by strong groups of triplets. The act ends with 'Long live Israel', Michal's final *b-flat*" soaring over all the other voices and sustained for two full measures (118).

Act 3 opens in Saul's tent (No. 15), where he is lying down and immersed in deep lethargy. The maidservants sing a chorus about how Saul fell into his present state. Then Michal, Jonathan, and David sing about Saul (No. 16):

He no longer turns his glance, and frozen sweat bathes his face.

His days of laughter are gone, stolen by the dawn.

Ah, God, you have turned your face from Saul.

Michal asks David to help them sing the hymn of invocation, and in a hymn-like trio they ask God to return to Saul and save Israel. A harp introduction is heard, and David, 'inspired', sings a solo hymn. He sings about God's rays of light which were even 'heard at Sinai' and to which Moses responded (127). He accuses God of abandoning Israel and Saul. This is the only libretto I have found in which David expresses anger at God. The accompaniment becomes softer groups of *staccato* triplets, and the

tenor is instructed to sing 'more sweetly and expressively' here and in the conclusion. In the middle section, he should sound 'resolute and warlike'. In the conclusion, David pleads with God to let Saul lie happily in the bosom of his children (129).

Saul awakens and, in poignant music, he remembers hearing David's voice. Then in a very moving aria, he sings (131, 2nd staff):

How sweetly does his voice come down to my heart,

O beloved son

A tear came to my eyes on hearing his voice.

This leads directly into a quartet in which Saul repeats his words, and the others comment on the effect of David's voice on Saul. The quartet becomes increasingly faster, higher, and louder, as they all sing of how God has brought joy back to Saul.

The action and chronology of the biblical account were of little interest to this composer (or the playwright on whose work the libretto was based). He was more concerned with exploring the feelings and motivations of the characters, and presents some unusual ideas about Saul's feelings for his children. These are barely intimated in the biblical text, but this area was of no interest to the biblical writer, and the notion of Saul having deep feelings for his children is not completely contradicted by the biblical text. Based on the biblical Saul's thoughtless actions towards both Michal and Jonathan, however, it may be far-fetched—and wishful thinking.

Twentieth-Century Works

In **Honegger**'s oratorio, the narrator recounts the incident in which David approaches a sleeping Saul in the midst of his camp and takes his pitcher and lance without striking him. No one sees anything because God caused a deep sleep to fall on them all (26.12). An orchestral interval paints the scene just described and the one that follows [10]. Slow, mournful phrases are played by low-pitched winds, cellos and basses. These are interrupted by trumpets and horns playing short heraldic phrases, all opening with an ascending fifth (32-33). These phrases are alternately loud and very soft, imitating the calls to battle that would have been heard this way across a distance. As this music dies out, the narrator recounts the war between Israel and the Philistines, adding that David is now with the Philistines (28.2).

In **Brown**'s oratorio, the chorus sings David's words to Saul, 'Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before thy face...' (26.20). The soprano notes are doubled in trumpets, a dramatic effect. These are David's words to Saul after he has proven his loyalty by taking the spear and water jug from the sleeping Saul without harming him. It is the only place in the cantata where the chorus sings David's words.

The text is slightly altered: instead of saying 'fall to the earth away from the presence of the Lord', the libretto reads 'before thy face, O Lord', as if David were addressing God rather than Saul. Immediately after this verse, the chorus sings another psalm setting, 'O send out thy light and thy truth' (Ps. 43.3). Interweaving narrative with psalms this way blurs the distinction between speech and prayer.

In a new section, the tempo slows again and an earlier psalm setting is reprised ('Out of the depths'), but with changes: the chorus opens on a unison C again, but an octave higher than before (69, Reh. 52). After several loud and dramatic measures, the music grows very soft and the chorus, without the sopranos, concludes 'Lord, hear my prayer' on very low pitches—the altos end on *b flat*, the baritones two octaves lower, over a *pp* G-minor *tremolo* (70, m. 4). The key is clearly G minor, but in the unsettled second inversion. These psalm settings establish a certain mood, which is of greater interest to the composer than relating all the action or exploring the characters' motivations

Nielsen and his librettist, in sharp contrast, focus entirely on the characters, developing and expanding them in highly imaginative ways. This is, of course, more typical of opera than oratorio.

Act III opens in the wilderness of Ziph, in Saul's camp (chap. 26). Saul and his warriors are sleeping inside a barricade of wagons. Michal and Jonathan are awake, gazing into the night. (They are present in almost every scene, defying logic). Lushly romantic opening music sets the mood, with a single pastoral theme heard in winds and repeated by the strings and then full orchestra (146-147). The theme is woven into their duet, whose text contains very flowery language. They admire the beauty of the stars and muse on the greater meaning of life. The music is so intensely lyrical as to resemble a love duet. In the middle of the duet, the time changes to 12/8, very broad, and the unusual key of D-flat major, with five flats lending it a very particular timbre (149, m. 3). At this switch, Michal sings:

The night sky's twinkling secrets swell with hope.

Jonathan responds:

Countless generations shall sit like us And look at the evening light. Ever our earth, under the sign of the stars, Shall be filled with longing for a goal Which they can never reach.

This very interesting text suggests that the siblings are speaking to us from history, as if they were real people with a universal story. The text also suggests their story, in common with every human story, will not have a happy ending. The tempo suddenly increases, as Michal rises and begins worrying about David's whereabouts, in agitated music (150, bottom):

Where is my beloved wandering just now?...
Where is the field where he rests for the night?...
Perhaps I am breathing the same air
Where his voice was heard tonight.
But words and voice have vanished
Like raindrops in the sand.

The key changes back to the F major of the opening, and the time is now an agitated 3/4, with *staccato* 8th-notes expressing anxiety (151). At the line 'But words and voice...' the music softens and slows (152, 3rd staff). The next two lines are sung almost unaccompanied. Jonathan reassures Michal that David is looking at the same stars as they are. The music returns to the previous 12/8 time and D-flat major, as their voices join in singing poetic verses about the beauty of the night (153-154). Jonathan takes Michal's hand and they enter the tent together. The closing music is like a lilting lullaby (Fig. 18).

The closeness and harmony of the voices in this duet suggest an emotional bond between brother and sister, an element completely lacking in the biblical



Figure 18. Nielsen: Jonathan and Michal.

text (but found in several other librettos). The libretto almost supplants the Jonathan-David bond with this sister-brother bond, an interesting and compelling example of gap-filling.

David enters and comments to Abishai (sung by a soprano, indicating youth) how Saul and his camp are in a deep sleep. They approach the sleeping Saul, and David notices that even in sleep, Saul is clenching his hand. This interesting observation on David's part suggests a compassionate understanding of Saul's mental condition. Abishai wants to kill Saul, but David tells him he would not kill Saul no matter how many times he had the power to do so. They take the spear and water pitcher from beside Saul's head (26.6-12). When they are safely out of the camp and on the rocks, David calls out to Abner very loudly, in ringing high notes and accompanied by loud trumpet calls. When he announces what he has just taken from Saul (26.13-16), Saul, then Michal and Jonathan all recognize David's voice. Jonathan and Michal sing 'David, my beloved/brother' together in perfect harmony (164, top), followed by Abner and then the warriors (164, m. 2-3).

David tells Saul how he has spared his life, and asks why he has been banished. The chorus sings that the king is moved, and then Saul sings 'David, my son' on a slow and descending vocal line, his notes doubled in the orchestra for emphasis (165, 3rd staff, m. 2). David reiterates that he would never harm the king, wishes him peace and starts to leave. Michal calls out to him and grabs Saul's hands, begging him to make David stay. In even more pleading music, Jonathan also begs David not to leave (168, 2nd staff, m. 3), pointing out that Saul has called David his son and has repented of his sin. He also points to Saul and shows David that his arms are open. In a paraphrase of 26.21, 25, Saul sings:

David, my son, you are better than I. Evil have I dealt against you. Evil have you repaid with good. I will bless your hand which spared my life, Bless every step of your path, If you will turn back.

The music is lyrical and sung with great emotion. While Saul is singing this heartfelt plea, Jonathan takes David by the hand and leads him to Saul. David throws himself at Saul's feet, calling him 'King' and 'My father'. Saul lifts him up and in still more lyrical music, sings:

Here on my breast, In my embrace, under my kiss and my weeping... David...do not make your ears deaf To my repentance today.

David swears that Saul has no truer servant than he, and Saul brings David to Michal, who throws herself into his arms. In a major departure from the

original narrative, David agrees to return with Saul. In the biblical version, they make peace but go their separate ways. The full chorus acclaims the 'pact concluded anew' between David and Saul. This remarkable choral fugue is in the simple bright key of C major but in the unusual time of 9/4, which is so broad as to give the impression of a liturgical chorus with no bar lines

Michal joins the initial chorus (173, top), but when Jonathan enters, a new, broader fugue theme is introduced, as Michal, then Abner, David and Saul join them (177). The chorus re-enters singing the first fugue theme (181), interrupted briefly by the quintet (185). Then the forces unite in an overpowering conclusion, for several measures in 3/2 time which has a broader feeling, and to be sung ff (186, last measure). Soaring high notes can be heard above the bombastic orchestral chords—Michal and David sing a unison high B-flat (*b-flat'* and *b-flat''*; 187, last measure), then the tempo reverts to 9/8.

The climactic ending note is a high C(c''') sung by Michal and sustained for two full measures, while David, Jonathan, Saul and Abner all sing in the key of C major. A more upbeat and glorious conclusion, which include bells and drums, cannot be imagined. It actually leads the listener to think it is the grand finale of the opera, which is why the scene that follows immediately is so shocking in its unexpectedness—even for listeners who know the story is not over yet.

Abishai appears and announces that a procession is approaching. He sees men in robes surrounding an old man who is pale as a corpse and rests on the cushions of a litter. The chorus calls out 'Samuel!' softly and with amazement. Saul wonders to himself if Samuel is coming to renew his curse against him. When the procession arrives, Samuel asks where he is, and then asks if David, youngest of Jesse's sons, is here. In a complete change of chronological order, and somewhat incongruously, Samuel now relates in very slow and solemn music that as he was dying in Ramah, the Lord told him to take his vial of oil and go to meet the man he has chosen as Israel's king: David of Bethlehem.

Saul, in jagged musical phrases that are almost shouts, reminds Samuel that *he* is king, chosen by Samuel; but Samuel tells him his kingdom will soon end. Saul, irate, tells the people to kill Samuel, who 'scorns God's pact with Israel's anointed king.' Samuel rises and tells Saul to fear him and be silent. Saul, in very angry music, mutters that he must stand and look upon his shame. Samuel, in very dramatic music, tells all the assembled to kneel as he anoints David, but Saul remains standing. This completely invented scene portrays a far angrier Saul than possibly any other libretto treated in this book.

The music for the anointment is solemn and lyrical. After the ceremony, heraldic horns are heard, followed by a very soft chorus singing of their hope

in the Lord. Samuel raises his hands to heaven and intones a final prayer. He says his work is ended and asks God to take him, to 'loose his soul from the cracked mouldering clay' and let him come in peace to heaven. The chorus announces his death. David bends over him and closes his eyes, calling him 'Father' which he had also called Saul.

In this retelling, it would seem that Saul's jealousy of David stemmed from his greater success in battle and in capturing the hearts of his children. It was not because he posed a threat to Saul's house. In the Bible, Samuel anoints David at his father's farm, long before David has been exiled by Saul (16.13). But Saul's downfall begins after this anointing. David is only anointed publicly in 2 Sam. 2.4, by the 'men of Judah,' and again in 2 Sam. 2.5, by the 'elders of Israel,' after Saul's death. In this opera, David is publicly anointed by Samuel in Saul's presence. This gives David greater authority in the eyes of all the people. On the other hand, David's previous exploits must be viewed in a different light if he had not yet been chosen by God. This version also makes Saul more aggressive and less sympathetic, yet his public humiliation by Samuel also suggests a motive for his anger and instability.

In the next section, the tempo is a cut time 4/4 marked *allegro con fuoco* (204, 3rd staff, m. 3). Saul approaches Samuel's corpse and in very rapid and dramatic music, sings of his relief that Samuel can no longer scorn Saul, 'the anointed one.' He turns to the warriors and sings, in increasingly more agitated music (205, top):

Power is mine alone again! So seize him, my men! David is a rebel who dares, In the king's presence, To besmirch his name.

On the word 'besmirch,' Saul sings an f', one of his highest notes in the opera, sustained here for three whole beats over a full and dense orchestra (205, m. 6). His men approach David but Michal stands between them, warning the men to keep away from 'the anointed one...the Holy David' (205, 3rd-4th staves). Saul interrupts Michal while she is still singing, ordering his men to seize Michal along with David (205, bottom). She dares them to do so, then warns them that Samuel is watching:

Out of his white face Shines God's will, Whose word he proclaimed just now.

In sharp contrast to the preceding section, Michal's music lies very low in the soprano range. The opening line is sung entirely on repeated and soft triplets on *b-flat* (206, top). Michal singing in her lowest and softest range sets up a sharp contrast to Saul, who has been singing in his highest

and loudest. It shows Michal in complete control, and also suggests she has a commanding presence. In more lyrical passages, she tells David that she will follow and trust him, to be 'hunted and banished' like him (206, bottom-207, top).

Saul, in the same loud and agitated music as before, again orders his men to seize Michal and slay them both. David, in similarly dramatic passages, tells Saul that he has not robbed Saul of his name or his daughter, since both have come to him 'as gifts from the Lord.' The final word is sung on a' sustained for four full beats (207, bottom-208, top). Saul almost bellows at his men, one last time, to grab and slay them, but instead the people retreat before David and Michal and allow them to leave. They sing 'Farewell' together in harmony as the curtain falls. Saul falls to the ground in a fury with Jonathan at his side.

This retelling suggests a Saul who is much angrier, out of control, and violent, than his biblical counterpart. The invented scene also gives Michal a heightened role as an intermediary between her father and David, apparently with power and influence over the people. Jonathan's role is minimized and overshadowed by Michal's in this scene. Though Saul does order Jonathan killed in a much earlier biblical scene (14.44), he certainly never orders Michal killed. This operatic scene probably destroys any remaining sympathy for Saul in the audience.

In **Milhaud**'s opera, Act II opens with the chorus describing David's life as a fugitive. The music has a martial sound, with heavy beats mimicking marching feet (86-87). After the chorus, David talks to Avishai, his nephew. Avishai tells him a man is approaching with two veiled women, and David tells him to check up on the man. After the dialogue with Abiathar (described in Chapter 5, p. 144), David quietly asks Avishai where the women are whom he had earlier mentioned. The measure preceding his question is a pattern of two slurs repeated twice, a lyrical sound. He speaks his question over an unresolved chord of an augmented seventh with a fourth added on (92, Reh. 60). At that moment the two women enter: Abigail and her servant Abinoam. David addresses Abigail as if he knows her already (92, m. 3-4 after Reh. 60):

David: The beautiful, wise Abigail, a fugitive here!

Abigail: And with me, my servant Abinoam, both of us seeking your

help.

David: The first time, your request was not in vain.

Abigail: My husband Nabal had conducted himself unsuitably towards

you.

David: The insolence of the husband was erased by the wisdom and

grace of the wife. You prevented me from spilling blood. And up there, on the rocks, how would we have survived without

your wine, your fig cakes, your barley?

The music in this duet builds very slowly, with the vocal line at the beginning almost a recitative. Under both Abigail's and David's words, the accompaniment starts with a g' repeated three times, then adding an a' (a-flat' for David), then d'', then building up this fifth with major and minor seconds (92, m. 1 after Reh. 65). The final measure of this series (93, m. 2 after Reh. 70) switches from 4/4 to 5/4 time, a broadening effect which leads into a new theme

David's words are sung to a conversational rhythm, becoming more lyrical on the last line, as he sings of the food Abigail had provided (94, top). These descending lines span over an octave, which suggests more emotion than the list of provisions alone does.

Abigail: Now listen to me, my Lord.

David: I'm listening, and unable to take my eyes off your face.

This brief line stands out for its lyrical qualities, a musical depiction of tenderness and love. Oboes and violins play a rising figure twice, over descending slurs, while David's voice rises on the final words, 'your face' from *b flat* up to *f*', which is sustained for two beats as Abigail begins singing (94, Reh. 85). A note in this register sung by the baritone voice would project ardour.

Abigail: When my husband learned that I had honoured you as he

should have done, he was so furious that his heart hardened like a stone in his chest and ten days later he died (25.18-38,

summarized).

This part begins in a recitative style, but quickly becomes more dramatic with wide leaps: *b flat'-g"-a'*, followed by two successive groups of thirds sung in two different octaves (95, top). There are effective moments of silence, one following a sharply dissonant chord of two overlaid augmented octaves, another following ominous 16th-note repeated phrases in trumpets and trombones, and another following the description of Nabal's death (95, m. 1-3).

David: O God of Israel, so do your favours continue to reward my

waiting!

Abigail: Why this invocation and these smiles?

David: Because the warrior was waiting for a woman in his solitude.

This last word is sung over an F#-minor chord, a rare tonal moment that stands out and underlines the sadness behind the words (96, top). David continues, not taking his eyes off Abigail:

Abigail, oh my beloved, your bed up there will be hard, but you will be respected like a queen. And you, Abinoam, you will bring the sweetness of a gazelle between us. But night is falling, I will show you the way.

The music becomes more excited building up to the word 'queen,' and then calmer, through descending 16th-note scales and slurred descending chords (96, Reh. 105-110).

In this interesting treatment of chap. 25, the action is not depicted but only summarized after the events by Abigail. In the biblical text, David hears of Nabal's death and sends for Abigail; in this version, Abigail seems to have come on her own in order to tell David, presumably in the hopes that he would marry her. This suggests a woman of even stronger will and character than her biblical counterpart. Ahinoam (here re-named Abinoam) is mentioned only in passing in the biblical version: 'David had taken Ahinoam of Jezreel; so both of them became his wives (25.43)'. It remains to be seen if Abinoam will also become David's wife, but at this point in the opera she is only Abigail's servant. It seems strange that the two women would stay with David and his men in the wilderness, but the biblical text does say that Abigail 'followed David's messengers' (25.42), indicating that David had women with him even when he was a fugitive.

The narrator (chorus) relates that God caused a deep sleep to fall on Saul and his men. When David and Avishai approach the sleeping Saul, Avishai asks David permission to kill Saul, but David refuses to lay a hand on the Lord's anointed. He says he will only take Saul's lance and water jug that lie beside him (26.6-12). These lines are spoken over the orchestra (98-100), a dramatic effect

The music under the chorus is in a very broad 12/8 time. Four groups of triplets are repeated in every measure, creating a drone or *ostinato* effect, which builds suspense (98-99). This changes when the chorus reports Avishai's words to David, and in the measure when he says 'Let me kill him with one blow!' the orchestra plays several loud, heavily accented dissonant chords (99, m. 1 before Reh. 135).

David and Avishai reappear, holding the lance and jug, and David calls out to Abner (100, m. 2 after Reh. 140). The dialogue between Saul and David that follows is a very close rendering of 26.17-25. This duet contains some of the more tonic and touching music in the opera. When Saul asks if he is hearing the voice of David, oboes and violins play a plangent rising phrase (101, m. 2). When David asks Saul what he has done, and why Saul continues to pursue him like a poor flea, the notation indicates this line is to be sung 'with veiled irony.' The phrase opens in B minor and then descends chromatically (*d'-c#'-c'*; 101, m. 1 after Reh. 150). The entire phrase is marked by chromatic intervals and slurred descending chords, music illustrating pleading or sadness rather than irony. Without hearing it sung, I can only imagine that irony would be indicated in the way these phrases are sung rather than in the music alone.

When Saul responds, he starts in a low range, on B, but then as he confesses to having acted foolishly (26.21), his voice rises over an octave

to *e-flat'* on 'Return' ('Reviens'), showing an intensification of emotion (101, bottom). After David returns his lance, Saul blesses and thanks him on lower pitches, indicating he has calmed down (102, m. 1 before 185). Saul sings a simple melody in C minor here, yet the measures surrounding his words contain a repetitive phrase in orchestra, a very large leap from A to B flat and back to A, an augmented octave. This eerie orchestral leap creates a discord, musically hinting that things are never as simple as they seem, when dealing with Saul.

By contrast, when David closes by asking God's blessing on both of them, he sings in harmony with flutes in a clear A-major tonality (102, m. 2 before Reh. 170). A few measures later, he sings several words on c' and sustains that note while the bass in the orchestra holds an open fifth F-C chord and the other orchestra parts modulate and descend slowly to end on a very soft F-major chord. For the moment, at least, the situation is calm.

In the next scene (Scene 2: Interlude), a chorus of Israelites relates that Samuel has died and David is still fleeing from Saul (103). He has found asylum with King Achish of Gath (27).

The most unique aspect of Milhaud's setting is the inclusion of Abigail, and her own telling of her story. A love relationship is convincingly suggested in a duet between David and Abigail.

Testi does not adhere to even the barest chronological outlines of the biblical story. In his Scene 11, Saul's 'demons' have taken Saul to a cave in the moonlight. Jonathan and David appear—this was their pre-arranged meeting place (a reference to chap. 20). Saul hides; significantly, this is the first scene in which the demons are with Saul when he is not alone. David tells Jonathan that when he hears the first trumpet call during the upcoming battle, he must persuade Saul to come to this cave and take refuge. By the third trumpet call, it will be too late. Trumpet phrases accompany this message (293, m.4). This is a completely invented plot twist.

David places his forehead on Jonathan's shoulder, and in a very interesting musical touch, Jonathan says farewell against a dissonant chord—C#-E flat—the same notes he sings. David responds in C major, shifting the C# down to C and the E flat up to E (296, top). C major is the brightest and simplest key, and has been associated with David elsewhere in the opera. These measures go by very quickly, but the perception is nonetheless of a David that is more settled than Jonathan.

Saul overhears this conversation and misunderstands, thinking David is betraying them. He wants to jump out of his hiding place but the demons restrain him. They tell him to pretend to sleep, then they disappear. David moves away from Jonathan in order to pray, and then Jonathan sees the figure of his sleeping father. David refuses to move until he has finished praying, a strong example of the portrayal of a devout David.

When David finishes his prayers, he approaches Saul—who is pretending to be asleep—and cuts off the end of his coat. This is not only a conflation of the scenes found in chaps. 24 and 26; it is also chronologically in a completely different place. David and Jonathan then run away. Saul gets up, looks at his cut-up coat and laughs sarcastically, saying 'They are so good to me.' The closing bars are played on the piano, creating a solitary and intimate mood (302, #49).

The opening music of the final scene (12) is slow and sombre. It is very soft and in a low register, creating a foreboding sound. Saul is with Jonathan on the eve of battle. Jonathan tries to push his father to ready themselves for action. Saul says he knows he has not acted as much as he desired, and that he is ready to repent. The music of this monologue changes in mood, tempo, and volume every few measures, effectively depicting Saul's moodiness and tormented uncertainty.

Saul tells Jonathan that he was not really asleep in the cave when David cut a piece from his coat. Two measures of David's *Leitmotif* are heard (313, bottom):

...he cut the piece from my coat to show you how to really betray me. Ah! The understanding between the two of you is perfect... You will be sure to thank him for me. He considers me deposed already!

This is one of only two librettos in which Saul misinterprets the meaning of David's action (the other was Nielsen's opera). This makes Saul seem even more paranoid than his biblical portrayal suggests.

Conclusions

The paired incidents of David sparing Saul's life are presented in a variety of ways in musical works. Hiller presents it fairly accurately. The incident is the only actual biblical reference in Buzzi's opera, and is presented very dramatically. Parry slightly alters the narrative, having Saul know (from his inner voice, or evil spirit) that David had come; the scene itself is not represented, only the subsequent one with David. Honegger and Brown only relate it briefly.

The scene is acted out in both the Nielsen and Milhaud operas. It is also acted out, though not in the right place chronologically, in Testi's opera. In that libretto as well as in Parry's, Saul questions David's motives. He does not do this in the biblical narrative, so it suggests even deeper paranoia. Parry, Buzzi, and Nielsen all include Michal in the scene, primarily to plead with Saul to forgive David. Jonathan is present and serves the same function in Buzzi and Nielsen

Samuel's death is announced by a mourning chorus uniquely in Hiller. The other works that include it are Nielsen and Milhaud, but in the latter it is only

mentioned in passing. Nielsen, instead, creates an entire melodramatic death scene, attended by Saul as well as Jonathan and Michal. The confrontation between Saul and Samuel amplifies the earlier impression of great friction between the two men. Samuel anoints David in his death scene, completely out of sequence with the story but a highly dramatic setting.

Abigail is included only in Milhaud's opera, where her encounter with David is told effectively in flashback. Their love duet suggests feelings between them that can barely be read between the lines of the biblical text.

Chapter 7

SAUL VISITS THE NECROMANCER OF ENDOR

Summary of 1 Samuel 28

28 The Philistines are preparing to fight Israel, and Achish insists David join in. Samuel had died—this is mentioned again—and all Israel lamented him. Saul had forbidden recourse to ghosts and spirits. When he sees the Philistines mustering, he is panicked. Since God won't talk to him any more, he tells his courtiers to find him a necromancer. They send him to Endor. He goes in disguise with two men, at night. When he asks the woman to bring up a ghost, she asks him why he is setting a trap for her to be killed, since this is forbidden by Saul. He swears she is safe, and tells her to bring up Samuel. Then she recognizes 'Samuel' (probably supposed to be 'Saul') and claims he deceived her.

In her vision, she sees an old man wrapped in a cloak coming up. Saul bows low in homage. Samuel asks why Saul has disturbed him, and Saul says the Philistines are attacking and God isn't in his corner any more. Samuel says he can't help, since God has become Saul's adversary. God has torn the kingship from his hands and given it to David, and moreover he and Jonathan will be with Samuel the next day, and Israel will be defeated.

Saul throws himself on the ground, terrified and weak. He hadn't eaten all day and night, so the woman gives him food—a calf she hastily slaughtered, and unleavened cakes. He and his courtiers eat and leave.

Commentary

Medium? Witch? Necromancer? Young? Old? This fascinating character is wide open for interpretation. In art, she has been depicted as everything from a young, seductive gypsy to a frightening old hag. Musically, she is virtually always an alto or contralto, standing for age and mystery (Handel is the lone exception, casting the role for a tenor).

Though 'medium' is the politically correct translation often used today in place of the older 'witch,' there is no biblical evidence that she was a real medium, through whose throat the ghost would have spoken (Alter 1999: 174 n. 12). The Hebrew has been translated in a variety of ways: in the KJV,

'a woman that hath a familiar spirit'; in JPS, 'a woman who consults ghosts', though in the footnotes, she is called 'necromancer'. Fox uses 'a woman, a possessor of ghosts' and Alter 'a ghostwife'. I choose to use 'necromancer' because it perfectly describes what the woman does: necromancy is defined in the OED as 'prediction of the future by supposedly communicating with dead people'.

This exact combination of words אשת בעלת־אוב occurs uniquely in the Bible in 1 Sam. 28.7. The term בעל (m.) סר בעלת (f.) in front of another noun normally signifies 'master or mistress of,' yet no one has ever translated what this woman does as a Master of Ghosts except the BDB, which has 'a woman who was mistress of necromancy' (BDB, 15). Alter's 'ghostwife' comes the closest but does not have the same connotation. A second meaning of the word בעלת כשבים is someone who masters or has a certain skill, like בעלת כשבים (Nahum 3.4, where it is a negative reference to a female necromancer). The root עולה כשבים refers to sorcery or magic (Kaddari 2006: 115). In the Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, אשת בעלת בעלת (v. 2, 239).

The word אוב itself means ghost or necromancer (depending on the phrase in which it is found), yet passages that literally mean 'consult a ghost' are understood to mean 'consult one who calls up ghosts'. This phrase appears in prohibitions against this activity (Lev. 19.31; 20.6; 20.27; 18.11; 1 Sam. 28.3) or in passages describing the activity as forbidden or evil (2 Kings 23.24; Isa. 8.19; 19.3; 1 Chron. 10.13; 2 Chron. 33.6). These passages all refer to male practitioners of the art. A similar word מכלשף means sorcery or magic, and there is one reference to a female practitioner of this art (Exod. 22.17). Other passages prohibiting the practice all refer to males or females and males together (Exod. 7.11; Deut. 18.10-12; Mal. 3.5; Dan. 2.2; 2 Chr. 33.6, which includes both אוב בישף and בישף אוב ביש

This brief survey highlights the uniqueness of this woman in the Bible. Frymer-Kensky offers several possible explanations for what exactly the woman does, based on comparative studies including the Odyssey. The word with which Saul initiates the necromancy is מובר meaning 'conjure' (2.8). Frymer-Kensky suggests that the אוב referred to, though commonly translated as 'ghost,' could be either a pit or trench which the necromancer would fill with blood and animal parts, or it could be a skull used to pour libations (Frymer-Kensky 2000: 312). If the word refers to a prop of some kind, this would have been understood at the time of writing more than in a later era.

Alter notes that the woman diverges from 'the usual necromantic procedure,' since Saul and Samuel speak directly to each other. The necromancer seems to be absent during their conversation, for in verse 21 she comes to Saul and sees how upset he is, suggesting she had been absent (Alter 1999: 175 n. 15). According to rabbinic midrash, in necromancy the

conjuror sees the spirit, but the person for whom the spirit has been raised can only hear it. So the necromancer saw but did not hear Samuel, while Saul heard but did not see him (Ginzberg 1968: v. 4, 70; he gives no attribution).

Alter and others have suggested that the scene may have inspired Shakespeare when he wrote of Macbeth's encounter with the three witches (Alter 1999: 176 n. 19). Another later playwright who was probably influenced was Eugene Scribe, who wrote the play on which Verdi's opera *Un ballo in maschera* (A Masked Ball, 1859) was based. In the second act, the necromancer Ulrica predicts death for the king who has come to her in disguise. (The notion that this was inspired by the biblical necromancer was also expressed by a reviewer of the Los Angeles production of Milhaud's opera; Alma Gowdy in Los Angeles Herald and Express, 24 September 1956).

Most scholars agree that the portrait of the necromancer is flattering. Though she is forced to announce doom to Saul, she at least gives Saul the courage and strength to face it. The necromancer insists that Saul eat, becoming the model of Israelite hospitality. Like Abraham (Gen. 18.5), she offers a morsel of bread, then also provides meat (she might be giving him her only fatted calf). She is not an evil woman—on the contrary, she is presented as good and generous. In Frymer-Kensky's words, her craft is outlawed because:

it is uncontrollable and ungovernable access to divine knowledge. But it is effective, and it can be benevolent. She shares her benevolence with other oracle women such as Rahab, Abigail, even Huldah. They all desire the good of the men to whom they speak (Frymer-Kensky 2000: 314).

The major difference is that the necromancer of Endor was practicing a forbidden art, and yet is still portrayed positively, clearly reflecting the feelings of the biblical writer. Exum also highlights the woman's kindness, noting that it contrasts dramatically with Samuel's severity and brings a kind of relief from tragedy. It is also noteworthy that she is kind to the king who has banished her trade. The necromancer functions at the 'terrifying threshold between the realms of the living and the dead...facing...a certain personal risk for her act of kindness' (Exum 1996: 25, 32, 117). Bellis also sees this as a positive portrayal. The necromancer shows compassion by her concern for Saul after she has given him the devastating news. Her concern could be based on his status as king, but it seems to be more personal. There is no indication that she would gain anything by killing the fatted calf (Bellis 2007: 125).

It would have taken several hours to slaughter and cook the calf. It is an eerie picture, with Saul waiting quietly while the necromancer prepares the meal. David had been saved by women in the past, and now it is Saul's turn. But the sustenance provided him merely gives him the strength to go out

to the battlefield and die (Alter 1999: 178). This can be seen as a supreme irony, or as an element that adds to the portrayal of the necromancer, who is after all the last kind person, and the last woman, Saul sees before dying. There is an echo of Jael here, but with the major difference in that Jael kills Sisera herself rather than predicting his death.

Other scholars note that the positive portrayal in this story 'strengthens our respect for those practicing the profession' (Brenner 1996: 70). The necromancer is depicted through her words as professionally competent, businesslike, and considerate (van Dijk-Hemmes 1996: 70). Josephus has an unusual amount of praise for her: for not resenting Saul's forbidding her to carry on her trade, as well as for sharing the little she had with Saul. Josephus states that this was not only her only calf, but also one she was very fond of (with echoes of Nathan's parable here). He holds her up as a model of generosity, kindness, and compassion, since she knew she would gain no benefit because of Saul's imminent death (Josephus, *Antiquities*, VI. 14:337-42; 177-78).

There has been much scholarly debate on the accuracy of the portrayal of this necromancer. Goitein, based on his study of the necromancer among Yemenite Jews, considers the story of the necromancer of Endor to represent the performance and speech style of this kind of woman who was frequently found in ancient Israel. He also bases this theory on the prosaic style of the story: the necromancer 'does not speak in hints or riddles or poetic meter, as we might expect...she is asked what she sees and what the dead person told her, and she answers in simple prose...' (Goitein 1988: 15, in van Dijk-Hemmes 1996: 68). The tone used by the necromancer in conversation with Saul changes after Saul's conversation with Samuel. She now refers to herself as 'your servant,' a polite formula (v. 21).

Women engaged in activities like sorcery and soothsaying because of their marginal position in official religion. Van der Toorn uses the term 'popular religion' for these activities. Popular religion is formed as a reaction to, and compensation for, activities that are permitted or forbidden by official religion (van der Toorn 1987: 106, in van Dijk-Hemmes 1996: 70). The dominant religion would officially condemn popular religion, in an attempt to mute and destroy it. But in reality, popular religious practices were secretly tolerated, and flourished in the shadow of official religion. This offered women possibilities to develop their abilities in ways they could not do in official religion. The necromancer of Endor illustrates how women exploited this avenue (van Dijk-Hemmes 1996: 71). Yet it is interesting that she is the only biblical woman depicted as practicing the trade; all other references in the Bible are to male practitioners or male and female lumped together.

The rational view that sees necromancy and sorcery in general as a fraud is first found in Jewish tradition in authors who flourished around 900 CE

(Ginzberg 1968 VI: 237). Yet women continue to act as fortunetellers today in some countries. In 2008, lawmakers in Tajikistan banned all forms of what they label witchcraft, calling it an 'illegal and parasitical industry.' People there value a good fortuneteller and word circulates quickly about a particularly gifted one. Soothsaying is one of the only career opportunities open to the mainly middle-aged and unmarried women who ply this trade (David Stern, *New York Times*, July 8, 2008). This echoes the situation as it was in Israel and elsewhere nearly 3000 years ago.

The Music

The necromancer of Endor is included in every musical work I studied, both nineteenth and twentieth century, that includes this part of Saul's story. Her music is invariably unusual, foreboding, and dramatic. The final part of the scene, which shows her kind and caring side, is only included in two works: Hiller's oratorio and Tal's short opera. Both are Jewish composers, which may or may not be coincidental. The only artist to my knowledge who portrayed the necromancer as a kind hostess was Rembrandt.

The works to be discussed include Handel's oratorio, three nineteenth-century oratorios, two twentieth-century oratorios, and four twentieth-century operas. I will refer to the woman according to her designation in the libretto, even if 'witch' is not the preferred term.

Eighteenth-Century Works

Handel's 'Witch of Endor' is sung by a tenor, apparently a common convention for this type of woman, a bit like the 'pantomime dame' in British 'Panto' tradition. It would have presumably underlined her infernal, unnatural nature (Deborah Rooke, pers. comm.). Possibly the tenor voice was meant to represent an old woman-1

In the opening scene of Act 3, Saul is in disguise at Endor and sings of his despair at finding no counsel from God [69]. The music is slow, stately and dramatic. Saul's mood changes frequently throughout the recitative, from defiance to despair and back:

Is Saul become a coward? I'll not believe it!
If Heaven denies thee aid, seek it from Hell...

Then commenting on his situation, he says [70]:

Myself am now reduced to ask the counsel Of those I once abhorred!

1. This tradition was recently revived for a 2009 Metropolitan Opera Production of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, in which the role of the witch was assumed by a tenor rather than the more customary contralto.

The next scene begins with a musical introduction to the 'witch.' The music has a different sound from the rest of the oratorio, played in a very low range with one long held note creating a dissonance against the others, and then the orchestra abruptly cutting off at the end. The opening line, 'With me what would'st thou?', is spoken, clearly by a man imitating a woman's voice [71] and creating an effect somewhere between eerie and comical

The accompaniment to the witch's aria [72] is striking: strings in a high register play a short motif that almost imitates a human voice, engaging in a dialogue with strings playing in their lowest register. These strings play an ominous *ostinato* repetition of two quarter notes with heavy bow pressure, creating a harsh sound. The tenor voice is used to great effect. The words are significantly modified from the original:

Add horror to the midnight hour, And chill the boldest hearts with fear. To this stranger's wondering eyes Let the prophet Samuel rise!

Samuel is introduced (Scene 3) by very low accompaniment dominated by brass and winds, and his opening words are also sung in a very low bass range, sounding as if he had truly just been awakened from the dead [73]. Both Saul's and Samuel's parts are written for bass-baritone, but they are differentiated by their ranges. When Samuel responds to Saul, his range is higher and he sounds angry. Samuel asks Saul:

Did I not foretell thy fate, When, madly disobedient, thou didst spare The curst Amalekite...

This reference to the events of 1 Samuel 15 suggests that Saul's madness provoked the actions for which he was eventually disowned. The biblical text, however, does not mention the 'evil spirit' until chap. 16, and it seems to be the result, not the cause, of God's abandoning Saul. As Raphael points out, in the biblical text, disobedience is followed by madness and rage; the librettist Jennens alters this to madness followed by disobedience and rage (Raphael 2007: 19). This version does not explain Saul's madness, but it does explain his actions. The biblical text's suggestion that God himself caused Saul's madness was clearly unacceptable to Jennens (and possibly Handel).

Before announcing Saul's fate, the witch's voice is preceded by a descending horn passage, representing the netherworld. This is the end of the scene; the witch does not offer Saul food or any other kindness, so the character remains otherworldly and not particularly sympathetic. This is true for most later depictions as well.

Nineteenth-Century Works

In **Hiller**'s oratorio, Saul's visit to the necromancer of Endor (from here on 'witch,' 'Hexe' in the libretto) takes place in Part 3 (No. 31). He sings:

God has turned away from me.

My dreams point to void and emptiness...

This frosty night has veiled the stars and moon.

Here is the witch, I will wake her up,

To learn how my destiny will unfold.

As in other places in this oratorio, the librettist has added an internal soliloquy, enhancing the portrayal of Saul and allowing the listener to empathize with him. This soliloquy replaces the narrative account in 28.6-7. The orchestra starts softly, with slowly ascending chords. Most of Saul's text is sung unaccompanied or over sustained chords. When he sings of reaching the necromancer's door, the accompaniment accelerates and grows much louder, with sharp staccato chords (190, pv; 364). A long scene between Saul and the witch follows (No. 32):

Witch: Who is knocking at my door in the dark night?

Saul: Come out.

Witch: What is your wish, stranger?

Saul: You must conjure up whom I tell you.
Witch: You know that Saul has forbidden magic.

Saul: I know he is mocking you.

Witch: You are trapping me, if I obey you I must die!

Saul: As the Lord lives, I promise you this misdeed will not be on

you.

Witch: Deep pain lies on your brow, and so I will be subservient to

you. Who is it you want me to bring up?

Saul: Bring up Samuel the prophet.

Witch: Gods, come and raise him up...it is Samuel—you are Saul!

Why did you trick me?

Saul: Do not fear, and speak: is his aspect frightening? His face?

Witch: He is old and gray, in white silk, with sad gestures.

Saul: I bow to the ground in awe. Witch: All you gods, protect me!

This text stays close to 28.8-14, with minor differences. Saul is alone, not accompanied by his men (28.8). The witch shows compassion early in the scene when she comments on the pain she perceives on Saul's brow. Samuel is in 'white silk' instead of in a cloak.

The dialogue is a recitative. The witch's opening is accompanied by two measures of three descending quarter notes, played very softly. The two measures of Saul's entrance each contains two short ff eighth-notes (365). The contrast is immediate, with the witch's music hesitant and soft while Saul's is loud and assertive. The same pattern is heard for the subsequent two phrases. For the next several measures, there is only sparse accompaniment under both

singers (366-367). The pattern of slow descending quarter notes returns when the witch sings about seeing pain on Saul's brow (367, last measure).

When Saul announces Samuel's name, groups of loud chords in a dotted rhythm introduce several ominous measures of four 16th-note groups repeating the same pattern (369). This suspenseful sound continues and is picked up by other sections of the orchestra, over the witch's music. Her opening word, 'Gods' ('Götter') is sung on a descending octave, c''-c' (369, last measure). The buzzing sound of the 16th-notes stops abruptly when the witch sings Samuel's name (370, m. 4).

When the witch begins recounting what she sees, she is accompanied by soft sustained half-notes (371, m. 6-7). The measure before Saul says he will bow to the ground, three very soft chords are heard. The same pattern of three quarter-notes followed by a whole note continues for the witch's line. She sings 'Protect me' twice, the second time completely unaccompanied (372, m. 6). In the next measure, the buzzing 16th-note pattern returns (372, m. 7-8). These constant rhythmical shifts vividly depict the changing moods throughout this scene, as well as the underlying fear and uncertainty of both characters.

Samuel asks Saul what he wants (No. 33), and the dialogue that follows stays very close to the biblical text (28.15-19). In the libretto, however, after hearing Samuel's words of doom, Saul begs Samuel not to leave. He sings 'Stay' ('Verweile') in pleading half-step phrases. In another addition to this scene, not found in the biblical text, a chorus of the 'women of Endor' sings, followed by a warriors' chorus.

Both choruses are very upbeat, in C major and a quick 2/4 tempo filled with dotted rhythms. Saul answers, but not specifically to either group:

Strength is elsewhere.

My body is weary, my heart is faint
And tired of life.

He sings these lines very softly, accompanied by single 8th–note chords at the start of each measure, with unison bass chords below descending chromatically. This music creates a breathless and exhausted sound which underlines Saul's state. After the choruses reprise their words, the witch sings a solo (No. 35) (Fig. 19):

O strengthen yourself, take a little bread, Do not spurn your servant. You lie on the ground overcome with pain, And with you on the ground lies The salvation of Judah's land. See, my heart feels great compassion for your need.

This text slightly alters the actions of the biblical necromancer, who additionally slaughters and prepares her only calf for Saul along with the bread

(28.24-25). This very kind deed, especially towards one who had banned her trade in necromancy, suggests a woman with great empathy. The libretto amplifies the quality of compassion through her text, though she only gives Saul a little bread. But she also speaks words of encouragement, and even reminds him of his historical importance.

The music opens with a plangent oboe solo (389). The witch's opening lines are accompanied only by single and low sustained notes. The oboe then repeats the short theme she has just sung, and a few measures later, the



Figure 19. Hiller: Witch of Endor.

flute echoes her next phrase. This pattern continues as the witch's measures alternate with oboes and flutes echoing her theme. Clarinets play the final repetition of this theme. The interweaving of winds with the voice creates a tender effect.

The women's chorus reprises their earlier music (No. 36). Then Saul sings about the coming battle:

The night has flown, the battle already rages, I can see their long squadrons glorious in battle again. Strengthen yourselves, your sinews and veins! And if I cannot turn away Jehova's final judgment, At least I will die a hero and a king!

In this dramatic solo, when Saul reaches the description of the long squadrons, the word 'long' (*langen*) is sustained for 3 measures (5 beats) while under the voice the orchestra begins a series of dotted and syncopated beats, building in volume. The rest of the solo includes alternating dotted rhythms, sustained high notes and a continual building of excitement. The battle is then vividly described by the women's chorus.

There is no clear conclusion to this scene. The impression is that the chorus of women and warriors is standing just outside the necromancer's dwelling, aware of what is going on. They urge Saul on to battle, after he has just learned of his imminent defeat from Samuel. The necromancer offers him bread in a final compassionate gesture. Saul does not speak again in the biblical scene, but in this libretto he expresses the will to fight and die as a 'hero and king', a major departure from the biblical Saul. His fighting words and music lead directly into a description of the battle itself.

In **Nuhn**'s oratorio, Saul addresses God before visiting the witch (*Hexe*) of Endor' (No. 2:) [no musical figures will be included, since this score can be accessed at an online archive: http://www.archive.org/details/dieknigeinisra00nuhn]:

In your holy tent I questioned you, but your mouth remained closed to me. So now I call you, spirits of the underworld, Hear me! Woman, speak your bold magic words So that out of the dark place of souls Samuel the wise will arise.

Although Saul is singing of anger and frustration, his music for the opening lines is soft and lyrical, and the mood is sad. When he realizes God really will not answer him, the melody stops. The next lines are declaimed loudly, as recitative accompanied only by occasional chords and *tremolo*. Saul's final line is sung on much lower pitches than the rest of this section, down to G# (65, last measure).

The woman recognizes Saul, but he reassures her not to fear. She then begins to bring up Samuel:

Ghost of Samuel, son of Elkanah, As you travelled down to the pit, So now rise up to the light: Appear!

She sings two more invocations after this one: in one she invokes Abraham and all the other patriarchs of his people, and in the last one she invokes 'Adonai Tzvaot' (using the Hebrew for God of Hosts). Three invocations are also found in other librettos, and the common point of inspiration might well have been the witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, who perform three invocations.

The invocations are sung over a *tremolo* in the orchestra and heavily accented chords. The first invocation begins in a low range, on a, and when the necromancer describes the descent into the pit, her voice drops to g (66, 2nd-3rd staves). The second invocation starts exactly the same as the first, but varies after the opening measures. The first two invocations are followed by measures of rapid high 16th-note passages (66, 3rd staff; 67, 1st-2nd staves), meant to evoke a sense of mystery or suspense. The third invocation opens a fifth higher, and the final 'Appear' ('Erscheine') is sung on the highest note of the recitative, f'' (67, 3rd staff, m. 4). This is a relatively high pitch for a contralto and has an otherworldly sound. That is why this voice is always chosen for the role (the only exception is Handel). Samuel appears and sings:

Saul, why do you disturb my rest? What will happen to you, is as I said: Through God the judge and avenger Your disobedience will be punished.

His remaining words are based very closely on 28.17. Between the necromancer's conclusion and Samuel's entrance, several slow and quiet measures are heard, ending with two chords separated by sustained rests (67, 4th staff, last measure). The long pauses create a sense of anticipation, helping the audience visualize the slowly rising ghostly figure of Samuel. The second chord is a dominant C7, anticipating a resolution to F major. Samuel enters on a low F (F), but unaccompanied, so the resolution is not obvious. The tonal ambiguity continues in the next measure, as he sings c over an open fifth chord (C-G), suggesting that the key could be either C major or C minor. Only in the next measure, when he sings c flat, does the tonality momentarily sound like C minor. However, as he goes on, clear C major chords are heard, though the key is F major (67, bottom). This tonal ambiguity effectively depicts the unknown.

Samuel's music bears an uncanny resemblance to parts of Wagner's operas, whose earlier works date to a few years before Nuhn's oratorio

(1867), so this resemblance may not be coincidence. The music is solemn and stately, in a steady 4/4 time (68). A measure after Samuel stops singing, the key suddenly modulates into F minor as Saul sings, joined by Michal and Jonathan (68, Reh. A). This is one of the few librettos that includes Michal and Jonathan in the Endor scene.

Saul: Woe, my bones are jittery (aufgelöst)

And the terror of God has seized me!

Jonathan: No, father, I will not leave you alone, I will follow the path

to death with you.

Michal: Lord, do not punish my father's delusions,

Let the magic be powerless.

An *ostinato* of hammered triplet groups of C is heard under the trio (68, bottom), dissonant against the D-flat sung by Saul. Jonathan and finally Michal join and sing in a kind of *fugato* as they all open with the same phrase. They then sing slightly different tunes, but all the phrases in both the accompaniment and the voices are descending. Saul's final phrase, singing again of his terror of God, is doubled in the orchestra, which has stopped playing the *ostinato* in those measures (69, 2nd staff). The combination of the *ostinato*, occasional dissonance, and descending phrases in all three voices creates a dramatically compelling moment. As in many other librettos, the idea of Saul and his children being so united is a fantasy that attempts to correct the complete absence of such unity in the biblical story.

Several measures filled with rapid 16th-note passages introduce the necromancer's entrance (70, top). She sings:

The magic was only a swindle, and light ('smoke and mirrors'). God himself sent the man of God.

The 'man of God' is presumably Samuel. This is the only libretto in which the necromancer denies her own skills. It is possible that Nuhn was uncomfortable with her portrayal in the Bible, where her prediction is accurate. Over her words, Michal, Jonathan, and Saul re-enter singing of being seized by the terror of God. Samuel interrupts the trio, after a few loudly accented chords:

The battle will strike you down As God's terror seizes you.

These two lines are sung in strong, heavily marked measures of quarternotes (71, top). After more repetitions of the loud chords that preceded the announcement, the music abruptly softens and changes. The quintet sings:

Oh do not let your people be defeated, Have pity, mighty God, Without you Saul cannot defeat the enemy, Dagon, and Astarte. The music, appropriate to the words, is prayerful and hymn-like. The accompaniment, groups of *staccato* 8th-notes, creates a light and strumming effect (71, bottom). A new section is introduced by a brief two-measure duet between Michal and the witch (73, top), in which they implore God to be gracious to them. This is the only work I have found with a duet between these two women.

After their duet, all the previous text is repeated by the full quintet, but Michal now sings a descant above the other voices (73, bottom). This beautiful musical effect underlines Michal's strong presence and the fervency of her prayer. The mood changes suddenly as all the characters sing a two-measure phrase entirely on a unison C, repeating that God's terror has seized them (75, top). It is as if they were previously caught up in their prayer and suddenly realized their desperate situation. The words sound almost spoken in this low range, effectively expressing their terror.

In the remainder of the lengthy quintet, brief solo lines and duets are interspersed. Some sections feature a bass *ostinato*, others a *tremolo* or other repetitive passages (75-79). In the final measures, everyone but Samuel sings single *staccato* quarter-notes off the beat, while Samuel repeats his gloomy words *on* the beat (79-80). Musically this creates a sense of breathlessness as well as fear in everyone but Samuel, who sounds steady by comparison. The scene ends with *ff* 16th-note passages quickly dying down to conclude on two *staccato* unison Fs (80, last measure).

The obvious change here is the presence of Jonathan and Michal in the scene. This completely alters the sense of mystery and secrecy found in the biblical narrative, and misses the point. The necromancer also admits that it is God, not she, who has the power. This, plus the supporting presence of Saul's children, makes the scene less unworldly and gloomy than in other musical works. The inclusion of a duet in which Michal and the necromancer plead with God together suggests Nuhn's discomfort with the less religious tone of the biblical tale itself.

Act IV of **Parry**'s oratorio opens with an aria for the Evil Spirit telling Saul his time has come. This is a completely invented scene, but I am discussing it here because it is a lengthy and important buildup to the scene at Endor. The spirit's aria has many of the same characteristics as her earlier ones. Parry paints this character musically through such devices as jagged rhythms and unusual intervals. The act opens with a low *tremolo* followed by meandering passages with no clear home key, only settling into F# minor on the Evil Spirit's opening note, c#' (172, top). She sings:

Saul! Is thy will attained? Now are thou king indeed! Lone in thy might. Hearken, a sound as of arms Comes from far,
The sound of an host
Of men marching to war.
God hath forsaken thee!
Man doth but fear thee!
Friend, none is near thee!
Saul! The hour of thy doom is here!

The orchestra continues its rumbling meandering passages under the voice. In the second measure, there is a dramatic leap from d'' down to d' on 'will attained?' The next phrase starts on c#' again, but ascends rapidly to e'' over an E-minor chord (172, 3rd staff, last measure). The tonality seems to shift every few measures, underlining Saul's uncertainty and fear. It is hard to imagine this as his inner voice, since it is externalized on stage by a female voice. But the different sound and quality of the music is a signal to the audience. In fact, this is the most forward-looking and almost 'modern' music in the score. The continual 16th-note passages in the orchestra are filled with chromatic intervals and have no clear tonality (172).

The mood changes in the next section, starting with 'Hearken'. The music is softer, and marked by persistent dotted 16th-note figures in both an orchestral *ostinato* and in the vocal part. This rhythm clearly represents the army of which the spirit is singing (173, 1st-2nd staves). The accompaniment changes again on 'Illness hath o'ertaken thee', to very rhythmic groups of 16th-note triplets, against which the spirit sings 8th-notes. The two-against-three rhythm is complex and underlines the steadiness of the vocal line. In the final lines, both the words 'fear thee' and 'near thee' are sung on a descending octave, e'' to e' (174, m. 3 and 1 before Reh. C), which leads to the sustained f'' on 'Saul'. The repetition of his name is sung a fourth lower on e', after which the orchestra modulates through several keys.

Immediately after the Evil Spirit predicts doom for Saul, the Israelites sing of war at their gates and ask Saul to lead them into battle (175-179). He expresses his fear and uncertainty:

An horrible dread hath overwhelmed me. I am become a man that hath no strength... I cry unto God...
But He heareth not.

In the biblical text, the narrator relates that Saul inquired of the Lord and received no answer, and that he asks his courtiers to find a necromancer for him (28. 6-7). This libretto replaces the narrator with Saul's interior monologue. In the first part of this recitative, he is accompanied only by a *tremolo*, reflecting his terror. The orchestra plays lyrical passages when Saul sings of crying out to God (180, m. 2 after Reh. H). His final phrase ends on a very low note, A, musically indicating his total despair (180, last measure).

The Evil Spirit enters immediately, starting on his ending note (two octaves higher), thus sounding like an extension of Saul. She sings:

Thou enquirest of Him,
And He giveth thee no answer...
Go thou to Endor,
There a woman dwells who holdeth converse with
The spirits of the dead;
She shall reveal to thee
What God withholds.
Farewell! O Saul,
My mission is accomplished.

In the opening lines, the spirit is mocking Saul's words, singing *a cappella* in an exaggerated imitation of the melody he has just sung (181, top). She continues singing over a series of repeated chords in the orchestra played off the beat, a very anxious sound (181, 3rd staff). The phrase 'She shall reveal to thee...' starts on *e*" and descends down to *a*. The final words of farewell are sung simply and softly (181, Reh. L).

The tone of the spirit's music ranges from sarcastic to kind. Dramatically the 'character' does not always make sense, since in this scene she is telling Saul something (about the woman of Endor) that he supposedly doesn't know. How can his internal consciousness supply him with such information? When expressing Saul's secret thoughts, the use of an external voice to express Saul's feelings works very effectively. The spirit was more goading in the earlier scenes, which added to the depiction of a possessed and paranoid Saul. Here, her role is less clear, especially in her final pronouncement 'My mission is accomplished'. It sounds as though telling Saul about the woman of Endor was the mission, but this does not fit with the earlier characterization.

Scene 2, 'At Endor', opens with a series of interesting and Wagnerian rising chord progressions with no clear home key, ending on an A-flat minor chord with an intruding dissonant F (183, 2nd staff, m. 1). After a measure's rest, a very soft, Brahmsian melody is heard in the orchestra (the opening measures bear a remarkable resemblance to Brahms's A-minor Intermezzo for piano, op. 76 no. 7). This theme will be heard at significant moments much later in the oratorio, so I am calling it the 'witch motif'. It begins on a *pp* E-flat minor chord in the first inversion. This unusual tonality features 6 flats. The second and third beats of all the measures from here leading up to the witch's entrance are a staccato descending third (G flat-E flat), an ominous *ostinato* (183, 2nd-4th staves). Saul sings over a repetition of the first few measures of the theme just heard (183, 4th staff) (Fig. 20):

Art thou she that holdest converse with the souls departed?

There is an enharmonic shift from the E-flat minor chord concluding Saul's phrase, to B major for the witch's entrance, when the G flat-E flat



Figure 20. Parry: Witch of Endor.

become F#-D# (183, bottom). This effective musical device alerts the listener that something has changed. In a short recitative, the witch tells Saul she is the last one left in the land who can call forth the dead. The orchestra sustains a high chord through her first few measures, musically representing a 'higher world.' But as she continues, the chords switch from B major to its relative G# minor and drop lower and lower as the witch sings of 'Sheol's depths' (184, top). On her final word 'dead,' the A# she would be expected to sing at the end of her phrase becomes an enharmonic B flat, with a repetition of the theme heard in the previous section (184, Reh. B).

Saul says 'Bring up for me, Samuel!' On the name 'Samuel', there is an unexpected shift to C major, underlined by a bass *tremolo* on C (184, 4th staff). The orchestra plays increasingly faster passages, leading up to several measures containing three groups of 16th-note arpeggios (185, top). When the witch enters after these passages, she sings 'Saul!' *ff* over A-minor arpeggios with an intrusive and dissonant F# (185, 4th-5th staves). Over this accompaniment, Saul asks the witch what she sees, and she answers:

I see as it were a god coming out of the earth, An old man covered with a robe (28.13-14).

On the word 'god', the tonality switches to bright C major and the witch reaches her highest pitch, e", relatively high for a contralto voice and therefore an unusual sound. The arpeggios gradually slow from 32nd- to 16th-notes and then die out just before Samuel's entrance (186, bottom). After Samuel

asks Saul why he brought him up, Saul responds (text is 28.15). The rhythm of these passages is irregular and syncopated, with a halting and breathless sound. The pitch of each measure descends chromatically, indicating loss of hope. At the end, the orchestra reprises the melody heard in the opening of the scene.

There are a few notable additions to Samuel's words in this libretto:

Thou hast done evil in the sight of the Lord.

Thou has spared those thou should'st have smitten;

Thou has smitten those thou should'st have spared.

Thou hast rebelled against the word of the Lord.

The major gap in the story of God's punishment of Saul, as discussed elsewhere, is what Saul did to deserve it. Parry's libretto amplifies the single line 'because you did not obey Yhwh and did not execute his wrath upon the Amalekites' (28.18), which is more specific. Parry adds several other possible reasons for Saul's punishment, two very general, two more specific; only one of these four is in the biblical text.

The sung music in this recitative is declamatory, while the orchestra fluctuates between heavy chords underlining Samuel's words, and short melodic phrases echoing and underlining those words (188-89). The climactic verse, when Samuel tells Saul God has given the kingdom to David, is sung unaccompanied right after a G-major chord in the orchestra. The passage, 'e'en to David' is also in G, but the last three ascending sung notes are *g-be-e-flat'*, where the last note should have been *d'* in this key. The unexpected diminished fourth signals a key change on the word 'David', to C minor. The opening chord includes an intrusive A natural (part of that key but dissonant when included in the chord). Samuel's voice descends an octave, *e flat'* down to *e flat*, so this very dramatic moment is highlighted by several musical devices.

Samuel's foretelling of the coming defeat of the Israelites, and the death of Saul and his sons the next day, is sung slowly and accompanied mostly by continually modulating sustained chords. A *tremolo* introduces the announcement of the death of Saul and his sons. At the conclusion of Samuel's recitative, the melody that opened the entire scene is reprised (the 'witch motif')—but in E-flat major instead of E-flat minor (Brahms modulated similarly in the Intermezzo mentioned above). This brilliantly suggests a change of mood. There is no more uncertainty or foreboding: Saul's fate is known. The fact that it is not a happy resolution is not the issue. The transposing of the same melody musically depicts a complete change in outlook

After an orchestral interlude the witch sings a long aria (9 pages, one of the longest in the oratorio; 192-201), in which she describes seeing the battle as it takes place, as if in a swoon. (This scene will be discussed in the next Chapter.)

Parry creates a highly dramatic scene through musical devices such as unusual flatted keys, enharmonic shifts, and unstable rhythms and tonality. Some of these are modern for that era, and clearly designed to shock or at least alert the audience into an awareness of the supernatural elements of the scene.

Twentieth-Century Works

Gabriel's Act 5 unfolds at the 'Witches' Place'. The directions specify that 'All action and situation should be as weird and uncanny as ability and condition will admit' (3). The music reflects this, opening with a hesitant and breathless repetition of C-minor chords punctuated by rapid triplet runs played three octaves apart in two measures (No. 35, 'Dark the Soul that Covets'). Repeated drum-rolls and rapidly descending chromatic triads are musical devices used here and nowhere else in the work, to create an otherworldly mood.

The major change from the biblical version is the presence of a 'chorus of witches,' rather than just a single necromancer. The composer might have been influenced by the scene in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, in which three witches appear. The chorus sings in unison in an alto range, with effective use of the lowest notes in that range such as g (92, 3rd staff). They sing text more appropriate to a coven of witches than to the necromancer of Endor, but this might reflect Gabriel's time and his audience's expectations. (I will capitalize the word Witch to distinguish the witch of Endor from the other witches in the scene).

After the initial chorus, a scene evolves between the Witch and a few individual witches. In between their dialogue, the chorus continually returns to their opening, brooding melody. The Witch does not seem as well-informed as others in her coven, who inform her that David has been driven into exile, Samuel has died, and 'Israel's army has no head' (94, 3rd-4th staves). The Witch asks why Saul cannot lead them, and another witch informs her that he is mad with jealousy and has wasted time and money trying to kill David. As the conversation continues, the music becomes much wilder, with very high *tremolos* and rapid chromatic runs. Over this accompaniment, the witches continue speaking, rather than singing. One witch informs the Witch that the end is near for Saul, who is crouching with a coward's fear (95). The music becomes even more frenzied, before the opening chorus is reprised. The final line, repeated several times, is:

Who shall be our victim? He whose conscience pricks 'im.

This verse is an interesting echo of the second witch in *Macbeth* who says 'By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes'. Saul enters in disguise with attendants. A dialogue ensues between Saul and the Witch (97). He tells her he is a 'poor wayfaring man', and refuses to

answer when she asks if he is a saint or sinner. When he tells her he must see the prophet Samuel immediately, she sings:

'Twere better thou shouldst say, 'Restore my sight to me.' As sun to light of day the prophet was to thee.

Saul asks what she means. She answers:

Stand back, dear sir, beware! A curse on thee to touch A witch's single hair.

Then, to steady repeated 8th-note chords, she sings to the spirits of the night to arise from the grave. The climactic phrase, 'Come forth, thou spirit', rises up to *g-flat''*, quite high in the contralto range and an otherworldly sound (Fig. 21). She sings this over a rapid *tremolo* and in the next measure the orchestra plays a furious *ff* chromatically descending scale over two octaves, ending on a long trill. In a total change from the original narrative, the Witch cries out 'I fail!' and Saul calls them all deceivers.



Figure 21. Gabriel: Witch of Endor.

Michal enters at this moment, to Saul's (and the audience's) obvious surprise, and tries to discourage her father from using 'such arts', which will only bring despair (100). He tells her to go away, but she continues to insist that God is near, that Saul should look up, not down, for comfort. Saul continues to order her to leave, but she ignores him. Instead, she kneels and prays to God (101, bottom)—inside a witches' coven! Surely this was meant to portray the power of prayer and also create in Michal the figure of an ideal pious woman.

Her prayer is sung in 4/4 time accompanied by sustained chords, a very sharp—and probably deliberate-- contrast to the frenzied music in the scene just heard. Musically this is distinguishing the sacred from the profane. The directions indicate that a 'sustained organ accompaniment' should be used, heightening the religious mood (3). The final two lines of Michal's prayer open with 'O holy night, O star so bright' and the tune could have been taken straight out of any Baptist hymnal, of which Gabriel produced hundreds.

Michal's prayer ends on an F-major chord, and is suddenly cut off as the witches sing 'Ah' on a descending octave *d flat"-d flat'*, harshly dissonant with Michal's last note. They are reacting in frenzied music to the appearance of Samuel (103, top). His words to Saul are both different and harsher than in the biblical version (104):

Ah Saul, thy sins condemn thee now! Thy greed, thy jealous rage, thy hate, Hath led thee on 'til now too late, Jehovah His decree hath set, Thou didst His laws, His love forget, Thy doom is sure, is near at hand, Another soon will rule the land!

As in the much earlier Samuel–Saul scene in this oratorio, Samuel gives much more specific, and different, reasons for God's rejection of Saul than are found in the book of Samuel ('because you did not obey the Lord', 28.18). He also does not mention the battle of the next day. Saul begs Samuel to save him, but Samuel tells him it is too late. Saul 'bows in anguish' as the scene ends.

There are many changes from the biblical narrative here. The most obvious change is the presence of more than one 'witch'. There is also no mention of Saul's prohibition of their profession. The biblical necromancer's offer of food and hospitality is also omitted, as in virtually all musical works. The text sung by the witches is closer to Shakespeare than the Bible. Michal's unexpected presence alters the tone of the biblical scene beyond recognition. But Gabriel's agenda has been obvious throughout the oratorio: to extol God's power, and to exaggerate Saul's failings in an attempt to justify God's punishment of him.

The narrator in **Honegger**'s oratorio relates Saul's despair and his decision to go to Endor to see the 'prophetess,' la *Pythonisse*. (I will refer to her as she is called in the libretto). In this highly dramatic scene, entitled 'Incantation' [12], Saul, in disguise, asks the prophetess to bring up Samuel (28.8-14). The prophetess declaims throughout in a very low and melodramatic voice, rather than singing. The orchestration vividly depicts a mysterious setting. Tambourine beats open the scene and continue throughout, along with cymbals and low sinuous passages in the bass clarinet, which slowly ascend and are then picked up in clarinet and flute. The tempo is extremely slow, gradually increasing during the scene. The prophetess's opening words are:



Figure 22. Honegger: Sorceress of Endor.

By fire, by water, by speech and by breath, by sight and by sound, break your chains. Appear! It is time! Om. Om.

On the words 'Appear! Appear!' quick short passages are heard on the piccolo and harp, followed by cymbal, a pattern that occurs twice (41, 43). After the second repetition, the rhythm in the tambourine changes abruptly from eight 8th-notes to four groups of triplets, which are doubled in the trumpets, while winds and brass play irregular jagged patterns off the beat (42). The tension continues to build until the prophetess proclaims her third 'Appear!' (Fig. 22):

Give your blood. Sense the blood, sense life, I drag you up to earth. Appear. Appear. Fire burns me...it comes into me, it pierces me to the marrow. O dark fire...like a branding iron. Up, up, appear. Ah! You have tricked me, you are Saul!

By the time she concludes with her closing shriek (not on all recordings), accompanied by a crash of cymbals, the piccolo and other instruments seem to be shrieking themselves, playing very high and dissonant phrases. The harp plays a *glissando* in the climactic measure, in which the entire orchestra is playing, and all play a short *sff* 8th-note followed by a sustained rest, when Samuel enters (43). Three invocations are found in other librettos, and they may all possibly recall the witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Samuel speaks only one line, asking Saul why he has troubled him, and then the narrator continues. This libretto eliminates the Saul–Samuel dialogue as well as the conclusion of the scene with the prophetess. Samuel's prophecy to Saul is summed up in one sentence by the narrator.

This is by far the most dramatic scene in the oratorio, but the focus is almost entirely on the prophetess. Saul and Samuel are both incidental. The composer and librettist deviate a great deal from the biblical account, adding incantations and other texts for the prophetess. Saul's prohibition of the art of necromancy is never mentioned and Samuel's speech to Saul is not included in the scene. The part of the prophetess is often assumed by famous actresses whose flair for the melodramatic is unrestricted in this libretto. (The scene is far more exciting on the Naxos than on the EMI recording).

In **Nielsen**'s opera, Act IV opens in a hut in Endor. A lengthy orchestral introduction sets the mood for the stormy night and the mysterious scene that follows (this orchestral prelude has been recorded far more often than the full opera). The opening chords are *tremolo* open fifths on strings, an unearthly sound not grounded in any key. After a more lyrical section, these open fifths are heard again, leading up to much stormier and more dramatic music.

When the curtain rises, the necromancer is sleeping in her hut. A lyrical, slightly modal viola solo opens, followed by a second viola joining in a duet (220). This viola theme is woven throughout the scene to come, a kind

of *Leitmotif* of the necromancer, who also sings the theme. The dreamy mood is shattered twice by unexpected rapid low *tremolos*. The tempo and volume then increase suddenly and the necromancer wakes up, asking who is knocking (220, 5th staff). Abner, who is accompanying Saul, answers that they are travelers. This is one of the few works in which Saul does not come to the necromancer alone, since it heightens the drama to have only the two of them in the scene. In the biblical version, Saul is accompanied by two unidentified men.

The necromancer says her hut is not a tavern, and Abner threatens her, saying they are powerful men and can break down her door. When she has let them in, Abner asks if she is the woman who can raise up the dead. She asks why he is tempting her, since the king has cast out fortune-tellers from the country. Saul reassures her that she will not be harmed (28.10). When he tells her he wants her to bring up Samuel, she is terrified, saying:

The hut will shake in its foundations. The floor will shift like sand Under Samuel's feet

The music for these verses is faster and more dramatic than it was up to this point, with the orchestra doubling or echoing the necromancer's lines (224, 3rd-4th staves). To reassure her, Saul throws the necromancer a purse of gold. This is a complete departure from every other libretto, and changes the nature of the necromancer. She shows kindness to Saul in both the biblical narrative and many later librettos, but here she is depicted as a professional. She accepts the gold immediately and agrees to go ahead. She warns Saul not to meet Samuel's eyes, to turn to the wall and bow down to the ground. The music for the warning is the viola theme that opened the scene (225, 3rd staff, m. 3). After Saul and Abner have turned away, the necromancer begins her incantations:

Hades, Hades!
Give up from your embrace
Samuel's gloomswathed soul!
Give him back his living face,
Put words in his mouth...
Samuel...come!

The role is taken by a contralto, the lowest woman's voice and most typically chosen for this role because of its slightly otherworldly quality. Up to this point in the scene, she has sung in the normal range for that voice, c'-c". Her first note in this section is a-flat", descending an octave on the word 'Scheol' (226, m. 3-4). ('Scheol' is sung in the Danish version, but 'שאול is actually a Hebrew, not a Danish word for Hades) (Fig. 23).

The tempo has suddenly shifted from a moderate 4/4 to a very fast, and fff 3/4 with a distinctly Wagnerian sound. This necromancer may be modeled



Figure 23. Nielsen: Witch of Endor.

more on Wagner's Erda than Verdi's Ulrica. The prophetess Erda is found in Scene 4 of *Das Rheingold* and is based on the prophetess Wala in Norse mythology. She tells Wotan that he is doomed, but does not call up the dead. Nevertheless, there are musical similarities.

Several measures after singing her *a-flat*", the necromancer descends to c#' (226, 3rd staff, m. 7). Then when she calls out Samuel's name, it is once again on a descending octave *a-flat*"-*a-flat*' (227, 3rd staff), and the last word 'Come' is sung on a sustained g'' (227, bottom). These are high notes for the contralto voice and have a very particular, almost eerie timbre.

A glimmer in the hut suggests Samuel's spirit is approaching. The necromancer screams at Saul as she recognizes him, and asks why he has deceived her (28.12). A loud cymbal crash accentuates her terror (227, bottom). When the necromancer recognizes Saul, her voice drops to c' (228, m. 5). The music abruptly softens, and repeated *staccato* 8th-notes in the violas, almost an *ostinato*, heighten the sense of mystery.

Saul, almost whispering, asks the necromancer what she sees. The *ostinato* abruptly stops as solemn, soft sustained notes are heard. The key is suddenly C major for these few measures, signaling a complete change in mood (228, 3rd staff, m. 2). The necromancer tells Saul she sees a god, an old man wrapped in a cloak (28.14). This last word is song on a descending octave *g'-g*, the lowest note she has sung in the scene. Saul whispers Samuel's name twice, almost inaudibly, over a sustained C major chord (229, top).

The music at Samuel's entrance shifts from C major to F major, from 3/4 to 4/4 time, and brass predominates. The Saul–Samuel dialogue stays very close to the biblical text (28.15-19). Only in the opening verses does the librettist embellish the text:

Samuel: Saul! Why do you lift the sweatcloth away from my brow

and loose the ties of my shroud on my weary body?

Why do you trouble me again?

Saul: Be merciful and hear me! The Philistine host is strong

and terrifies me greatly.

Interesting changes here include more flowery language for Samuel, and Saul's asking for mercy and admitting his terror. None of these elements, which add dimensions to the characters, is found in the biblical dialogue. The remainder of the text is biblical verse. Samuel's Wagnerian music is sung softly and without emotion, in a low range.

Saul's opening lines are marked *ad lib.*, meaning he is to sing them freely, to sound more like speech. The brass in the orchestra is replaced immediately by strings on Saul's entrance (229, last measure). Sustained chords are heard over his almost whispered words and he, too, sings in a low range. This is some of the softest music Saul sings in the opera, reflecting his terror and awe before the ghost of Samuel.

Scenes between two basses are extremely rare in opera; the most notable one is that between King Carlos and the Grand Inquisitor in Verdi's *Don Carlo*. It is possible that Nielsen was trying to create a similar dramatic effect. Both are scenes between the two most powerful men of their time, even though Samuel is coming back from the dead in this scene. Several of Samuel's measures strongly echo the music of Verdi's scene (231, top staff).

When Samuel responds to Saul, the regular 4/4 rhythm returns under Samuel's very measured singing (230, last measure). The range is higher in this section, and grows higher and louder as Samuel reaches the climactic line in which he announces that Saul and his sons will be joining him the next day (28.19; 232, 1st-2nd staves). His final note is a ff d', held for five beats over drumbeats in the orchestra and constantly modulating chords. The section ends more softly in D major, over soft and steady drumbeats (232, 3rd staff).

The remainder of the biblical scene, in which the necromancer feeds and comforts Saul, is not included. It rarely is in operas, but in this particular opera she is portrayed as a paid professional, so it would not make sense for her to be hospitable. Instead, the necromancer, Saul and Abner all fall on their faces (in the biblical version, only Saul does this). Then shouts are heard outside, as warriors are calling for Saul, asking where he is. Saul and Abner realize the enemy is upon them, and Saul's final words are 'Samuel, help me die!' which ends on f' sustained for 6 beats (233, bottom). This is

a high range for bass and musically is a vivid depiction of Saul's despair, especially after the very soft singing in the scene leading up to it.²

The focus in this scene is slightly less on the necromancer than on Saul and Samuel, unlike many other works. Though Nielsen has included 'incantations' and unearthly music for the necromancer as other operas do, he has also included a very dramatic scene for Saul and Samuel that amplifies their relationship. The highly dramatic music in this scene evokes both Wagner and Verdi, possibly not by accident. The music adds weight and pathos to the portrayal of Saul.

In **Milhaud**'s opera, Saul is disguised as a beggar (an elaboration of the biblical account, which does not specify the disguise), heading out with two servants to see the Sorceress of Endor, *la Pythonisse*. The libretto for this scene follows the biblical account almost literally, though paraphrased (28.8-25). Like every other composer discussed in this book, Milhaud tries to create a particular, eerie atmosphere for this scene about ghosts and spirits. In the opening measures, piccolos and flutes play rapid figures in a high register, contrasted with bassoons and contra-bassoons playing parallel figures in a different tonality—a minor second apart—and several octaves lower (106, top). This seems to musically represent the netherworlds, above and below.

In the middle of these measures, an E-flat minor and an F major chord, which were heard in the earlier passages but not as distinctly, are now played loudly in full orchestra simultaneously and moving in opposing directions. This might be another musical suggestion of 'other worlds'. A duet ensues:

Saul: Woman! If in order to find you, I walked all day and night, it's

because I need you.

Sorceress: No, no! You will not enter.
Saul: It is a matter of life and death.

Sorceress: For me too, you know the King's orders.

Saul: Woman, I beg you! Bring up the one I tell you.

Sorceress: You know well that the King has banned divination and

necromancy, why do you want to ensnare me and make me die?

Saul: By the living God, I swear to you that you will not be punished

for this

Sorceress: Whom do you want me to bring up?

Saul: Samuel!

One of the most unusual features in Saul's part is the frequent notation of *glissando*. This entails the voice sliding through several notes without

2. In the Allegro CD, Christoff adds a *glissando* descent from the f', and then repeats the line in a choked speaking voice—not called for in the score, but a highly dramatic improvisation (it was recorded from a live performance).

articulating them, usually called *portamento* for voices but in this score clearly marked with the *glissando* symbol. So the first word Saul sings, 'Woman' (*femme*) is slid over an ascending fifth from *a-e'*. In the next measure, the word 'day' (*jour*) is sung the same way but on an ascending sixth, and in the following measure, the word 'night' (*nuit*) is a *glissando* descent from *e flat* down to *B flat* (106, m. 4-6, 9). Saul continues to sing other words *glissando* over large intervals and the effect is of a drunk or crazed person trying to articulate his words. The orchestra continues playing 16th-notes in the extreme ranges of the orchestra (Fig. 24).

Another feature found frequently in the scene is large vocal leaps. The sorceress's opening phrase, 'you will not enter,' (tu n'entreras pas) leaps from b' down to c', a diminished octave, echoed several times in the orchestra in reverse, b to c', an augmented octave. Saul echoes this interval in his next line, sliding his voice from d flat up to c'. This pattern continues in the next few phrases, as Saul slides up intervals of sevenths, augmented



Figure 24. Milhaud: Sorceress of Endor.

sevenths or sixths (106-107). This kind of almost crazed singing is a vivid musical depiction of Saul's madness.

When the sorceress protests Saul's request, she initially sings chromatic passages over a low and very small range (107, Reh. 40). Then her voice suddenly leaps from d'' down to b, a full 10th; in the next measure, it continues to ascend and descend between b and c'' (107, Reh. 45). This music depicts if not a crazed woman, then one clearly frightened to death.

The music calms when Saul persuades the sorceress to open her door. Chords in dissonance with each other slide up and down chromatically, creating anxiety and suspense for the listener (108, Reh. 55). After Saul tells the sorceress he wants Samuel brought up, subdued measures follow, with eerie sustained and extremely dissonant chords interrupted by occasional loud brass notes. The sorceress expresses her shock at Saul's request with an exclamation ('Oh!') sung on the highest pitch she has sung in the scene, f'', followed by 'Samuel' sung an octave plus a fourth lower, on c' (108, Reh. 60). The next few measures are filled with chromatic phrases as well as another leap of over an octave, all echoed in the orchestra (108-109, Reh. 80-85). When the sorceress asks Saul why he betrayed her, she sings sustained notes while a high violin solo eerily echoes the sixth and seventh interval leaps heard frequently in the vocal line (108, m. 2 after Reh. 60). These musical devices create harrowing effects.

At the mention of his name, Samuel apparently appears immediately, because the sorceress raises her arms 'in the direction of the ghost of Samuel which she sees, but Saul cannot yet see'. The sorceress tells Saul that she recognizes him under his beggar's disguise, but Saul reassures her that she will not be harmed and asks her to tell him what she sees. Saul reassures the sorceress in a very low range of the voice—down to *A*—and then when he orders her to tell him what she sees, the range is over an octave higher, starting on *e flat'* (109, 2nd staff). Musically this effectively portrays different styles of speaking, contrasting pleading or reassuring tones with more declamatory ones.

The sorceress, in descending passages ranging over an octave (109, Reh. 70), says she sees a superhuman being rising from the ground, an old man wrapped in a cloak with white hair and eyes like two holes in their sockets. Alternating 16th-note and triplet phrases imitate the rhythm of speech, and the dissonant chords in the accompaniment are like punctuation marks under her singing (109, Reh. 75).

When Saul recognizes the figure of Samuel, he is terrified and falls to his knees, asking his forgiveness. His terror is heard in the groups of *ff* and heavily accented clashing ninth chords echoed by the contracted version of that chord, minor or major seconds (110, top). Samuel asks why Saul has disturbed his rest. A clear E-minor chord introduces Samuel, and much of his vocal line is relatively melodic in spite of the occasional dissonant intrusion.

After the sharp dissonances throughout this duet, a tonic chord comes as not only a welcome respite but also a shock. Samuel's calm measures (110, Reh. 80) are sharply contrasted to Saul's response, sung in jagged rhythms and filled with octave and sixth leaps echoed in the orchestra (110, m. 2 after Reh. 80). Saul says he is distressed: the Philistines are attacking and God has withdrawn from him, no longer answering him in dreams or prophecies. He has called up Samuel to tell him what to do.

Samuel responds 'why consult me, since God has withdrawn from you, as he declared through me, when you disobeyed him refusing to exterminate Amalek.' This second entrance (111, 2nd staff) is also announced by an E-minor chord and similar harmonies as his earlier part. Samuel continues to tell Saul that if he had listened to God then, his reign would have been assured for eternity, but now God is his enemy and has torn the crown from him to give it to David, whom he has chosen. Samuel also tells Saul that he and his armies will all be delivered up to the Philistines the next day, and that he and his sons will be taken under the earth, to Samuel.

When Samuel begins to quote God's words, the vocal line consists mostly of groups of repeated notes sung on groups of 16th-note triplets (111, Reh. 95). When he finally announces that God is now Saul's enemy, dissonant chords make their first notable appearance, though Samuel's vocal line remains relatively melodic (111, Reh. 100). When he mentions David as God's chosen, the key changes abruptly from A major to A minor, foretelling doom (112, m. 2 after Reh. 105).

When Samuel speaks of the Israelite army's defeat by the Philistines, trumpets sound out repeated notes, followed at once by rapid chromatically descending thirds in the violins. This is an eerie background to Samuel's highest notes, d' and e flat', both at the top of the bass range and dramatically very effective (112, Reh. 110). The voice drops again when Samuel tells Saul he will join him underground, and the accompaniment is its most dissonant at this point. But on the word 'son' (referring to Jonathan), a C-major chord is held for two beats and modulates to E minor, Samuel's opening key. His final note is a sustained b over this chord (112, m. 1 before Reh. 115). The orchestra, after modulating through A major into A minor, ends on a long sustained unison A with the echo of A minor still in the ear.

Saul prostrates himself at these words, and the sorceress bends over him in pity. The scene ends here, leaving out their final conversation and the necromancer's kind offer of food to Saul. Other librettos also omit that part of the scene, suggesting it may have been too odd or uncomfortable for modern audiences to see a positive portrayal of a necromancer.

Milhaud's rich musical palette is used very effectively to depict a crazed Saul, an otherworldly yet frightened necromancer, and a supremely calm Samuel. The music adds layers of emotion and drama to the scene as well as to the characters.

The opening measures of **Josef Tal**'s chamber opera, *Saul at Endor* (1955) are loud and dramatic, with rapid descending figures in the violins punctuated by repeated off-the-beat chords in horns. The descending figures are a *Leitmotif* that will recur at many points in the opera. After this opening, the music becomes softer and more flowing. The narrator announces that Samuel had died, his lines spoken over sustained chords (3, m. 36-37). After these two measures, the orchestra's opening section is repeated. The tempo slows in a new section (4, m. 60), several measures of regular timpani beats. A repetitive group of open fourth and fifth chords moving chromatically introduces the next text, 'all Israel mourned.' The music suggests a funeral march.

Very different music introduces the next section, when the narrator announces that Saul has forbidden all 'ghosts and familiar spirits' (28.3). Under a high *tremolo* on A, trumpets play repeated accented E flats, and then A (5, m. 80). This is known as the tritone—either an augmented fourth or diminished fifth, traditionally considered a 'bewitched' sound. The next verse is introduced by horns playing a repetitive figure, almost mocking the sound of a battle call (6, top). Right after these measures, the narrator announces that Saul gathered his troops at Gilboa (6, m. 100).

Before the announcement that Saul was afraid of the Philistine force (v. 5), the funeral-dirge measures heard when Samuel's death was announced are reprised. Musically this links Saul's fear with Samuel's condemnation. Several earlier sections are briefly reprised (7, m. 110-16) before the narrator announces that God no longer spoke to Saul (v. 6). This verse is spoken over a single chord sustained for many measures (7, m. 116-22).

A loud trumpet introduces Saul, and his first two phrases rise to f#'. He repeats his opening line, 'Find me a woman' (opening of v. 7), several times, in jagged and rhythmically complex phrases (8, m. 124-30). Though Tal took no liberties with the biblical text, Saul's numerous repetitions of this sentence to this kind of music suggest his obsessive nature.

In Saul's next words, 'who consults ghosts', the vocal line, marked *lamentoso*, is a long melismatic phrase. The voice is accompanied by a lengthy trill in the low range of the orchestra (8, m. 131-36). The effect is one of high anxiety verging on madness. This effect continues in the conclusion of the verse, 'I will go to her and inquire', which like the previous verse is repeated several times. Saul sings mostly unaccompanied, with sharply dissonant and heavily accented chords between his sung lines. The final words 'and inquire' are sung broadly and very loud on a long drawn-out melismatic group of 16th notes. The voice is doubled in a much higher range by the orchestra (9, m. 145-46). The vocal range is quite high, mostly between *e'* and *g#'*. A long pause follows this outburst, after which the narrator relates that the servants tell Saul about the woman at Endor.

The orchestra now plays groups of *pp staccato* open fifth chords, an ominous sound (9, bottom). Then the narrator relates that Saul disguised himself

and went to see the woman at Endor (v. 8). Before Saul speaks, a short orchestral introduction marked *andante cantabile* features a *legato* cor anglais solo, a plangent sound greatly contrasted with what has come before it (10, m. 161). Its poignant sound subtly suggests Saul's sadness. Saul's opening words, 'Divine for me', are to be sung *pp* but at the same time *appassionatamente* (passionately), accompanied only by a single sustained note in the orchestra.

As in earlier scenes, Saul repeats this line numerous times, both for emphasis and to suggest his obsessiveness. Between the repetitions, the almost lyrical cor anglais solo is played. Saul's repetitions of the phrase become increasingly louder and more intense, until the final one, which is sung on a melismatic group (11, m. 174). The next measure recapitulates the opening measure of the opera, played here by piccolo rather than violin. After Saul has finished his request, the strings play several measures of sinuous 16th-note passages in unison (12, m. 178-82). This is a calm but also unsettling sound.

The woman opens on a, a relatively low pitch (Fig. 25). After she sings about Saul's banning of ghosts and familiar spirits (v. 9), Saul repeats his earlier verse, 'Divine for me' (v. 8). The woman continues singing as he continues to repeat this line. The accompaniment for these few measures when they sing together consists only of extended low trills, played on three different pitches. This very foreboding sound seems to prevent the two characters from hearing each other's words.

The trills stop abruptly, and the woman asks Saul why he is laying a trap for her and putting her in danger (v. 9). On the word למה ('why?'), the voice leaps up to f#" (13, last measure) after which the woman sings a



Figure 25. Tal: Saul at Endor.

very extended melismatic group, doubled by the flutes. She reaches a high note of g#'' and stays almost entirely 'above the staff'—i.e., higher than e''. Under these complex and sinewy phrases, Saul continues to repeat 'Conjure for me' in a similarly high register, starting on g' (14, top). The device of having Saul frequently repeat his lines over and over effectively portrays his nervous and obsessive nature.

When the woman asks why Saul wants to get her killed, her voice drops to a lower range and the 16th-note groups in the orchestra stop. She sings her line over sustained chords or rests, dropping unaccompanied at the end to *g*, very low in a female voice. A sustained measure of rest follows (14, m. 205-206).

The musical phrase heard at the opening of the scene is now reprised, introducing the narrator. He relates Saul's oath to the woman, which Saul then sings (v. 10). His phrases include unusual and large vocal leaps—augmented seventh, diminished ninth—making the oath more emphatic (15, m. 213-14). The woman speaks rather than sings the line 'Whom shall I conjure up?' (v. 11), a dramatic device (15, bottom). Several measures of ominous music precede the woman's announcement that she sees Samuel (v. 12), and this is followed by a reprise of the *Leitmotif* heard in the opera's opening measures (16, m. 233-41).

When Saul asks the woman to relate what she sees (v. 13), a single measure of frenzied music follows, with winds and percussion playing loud heavily accented 16th-note groups. This stops abruptly, as the tempo slows dramatically to *largo*, one of the slowest and broadest tempos. Over an extremely low sustained note in the bass, strings and piano play a low, repetitive two-note accented phrase (18, m. 256-61)—the musical depiction of a nervous heartbeat. Over this thumping sound, the woman sings a more sustained line, starting on *d flat'* and ascending slowly to a climactic *f''* to be sung *ff*. This is on the text 'coming up from the earth,' so the ascending musical line is a bit of word-painting. At this phrase, the 'heartbeat' stops and only a high sustained chord in the woodwinds is heard under her voice. (Fig. 26)

The measures in which the woman describes what she sees are an echo of the music heard when Samuel's death was announced earlier in the opera. A series of mostly open fifths moves up and down chromatically, while the woman's voice doubles the top note of these chords (18, m. 270-73). The only variant from the biblical text is the repetition of 'an old man' at the end of the section. She ends softly on a low a, more a pensive than a dramatic or mysterious ending.

The music introducing Samuel is marked *adagio*, *molto intenso*—very slow and intense. Strings and piano play rhythmically complex, sinuous passages in unison, becoming louder and more dramatic at Samuel's entrance. The nervous accompaniment contrasts with his calm and deliberate vocal



Figure 26: Tal: Woman of Endor.

line (19, m. 289-90). When Saul says 'I am in great trouble', this line is introduced by an expressive cor anglais passage (20, top), lending pathos to Saul's portrayal.

Saul describes his alienation from God in simple, sing-song music. On the phrase 'So I have called to you', the tempo slows and Saul sings a ff phrase rising first to f#' and then to g. These notes are also heard in the trumpets and horns which are blaring out short, heavily accented open fourth chords whose top notes are doubled by Saul's voice (20, m. 300-301). Saul sings the line 'to tell me what to do' on a melismatic and high-lying phrase, with only a soft sustained chord under him (20, m. 302). This is an intensely dramatic portrayal of Saul's desperation.

Samuel's next entrance is introduced by the same music as his previous one. A new figure, introduced just before he sings, continues throughout most of the scene. It is a persistent and heavy *ostinato* composed of groups of 16th notes—octaves played in the strings and a dissonant chord in the percussion (21, starting at m. 307). Occasionally the strings drop out, but the steady pounding 16th-note dissonant chord groups never stop. Over this, Samuel sings his condemnation of Saul to very brusque music, the

driving accompaniment lending a relentless feeling to his words. There is an occasional unexpected high note *appoggiatura* in the flutes (21, bottom), perhaps to denote terror.

After Samuel announces that the kingship will be given to David, the driving *ostinato* stops for the first time. Two measures of very fast and loud unison string runs are heard, climaxing in almost heraldic blasts played by brass and piano (22, m. 320). When Samuel explains the reasons for Saul's punishment (v. 18), cellos double all of Samuel's notes over a sustained chord playing above their voices. The heraldic calls are played in the measures between Samuel's words. The effect projected musically is of an awe-inspiring prophecy.

Samuel's voice ranges from G up to a climactic d' after announcing Saul's death to come. The vocal leaps give his part great drama; in several consecutive measures he constantly spans an octave.

This 'heraldic' section is followed by a long pause, after which the short musical figure heard when Samuel sang for the first time is briefly heard again. The tempo slows and Samuel, announcing God's verdict, descends by steps to his lowest note, G. In the next measure he reaches d' on 'today,' highlighting the import of that word. The *ostinato* begins again and continues to the end of Samuel's words.

When Samuel sings of the battle, and of the defeat to come, several high flute notes are interjected, lending a sense of terror (24, m. 342-43). The narrator describes Saul's fear, and how he threw himself on the ground, over another extremely fast and loud passage of runs played by unison strings (25, 2nd-3rd staves). At the text 'he was terrified of Saul's words', two short lyrical phrases are heard in flute and then cor anglais (25, m. 350-51). Musically this transmits the pathos of Saul and creates audience sympathy for him.

The narrator relates how weak Saul is from not having eaten (v. 20). Then the woman speaks to Saul, introduced by a series of very soft high chords played by a solo clarinet (26, m. 358) which continue throughout her opening measures. The woman's solo (vv. 21-22) is marked by a wide dynamic and pitch range. She starts softly in the range of *b flat-f'*, but the next few measures are sung roughly an octave higher than this (26, m. 360-362; 27, m. 368-370). Three measures of lyrical passages in flute, then horn, then solo cello precede the woman's request to Saul that he eat (27, m. 376-379). These phrases establish a gentle mood.

The woman begins her request in a very low range, on g (27, m. 380). She repeats the phrase 'Now, hear me' several times, underlining her attempt to be persuasive. Because the music is soft and low, the effect of repetition differs from the obsessive sound of Saul's earlier repetitions. The request is only made once in the biblical text (opening of v. 22). When she finally reaches the words 'I will set a piece of bread before you', the tempo and

volume both suddenly increase, and a rapid and anxious-sounding phrase is played repeatedly between the sung phrases of the duet. Saul emphatically sings 'I will not eat' opening on a relatively high pitch, *g flat'* (28, m. 390). Unlike in the biblical narrative, both characters repeat their text several times, their voices even coming together once (29, top). Musically this creates a sense of urgency and even desperation, as well as transmitting the sense of a real conversation.

The woman, trying to be even more persuasive, finally continues to the rest of the biblical verse (v. 22), telling Saul he will gain strength for his voyage. The tempo suddenly doubles, with repetitive phrases in the strings under the woman's long and sustained line which ends in almost a wail (29, 2nd-3rd staves). In the biblical narrative, it is only here that Saul refuses her request (in v. 23). In this opera, he sings 'I will not eat' two more times before she sings this text, and one final time when she concludes.

Over the continuing repetitive figures in the accompaniment, the narrator relates the remainder of v. 23. The accompaniment is heard in steadily higher ranges before dying out. Most of vv. 24-25 is left out; the continuation of the narrative picks up at 'they ate, they rose, and they left the same night' (end of vv. 25-26). This is narrated under very high, sustained notes. The tempo broadens and slows steadily up to the conclusion. The final words 'on that night' are spoken over a few high chords in the violins. The concluding two measures are marked *adagio* (very slow) and also *con espressione* (with expression).

The three closing chords, played by the full orchestra, come closer to tonality than any other moment in this short opera. The first and last chords are in E-flat minor with an intrusive C. In a conventionally tonal work, this would stand out as an interesting dissonance. Here, it is notable for being *less* dissonant than any other moment in the work. It suggests that though Saul is about to die in battle, his final hours in the company of the woman of Endor calmed and prepared him for his end.

Tal uses very interesting devices to depict characters and mood. The most unusual feature of this work is the portrayal of the woman as a kind and sympathetic character. There is no attempt musically to create a scene of magic and the supernatural as was seen in virtually every other work. Tal was attracted by the human tragedy in the story. The woman is not a witch, as she is so often named and portrayed. She is, according to Tal, a 'priestess, full of dignity and human insight' (notes in score). Tal succeeds in his goal of rectifying the common perception of the woman as a 'witch', but unfortunately his work was never recorded and has probably been performed too rarely to have changed this common perception.

In **Testi**'s opera, based on Gide's play, Saul hears that a single sorceress survived, the one in Endor known as the *pythonisse* (the French translation

of Pythoness, an alternate name for the Oracle at Delphi and equivalent to sorceress). Based on Saul's instant recognition of this name, it appears she is a very well-known personage, one who 'speaks with the dead'. When Saul mentions her name, the music instantly changes: his singing becomes very soft and is accompanied by a very low *ostinato* (155, #23). He says she knows him, implying he has previously visited her. This implication is found in no other libretto. He changes from his royal robe into an old coat. He comments on an approaching storm, which is signaled in the orchestra by very loud ascending 16th-note groups played in string bass (159, #25). Saul speaks of his alienation from God, in softer passages (162, #27):

It has been too long since I have prayed. And when I did pray, it was always the same thing. We will keep fighting. And it is not I who must come back. He turned away first.

These words sound more like the description of a lovers' spat than a search for God. In this instance, the line seems to blur between Saul's desire for David and for God.

Scene 7 opens with a long aria for the necromancer of Endor (henceforth 'sorceress', from the French), in which she refers to the stormy night. This is not in the original story (28.8 simply says 'at night'); it could reflect the influence of a famous operatic scene for the sorceress Ulrica in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*. The reference would be logical, since that scene also features a king in disguise secretly coming to have his fortune told. The sorceress wonders why Saul killed all the clairvoyants in Israel, and asks:

What future is transpiring for you, that you want to be the only one to know it?

Her music is very changeable, marked *marcatissimo* with repeated heavy 16th-note groups (171, #35). Looking into her cauldron, the sorceress sees a stranger approaching and feels his great fatigue (in the biblical version, Saul is accompanied by two servants, but that would lessen the drama of the scene). She wonders who would be out in such a terrible storm. Her music covers a very wide range (Fig. 27). When Saul rushes in, the orchestra plays a very high trill starting on e'', doubling the note the sorceress sings up to the moment Saul appears and creating an instrumental 'scream.'

She recognizes Saul immediately (which also differs from the biblical account) and screams his name (177, #39). He asks why she once predicted that he would be king. Additional text in the play clarifies that this sorceress was the first to predict Saul's kingship, from the day he lost his asses in the desert. She also says that from that day, Saul thought himself a prophet, but asks him now, 'Who tells you your prophecies?' (Gide, 87).

The sorceress touches Saul's forehead 'with great tenderness' and says she has pity on him. She also offers him the little bread she has. This is an exception to most other operatic portrayals of this character, in which the



Figure 27. Testi: Sorceress of Endor.

sorceress is more unearthly and unconnected. This depiction differs from the other two that present a sympathetic portrayal (Hiller and Tal) in that here the sorceress shows kindness at the beginning rather than at the end of the scene. The sympathetic portrayal of this woman in Gide's play and the opera is in marked contrast to that of the queen, an invented character killed by Saul.

Contrary to the biblical text, in which Saul does not immediately tell the sorceress whom he wants brought back from the dead, here he directly orders her to bring up Samuel. She is frightened at first, but bows to the king's will (189).

Samuel's opening phrase, 'Why have you disturbed me in my sleep?', effectively utilizes the extreme low range of the bass voice, descending here to *E#*. This unexpected note concludes a passage in B minor sung over a sustained F# (the third inversion) in the orchestra (201). Samuel's dramatic music is accompanied by much brass as well as xylophone. The first part of this duet is in a fast tempo, the rapid-fire words sung on 16th- or 8th-notes over loud and strongly rhythmical *staccato* groups of 16th-notes (201, #52). When Saul tells Samuel he is in distress because the Philistines are attacking and the Lord has turned from him, Samuel says he is lying and that something else is bothering him. The music becomes gradually slower and softer. Saul admits that Samuel knows his secret better than he himself does. Samuel says:

There are other enemies besides the Philistines to conquer, but the one who is wounding you has been welcomed by you... It is your enemy whom God now protects. Before he was conceived in his mother's womb, God had already chosen him (207, #54).

Saul asks what his mistake was, to which Samuel responds, 'simply welcoming him'. But, Saul asks, if David had already been preordained by God, what choice would Saul have had? Samuel tells him that God had perceived Saul's weakness. (In the Gide play, he adds, 'You know well in your heart that what you call fear is desire', and that God has always known this.) He then announces the forthcoming battle and victory of the Philistines, initially singing softly in a much higher range (213), gradually increasing in volume (215):

The kingdom will be for you like a royal robe that is torn, like water that runs through the fingers of your closed fist... Jonathan will no longer have so much as...a scrap of royal robe to cover him... Look! The crown is already off your head. God has placed it on David's head... Jonathan himself is placing it there. Farewell, Saul! You will both soon come to join me.

These final phrases are accompanied by martial trumpet music until the last line, which provides one of the rare tonal moments in the opera. Samuel sings over a sustained D-flat major chord in the orchestra, although some of his vocal line is in dissonance against that chord and his final note is *e flat*, echoed in the orchestra. This is followed by a concluding D in the orchestra, a harsh dissonance against the D-flat-E-flat chord below it (218, #59).

As the ghost disappears with these final words, the sorceress murmurs, 'And I even sooner, Samuel', starting this phrase on *d flat'* against the D still heard in the orchestra (219, top). Saul then seems to wake up from a kind of trance, and tells her he is hungry. The sorceress kneels tenderly beside him; in the play, but not the opera, she also offers him a bit of bread she had put aside (Gide, 96). Suddenly Saul stands up, agitated, realizing that she had heard Samuel's words to him. He wants to know if Samuel named his successor to the throne. Then he asks if he spoke of someone he loved, mentioning David's name. When she asks why he speaks of David, Saul strikes her with his spear (228, #64). She says she has been mortally wounded, but he seems unaware of what he has done and continues to ask her if Samuel named someone. Finally, in agony, the sorceress, in very soft and mostly unaccompanied music, tells Saul (232, #67):

Close your door! Close your eyes! May the perfume of love no longer have access to your heart.

Her final, dying words are a warning to Saul, sung to haunting music: 'Everything that is sweet to you is against you...Free yourself!' Her final phrase is sung on *b flat*, the lowest pitch she has sung in the scene. Saul looks around, confused, saying 'What? What?' In the play, he adds, 'She is dead. Will I from now on be troubled alone in the darkness?' (Gide, 100).

The fate of the necromancer of Endor in the Bible is unknown. This scene of Saul at Endor is the most imaginative of those discussed in this chapter, but the opera is based on a play and not directly on the biblical

narrative. The focus of the play is on Saul's suppressed lust for David, so it is logical that the sorceress would comment on that. Even Samuel seems to intimate that he understands Saul's motive for bringing David into his household. Interestingly, in spite of the major change in the conclusion, this scene is closer to the biblical version than any other in the play or opera.

Conclusion

There are both major similarities and differences between these representations of the scene of Saul at Endor. One common element is the attempt to create a particular mood through otherworldly, eerie music. This is found in virtually every work, regardless of era or genre. Where the composer and librettist wish to focus on the necromancer, they often include lengthy incantations for her to sing, perpetuating the perception of the woman as a witch or sorceress (Nuhn, Honegger, Nielsen). Those librettos that stress the more human aspects of the story include the woman's kind gestures towards Saul (Hiller, Tal, Testi). These versions create a more human and sympathetic character.

Some librettos stay very close to the biblical narrative (Milhaud, Tal) while at the other extreme, some add a great deal of new text (Honegger, Nielsen). The most significant alterations are the inclusion of a chorus in the scene (Hiller), a chorus of witches (Gabriel), the presence of Michal (Gabriel) or Michal and Jonathan (Nuhn). Samuel's words to Saul are sometimes kept concise, while in other instances they are greatly expanded to create a dramatic confrontation between two powerful men with low voices.

Whether the goal was to make the necromancer more human or more otherworldly, to focus on Saul's terror or Samuel's severity, this biblical scene was clearly inspirational for every composer who chose to set it to music. The biblical narrative's sparseness called out for elaboration and dramatization. The results breathe new, melodramatic life into the scene and the characters.

Chapter 8

DEATHS OF SAUL AND JONATHAN, AND DAVID'S RISE TO POWER

Summary of 1 Samuel 31 and 2 Samuel 1-6

31 The Philistines are victorious and kill many on Mt Gilboa, including Saul and his three sons. Saul is at first severely wounded, and when his arms-bearer refuses to finish him off, he falls on his sword; the arms-bearer does the same after him (the suicide itself is not condemned; other biblical suicides such as Samson in Judges 16, Ahitophel in 2 Samuel, and Zimri in 1 Kings, are also apparently considered justified). The Philistines strip the slain. They cut off Saul's head and send it with the armour around the land of the Philistines. They impale his body on the wall of Beth-shean. Israelites find and remove the bodies of Saul and his sons and burn them, bury the bones and then fast for seven days.

2 Samuel 1 David is back in Ziklag, where on the third day after Israel's defeat at Gilboa an Amalekite messenger approaches and tells him of the death of Saul and Jonathan (apparently the other sons didn't count as much). David asks him how he knows about this, and he claims that when he found Saul, he was leaning on his spear in agony, unable to finish himself off. He begged the Amalekite to kill him, and he did, taking Saul's crown and armlet to prove this. The Amalekite clearly thought this lie would bring him a reward. Instead, David and his men lament, weep and fast till evening. Then he orders the messenger killed for having dared to lift his hand against 'the Lord's anointed'

David intones a dirge over Saul and Jonathan, which is 'recorded in the Book of Jashar.' In this dirge, he praises the valour of Saul and Jonathan, who will never be parted even in death. 'How have the mighty fallen,' 'Your love was wonderful to me, more than the love of women' are among the most famous verses in the books of Samuel. Many musical works end after the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, concluding with praise for David. The next three chapters, 2-4, are not included in musical works I have found, but I am summarizing them in the interest of filling in the story that is left out.

2 David moves his men and his wives to Hebron, at God's suggestion, and there he is anointed king over the House of Judah, where he reigns for seven and a half years. Some very gory and nasty fights are described,

between Abner and Joab, David's soldiers and the Benjaminites, the House of Saul and House of David.

- 3 David's house gets stronger, Saul's grows weaker, and the battle is drawn out. The names of David's sons and wives are given here. Abner supports the House of Saul but wants to make a pact with David. One of David's conditions is to have Michal returned to him. Her husband Paltiel walks with her, weeping, until ordered to leave. David makes a feast for Abner and his men, and lets Abner leave unharmed. Joab gets wind of this and thinks David was deceived, so he kills Abner when pretending to want to confer with him privately. David proclaims himself innocent and Joab guilty of this blood. He even curses Joab, forcing him and his troops to lament before Abner's bier. David intones a dirge, all the troops weep and David fasts until sundown. This ensures that everyone knows David had nothing to do with Abner's killing.
- 4 One son of Saul, Ishbosheth, is still alive; he is frightened when he hears of Abner's killing. Two Benjaminites enter his bedroom in the middle of the day, stab him to death, cut off his head and take it to David. They tell him it is the head of his enemy Saul's son. David tells them what happened to the messenger who told him of Saul's death, and then orders them killed. They bury Ishbosheth's head in Abner's grave at Hebron.
- **5** All the tribes of Israel come to Hebron and proclaim David king over all Israel. He is 30 years old and will reign for 40 years. David and his men take Jerusalem from the Jebusites, occupy the stronghold and name it the City of David. David fortifies the surrounding area, and grows stronger because God is with him. King Hiram of Tyre sends envoys to David with supplies to build a palace. David also takes more concubines and wives in Jerusalem, and has more sons and daughters there (children are named here). The Philistines hear that David has been anointed king of Israel and decide to attack. This happens twice, and both times after God gives David good military advice, he is victorious.

6 David decides to bring the Ark from Judah to Jerusalem. They load it onto a cart, and dance and sing in front of it. Uzzah reaches out to steady it when the oxen stumble, and he is struck down on the spot 'for his indiscretion.' David is afraid of God now (understandable after this capricious act), and leaves the ark right there for a few months, at the threshing floor of Obededom. Later on he hears Obed-edom's household has been blessed because of the Ark, so he decides to try again. This time David sacrifices an ox and fatling (animal fattened for slaughter) every six paces—an extravagant display--and 'whirls with all his might' wearing only a linen ephod.

They enter Jerusalem with shouts and horn blasts. Michal looks out the window and sees David whirling and leaping, and despises him for this. It is unclear whether her anger is at his exhibitionist display or for ignoring her. David then sets up the Ark in its tent, makes more sacrifices, blesses

all the people, offers them snacks and everyone leaves. When David gets home, Michal comes out to meet him (not usually done) and sarcastically comments on how David exposed himself to the 'slavegirls' like 'one of the riffraff.' He retorts that he can do whatever he want, since God chose him over her father Saul, and he will be honoured among the slavegirls. After this conversation, the narrator informs us that to her dying day Michal had no children

Commentary

David's continual willingness to consult God becomes more and more obvious in these chapters. It is quite possible that the writer stresses this to justify the history. This is a crucial part of David's portrayal in all his complexity. Ultimately, the writer reveals God's particular rationale for choosing David. The story was written for an audience that needed hope and a belief that the future could be better than their present. For Borgman, the character of God of this story, whom modern readers consider inscrutable or mysterious, even arbitrary, is actually a God that makes perfect sense (Borgman 2008: 193, 243)—or certainly did to the intended readers.

Jonathan replaces Michal as a love object in these chapters, while Michal replaces Jonathan as an object of David's hostility. Both of these are a kind of reversal of expectations. Public and private, national and individual, are amalgamated in the narrative. The daughter of Saul is in a sense sacrificed so that the son may be honoured. The fates of the two are gender-specific. The young prince dies heroically on the battlefield, while there is no such graceful exit by the sword for Michal (Exum 1996: 92).

At Jonathan's death David laments and weeps for him, calling him 'my brother' and proclaiming he was dear to him, and his love more wondrous than the love of women. The reader might wonder why, if David loved Jonathan so much, he never proclaimed this love openly while Jonathan was alive. Most commentators simply assume David's primary motive was always political, that he did not have deep feelings for Jonathan, and that his elegy was politically motivated. Borgman has a different theory: if it were known that David loved Jonathan in return, Jonathan would have been in even greater danger from Saul than he was already. So David's silence about his feelings may have been not only 'politically shrewd, but also personally considerate' (Borgman 2008: 155). The ambivalence of the text makes both readings possible.

Most commentators focus on the order of the wives, but Clines has highlighted another list, that of the six sons born to David in Hebron (2 Sam. 3). Each of these six sons has a different mother, indicating that David had six wives one after the other—making him a 'serial monogamist', and explaining why only one son was born to each wife. Clines believes this

highlights David's problem in forming lasting relationships with women (Clines 1991: 135-36). This modern psychological take on David is both insightful and compelling, and is not contradicted anywhere in the text.

Michal appears in four episodes, interspersed throughout the main narrative about David (1 Sam. 18 and 19, 2 Sam. 3 and 6). The first and last episodes echo and also reverse each other. She acts and speaks in these two scenes, while in the two middle episodes she is silent and acted upon. The parallels between the first and last episodes underline Michal's transformation from an apparently independent woman, able to express her love for David, to a bitter and neglected wife. She is verbal in both these scenes, but her sarcastic, bitter tirade in the final scene shows her to be an unhappy woman.

In some senses the David–Michal story seems to be an 'ironic reversal of a romantic tale' (Aschkenasy 1995: 144). Her story is framed by two window scenes, which together mark her 'transformation from power to power-lessness,' with the dispersed episodes about Michal a sort of 'paradigm of the deterioration of a charismatic, independent-minded woman in an environment hostile to female autonomy' (Aschkenasy 1998: 35). It is not clear where the text suggests Michal is charismatic, so this is a bit of wishful reading into the text

Michal is 'hemmed in' by the narrative, since scenes in which she is a subject are surrounded by scenes in which she is 'acted upon,' by her father and then by her husband. She is additionally hemmed in by men's political maneuvering. This 'narrative imprisonment' highlights the impossibility of autonomy for Michal (Exum 1996: 84). This is how the writer portrayed her, clearly reflecting the reality of his society. Michal's feelings about her treatment at the hands of both her father and husband are never revealed to the reader. This speechlessness is a reflection of her powerlessness (Bodi 2006: 34). Though Michal has a much greater presence in most operas and oratorios, none of her feelings beyond her love for David and Saul are ever revealed there either.

The next episode featuring Michal occurs when she is returned to David after his lengthy absence (2 Sam. 3.12-16). The actual reunion is not reported, and Exum finds this gap particularly significant. She suggests there is a 'volatile subtext' (Exum 1996: 83), but many other key scenes are also not reported in the narrative, so we can selectively decide which gaps are more significant. What is described in that scene, however, is Paltiel's open expression of grief. His depiction as emotional and caring is in marked contrast to David, who remains cool and scheming and uses cautious public words. This scene is the only place David refers to Michal as his wife, while Paltiel is twice called Michal's husband. The use of the words suggests an emotional bond on Paltiel's part but only a legal arrangement on David's. In fact, as Alter points out, the image of the weeping Paltiel is 'a poignant image of the human price of political power' (Alter 1999: xxiv).

The fact that the reader is not told of Michal's feelings for Paltiel—whether she feels 'gratitude, love, pity or contempt'—creates tension and makes us wonder further about her relationship with David (Bodi 2006: 39). It is possible that having enjoyed the love of another man, and then hearing about David's newly acquired wives, Michal would be more aware than ever of David's lack of feeling for her.

The image of Michal at the window—in the two very different scenes—has many connotations and echoes. Like other openings, be they doorways or a womb, the window represents a frontier between two spaces: the dark and the light, interior and exterior, included and excluded. In the ancient Semitic world, these spaces were considered dangerous areas of potential conflict, because they are a liminal area between two domains. At the entrance of ANE temples there are always statues of guardian angels (in Akkadian called *lamassu*), whose role was to prevent evil or dangerous forces from entering the temple. The liminal space symbolized the alternative between life and death (Bodi 2006: 41). While Michal stands inside the house, looking outside and watching David disappear into the night (in 1 Sam. 19), she embodies this kind of liminality. She becomes silent and passive after helping David escape, probably because the writer's attention turned fully to David's story at that point.

In the later story of Michal at the window (2 Sam. 6), she is watching David dancing and 'whirling' before the Ark. Some feminist writers have seen the window in this scene equally as 'confining' as that in the earlier scene (Klein 2003: 90).

Borgman disputes this view, because Michal chose to stand by the window, and left to confront David. This does not suggest confinement, and Borgman accuses Klein (and others) of being overly guided by her own interpretive lens or bias. He agrees that every reader has this lens, but he stresses the importance of paying close attention to the text in its coherence and unity, and to the story's own patterns of repetition (Borgman 2008: 280, n. 28). In fairness to Borgman, he succeeds in what he sets out to do and is therefore justified in critiquing others who do not.

There has been much speculation about precisely what Michal saw that angered her, because the verb describing David's 'whirling' (מַברבר) is found uniquely here in the entire Hebrew Bible, in vv. 14 and 16. The biblical writer seems to be suggesting that her emotional reaction has a complicated prehistory. By suppressing any causal explanation for Michal's reaction, the writer may be intimating that her response is exaggerated and stems from everything unsaid but only obliquely intimated about the relation between Michal and David. Therefore only multiple interpretations can be validly applied to this episode (Alter 1981: 123).

Many commentators have suggested there was an erotic aspect to David's dance, and that therefore Michal's objection might reflect the view of

Yahwistic circles uncomfortable with the combination of different religious practices introduced by the new king. The fact that Michal's punishment is sterility may indicate a connection with fertility rites, which originated in Canaan. Reading between the lines, Michal might be criticizing the type of Yahwism that was still permeated by Canaanite influences (Bodi 2006: 48, 51).

The fact that Michal's protest focuses on David's uncovering himself in the eyes of his servants' handmaidens, rather than simply before the general populace or the courtiers, suggests that her objection could be to some degree class-based (Clines 1991: 59). The verb 'expose' (גנלה), 6.20) is clearly used in a sexual sense, according to Alter. Michal's anger suggests possible sexual jealousy. David has assembled a harem during their years of separation, and we do not know if he and Michal have had sexual relations since her forced return, which was politically motivated (Alter 1999: 229).

In the argument with David, Michal finds her own voice, but David has the last word because he holds the power. These words of rebuke are the only words he ever speaks to her in the narrative. The complete absence of dialogue between Michal and David up to this point in the story is particularly noticeable in the Bible, because dialogue usually takes up a large part of the narration. Michal notably speaks to David in the third person, angrily rather than deferentially, and refers to him by public title rather than as a personal relation (Alter 1999: 229). The portrayal of Michal is negative: rather than being regal as befits a king's daughter and a king's wife, she is made to seem jealous, bitter, and even nagging. Her criticism of the king sounds petulant and exaggerated, on the surface.

References to 'all Israel...all the people...the whole multitude of Israel... all the people' (6.19) highlight Michal's isolation inside her home. Going outside to confront David in the public sphere brings her rebuke and still greater exclusion, and leads to the loss of any role she might have had in the future of David's house. Exum sees this scene as a displacement: the animosity between the house of David and the house of Saul is played out as a marital conflict. The politics of gender serve the politics of state, as Exum says, and therefore Michal's words cloak the real issue, which is the political problem downplayed by the narrator by foregrounding the domestic dispute (Exum 1996: 87).

Michal accuses David of sexual vulgarity, and the consequence is at a sexual level, denying her the possibility of a child. It is not overtly stated whether this denial is punishment from God, David's refusal to share Michal's bed, or if the two are connected (Alter 1999: 230). Depriving her of children symbolically kills Michal, and denying her a reply to David kills her off as a narrative presence. The narrator essentially has her commit verbal suicide by challenging the king from her position of weakness.

Clines argues that being denied the possibility of bearing David's child might not have been a great punishment. If Michal despises David as much

as she seems to, then she would hardly have wanted to bear his child. And any son she had would have been locked in a power struggle with the other sons (Clines 1991: 139). This is a fair supposition to modern readers, but the writer probably does not want us to think this way. Thinking as a person of that era, he clearly describes her childlessness as a punishment, coming at the end of David's harangue. And in any case, David was still the king, and having a child with him would give her status. This political reality would certainly have been a stronger motivation for Michal than any personal feelings of revulsion she might have had for David.

At this point in the story, Michal is no longer called David's wife, but reverts to being Saul's daughter. The very notion of childlessness as a punishment reflects the extent to which patriarchal texts identify women in terms of their reproductive function. As Exum succinctly states it, 'Patriarchy severs the relationship between eroticism and procreation.' She further notes that female sexual pleasure is never an issue in patriarchal texts (Exum 1993: 32)—but then again, male sexual pleasure is not discussed in biblical texts either. The purpose of marriage is always shown to be political alliances and offspring, both of which represent power, rather than a loving or pleasurable physical relationship.

Exum provocatively suggests that perhaps it is Michal who refuses to have sexual relations with David: such a refusal would not seem out of character for her. It is more likely, of course, given the historical context, that she would be the object of her husband's whim. Yet it is interesting that commentators never even raise the possibility of the impetus originating with the woman, robbing Michal of autonomy. It is an example of what Esther Fuchs calls 'reinscribing patriarchal ideology' (in Exum 1996: 88). McKenzie supports this ideology when he proposes that David refused to sleep with Michal not only out of hostility, but out of political concerns. Any child she would have had would be Saul's descendant and therefore a potential rival for the throne (McKenzie 2000: 138). Halpern goes even further, suggesting that 'Michal's confinement was no doubt planned from the first. David was bent on eradicating, not on allying with, Saul's house.' He even suggests that Michal may have been murdered, since she is never heard from again (Halpern 2001: 313). Feminist readers understand more clearly that a woman who could no longer bear children was of no further use in the narrative, so Michal was subjected to a literary murder.

It is possible that the writer's intent was to portray Michal negatively and show that her punishment was deserved. Borgman does not see sexual innuendo in the scene; rather, he thinks the proper focus is the ark and the people's celebration of its presence in their midst. If the story is read with reference to other narratives concerning the ark, Michal is condemned for failing to join this community celebration. From Michal's point of view, her anger with David may have been justified; but the narrator repeatedly

makes the point that the personal must be subsumed by the communal, and this was Michal's mistake (Borgman 2008: 110).

In his analysis, Borgman compares scenes within the books of Samuel with each other and with thematically similar scenes elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, thus shifting the focus and making a new and fresh reading possible. Klein reaches a similar conclusion about Michal's mistake, noting that Michal is depicted as displaying more concern about the propriety of royal behaviour than joy in celebrating Israel's one God. Her barrenness could be seen as punishment from God rather than from David, in this scenario (Klein 2003: 92-93).

For whatever reason, the whole episode is omitted from Chronicles—both the dispute and the resulting childlessness. It is all summed up in a single verse, concluding with the phrase 'and she despised him for it' (1 Chron. 15.29). Rashi comments that since the Chronicles were written to honour David and his reign, Michal's criticism of David was omitted because being spoken to in that way would be offensive (Bodi 2006: 120). The Book of Chronicles omitted many negative aspects of the story of David's rise. This whitewashing effect is also seen in films and musical works based on the David narratives, in which Michal is made to look more shrewish and generally unappealing in order to improve David's image.

The Music

Michal has a part in many oratorios, including in many scenes where she is not present in the biblical narrative. This has already been seen in previous Chapters. Her role is generally limited to expressing love for, and trust in, David. In addition, their love is depicted as reciprocal, a more appealing if deceptive version of the original narrative. David's expression of love for Jonathan in his dirge is sometimes excluded or altered in librettos. This reveals the same reticence about their possibly homoerotic relationship as is found in so many commentaries.

Musical works included here are Handel, five nineteenth-century oratorios and one opera, three twentieth-century oratorios and three operas.

Eighteenth-Century Works

In Act 3, Scene 4 of **Handel**'s oratorio, an Amalekite comes to tell David of the battle, Saul and Jonathan's deaths, and his role in ending Saul's life [75] (2 Sam. 1.1-16). David sings an angry aria, filled with leaps and rapid runs [76]:

Impious wretch, of race accurst!
And of all that race the worst!
How hast thou dared to life thy sword
Against the anointed of the Lord?

David tells his attendants to kill the messenger. A funeral march follows in the orchestra, punctuated by drums [77].

The entire closing scene (Scene 5) is one long elegy, starting with the chorus and continuing with the High Priest, Merab, David, the chorus, Michal, and David [84]. The words closely paraphrase the biblical text (2 Sam. 1.19-27), divided up between the different characters and chorus. The first section of David's elegy [81] is upbeat as he sings of Jonathan's and Saul's successes in battle:

Brave Jonathan his bow never drew, But winged his death his arrow flew, And drank the blood of slaughtered foes.

The chorus that immediately follows [82] is fast and also very upbeat, as they sing of 'swift eagles.' Michal follows this by singing of the harmony in which Saul and his son Jonathan lived. This is as jarring here as in the original biblical version, given the narrative's depiction of their constant conflicts. Here it is greatly amplified in the lengthy aria which includes many repetitions of the same text.

The climactic chorus [84] opens 'O Fatal Day!' followed by David singing of his love for Jonathan. The sadness of the music is underlined with numerous musical devices, such as falling intervals, echoes, and unexpected tonal shifts. The sense of overwhelming grief is amplified by the singing which alternates between David and the chorus. David sings:

What language can my grief express?
Great was the pleasure I enjoyed in thee,
And more than woman's love thy wondrous love to me!

Some later librettos omit this text (2 Sam. 1.26), particularly in the nineteenth century. Clearly in Handel's time this was considered an acceptable expression of friendship. The opening line is not in the biblical text, but is a subtle reference to the ability of music to express what words cannot. This idea is a theme running through the oratorio.

Abner now reassures the people that 'David will restore what Saul by disobedience lost', suggesting that Saul deserved his fate. The bias is clearly in David's favour. This is confirmed by the very upbeat closing chorus [86] urging David on to victory in battle. The rapid tempo and closing fugue leave no doubt about David's future triumphs.

Nineteenth-Century Works

In **Reissiger**'s oratorio (No. 10), the narrator sings a short aria relating the grief of all Israel over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (1.12). Each descending musical phrase is repeated in the orchestra, doubling the weeping effect of this musical device (44). The text of David's recitative and aria (44,

No. 10b, m. 37) is all from the biblical lament (1.19-27). When David sings 'How the mighty have fallen,' the orchestra plays dramatic 16th-note runs. In the *arioso* 'Daughters of Israel, weep for Saul' (1.24), David sings the same short descending phrases just heard in the narrator's recitative. The orchestra plays with David, underlining the pathos of the phrases (46, m. 62-64).

In the next section, David sings a lyrical melody whose long phrases are accompanied by the previously-heard Schubertian regular 8th-note accompaniment. Alternate measures feature cascading phrases of descending chords, an amplification of the earlier theme (46, m. 67-68, 71-72). Then David sings two short descending phrases echoing his earlier 'Cry, Cry' before singing a new melody to 'Oh, my Jonathan' (47, m. 86). Some new text is introduced here, replacing 'Your love was wonderful... surpassing the love of women' (1. 26). Here David sings, 'O Jonathan, your eyes are closed forever' several times, on the final repeat reaching *a flat'* and then slowing and ending on a much softer *a flat*, an octave lower (48, m. 104-106).

In the next scene (No. 14), the narrator relates the story, condensing the narrative of 2 Sam. 5-6, 9. This is followed by a lengthy aria sung by 'Sulamith,' whose identity and presence are not explained. Based on the text, she seems to be expressing the love of all Israel for their king David. This is an interesting device found in no other libretto.

In **Hiller**'s oratorio, the battle at Gilboa, given only two verses in the Bible (1 Sam. 31.1-2), is vividly described by the women's chorus (No. 37):

How the spears slash through the air, How the steeds foam on their reins. There, see, Israel is victorious! See Saul and Jonathan as they advance through the battle. Is the mob not yielding?

Woe, the king is in danger...
O God of our fathers,
Who with a strong hand
Led us, proud and free,
out of slavery in Egypt's land,
Let not the heathen win the battle of Gilboa.
Cover Saul with your shield
and your people with your protection.

Ah, all in vain, Our warriors withdraw in terror. Woe, Saul is struck down by arrows.

This blow-by-blow account makes the battle very real and alive. The middle section's text echoes not only verses from Exodus, but also the

Passover Haggadah (being led out of slavery in Egypt's land). These references reflect the Jewish orientation of the composer and librettist. The music is marked *allegro con fuoco* (fast and fiery) and is in 12/8 time, a very broad tempo. Numerous *tremolos*, rapid ascending 16th-note passages, and heavily accented beats all amplify the vivid text.

Immediately after this lengthy chorus, Michal greets a messenger (No. 38). She notices the messenger's countenance is unsettled, and asks where he comes from. He tells her he comes from the Israelite camp, where many Israelites died, many fled, Jonathan was killed and Saul fell on his own sword. This eliminates all the narrative of 2 Sam. 1.1-16 in which the messenger announces the news to David. Michal assumes David's role here, as the first to receive the news of Saul's and Jonathan's deaths. This elevates Michal's importance and also underlines the family connection. Michal cries out 'Woe, my father, my brother!' There are two major departures from the biblical text: David is not the first to receive the news, nor does he have the messenger killed for daring to kill Saul.

When the messenger begins describing what he saw, an ominous tremolo is played until the announcement of Jonathan's death, which is sung unaccompanied (431, m. 1-4). Michal sings her first 'Woe' (Wehe) on a descending fourth, e''-b', with a quick ff E-major chord under the voice. Michal's next phrase goes from f'', down to g#', a diminished seventh. She then sings 'my father' on a sustained g'' down to a', a seventh under a quick dominant seventh chord played at the opening of the measure. The word 'father' is sung on a sustained g'', which drops a seventh unaccompanied to a' (431, m. 6-8). These unusual and large vocal leaps depict Michal's distress.

After a short pause, violas followed by violins play a lyrical melody filled with descending slurs, typical music for the depiction of grief. A few quick and very soft chords lead to the conclusion, and after a long pause the orchestral Funeral March is played (432, No. 39). This march is in 4/4 time with the traditional funeral-march dotted rhythm. It is played only by winds and brass, an authentic 'folk' sound. After the funeral march, Michal and the chorus sing (435):

Mourning veils, hang low, To shroud us on the earth, Mourning chorus, songs of lament Should fill all the valleys.

The chorus and Michal alternate. The chorus sings a rising, pleading melody of mostly 8th-note groups, homophonically and with the women's and men's voices following each other as in a *fugato*. Michal's music is much more sustained, all half- and quarter-notes. Grief is vividly portrayed in the music as it grows louder and more passionate. Michal's words 'mourning

chorus' and 'songs of lament' are sung on descending minor seconds, each phrase starting a half-step lower (438, m. 9-11; 439, m. 1-3). These phrases are doubled in the flutes, highlighting the chromatic descent which is one of the oldest musical forms for depicting grief.

David and the chorus next sing the biblical dirge (No. 41), with text from 2 Sam. 1.19, 23, and 26. The choral part is almost an anthem, while David's solo lines interrupt the chorus with recitatives accompanied by half-or whole-note chords. This gives a speech-like quality to his words, as well as isolating him from the people represented by the chorus. Michal says to David (No. 42):

Son of Jesse, my lord and king, you alone are now our protector and saviour!

The chorus repeats her words, adding that they all bow to David. Michal and the chorus sing together:

God's word to him has been fulfilled, He is sanctified in Jehova's sight; May he henceforth be our treasure and protector, His name be blessed!

David asks them not to honour him, only to honour God's name. He asks everyone to praise and elevate God's name.

The full chorus and David certainly do elevate God's name in the conclusion of the oratorio (No. 43), ending on a triumphant Halleluja. The fast closing C-major chorus opens with Michal and David singing in unison introduced by harp, after which their voices are interwoven with the richly polyphonic chorus. The final chord is in the predictable triumphant and upbeat C major. This fast-forward from the funeral dirge to the triumphant hailing of David is fairly typical of oratorios entitled *Saul*, which normally end at this point in the story.

The most unusual feature of this oratorio is Michal's supplanting David as the recipient of the news of Saul's and Jonathan's deaths. This gives her much greater importance and presence than she has in the biblical narrative.

In **Nuhn**'s oratorio, Saul sings a final battle song (No. 3). This aria is marked *maestoso* (majestic) and is in a strongly marked 3/4 time. [No musical figures will be included, since this score can be accessed at an online archive: http://www.archive.org/details/dieknigeinisra00nuhn.]

Saul sings:

You, you who carry my bow and shield If my people are still looking back in the field, Then quickly lay out my bloody body in the dust. Let that fate feared by my people be mine.

Farewell, then, to you all. But we are united, my son, my soul, Joined by the enemy.

The crown and immense power await us

Or a royal death before night.

This invented text offers Saul the chance to express his final thoughts, which he does not do in the biblical story. The music alternates every two measures, between loud assertive music and softly lyrical phrases. This effectively shows Saul trying to be strong while feeling great sadness. Between the first and second sections, there is an orchestral interlude that almost resembles a *Ländler*, a lilting folk-like German waltz. Though it has a wistful quality, it still seems lighter than would be expected with this dramatic text.

The final section, starting at 'Farewell then' is more legato (83, top). The sung melody is the same as the orchestral interlude just heard, though transposed from C to F major. The second time Saul sings 'Farewell' ($Lebe\ wohl$), the starting note is a loud f' (83 top, last measure). This high starting note for a baritone would project great emotion.

When Saul sings to Jonathan, the opening measure is the same as the opening of the aria, except in the key of A major instead of A minor (83, 3rd staff, m. 2). This subtle change subliminally suggests optimism or even joy, at being together with his beloved son. The next few lines are accompanied by Schubertian groups of four 16th-notes, a harp-like strumming effect that adds an intensely lyrical quality to the sustained line sung by Saul (83, 3rd staff, m. 2). When he sings of the enemy, these 16th-note groups suddenly shift into groups of triplets (83, bottom), a more expansive feeling.

In the final section, beginning with 'The crown', repeated chords are played as triplets (84, 1st staff, m. 5). These chords change tonality every few measures as Saul contemplates the different possible outcomes. He sings the phrase twice, first in A minor, then higher and in C major (84, 1st-2nd staves). The shifting tonality vividly portrays Saul's uncertainty and changes of mood.

The entire closing section is a reprise of the aria's opening, but the altered accompaniment indicates a change in mood, even though the melody is the same. On the final repeat, Saul holds the word 'death', followed by a sustained rest, then another sustained rest after 'before', all of which creates a feeling of breathless suspense. The final key of the aria is A minor, but the pretty *Ländler* melody is taken up again, this time in A major. It is an oddly upbeat, if wistful, ending.

The next scene (No. 4) is a double chorus and solo (Saul's death). The Philistines sing a martial chorus with vivid descriptions of the battle (85), followed by Saul's warriors:

Clarion horns, swishing cymbals, Rushing spears, massive swords: All this the enemy feels with terror—soon they will turn on their heels and be swept away in flight.

The opening measures of Saul's warriors' chorus are the same as the Philistines', but instead of singing on every beat, they sing sustained halfnotes, creating a very different mood (86, top). They sing:

Woe, we have fallen into their hands, With our hearts' blood Our life flows down to the underworld.

The accompaniment changes on 'to the underworld,' from martial chords to *legato* and flowing 8th-note slurs. At the end of this section, Saul sings over the Philistines' chorus. The accompaniment is much lighter in this section, with only soft *staccato* chords (86, Reh. B). This creates a sense of anticipation, while also allowing Saul's voice to be heard over a full male chorus, as he sings:

Ah, whatever happens, I must not fall into enemy hands, I must fall on my own sword (31.4).

This is one of the few works which includes the biblical text explicitly indicating Saul's suicide, though this text also suggests he had planned it. While Saul sings the final line, the Philistines' chorus stops and only short soft phrases are played under his voice. His last phrase ascends slowly to f', sung unaccompanied and ff, and sustained for six beats (87, m. 8). As he holds this note, the Philistine chorus re-enters, while Saul's warriors sing a long sustained 'Woe' and then drop out (87, m. 8-9). This suggests they have been defeated, especially since the Philistines continue singing their earlier text. Saul's warriors re-enter later, singing (89, Reh. D):

Ah, never, never did we gain The profit of the battle, woe, woe!

This chorus's lines are sung mostly on half-notes, here as earlier, creating the sound of a chorale. This is highly effective as heard under the martial beat of 8th and quarter-notes sung by the victorious Philistines at the same time. The final triumphant notes are sung only by the Philistines (91, 3rd staff).

The next scene is entitled Michal at the Battlefield (No. 5). This is not the only oratorio or opera to place Michal at the battlefield. Many librettists give her relationship with Saul much more importance than the biblical writer did. She sings:

Where are you, my father, in the danger of the battle? Here I am in the bloody battlefield

Looking for you to drip balsam on your wounds Which you received in the heated battle.

Oh nameless sorrow, I find you again, here in the valley of death, Woe is me, you met the sharp steel. Out of the dear heart flow crimson spurts.

Though this is original text, the words 'valley of death' definitely echo the well-known phrase 'though I walk through the valley of death' in Psalm 23. The opening measures quote the theme heard at the start of Saul's battlefield song. When Michal sings of the 'bloody battlefield', trumpets play a call to battle just before Michal reaches a high A (a") in the next measure (91, bottom). The next two lines are lyrical, accompanied by a soft *tremolo* (92, 1st-3rd staves). There is an orchestral interlude before the next section ('O nameless sorrow') in which, over a steady soft *tremolo*, descending slurs (*seufzer*) are played by different instruments in alternately high and low ranges (92, 3rd-5th staves). This is a vivid musical portrayal of lament, though the text seems focused on Saul and not Jonathan.

In the next section (93, Reh. A), Michal's flowing and lyrical melody is sung over a very Schubertian accompaniment of slurred 16th-note groups. On the words 'valley of death', the voice reaches a high B (b''), adding extra emotion to that text. Other Schubertian devices are sudden shifts from major to minor, for example when a measure opens in A major and shifts in the middle to A minor (94, m. 1). Elsewhere in a deceptive cadence, the key modulates into B major instead of the expected E major (94, m. 2). These devices underline the sung text in a particularly emotional way.

In the third section, Michal sings (95, Reh. B):

The steel lies deep in the heart of Gad.

The king is avenged for the enemy of our people.

Though this text is more militant and warlike, signalled by a change from 4/4 to 3/4 time, the sung music is still fairly lyrical. But the accompaniment now includes heavily accented chords in the bass, which alter the feeling (95, bottom, 96, top). At the end of this section, after a short cadence, Michal repeats her earlier lyrical melody and text, starting from 'O nameless sorrow' (97, Reh. C). There is a change on the final repetition of 'Woe is me' when the voice leaps unexpectedly from a' to g#", an ascending augmented seventh accentuated by repeated chords that include both notes, a surprising though brief dissonant moment (98, bottom). This passage is repeated near the end (99, 2nd staff, m. 3) and then a new line is sung, 'O pains never before felt', with the final note sustained. Then the final line, 'bitter torments of the soul' is started a cappella and also marked ad lib., allowing the singer to sing the line freely the first time. On the final repeat, the phrase ends on a sustained a". The key is A major but this does not feel like a happy conclusion.

In the next chorus (No. 6), the Philistines gloat over the enemy fleeing and falling in a victory song, which is in a very quick 2/4 time. They sing many measures *staccato* which has a warlike, shouted sound. On their concluding notes, David enters and tells them to stop, singing a ff g'—a clarion tone in the tenor voice (101, last measure).

This is, of course, a complete departure from the biblical plot. David is elsewhere, not present at the battlefield when Saul and Jonathan are killed. But this alteration creates the opportunity for a dramatic confrontation between David and the Philistines.

David sings in the same strong and martial rhythm as the chorus he interrupted (No. 7):

Now I fight for my people, If you do not want peace, know that you are surrounded And your blood is in my hand.

The word 'surrounded' (*umstellt*) is sung on a *ff g'*, sustained for five beats (102, 4th staff, m. 4-6). This musically suggests David is a warrior to be feared. In a chorus entitled 'Revenge!' the Philistines respond to David immediately, in a cut-time fugue (No. 8):

Betrayed by a false friend, Revenge, revenge!

Their final repeat of 'Revenge' (*Rache*) is sung on a slowly ascending scale over a building *tremolo* in the orchestra. Their final note, a dominant D7 chord, is sustained and leads directly into a much softer section, a quartet in G major. The singers, unfortunately, are not identified, but they are probably the Philistines, since they sing of Israel's proud King Saul lying dead in the dust (105, Reh. A). Michal, David, and Abner repeat the melody and words (106, top), joined then by the Witch of Endor and the full chorus.

The unexpected reappearance of the Witch of Endor in this scene is a striking example of the difference between oratorio and opera. There is always less need for dramatic verisimilitude and consistency in oratorio, since it is sung in concert form and the absence of costumes and sets means an absence of context. If the necromancer were to suddenly wander onto the battlefield in a staged opera amongst a group of Philistines, David, and Michal, it would completely erase any sense of continuity or plot. But in an oratorio, ensembles are the crux, and since Nuhn apparently needed a contralto voice to join in this quartet, he simply brought back the 'witch'.

David and Abner interrupt the chorus to sing that 'the king's blood cries out for revenge', which is sung several times in a kind of *fugato* chorus (108, bottom). Then two measures open with two heavy chords followed by the chorus and quartet singing 'Revenge' on two *ff staccato* unison B flats (108, last two measures). This is a very dramatic effect. As the quartet continues to sing of avenging the king's blood, the chorus repeats the words

from the opening of the scene (109, Reh. C), suggesting these are the Philistines (it is not indicated in the score). They sing softly, *staccato* and with many rests between their words, sounding hesitant and breathless. This is a complete change from the tone of the opening chorus in this scene, and the music depicts a less defiant group. Later in the chorus, both the quartet and Philistines are singing 'Revenge!' but of course, they want revenge for different things.

The word 'Revenge' is given great emphasis: for example, it is sung by the quartet at one point on a sustained ff unison A, with Michal holding a high A (a'') for a full measure (112, m. 3). The Philistine chorus is singing under the quartet, in D minor. Several measures later, the word is sung on a unison C, with Michal holding a high C (c''') over a C major chord—while the Philistine chorus is singing along with them (113, m. 2 before Reh. D). The message is clear: everyone is anxious for revenge, and at this moment they are united.

There is an immediate change of mood as the earlier softer theme is reprised (113, Reh. D; earlier heard on 105, Reh. A), a half-step higher than before. The assembled forces continue to sing of the proud King Saul lying in the dust, for several pages of continually more excited music (113-115), until suddenly they all break into 'Revenge!' phrases again (115, last measure).

David's lament follows (No. 9). Marked *adagio*, it opens with a brief orchestral introduction playing *pp* measures filled with descending slurs, a common trope for lamenting. David's opening notes are a descending minor second, echoing a phrase just heard in the orchestra (118, 4th staff, m. 3). The text for this solo and chorus is 2 Sam. 19, 21, 23-25. The verse in which David describes Jonathan's love surpassing the love of women (v. 26) is not included

The first part of the solo is a long vocal line under which soft 16th-note groups of triplets play off the beat, a funereal sound (118, 4th staff, m. 5). The word 'heights' is sung on *d'* sustained for four measures, underneath which the opening lament theme is played (5th staff, m. 1-4). The sustained note, together with the plangent theme, create a moving moment. The entire eight-measure setting of v. 19 is repeated. David then sings the third line of that verse, 'How have the mighty fallen', which is immediately echoed by the women's chorus (119, top), in music marked by descending lines.

After a pause (sustained rest), David sings v. 21, 'The hills of Gilboa' slightly louder and more assertively (119, 2nd staff, m. 3). There is a change of mood at v. 23, on the words 'swifter than eagles', when the orchestra plays high 16th-note figures meant to depict the flight of the eagles (120, top). David sings f on the phrase 'stronger than lions', where he also reaches his highest note, g' (120, m. 3). After this phrase, the 16th-note groups stop as the chorus re-enters reprising the words and music of 'How have the mighty fallen' (120, 2nd staff, m. 3).

The mood changes at 'My Jonathan, brother' which is sung ff and declamatory—the word 'brother' starts on g'. Then when David sings of mourning for him, and of his falling, the line descends steadily (122, 1st-2nd staves). The chorus repeats David's line on a repeated unison g' over which David sings a slowly ascending line marked ad lib. to sound like a cry of grief, rising to a-flat' and then slowly descending over long sustained chords (122, 2nd-3rd staves). Musically this phrase suggests exhaustion as well as grief. The chorus, accompanied by the repeated triplet groups sounding the death knell, ends softly on a sustained G over two pp staccato G-minor chords (122, last two measures). This is an emotional and heartfelt setting of David's lament.

The Finale (No. 10) is the longest single number in the oratorio, running to 25 pages in the score (123-148). The full chorus hails David, 'God's anointed one', who will rule forever, who had slain his ten thousands (though this text and scene never appeared in the oratorio until now). The contrapuntal chorus echoes Handel in several spots.

David sings in a few solo measures that God has the power, his glory is in Israel and his power in the heavens (127). After the chorus repeats these lines, the accompaniment suddenly becomes more flowing, with arpeggiated 8th notes (128, 1st-2nd staves). Then the key abruptly changes to D-flat major with no warning. David sings another solo praising Israel's God. Once again, the chorus repeats his words, but in the home key of A major (129). This section is followed by a very upbeat Hallelujah chorus with many Handelian 8th-note runs and repeated *staccato* notes (130, Reh. E).

The key changes abruptly again for Michal's solo, this time to C major (135, Reh. H). Michal sings praises to God in long Handelian 8th-note passages (136, 4th-5th staves). David sings another solo, and then their voices unite in a short duet. They initially sing in unison to indicate their oneness, and then the voices sing homophonically (139, 1st-2nd staves).

When the Hallelujah chorus is reprised, Michal repeats the soprano line but takes the melody higher (143, bottom). Her part reaches a high B (b'') twice, and generally lies very high in the range: she must sing runs between f''' and b'', a difficult feat and a dramatic effect (144, top). The chorus is joined for the grand finale by both Michal and David singing together in a high range again, both reaching high B (b' for David, b'' for Michal) (146, 2nd staff, m. 4-5). Making the ending still more dramatic, Michal's final measures climb from a'' up to a treacherous high C# (c''), beyond the range of many sopranos.

A chorus of praise is a fairly common choice to end any biblical oratorio, but C major is the most frequently used key. It is considered the brightest key, but A major is equally bright when the second note of its chord, C#, is used as the top note in this way. It is quite a spectacular ending, especially after such a lengthy and complex chorus. As in other oratorios that focus

on Saul (though this one is entitled *The Kings of Israel*), the ending is an unqualified glorification of David's triumph.

In **Parry**'s oratorio, as mentioned in the last Chapter, the 'witch' sings a long aria (nine pages, one of the longest in the oratorio; 192-201), in which she describes seeing the battle as it takes place, as if in a swoon. I am including this here because the battle occurs in chap. 31. She vents anger against God at the beginning and end of the aria, for allowing his own chosen to be killed.

Wilt thou take vengeance, O Almighty!
Wilt thou destroy them whom thou hast chosen?
Shall the flower of Thy people perish?
Shall the gods of the heathen triumph?
Terrible is Thy wrath, O Jehovah!

The opening section is marked largo, 'broad' and very slow (192, 4th staff). The voice ascends slowly on the first phrase, over a rumbling tremolo in the lowest bass section. The tone is defiant, until a shift at 'Shall the flower...' (192, Reh. K), which starts a mournful phrase migrating briefly through F minor before returning to C minor. On the next phrases, the voice sings continually higher, once touching f'' and the word 'wrath' sung ff on e flat'', sustained for six beats, returning to the defiant sound (193, 3rd staff, m.2).

The next section, in C minor, is faster and softer (193, 4th staff, m. 3):

I see, as in a swoon, the hated heathen host.
I see, as in a cloud, dim, surging, swaying crowds;
I hear the shout of striving men,
I scent the deadly breath of war,
As in a dream.

The orchestra plays in a much lower register than the previous section, and the first five measures are identical (193, 4th and 5th staves). This 'seeing' theme is very similar to the melody the witch sings each time she describes a new vision (i.e., 193, bottom, 194, top and bottom). The final two measures of this section are *pp* and sung over a very low *tremolo*. The final word 'dream' is sung on *g*' with a G7 chord underneath (194, Reh. M). An A flat is heard in dissonance with the held *g*', though it follows it by a half-beat.

In the next section, the witch describes the warriors standing on a hill, with their 'kingly chief' towering over them (195, top). The passage starts softly and calmly and builds slowly to the mention of Saul, when the key modulates unexpectedly to a brighter G major (195, 2nd staff), though the home key is never evident and measures in D major and E minor are heard. When the witch sings that Saul 'does not heed that death is near', the word 'heed' is sung on a sustained d', held even when the orchestra plays a

sharply dissonant C-minor chord under her voice (195, m. 2-3 after Reh. O). This dissonance could be meant to foretell death.

When the witch begins to describe the battle, the music becomes more martial (195, m. 4 after Reh. O). 'Galloping' passages are heard, patterns of repeated 8th notes representing movement, along with the vocal part in very marked 4/4 rhythm (196, Reh. P). Representing the relentless nature of the attack, the accompaniment grows faster, with the same 8th-note pattern repeated for several measures (196, 3rd staff, m. 4):

Though beaten back they come again, Trampling o'er heaps of slain; Like ravening wolves upon their prey, Reckless of death and pain!

The mood changes when the witch urges Saul to attack:

Strike, thou great king! Strike yet again! Let thy white weapon ring! Sweep them away Like wind-blown chaff; Their death-song let them sing.

The first phrase starts ff on a b' with an E-minor chord in the orchestra. Then the witch sings a 4-note phrase: b'-e'-b'-e'', a descending fifth followed by an ascending fourth. This heraldic sound is almost a trumpet call to battle (197, m. 3 after Reh. Q). Several marcato chords in the orchestra follow. The next phrase is sung to the same pitches, and the phrases that follow are similar. The last phrase, a descending series of 8th-notes on 'their death-song...' slows down. Several upbeat ff measures follow, ascending 8th-note passages and chords (197, Reh. R) building to a climax (Reh. S). The quarter-note chords begin their descent accompanied by a low and ominous tremolo. The rests between the notes become longer and longer, leaving only the sound of the tremolo: foreboding music. Opening with the same fifth and fourth intervals as in her cry to battle, the witch now softly sings these words (198, m. 5):

In vain, in vain the mighty spear is swung, Fruitless the sheltering shield! The heathen wolves have snatched their prey, Theirs is the wreck-heaped field!

Under the vocal line, the orchestra repeats the same *ostinato* death-knell phrase. This creates an occasional dissonance with the voice, such as a sung g' against f# (198, 2nd staff, m. 2). An E is sustained for the final four measures, with the *ostinato* played under it. In the final measure, F is heard twice under the E. Though this dissonance is heard fleetingly, it nonetheless creates a deep feeling of unease (198, last measure).

In the next section she describes Saul's defeat (199, top):

Fallen, and trampled in the dust!
Dead, the unvanquished king!
Stilled is the heart that beat so high,
Sightless the keen and piercing eye,
The first of Israel's kings on battlefield o'erthrown doth lie!

These words are sung in the same range as the previous sections, but instead of rising from e' to e'', the vocal line descends between these pitches. The first two phrases both open on e'', over a *tremolo* E in the basses. The final line is sung more slowly and *ad lib*. (freely), and partly unaccompanied. All of these musical features heighten the expressiveness and importance of this final phrase. As the voice and orchestra sustain a final e', the orchestra again plays the six-note 'death knell' phrase heard in the previous section, before the section ends on a few very slow chords that modulate to end in F minor.

The mood changes again in the final section (200), recalling the anger the witch expressed at the beginning:

Thou hast taken vengeance, O Almighty!
Thou hast destroyed them whom Thou hadst chosen!
The flower of Thy people have perished,
And the gods of the heathen triumph.
Terrible is Thy wrath O Jehovah!

The orchestra starts with soft and tentative chords, which unexpectedly burst into the witch's opening measure (200, top). This section is in A major, marked *Maestoso, sostenuto*, 'majestic, sustained.' The orchestra plays *tremolo* under most of the witch's lines, then repeats her phrases to reinforce the text's emotional intensity. The final line is repeated twice (201) and features interesting modulations. The first 'Terrible' is sung on a melismatic group of 8th-notes—almost a wail—in G# major. The word 'wrath' is sung on a *ff e''* sustained for six beats in C# minor, which modulates to A major (the home key).

Orchestral *tremolo* and chords in the next measure seem to be building to a climactic A major chord, but instead the witch sings 'terrible' on a sustained f" that drops to f'. The orchestra doubles the voice's F, on top of a B7 chord in which the F is dissonant. There is a sustained rest after this striking chord, as if Parry wanted it to sink in. The next chord is more extremely dissonant, virtually a chord cluster, but played very softly: b-d#-e#-a. It gradually modulates through C#7 and F# minor to A major. The last word, 'Jehovah,' is followed by some unusual modulations in the orchestra that flirt with dissonance, only to end on a crashing ff A major chord, underlined with a *tremolo*. This conclusion suggests acceptance of God's power, as well as marking the end of the battle and of Saul's life. The use of

the 'witch' as a kind of Greek chorus, possibly expressing the composer's sentiments, is unique to this oratorio.

Scene 3 is entitled 'The Lamentation for Saul'. The lament is only for Saul, since Jonathan is not mentioned in this libretto. Though a fairly unusual omission, it occurs in some other oratorios. Parry wanted to keep the focus on Saul, and his relationship with Jonathan does not reveal as much of Saul's complicated psyche as does the fraught relationship with David.

Though David alone intones this dirge in the biblical version, here the words are sung by the chorus, joined by Michal and David. This is not uncommon in oratorios, as will be seen elsewhere in this book. It is not consistent with the biblical chronology, however, because at the time Saul and Jonathan died, Michal was still with Paltiel and had not yet been brought back to David. But Michal in this libretto is in a love relationship with David, and the evil spirit intimated that she and Saul had a very close relationship before David entered the picture. This may be why Michal was included here.

The text of the dirge has been altered in order to delete references to Jonathan, but it otherwise stays quite close to the biblical text. The chorus opens:

Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no rain nor dew upon you! For there the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away... even the shield of Saul (2 Sam. 1. 21).

Between the end of the choral part and Michal's entrance, the orchestra plays two measures of the music that had introduced the witch, using this 'reminiscence motif' to recall her predictions, for the very attentive listener (204, last measure).

Michal joins the chorus, singing vv. 19 and 27 (205). The melody and mood of this solo could best be described as powerfully evoking a Proms concert: stately, majestic, quintessentially English. The opening phrase reaches g'' and the voice rises ever higher to a sustained b flat'' on the final repetition of 'beauty' (205, 3rd staff, last measure). A contrapuntal chorus repeats the same text mostly a cappella. New rhythmical figures of triplet groups and dotted 8th-notes introduce David's solo (207, top):

From the blood of the slain, from the necks of the mighty, The sword of Saul returned not empty (1.22, omitting reference to Jonathan). He lifted his spear against a thousand, and his arrows sped abroad.

The reference to 'a thousand' recalls 1 Sam. 18.7, the verse that first triggered Saul's mad jealousy. It is an addition to the dirge not found in the biblical text. The vocal line continues the strongly rhythmical music of the orchestral introduction. The sound is more militaristic than mourning, as David recalls the battle and the courageous fighting of Saul and his soldiers. The word 'spear' is sung on a' and sustained for two and a half beats (207, 3rd staff), one of the most dramatic vocal moments for David in the oratorio.

The male chorus repeats David's words and melody (207, bottom). The chorus that followed Michal's solo did not repeat her exact melody, so this may be meant to suggest that the soldiers are completely in sync with David. This is borne out by the next section, in which the chorus joins while David is still singing his lines, and they continue to follow one another in *fugato* form (208, bottom). The accompaniment becomes more agitated, with trills accenting each beat, building to a climactic *a'* sung by David and the chorus together (209, Reh. G). Then Michal, David and the full chorus sing:

How are the mighty fallen! And the weapons of war perished! (1.27)

The opening few measures are unaccompanied, but as the chorus builds, the orchestra plays bombastic chords. Before the final section, the 'witch's theme' is heard one final time, a musical announcement that the prophecy has been fulfilled (210, Reh. H). Then Michal and David sing a brief duet:

Ye daughters of Israel, weep for the slain! For their voices shall be heard no more in the land.

They sing in unison here rather than homophonically, (211, top), indicating complete oneness and unity. The chorus then rejoins for the final words:

In death they sleep together, But their deeds shall live in men's remembrance. Weep for the slain! Weep ye for Saul! (2 Sam. 1.24)

It is not clear who 'they' refers to, other than the warriors who died together in battle. In the biblical text, the dirge is for Saul and Jonathan, 'never parted in life or in death.' Here again, the complete absence of Jonathan is jarring. It is safe to assume the audience was a biblically literate one, as has been mentioned previously. They might have accepted the absence a crucial character like Jonathan in an oratorio called *Saul*, if Parry's portrayal of Saul made a convincing case for the greater importance of other characters.

Parts of this final chorus are sung only by Michal and David, but most of the time their voices respond to the chorus. Choral parts are contrapuntal and unaccompanied. In the measures between their singing, the orchestra plays a triumphant, broad melody which the final chorus sings, up to the final D major chord crowned by Michal's a'' rising over all the voices (214).

Though musically this is a triumphant and upbeat ending, the text mourns Saul's defeat and death. The triumphant major key suggests that this was for the best, and that David and Michal will live and reign happily ever after.

The most unusual element of this final scene is the blow-by-blow description of the battle by none other than the necromancer of Endor. Instead of disappearing from the story, she becomes a prophetic voice. The detailed and harrowing description of the battle is a highly dramatic change

from the dry biblical account. The fact that the oratorio ends at this point in the story is typical of oratorios based on Saul's story.

George Macfarren's *King David* (1883) opens at 2 Sam. 5.1-3, in which the tribes come to David in Hebron and anoint him king. The narrator's text is eliminated, leaving only the words of the people, who at times take over the third-person narrator's words with a first-person account. For example, the end of v. 3 reads 'they anointed David king,' but here the chorus sings 'O David, we anoint thee king.'

In the next scene (No. 3), the recitative text is from 1 Chronicles 15 (2, 12 and other verses), in which David proclaims that only the Levites should carry the ark of God. This is the only work I am discussing that uses Chronicles extensively. David's words are sung as unaccompanied recitative, interspersed with short forceful orchestral passages (starting on 31, 4th staff). At the end of this recitative, several measures of harp introduce David's aria, a setting of Ps. 132.4, 7, 'I will not suffer mine eyes to sleep.'

The next scene (No. 4) opens with a chorus of praise sung by the twelve tribes, to the text of 1 Chronicles 16 (8, 9, 32-34, 36). The opening heraldic measures are played only by trumpet(s), whose call is echoed by other trumpets 'outside', meaning offstage (37, top), effectively suggesting a distant battlefield. The chorus is in a very traditional 4/4 time and C major. The organ joins the chorus in the second half, probably to give it a religious feeling (42, Reh. B).

The next section, to the text 'Let the sea roar', is much louder, more assertive and less *legato* (44, Reh. C). The mood changes at 'He is good, his mercy endureth forever', where the harp strums under a long and *legato* melody (47, Reh. E). There is some very difficult choral writing: for example, the sopranos must sustain an e'' for 10 beats, move up to a'' for two beats and then, in the same phrase, descend to e'—a virtually impossible feat (49, 2nd staff) although it would be highly dramatic.

The use of large sections of Chronicles plus many Psalms and other biblical texts give this work a clearly devotional feeling and agenda. Since Macfarren was Parry's teacher, it is possible that this work inspired Parry to write his own setting of the narrative, though musically and textually they could hardly be further apart.

Buzzi's opera changes these biblical scenes almost beyond recognition. Act 4 Scene 1 takes place in the Israelite camp at night. After a short interlude that evokes Verdi, Michal enters looking for David. She suddenly hears trumpet sounds and realizes she is at the scene of the battle. Then she spots Saul, and singing mostly unaccompanied, with only loud *tremolo* passages between her measures, she sings 'poor father, ah, my foot stumbles, my voice is gone' (171). A rapid ascending passage of 8th notes leads to Saul's

entrance, singing 'Please, have pity and leave me, terrible ghost (*ombra tremenda*)'. Still addressing this 'ghost' he asks if it seeks vengeance, and says he will grant it:

Ah, how suddenly the burning arrow of God's disdain swooped down. Ah, what a terrible fire spreads through my bones and devours me. What? Will the avenging hand of God still fall upon my children [sons]?

He asks God to have pity on his children (or sons: *figli* can mean either), and a lyrical aria greatly contrasting with the previous agitated recitative follows (173):

If you insist I fall at your feet, see, I prostrate myself there. Take Saul's crown,

Like a servant he bows down to his king.

Michal witnesses this scene and realizes Saul is delirious. She tells him to be calm, and says to herself that he has lost his mind (singing this on a trill, operatic shorthand for madness). She tries to warn Saul that the enemy is approaching, but he goes on repeating the delirious verses above, even when she tells him his daughter is with him.

Then he suddenly seems to wake up and asks where he is, and who Michal is. When he recognizes her, he says 'at least you can close your father's eyelids'. She sings an agitated and melodramatic aria in response (175):

Ah, I want to die with a thousand pangs, But in my father's arms. To uproot myself from my father's breast All of hell would not suffice

Saul asks what noise he hears. Abner enters and tells him they have been deceived and need to flee. The Philistines are approaching, but Saul refuses to flee: he will confront them alone. In very declamatory and martial music, he sings (178):

I still have a soul and a sword, they will not make me a slave. Only from my corpse will they take my scepter.

Tremble, Philistines,

I will destroy your pride.

As he gains increasing strength, Saul sings these lines 'with abandonment' near the end. He then instructs Abner to give his daughter to David. Michal refuses, apparently more loyal to her father than to David, saying she would die first. But Saul insists Abner take her away.

Then Saul repeats the aria from the beginning (180). When he finishes, Michal is taken away forcefully by Abner as Saul goes off to fight. Michal's fierce devotion to her father, apparently stronger than her love for David, is an interesting creative midrash.

In the next scene (No. 20), David sings of finding Israel's tents deserted and everything quiet. He only hears a distant sound of battle (183). He wishes he had news at least of his 'royal consort', and wonders where she is wandering by herself. He hopes the Philistines haven't lain their bloody hands on her and made her a victim. He then sings an aria in lilting 6/8 time in the unusual key of D-flat major (185):

In the silence of the desert I seem poised at a threshold But your faithful one on earth is not yet dead... O with you I will go underground, blessed, together with you.

The music suddenly becomes much more agitated as David hears approaching warriors. David asks the warriors about Saul's fate, and they only answer that God is no longer the defender of Israel's warriors. In a chorus marked *vivacissimo con fuoco* (very lively and fiery), the warriors describe the fierce battle in a vivid musical depiction of the flashing of broken swords, dead bodies covering the fields, pitiful laments, and blasphemies (189). When they finish, David asks them if they have news of Michal, if anyone saw her, or saved her—almost as if she had been present at the battle (191). They tell him she did not come with her father. David, determined to rescue her, sings a rousing aria (192):

Horrible night, bloody with death, at least extend to the unhappy one the defense of your veil [of darkness].

The warriors comment that only David can awaken their pride. He says he only wants to give back the crown of Israel to Michal. The suggestion is that Michal is queen—earlier she was referred to as the 'royal consort'. There is no mention of other wives. But there is no consistency with the biblical story at all, since neither Michal nor David was at the battlefield where Saul died.

A chorus of Israelite women (No. 21) sings of crying and grief and of placating the heavens, without explaining the reason—presumably for the return of Michal. Meanwhile, Abner is leading Michal to a safe place (Scene 5, No. 22). She says she is tired and wonders where her father and brothers are (other brothers were not previously mentioned). She sings in a recitative that she is alone and abandoned and wonders what will become of her. Suddenly prostrating herself, singing 'O Heaven' twice, she says she bows her head as her heart is dying. She sings a mellifluous cadenza for extra effect and then a heartfelt prayer/aria, accompanied by flowing 16th-notes.

A group of defeated warriors enters and tells her of Saul's death, at which she sings 'O father!' on a descending octave *b flat"- b flat'*. She says she feels the terrible hand of a vengeful God (210). She virtually curses God, asking if he is finally satisfied with the sea of blood and ruin. She further rants that his destructive power ruined her father and brothers, leaving pitiful ashes in place of what was glory (Fig. 28).



Figure 28. Buzzi: Michal.

She repeats this entire aria twice, ending on her highest note in the opera at the conclusion (212). This is the rather shocking or at least surprising end. Michal never finds David, nor does she even express a desire to. This is the only musical work I have found based on these parts of the biblical narrative that does not end triumphantly, with David hailed as the saviour of Israel. The focus throughout is more on Michal and Saul. David emerges as a sketchy figure, while Saul is sympathetically tragic and mad. The complete absence of recognizable narrative—such as David's famous dirge—puts this opera in a different category than other works discussed in this book.

Twentieth-Century Works

In **Gabriel**'s oratorio, when Saul has gone forth into battle, the chorus sings 'Again he is Saul, ever bold' (105). Everyone seems happy that Saul is 'well' enough to fight battles—an ironic touch for the audience that knows what is coming. David joins the chorus in wishing Saul well in battle. David ends on *e flat'* over an E-flat7 (dominant) chord, and suddenly Michal comes in on d#, an enharmonic of E flat, which signals an unexpected key change. It is also a deceptive cadence, because the dominant chord should have led to the previous home key of A-flat major, but instead the D# takes us to E major. All of these devices heighten the unexpectedness of Michal's appearance.

She warns David, in halting phrases, that Saul has not changed his mind and David is still in danger; but David insists on remaining because God will always protect him. Michal joins him as they sing these words in harmony (107). The harmony is abruptly ended by Jonathan's entrance, singing 'He is dead! The King is no more!' (108)

This may be the most startling change from the biblical account found in any libretto. Surely the composer and his audience were familiar with the

famous dirge over Saul and Jonathan, and they certainly knew the biblical story. On what grounds did the composer and librettist feel comfortable with such a drastic alteration? This question might only be answered by a scholar familiar with Gabriel's time and place.

Jonathan, echoed by the chorus, sings that the King is gone and his troubles over. These lines are sung in C major, a bright key for such a sad moment. In Jonathan's account, Saul was pursuing the foe when a javelin was hurled through his heart. This is another change to the biblical text; obviously the idea of Saul's suicide was not acceptable to the librettist and composer, or their audience, so they gave him a more heroic ending.

A trio follows (No. 37), 'Return, O Lord', sung by Jonathan, Michal and David with full chorus, still in C major. All kneel and pray to God to save them. A funeral march follows immediately (No. 38). This orchestral interlude is played as Saul's body is carried across the stage. Four heavily marked beats per measure establish a standard funeral-march rhythm (111). There are some interesting dramatic touches in the music, such as rapid high triplet figures. The last section changes from A minor to A major and in its rhythm and soaring melody bears a startling resemblance to Verdi (112, 3rd-5th staves). Then the C-major key returns and the final measures die out (113).

David, in a fast and energetic recitative (No. 39), says he will go off and achieve victory through the Lord. The chorus repeats his words. The elimination of the entire biblical elegy and a transition directly back to David as warrior are strange choices.

A triumphant victory chorus follows (No. 40). The warriors proclaim that 'David led as tho' a king' and that they had total victory. They sing Hosanna to their 'Lord and King', referring either to God or David. The 'chorus of damsels' follows, proclaiming David their 'morning's sun' (116).

Jonathan proclaims that he gives David all rights to succeed as their ruler (No. 42), since he recognizes that it is David the people love. It is never clear in the biblical narrative what legal rights David had to succeed Saul as king. Clearly this troubled the librettist who added this scene. Of course, Jonathan did not really outlive his father, so he could never have ceded the throne to David.

Jonathan now sings a brief duet with Michal, in which they remind the people that David was anointed by Samuel (though this was never portrayed) and chosen by God as their king. The people rejoice and proclaim more Hosannas and Huzzas to their Lord and King—now clearly referring to David.

The closing chorus (No. 43) is set to the text of Psalm 19, 'The law of the Lord is perfect', sung *a cappella*, like an anthem. The final text of the chorus is 'Hosanna to the Lord our King', ending on a ringing high *b flat*".

As in most oratorios, the conclusion is a ringing endorsement of David's succession to the throne. Unlike every other work treated in this book,

Jonathan does not die in this libretto, so he is able to officially approve David's succession. There is a short orchestral funeral march, but no sung dirge, which also sets this work apart from all the others. Clearly the whole point of the oratorio is to legitimize and glorify David's kingship.

In **Honegger**'s oratorio, Samuel's prophecy to Saul (chap. 28) is summed up in one sentence by the narrator, who also relates the deaths of Saul and his sons on Mt Gilboa in a fast-forward (31.2-6). He then announces that 'The splendor of Israel is extinguished in the dust' (paraphrasing 2 Sam. 1.19). This is followed by a March of the Philistines [13], an absurdly pompous marching tune marked *pesante e marcato* ('heavy and marked'; 46-49). A comical effect is created by brass playing in extreme low registers at the same time as piccolos and flutes play in their highest register. This is punctuated by an almost comical use of the slide trombone and tuba, whose parts are marked *glissando*, meaning they must slide through several descending notes. (The effect was much more exaggerated in one of the performances I attended than on the recordings, so it is dependent on the conductor's interpretation.) This army is accompanied by what sounds almost like a village band, presumably with the intention of ridiculing them—even though they have just been declared the victors.

The narrator relates that when the Amalekite messenger brings David 'the armlet and crown' of King Saul (1.10), David rends his garments and weeps for the deaths of Jonathan and Saul (1.11-12). In a departure from the Bible, the narrator omits David's order to have the messenger killed. The lament [14] is a very close paraphrase of the biblical lament, with only minor changes:

Gilboa! Gilboa!
The beauty of Israel has perished on your hills.
How are the mighty of Israel fallen?

A contralto soloist opens singing an *a cappella* two-bar lamenting, wordless vocalise. A soprano soloist responds with a similar phrase (Fig. 29).

The orchestra plays measures of off-the-beat chords in between this 'dialogue'. The contralto then sings a one-bar phrase, immediately echoed by the soprano; as the volume increases, strings play a sustained chord under the soprano, who initiates the next exchange (50). The contralto repeats her phrase one octave lower. At this point, the narrator (representing David) begins speaking his lament over the music (52), while in the orchestra, the strings and harp pluck a funeral rhythm and the flutes play rapid 'fluttering' sounds (*Flatterzunge*, 52). The full women's chorus sings the sopranocontralto lament music, which becomes more complex as the voices interweave in modal and chromatic dissonance and trumpets are heard repeating an ascending phrase (58).

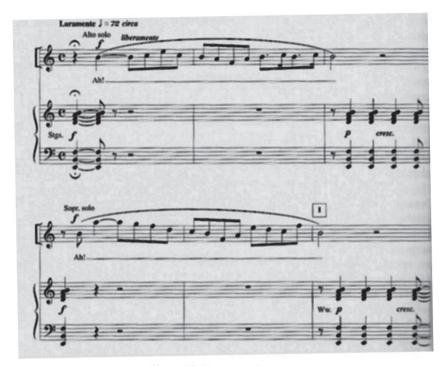


Figure 29. Honegger: Lament.

On the text 'Daughters of Israel, weep over Saul' (2 Sam. 1.24), the chorus sings 'Weep, Saul' for several measures, with 'Saul' sung on a descending slur known as a *seufzer* and typifying grief (58-60). They then resume the wordless lament. The full orchestra plays to the end, with falling cadences in the harp echoed in flute and celesta while strings play long sustained chords. The orientalizing *melismas* plus the lamenting vocalises are strongly evocative of Middle Eastern music, while a funeral march rhythm is suggested throughout the lament. The full text of 2 Sam. 1.26-27 is included and paraphrased:

My heart, Jonathan, suffers bitter pain. You were my pleasure, O my friend, my brother.

And you loved me, my Jonathan, more than your soul, Your love surpassed even the love of women.

During the final spoken lines, the chorus stops, heightening the effect of the words that follow. In his programme notes, Philip Clark comments that this is 'some of the most forward-looking music of the score...with serenely braided woodwind and choral writing' (Clark 2003). It is certainly one of the most evocative and moving musical portrayals of this biblical scene of lament in the musical literature

Part Two of the oratorio follows. In a fast-forward, the narrator announces that David is king and that after conquering Jerusalem, he has chosen it to house the holy ark (6.14-15). Today the ark is being brought to its place, in the midst of Israel.

This section is called 'Cantique de Fête' (Festival Canticle). Some of the texts used are Psalms, for example 'Gates, raise your lintels' (Ps. 24.7-8). The lengthy chorus [15] opens with two bars of rapid passages in the winds followed by a short *a cappella* soprano solo, 'Sing, my sisters, sing!' In a few more *a cappella* bars, to be sung 'freely', she reminds the people that God has never abandoned them. Following this, the chorus begins a very upbeat, rhythmic and *staccato* folk-like song. A repetitive and fast 'dancing' celesta passage plays above the chorus, who asks God to bless them (66). The soprano soloist sings a kind of descant above this chorus. The only accompanying instruments are celesta and harp, convincingly conjuring the sounds of a victory chorus in the Ancient Near East of our imagination.

The next section, The Dance before the Ark [16], is the longest of the oratorio, and was Honegger's own favourite (Anderson, liner notes). Honegger varies the sound and rhythm constantly throughout this lengthy chorus: for example, the sombre bass tones of the priests contrast with the very syncopated rhythms accompanying the soldiers. The section is introduced by the narrator, who announces:

The shepherds are bringing their flocks, the reapers their wheat, the vintners their good wine, and all the artisans who have worked for God.

This narration helps the listener visualize the participants in the chorus. The narrator continues commenting through the orchestral introduction that precedes the chorus. Flutes and oboes predominate in the opening measures, their modal music suggesting the Orient, as in so many other places of this oratorio (70). The chorus includes priests singing before the ark, women, warriors, young girls, then later an angel followed by a chorus of angels.

The first voices heard are the tenors and basses, singing 'Jehovah, come to us' in unison, possibly to suggest a 'priestly' sound (75). They end on an open fifth, F#-C#, and the women's chorus opens on that same interval. This chorus, 'Come to us, Eternal one', is sung mostly in parallel open fifths, a very modal, 'primitive' and 'ancient' sound (76-77). Tambourine and harp predominate throughout the lengthy chorus.

As the women's chorus continues in their upbeat rhythm of a quarter note followed by two 8th-notes, the basses enter, singing a much different melody and in a more measured 4/4 time, with more sustained notes (78). Their text is 'Open the door to the Eternal, to Justice'. They clearly represent the priests (in the piano-vocal score, but not the orchestral score,

the basses are actually identified as priests). When the tenors join in, they alternate between singing the rhythm and melody of the women's chorus, and singing in sync with the basses (78-79).

The next section is introduced by a new musical motif, *pesante e molto marcato* (heavy and very marked) in a much faster tempo. The text, sung by tenors and basses in unison (84, Reh. #9), opens:

All the people attacked me in the Lord's name, and I destroyed them.

These are clearly soldiers, based on the text, the predominance of brass in the orchestra, and the strong martial rhythm (they are identified as soldiers in the piano-vocal score). After a few measures, the women's chorus sings 'It is the Lord' (*C'est Jehovah*) in a different rhythm, a kind of descant over the male chorus. As the tempo and volume increase, the basses, again representing the priests, begin singing a different line than the tenors.

At the climax, the chorus abruptly slows down; the time shifts from a fast 4/4 to a broad 3/2 as they all sing together, 'Come to us, Eternal, come to us' for several measures (90, Reh. #11 bis) before another abrupt increase in tempo, shifting from 3/2 to 3/4 time (91, Reh. #12). This section is introduced by muted trumpets playing *staccato* phrases of six eighthnotes that include minor and augmented seconds and other modal-sounding intervals. After this introduction, the trumpets continue to play this phrase as they are joined by full orchestra, including cymbals, celesta, and harp. The sopranos sing first, on sustained quarter notes which contrast with the eighth-note trumpet phrase (92):

Let us sing to God, strong and merciful, Let us dance to the sound of the instruments And sing him new songs.

The orchestral section that follows is even faster, representing David's dance as it is described by the narrator (101, Reh. #19):

And David danced as king to the sounds of drums and cymbals.

The music vividly conjures David's uninhibited dance. The music builds continually, and an organ is heard just before a sudden and extreme increase in tempo (113, Reh. #25). Then there is just as sudden a broadening of the tempo, as the climactic bars have the sopranos repeating a'' several times, a highly dramatic choral effect (116, m. 1 before Reh. #26). All the voices unite and erupt into a joyous tonic conclusion on a single clear F-major chord (116, Reh. #26). This tonality emerges gloriously and unexpectedly from the predominant dissonance, described by Clark as 'ominous chromatic nuances from within the bowels of the orchestra' (Clark 2003).

The tempo suddenly slows down, as an 'angel', sung by a high soprano and accompanied initially only by a celesta *tremolo* and muted trumpets, announces that David will not build the Temple, but rather his son will:

He will be my Son and I will be his Father, And his name will be the greatest in the world. It will be a light for all, And he will be the son of David.

These words are a paraphrase of God's words that come to Nathan in a dream (2 Sam. 7.12-14). Apparently the angel speaks for God in this libretto. The capitalizing of the words Son and Father in the libretto clearly reflect a Christian perspective which links David directly to Jesus. Of course, this would not be an audible element. The closing measures of the angel's music include simple descending lines in the chorus, first the sopranos and basses in unison, followed by the contraltos and tenors, also in unison (118-119). They represent a 'chorus of angels'.

The opening theme of the section leading directly from the angel's solo is a polyphonic Hallelujah chorus, which builds an amazing choral fugue out of a simple theme of an ascending fifth (119, Reh. #28). Harp predominates, along with a lyrical oboe descant above the chorus. The orchestration becomes much fuller near the end of the chorus, when a soprano soloist sings above the choral Hallelujahs (123, Reh. #30). The closing measures are repeated open fourths which diminish until the quiet final chord, which is F# major in the chorus, in the third inversion; but in the orchestra, though the bottom note is F#, a D# and G# (a fourth) intrude on this harmony (126). This dissonance has an otherworldly 'angelic' sound.

Honegger's music depicts both lamenting and rejoicing more vividly and effectively than most of the other works discussed in this book. Because of its limitations as an oratorio, there are no depictions of individual characters. David emerges only as a mouthpiece for psalms. But the dramatic and lengthy choruses create a place and mood in which the biblical narrative unfolds with stirring drama and excitement.

Part IV of **Brown**'s oratorio is entitled 'The Death of Saul and Jonathan'. The orchestral introduction, indicated 'Marchlike,' includes very low regular drum beats and muted trumpets playing dotted figures. The effect is the sound of a distant battle. The volume increases steadily, as if the battle is getting closer, and after a climactic cymbal clash and loud horns, the narrator enters and relates the Philistines' battle against Israel (1 Sam. 31.1, 4, 6). His opening measures are unaccompanied, with quick rapid figures in the orchestra at the end of each phrase (70, Reh. 53). On 'slain in Mount Gilboa', he sings a descending line *ff* over agitated orchestral figures. As he relates the battle, soft chords are repeated in a dotted rhythm, a muted martial sound (71, 1st-2nd staves). This sound stops when the narrator relates Saul's suicide, with only heavy chords under him (71, Reh. 54).

The accompaniment is still more muted on 'So Saul died' and only a sustained chord is heard when the narrator relates that 'David lamented with

this lamentation'. The first syllable of this final word is sung *ad lib*. to a long 'wail', slowly descending modal groups (72, top) starting on *e'*. It is sung with great emotion and is a highly effective musical depiction of grief. The last words, 'over Saul and over Jonathan his son', are sung as a free and unaccompanied recitative in a low range. The lowest note reached, on 'Saul', is *B flat*, an octave and a half lower than the start of the lamenting phrase. On the last word, a low drumbeat is heard, building from *ppp* to *fff* in a measure and a half (72, 2nd staff).

The lament 'How are the mighty fallen!' seems to burst forth out of the *crescendo* drum leading up to it. The lament includes most of the text of 2 Sam. 1.19-27, in slightly altered sequence. The music is marked *Lento con passione* (very slow, with passion) in a steady 4/4 rhythm. The chorus sings the opening section, which is repeated by the mezzo and baritone soloists. The opening is sung *ff* in unison, starting on E flat in dissonance against the loud D drumbeat (72, 3rd staff). This drumbeat continues steadily through the opening section, creating a funeral march sound. The sustained chords in the orchestra steadily descend, so when the chorus repeats the first four measures, the chords under them are already a third lower (73, top). The words 'fallen' and 'perished' are both sung on a descending seventh. These are all musical markers of grief.

The next section, starting at 'Ye mountains of Gilboa', is a slow *fugato*: the basses introduce the two-measure theme, which is picked up by the other voices and repeated in different and steadily higher keys. When the sopranos repeat the theme, they end on 'Gilboa' an octave higher than the first time, leading straight to a new section, 'Let there be no dew' in 9/8 time (74, m. 2). The rhythm becomes unstable in the next few measures. This text is sung decisively, on an *a cappella* E-flat chord in the second inversion. The tonality vanishes in the next measure, suggesting the instability that accompanies grief. On the word 'fields', the sopranos and tenors sing a modal 'wail' (74, m. 4).

At 'For there the shield of the mighty', the music accelerates and has an angrier sound (75, top). On 'the shield of Saul,' the word 'Saul' is sung on two successive descending intervals: a diminished fifth and augmented octave (75, m. 4). On 'From the blood of the slain', the tempo picks up even more, and the chorus is accompanied by a steady, very high trill and steady drum beat (76, m. 2). On the climactic phrase 'the bow of Jonathan turned not back', the orchestra plays a loud B-minor chord but the chorus's unison phrase is in discord with that tonality (77, top). They end on C as the mezzo and baritone soloists enter on this note, while the orchestra plays an F-minor chord—one of the few completely tonal moments in the lament (77, Reh. 57).

The two soloists repeat the chorus's opening measures, 'How are the mighty fallen', in unison. Their starting note is lower, and they sing a larger interval on the word 'fallen'—a diminished octave (77, Reh. 57). The word

'perished' is sung on a descending fifth, G-C, over a clear C-minor chord in the orchestra which continues through the next few measures (77, bottom). The tonality is stressed with a sustained C in the cor anglais.

In the next chorus, different sections enter separately. The sopranos start with 'Saul and Jonathan were lovely', an expressive cor anglais solo woven in with the voices (77, last measure, 78, top). The cor anglais continues playing modal melismas throughout the section, an 'orientalizing' and plangent sound. The altos and tenors repeat the line, then the sopranos sing 'and in death they were not divided' followed by tenors and basses (78, last measure, 79, top).

A series of trills and ascending runs accelerate, leading to a new section marked *Allegro agitato* and starting with 'They were swifter than eagles' (79, Reh. 58). Trumpets play a short theme that is immediately repeated by the chorus in a *fugato* (79, starting at Reh. 58). After a short orchestral interval, the tempo abruptly slows. A high trill is heard together with loud chromatic descending notes in the bass. This leads to a reprise of the opening lament, 'How are the mighty fallen', but starting one pitch higher, on a unison F (83, 2nd staff, m. 5), with the same dissonance as before, this time created by the repeated E in the drums.

As the chorus starts its repeat of the text, the bass E drops to D# and B major is briefly heard in the second inversion (83, last measure). This is the only repetition of the theme sung *a cappella*, and the sense of grief is heightened by the sudden silence of the orchestra. This repeat starts a diminished fifth lower, on B, and takes all the voices down to a low B (b, or B) while the orchestra plays a B-minor *tremolo* (84, m. 3).

Over this *tremolo*, David (mezzo) begins singing, starting on a#' in sharp dissonance against the B-minor tonality. The mezzo, doubled by flute, is to sing *piangendo* (crying). The opening measures of this short solo are accompanied only by *tremolos* which modulate from one key to another. Only rarely is the singer's key consonant with the accompaniment, and when it is, it offers moments of restfulness. For example, 'my brother Jonathan' takes the voice to *d flat*" over a D-flat major *tremolo*, even though an E is heard briefly in the bass (84, 2nd staff, m. 2). The word 'pleasant' is sung on e" over an A-major *tremolo* (84, 2nd staff, m. 3). The final line, 'Thy love to me was wonderful' is echoed by the clarinet, playing a *fugato* with the voice. The vocal line ascends to g" on 'Jonathan' with a clear C-minor chord in the orchestra. The mezzo repeats the name on g', an octave lower and over a C major chord in the second inversion (85) (Fig. 30).

The sound of a woman's voice singing this famous lament is odd. A female voice worked earlier in the cantata when David was depicted as a young man. But he is no longer young, and to hear a woman's voice proclaiming that a man's love 'passes the love of women' creates a kind of discord between text and music. Despite this distracting element, the short solo is convincingly moving. The oratorio form often requires a suspension

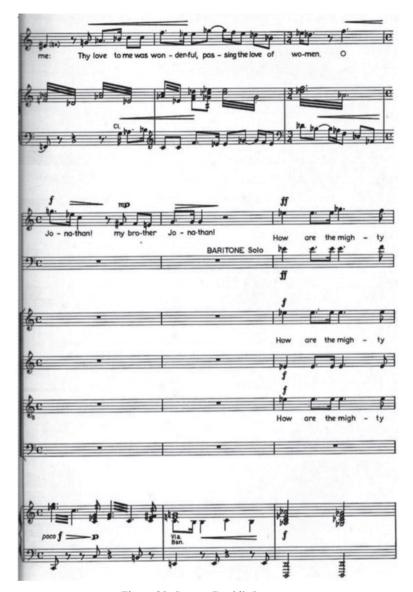


Figure 30. Brown: David's Lament.

of disbelief; in much earlier Handel oratorios, alto parts representing men were often taken by women (Sisera in *Deborah* is only one example).

The chorus enters under David's and a baritone soloist's voices, reprising the opening lament 'How are the mighty fallen', starting on E flat as in its first rendition. All the singers start out in unison, but while the chorus sings the same notes as in previous repetitions, the mezzo and baritone sing slightly different notes. Drums play a steady D, but unlike the earlier repeats,

a modal scale ascends an octave under the singers. When D is reached, an open fifth chord is heard, D-A, as the singers sing this interval—an only partially resolved sound (86, m. 3). Then a bassoon plays another ascending modal scale over the steady D in the drum, which closes the section.

In Part V, the narrator (baritone) recounts that all Israel anointed David King of Israel (2 Sam. 5.3, but omitting mention of Hebron). This is sung in an unaccompanied, *ad lib*. recitative, a heraldic sound (87, top). A joyful chorus of praise follows, marked by very upbeat and rhythmical music dominated by trumpets, bells and tambourines. The tempo suddenly slows, and the male chorus sings 'Lord, remember David' (Ps. 132.1-5) while the narrator continues to recount the story of David's arrival in Jerusalem, the taking of Zion, and the naming of the city of David (2 Sam. 5.6, 7, 9). The chorus sings in unison, which in male voices resembles a liturgical chant. There is no melodic or tonal relationship between this chorus and the narrator's solo: it is a depiction of two separate worlds, those of action and of prayer (90, m. 6; narrator enters at Reh. 65).

Although they are singing different texts, the chorus and the narrator's voices begin to come closer, several times singing B flat together. The narrator sings 'city of David' while the chorus is singing 'God of Jacob' but all come together at the end of those phrases on a B-flat major chord, a rare tonal moment which underlines the importance of both texts. This may be more obvious on the printed page, since loud chords are modulating in every measure and the fleeting moments of tonality barely register in the ear.

Another tonal moment occurs several measures later, when the narrator recounts David building the city 'round about' and reaches a high A (a"), the same note heard in the soprano and tenor choruses, with a D-minor chord in the orchestra (93, 2nd staff, m. 4). This D-minor chord is repeated with a dissonant E-flat under it. This is a passing tone, however, moving back to D. In a new, faster section (94, Reh. 67), the male chorus sings 'For the Lord hath chosen Zion... Here will I make the horn of David to bud...' (Ps. 132. 13-14, 17) while the narrator sings 'David waxed greater and greater' (2 Sam. 5.9; 94, Reh. 67). The chorus and soloist notes overlap more than in previous sections, and their texts are also closer in theme. But the overlap goes by very quickly, and many of these subtleties may only be noticeable on the printed page.

The chorus now reprises the song of praise that opened this section (95, Reh. 68). At the conclusion, both tempo and volume decrease as a new short phrase, introduced in the bass, is repeated throughout the section almost as an *ostinato* (98, starting at Reh. 70, repeated through 101, Reh. 74). The pattern is an ascending half-step slur and descending fifth ending on a short 8th note: D#-E-A, sometimes on other pitches. It may represent steady marching steps, and it stops when the ark is brought up. The chorus as narrator sings 'And David gathered all Israel together...' (6.15). The sopranos do not sing

the opening few measures, which are sung on low pitches and almost as a chant (98, 2nd staff, m. 2). Both tempo and volume increase as they recount that the ark is borne into Jerusalem (99, 2nd staff, m. 2). The baritone, now representing David, sings 'Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place' (Ps. 132.8) on a loud d' over a tonic G-major tremolo (100, Reh. 73). These few verses are sung like a declamation, in a high range (mostly between d' and f'; 101, top), and the momentary major tonality suggests joy.

The narrator (now the mezzo) relates how all Israel brought up the ark 'with shouting, with the sound of the cornet...' (6.5). She starts softly on c', and the voice gradually ascends. At the word 'trumpets,' loud trumpet calls are played in heraldic-sounding triplets, their top note doubling the singer's (101, 4th staff, m. 2). The climactic word, 'noise' is sung f on g'' followed by a descending scale on 8th notes ending on c', on the word 'harps' (102, top). Several measures of trumpet blasts introduce the Hymn of Praise (102, 2nd staff, Ps. 122.1-6, relating to Jerusalem).

Similarly to other choruses of praise in this cantata, the tempo is very fast and the rhythm is constantly in flux. Measures alternate from 4/4 in cut time, to 3/4, 7/8, 3/2, 3/4, 5/4. This device is often used to suggest instability, but Brown also uses it to project sheer spontaneous joy. Continual trumpet blasts and frequent tambourine sounds underline that joy. As in his other choruses, sections of unison singing are interwoven with short *fugato* passages and 4-part singing, and these constant shifts add to the sense of spontaneity.

The two soloists introduce a slightly slower and softer section, a setting of 'O pray for the peace of Jerusalem' (Ps. 122.6; 111, Reh. 80). The chorus enters just after the mezzo has begun her solo. The interwoven voices of the soloists and chorus sing different parts of the text at the same time. The accompaniment is mostly sustained chords, and many sections are sung *a cappella*, creating an anthem sound. There are several 'resting spots' of tonal moments.

The section entitled 'Epilogue' is marked *Maestoso e con moto* (majestic and with movement). It is a setting of stanza XXXVIII of Christopher Smart's poem; the final three lines are from Smart's poem 'Rejoice in the Lamb':

O David, scholar of the Lord! Such is thy science, whence reward And infinite degree; O strength, O sweetness, lasting ripe! God's harp thy symbol, and thy type The lion and the bee!

Alleluya from the heart of God, And from the echo of the heavenly harp in sweetness Magnifical and mighty. A majestic-sounding anthem, the music is differentiated from other anthems in this oratorio by more frequent tonal moments: on 'Such', a clear E-flat minor chord is heard; on 'infinite', F major and C major; on 'lion', E major (120, m. 4, 6-7; 121, m. 6). The 'Alleluya' verses are sung first by the two soloists, initially singing homophonically over an opening G-major *tremolo*. Their musical line, with its irregular rhythm, imitates chant (122, Reh. 88). The chorus's first 'Alleluya' ends on a loud and sustained C-major chord (123, 1st measure). A fast, rhythmically changeable chorus follows, marked *Allegro giocoso con spirito* (Fast, joyous and spirited; 123, Reh. 89). The final phrase of the oratorio is sung *fff* starting on a unison high A (*a*") and rapidly descending a fifth to end on an 8th-note *d*", heavily accented in the orchestra. The abruptness of this conclusion is highly dramatic.

The chorus, as typically in the oratorio form, has the most extended parts in this work. The use of the same two soloists, a mezzo and a baritone, to sing the narration and also assume the different parts of individual characters lessens the dramatic impact. The listener is always aware of this as a story being told rather than acted out. In spite of these limitations, the musical depictions of joy, fear, excitement, love, and grief are consistently exciting and filled with the unexpected.

In **Nielsen**'s opera, as the scene with the necromancer of Endor ends, lengthy and dramatic battle music is heard. The rhythms are suggestive of rapid and chaotic movement, and occasional trumpet calls create a military sound. At the conclusion, an offstage chorus of Israelites is heard. This chorus includes women, more for the dramatic effect of their very high range than to suggest women were also warriors. The chorus seems to represent the Israelite people, not just the warriors. Intensifying the drama, trumpets double the very high soprano notes, and heavy brass dominates the final measures.

In Scene 2, the battle music dies down and a plangent cor anglais solo is heard. The curtain goes up on Jonathan, mortally wounded and supported by Abner. This invented scene gives Jonathan the chance to express his love for David as he dies. In the biblical version, his death is simply recounted along with that of his brothers (1 Sam. 31.2).

Jonathan asks Abner where Saul is, but Abner does not know. Jonathan relates that his brothers fell and his father will also die, as will he. Then Abner sees Saul fleeing in the distance, bleeding and with trembling knees. Jonathan sings:

There comes one after him, One who stands fast; David the Redeemer! The kingdom is his. Bring him my kiss and say: With his name on my lips I took leave of life.

The music for the opening lines of this passage is triumphant, with brass doubling Jonathan's line. The words 'David the Redeemer' are sung on two descending octaves, g'-g, over a G-major and then a C-major chord. The word 'his' is sung on a' sustained for five beats (252, 2nd-3rd staves). The final two lines are sung softly, with the mournful sound of an oboe playing a poignant descending line above Jonathan. This music heightens the effectiveness of Jonathan's expression of love for David. It is one of the most overt of such expressions found in any libretto. As Jonathan sinks back and dies, the moment of death is depicted by a sudden shift from D major to D minor and two long rests, followed by a timpani roll (253, top).

The tempo suddenly increases to signal Saul's entrance. He still has his sword, but no helmet, and he looks 'wild and shocked' (libretto note). As he sinks down, he moans 'Samuel! Help me to die!' Abner approaches and tells Saul of the death of Jonathan, pointing to his corpse. This scene greatly amplifies the biblical narrative, which bluntly relates the deaths of Saul's sons, Saul's request to his arms-bearer to kill him, and the suicides of both men in five verses (31.2-6).

A grieving Saul sings: Slain! See how greedily the earth drinks his blood, There in the night-filled darkness. All my family and my warrior sons And Saul with them.

The word 'Slain!' is repeated twice, both times on a sustained *e-flat*', but sung *ff* the first time and *pp* the second (254, m. 3-4). This musically illustrates grief immediately following anger. (On the Allegro CD, Christoff ignores this marking and sings the repeat almost louder, but tapering off into a cry). The musical line for these verses is lyrical and emotional, a rising and falling line repeated twice (254, 2nd-4th staves). Saul realizes he will also die, and asks Abner to run him through with his sword. Abner refuses, saying he cannot lift his hand against the anointed one. Saul calls him 'Slave!' for his refusal, and says he will do it himself. In an amazing tirade against God, lifting his sword to heaven he sings these final words before falling on his own sword (Fig. 31):

My Lord and Tempter! You eternal mocker up there; You have tormented me with endless agony, You who yourself have made your creation. You old mocker, who laughs at my agony. See, now I spatter my blood on your heaven. Wash yourself clean of my sin If you can!



Figure 31. Nielsen: Saul's Curse.

The aria is in C# minor, all ff and is almost shouted more than sung in spots. There is no clear tonal centre, as the key modulates continually to musically indicate Saul's instability. The first few phrases are sung a cappella with loud orchestral passages between the sung measures. The music is in a relatively high range for bass, with the word 'See' on an explosive e' (257, 3rd staff, m. 4). The final note is d-flat', and in that measure the key shifts to D-flat major, enharmonically C# major (258, m. 3) and therefore sounding unexpected and unsettling. The tempo broadens here, and as Saul kills himself, loud descending chords are heard in the brass in measures very reminiscent of Wagner (258, 2nd staff). (In the Allegro CD, Christoff can be heard moaning as he dies).

This operatic Saul would certainly have not been a suitable leader of his people, because he is depicted here as clearly irreverent. He commits suicide almost to avenge himself on God. Was the librettist perhaps puzzled by God's punishment of Saul, and trying to explain it by showing a darker, more cynical and angry side of his character? There are textual and musical echoes here of Verdi's Iago again, as there were in a much earlier scene.

David enters to the sound of martial trumpet calls, followed by Michal, the warriors and women. Abner shows them Saul and tells them he fell on his sword. These are major alterations from the biblical text, where David only learns about Saul's death later; and Michal is no longer part of the biblical narrative by this time.

David's words of lament are very close to the well-known biblical verses (2 Sam. 1.19-27). The lament opens, however, with David standing over the two bodies and saying 'Dead at Jonathan's side.' Abner, and then the chorus, proclaim David the hope of their tribe. They sing these words in a triumphant-sounding fugue for several measures (260, bottom-261, top) until David interrupts them with the line 'Israel's daughters, weep for Saul!' (2 Sam. 1.24). The phrase starts high, on *a'*, and the tempo immediately increases at his entrance (261, m. 3). David's verses proclaiming Jonathan's love for him are altered:

I grieve for you, my brother. Your love for me was deep and strong. Lovely were you to my soul.

The last line reaches a sustained b', a heroic and also ardour-filled note in the tenor voice. Notably altered here is the verse describing Jonathan's love as 'surpassing the love of women' (2 Sam. 1.26). It might seem that both Nielsen and his librettist were less comfortable with a suggestively homoerotic verse than with an overtly irreverent and contemptuous Saul. Yet there was a possibly homoerotic element in Jonathan's earlier farewell speech to David.

The chorus and Michal now proclaim David the hope of their tribe, while David proclaims that God is King and above all men. He sings this text in a slightly slower section, in C major and to a hymnal-sounding melody (269). Michal sings the same text with David for several measures, singing unison g'' and a-flat'' over the full four-part chorus proclaiming David the king.

The chorus continues proclaiming David up to a climactic high C(c''') in the sopranos sustained for four full measures as the curtain falls. The opera ends on a ringing C-major chord echoing with the sound of bells.

This triumphant C-major ending lauding David is one of the only traditional elements in the opera. Having both Michal and David at the battlefield and in front of the bodies of Jonathan and Saul is a major innovation, though it is also found in some other works. Jonathan proclaiming his love for David just before he dies is a dramatic addition, much more effective than David relating Jonathan's love for him. But in spite of these alterations, Nielsen may have felt a need to offer the public what they expected at the end: praise and affirmation of David's rule.

In **Milhaud**'s opera, David, echoed by the choruses of soldiers and refugees, recounts how they pursued the Philistines and regained all the booty that had been taken (30.17-20). Everyone dances to celebrate the victory, but the dance stops abruptly when a wounded Amalekite soldier suddenly enters. His entrance is marked by a sharply dissonant *fff* chord (131, Reh. 225). The Amalekite recounts the battle and the deaths of Saul and Jonathan

(2 Sam. 1.1-10). The orchestra plays loud and rapid dissonant passages between the measures of his music. When David asks him how he knows of this, the music slows and becomes more lyrical.

The Amalekite relates how he found King Saul on the heights of Gilboa, bent over his sword and covered in blood, abandoned and pleading with the Amalekite to finish him off. Some of his phrases imitate rapid speech and also suggest nervousness by utilizing 32nd-note groups (132, m. 1 before Reh. 245). When the Amalekite relates Saul's words, the style of his music is less recitative and more lyrical, with a flute passage playing over his voice. His nervousness is underlined by more rapid-fire passages sung on 32nd-notes, with one word sung per note (133, bottom, 134, top). His solo ends on *g*, echoed very softly by unison G in the orchestra, sustained for a full measure.

This is followed unexpectedly by several very strident and dissonant passages depicting David's anger (134, bottom). When David accuses the Amalekite of killing the Lord's anointed, his voice jumps from e to f' (134, Reh. 270) and his next measure is sung on the same rapid 32nd notes as the messenger's had been. As David orders the messenger killed (2 Sam. 1.15-16), trumpets and cellos play a rapid series of ascending notes with a trill on each note. This is echoed in the brass by trills in a much higher register on a repeated minor third figure. Rapid descending dissonant chords leading to two f low eighth notes accentuated by drums, with a rest after each, vividly announce the killing of the messenger (135, Reh. 275). There is a distinct echo here of the onstage killing of Salome by the soldiers in Richard Strauss's opera Salome.

[In the L.A. stage directions, 'the villagers, in horror, back away, horrified both at the cruelty of the killing and at David's brutality.' This is a modern concession to the audience, who might not accept that David's act would have probably been less shocking at the time of the events. Their reaction also makes the Israelites more sympathetic to a modern audience.] The killing of the Amalekite in the biblical version seems to have taken place later in the day, after David and his men had fasted until evening (1.12), but the action is telescoped in the opera for dramatic purposes.

The tempo slows abruptly, and the time signature changes for the first time in this scene, from 2/4 to 4/4 (135, m. 4 after Reh. 275). The orchestra plays four groups of descending triplets of which the first two notes are slurs, a very measured, funeral-march rhythm. David sings (135, 2nd staff):

Saul and Jonathan are dead, it is no longer the time to sing and dance, but rather to cry, fast, and tear our clothes.

The descending triplets continue like a drone under his singing, while an oboe plays a plangent rising passage followed by two long descending slurs, a weeping sound. David's voice doubles the notes of the orchestra in the final phrase. When the chorus enters, the meter shifts to 12/8, even broader and more mournful. In their opening *a cappella* measures, in which they repeat 'They are dead, they are dead,' the sopranos and tenors repeat the same note while the altos and basses descend by steps under them (136, Reh. 285). After this, they sing 'Saul and Jonathan are dead, let us cry' with the women's voices starting and the men's following. The last phrases are all descending seconds, with rests between them, a weeping and breathless sound (136-137, Reh. 290).

The score's stage directions here indicate David alone on an empty stage, taking his harp and sitting, unmoving, his head bent 'in a mood of immense despair.' Then, inspired, he raises his head and begins to 'compose a song' while playing his harp, with words excerpted directly from 2 Sam. 1.21-27. The opening measures have an improvisational quality and are sung almost like a recitative (137, m. 3 before Reh. 295). These lead into



Figure 32. Milhaud: David's lament.

a more melodious section, in the middle of which a unison chorus is heard lamenting in the distance, singing on one note while David sings a series of descending passages in a different rhythm (138, Reh. 305) (Fig. 32). Several solo passages in French horn and oboe are braided into the orchestral part. The text is altered slightly when David sings of Jonathan:

Jonathan! My heart breaks when I think of you. You whom I loved so much, You who loved me more than your own soul.

Unlike several other librettos discussed in this book, the verse calling Jonathan's love surpassing the love of women is included here (Appendix 3). In addition, David notably proclaims his own love for Jonathan. Most of the phrases throughout the lament descend. The penultimate phrase starts on f#' and ends on B, while the final phrase descends an augmented octave, from c' down to B. David periodically cries out in despair, each of these spontaneous-sounding outbreaks starting on f#'. This relatively high pitch in the baritone range heightens the emotion in his words (137, 139, bottom, 140, Reh. 320). The lament contains some of the most tonal and emotional passages in the opera, ending the act on a clear E-major chord. The major key is a subtle indication of hope amidst despair. The second act ends here.

The first scene in Act 3 creates a dramatic love interest that can barely be read between the lines in the original account. Based on 2 Sam. 3.12-13, where David makes a condition in his pact with Abner that Michal must be returned to him, Milhaud has created a reconciliation scene between Michal and David.

As the scene opens, Michal is on the side of the stage, where she raises a curtain halfway, staying partially hidden to choose the right moment for her entrance. When others have left the scene, she falls at David's feet and caresses his knees.

The music of this duet is lyrical and mostly tonal, sounding in many spots like quintessential romantic French music. It opens softly, with slow descending chords opening in D major in the third inversion in a very high register (156, m. 2 before Reh. 165). Traversing suspension-filled chords, the introduction ends several measures later and three octaves lower, in a suspension of D major including an intrusive E held for three beats before finally moving to a D to resolve in D major (156, Reh. 170). The frequent use of suspensions—unresolved chords leading to other unresolved chords, not reaching resolution until the end of the section—creates a sense of longing and anticipation. This harmonic device is used throughout the duet (Fig. 33).

Michal: Since Bahurim with that Paltiel where I was kept a prisoner,

oh my King, I ran until I was breathless, and here I am!

David: O my Queen, here you are! How many days and nights I have

awaited you!

Michal: How many days and nights I have called out to you! David: For so long have I thirsted for your freshness.

Palti (Paltiel) is not mentioned in other librettos, and Michal's obviously unhappy experience with him is an interesting way to fill the gap of that relationship. She not only refers to him as 'that Paltiel' but also says she was a prisoner. Because of his grief at their parting (2 Sam. 3.16), many commentators have imagined a possibly happy marriage. But this libretto stresses Michal's undying love for David, and her being forced into an unhappy marriage when away from him intensifies that.

The rhythmic pattern of the accompaniment fluctuates between measures with a breathless pattern and others with smoother rhythm (157, top). Michal's vocal line in this opening section has a breathless sound, suitable to the text in which she says she ran till she was out of breath. The lines start off the beat and range over wide intervals, until finally stopping on the words 'here I am' on a *d''* held for four beats (157, Reh. 175).

David enters on d', Michal's last note, and the accompaniment in his opening measures is identical to Michal's opening. These are musical ways of suggesting emotional connection and unity. This connection is further underlined by the measures that follow, in which Michal imitates David's musical line—not the precise notes, but the pattern (157, 3rd-4th staves).

Michal: For so long I have desired your protection, and dreamed of it

as of a standard [of arms] over me, o my King, of your

victories. No one in this land is now more powerful than you. I have thirsted for milk, wine and honey from your lips. [As he

lifts her] O Michal! Arise now, my great love, delight of my

heart, I beg you.

David:

On Michal's word 'protection' (*ombrage*), the voices come together, singing different phrases, while yet other phrases are played by the orchestra (158). There is very little dissonance here; in fact it could almost be labeled romantic music. Passing tones create momentary dissonance, but they are heard more as suspensions and are deeply expressive. They can lead to such tonal moments as an A-flat major chord (played by muted horns) with David singing an *a flat* against Michal's *e flat*" followed by a briefly heard B-flat minor chord in the next beat (158, m. 1 before Reh. 190).

The accompaniment becomes increasingly denser, featuring many chord clusters. At one point the voices unite on the exact same note, f' (158, m. 4 after Reh. 190) followed by a unison *a flat*. In this instance, reading the music on the page leads to an insight—in this case, the musical depiction of unity—that might go by too quickly to be heard. Throughout this section, though the orchestra is playing descending chords and themes, there is a sense of buildup and tension. The music slows when David asks Michal to rise.



Figure 33. Milhaud: David-Michal.

Michal: [still at his feet, holding on to him even more tightly] No, not

vet. David, you are great and strong, the Eternal is with you

and I am but a weak woman.

David: This weak woman is my Queen.

Michal: [sadly] Queen! Daughter of the unhappiest of kings, offspring

of a dynasty that is almost extinguished. Saul, Jonathan, Abner, Ishbaal [Ishbosheth], are all dead. All my family died unjust and violent deaths. O my David! I beg you, be generous

towards the ruins of my house [of Saul].

David: [finally lifting her, and kissing her] Michal, fear nothing. You,

who remain first in my heart.

The last word of her phrase 'I am a weak woman' is a half note sung on a', under which David sings an ascending phrase leading to G major, as Michal descends to g'. For this brief moment—the length of a quarter note—their voices and the orchestra harmonize completely (159, Reh. 200).

The section beginning with 'Queen!' is very different in tone and notably contains the only dissonant music of the duet. The opening word is sung on a descending octave leap, f''-f' (159, 3rd staff). The phrases naming those who have died are all sung to the same musical phrase, which heightens the emotional impact, and the brass plays heavy descending dissonant chords after each phrase (159, bottom), sounding like death knells. When Michal sings of the injustice of their violent deaths, the chords are even more

harshly dissonant. Her highest note is *a flat*", on 'Oh my David' with both an A flat and A in the orchestra under her (160, top).

A short ominous five-note theme is introduced in bassoons and clarinets (160, m. 3 after Reh. 210), before David lifts and embraces Michal, telling her not to fear. His opening words are unaccompanied, but the accompaniment under the remainder of his text up to the closing measures of the scene, repeats variations of the five-note theme. The musical repetition suggests that this love story is not destined to end happily. The theme is played in higher and higher registers, finally modulating to the closing *pp* chord, which is A major, but in the first inversion (160, Reh. 220). So an unsettled feeling hangs in the air as they exit embracing.

The inclusion of a David–Michal love scene is not unusual; in fact, such a scene is in virtually every musical work discussed here. It is not represented as a reconciliation, however, in any other work. Lunel, the librettist, has created original lyrics, rather than simply using *Song of Songs* verses as most other librettists do. It is unfortunate that this duet was not heard in the American premiere or in the German production.

Scene 2, the coronation scene, opens with processional-sounding music as Abiathar holds open the 'scrolls of history'. In proclamatory style, Abiathar relates how David was their military leader but that now, by the word of the Lord that came to Samuel, he would be the shepherd of all Israel (163, Reh. 30). [L.A. stage directions: There is a procession of David's seven wives and their six children, with their servants. Then the high priests, generals, and representatives of the 12 tribes all process, along with a group of dancers.] Scribes enter and stand by Abiathar, ready to dictate the history for him to record. Abiathar continues relating the history as David enters. Two priests place the crown on David's head. David repeats that he was anointed and proclaimed king and ruler over all Israel (2 Sam. 5.12), which the chorus reiterates.

A chorus of modern Jewish soldiers appears and the two choruses together, in very triumphant music, sing that this 'one great body, united and free...is an example and great encouragement' (166, Reh. 70). Then both the ancient and modern soldiers sing of their victories. The soldiers of David's time sing of Philistine attacks, while the modern soldiers sing of victory in the same battlefields of 3000 years ago, when they were attacked on all sides by their neighbours after the declaration of the State of Israel (168, Reh. 95).

During this chorus, more and more groups of soldiers, both ancient and modern, enter with raised flags, as if returning from the battlefields. David singles out his best captains for praise. Then the chorus continues as a narrator, singing 'Time went on and the years rolled by...it was seven years and six months since David had been enthroned at Hebron'. The lights dim, the figures freeze, and only Abiathar and his scrolls are visible—as if the whole vision sprang from them. Symbolic figures representing time encircle the stage. When they exit, the lights come back.

David and his top generals discuss the need for a capital (178, Reh. 205). They weigh the pros and cons of Hebron or Gibea versus Jebus, stronghold of the Jebusites. As they speak, two guards open a curtain behind the throne and a vast schematic panorama of 'Palestine' appears. [The stage directions for the Los Angeles performance differ: there, servants unroll a large embroidered carpet with the design of the map of Israel, and lay it out at the feet of the generals]. As different towns are mentioned, David points to them with the tip of his sword (178, Reh. 225). This scene is based on 2 Sam. 5.6-8, which is straight narrative. Presenting it as a discussion brings it to life, and the recitative quality of the music creates a conversational tone.

The patter sound of the music abruptly stops when David proclaims that with Yhwh's help, they will take the city of Jebus and call it Jerusalem. Most of this line is sung *a cappella* but when David sustains notes for full measures, bassoons and horns play an ominous low note. The final word of this line, 'Jerusalem,' is sung softly and *a cappella* (183, bottom). The taking of Jerusalem, related in two short biblical verses (2 Sam. 5.7, 9), is depicted in the opera by lighting effects, which reveal surrounding hills and towers not previously visible, plus soldiers waving banners. The full chorus, with David, sings praises to Jerusalem:

City of peace, holy mountain of Zion, city of the God of Jacob, joy of all the earth, perfect in beauty, Yhwh's bride, in her hands for eternity.

These verses are paraphrases of biblical texts that postdate the books of Samuel, but since Jerusalem's 3000th anniversary was the occasion for the writing of this opera, the spotlight needed to be placed on its conquest. The finale of this act (184-188) maintains a uniform rhythm and meter, a slow 3/4 rhythm punctuated by a low drum *ostinato*. Tonal measures in F major (185, last bar) and C major (187, Reh. 320) stand out in contrast with the rest of the music, which flirts with tonality but contains passing notes in dissonance with the tonal chords.

The closing fff F major chord comes as a climactic resolution to the instability of the preceding measures, which however stayed at the edges of this tonality throughout. The chorus sings softly and yet triumphantly, with David interjecting forcefully every few measures, each time singing 'Jerusalem.' Dynamically this scene leads to the climactic moment, the dance before the Ark (190-207), which is however placed at the start of the fourth act

As this scene opens, the procession of the Ark is visible in the distance (based on 2 Sam. 6.12-15). The Dance opens with a brief prelude, in Collaer's words 'imperious as a Bach concerto', before developing its obstinate rhythm 'whose breadth is exceptionally intense. These pages are among the most compelling of the whole opera' (Collaer 1982: 235). In a fast dance rhythm, the chorus sings 'Make way for the holy Ark, and vessel of the Lord' (190). They are anxiously awaiting its arrival.

The music suddenly changes and tambourines predominate at the moment that the watchman announces the arrival of the procession (193, top). As it enters, the 'delirious crowd' sings 'Open up ye gates' (Ps. 24.7; 193, Reh. 35), a text which is not in the biblical scene. Its presence creates a religious tone, since this hymn is part of the synagogue liturgy (it was also used in the Honegger work).

Among others watching the procession and David's whirling dance, are Michal and David's six other wives. Michal seems to be watching alone in the biblical text, but this interesting change gives her a chance to express her reactions before confronting David. She is described here as 'distinguished by the immense feather fan in her hand, by her luxurious makeup, jewelry, and coiffure' (190 in the score). Michal comments to the other women:

This celebration is truly royal, but I'm looking for the king everywhere and don't see him.

The music for the chorus that precedes this entrance has been loud, stately, somewhat modal in sound with occasional tonal or dissonant moments. At Michal's appearance, there is a sudden change in texture as only high strings play the next few measures, a transparent and playful short theme with a slightly discordant sound (195, 2nd staff). Michal's vocal line is smooth and sung mostly on 8th notes, while the dancing sound of the accompaniment is more rhythmical and consists largely of 16th notes. The music seems to be mocking her words. In the course of her few measures of music, more and more bass enters to create a heavier sound, under the same repeated little playful phrase. This phrase continues to be heard in the short musical interval introducing David's dance, but it becomes transformed by the addition of heavier orchestration around it (196, Reh. 55).

At that moment, David moves away from the crowd of celebrants and is seen dancing wildly, bareheaded and barefoot, wearing only a simple ephod. He sings, in the same fast and almost breathless rhythm of the chorus that preceded him (196, Reh. 60):

A celebration where there can be only one king—the King of Kings! O my God, my rock, my saviour, my light. Here I am before you, with clean hands and a pure heart, your creature and your servant.

He continues with similar verses, in a more deliberate tempo. None of this text is found at this spot in the biblical account, where David simply dances. But this version makes his motivation unambiguously religious devotion to God. As he concludes his hymn, Michal, still 'playing with her fan', addresses the other women again:

My very dear friends, I have looked and cannot believe my eyes, such revels on the part of our sovereign seem to me an extraordinary impropriety.

The tempo speeds up before her entrance, sounding breathless and irregular, as trumpets play rapid 16th-note groups. This could be heard as

mocking or scolding music. Full quarter-note rests at the end of her first two sentences (198, m. 2-3 after Reh. 80) could suggest that she is truly amazed, and is trying to find words to express her feelings. There are a few brief tonal moments: when she sings c#'' on 'I don't believe' over a C#-minor chord (198, m. 3 after Reh. 80), or 'on the part of' when she sings d#'' over a G#-minor chord (198, m. 4 after Reh. 80). But these are fleeting moments, and most of the accompaniment is filled with chord clusters. At the end of two of her measures, the orchestra has a quarter-note rest, leaving her to sing those phrases unaccompanied (198, m. 2, 4 after Reh. 80). So although the text sounds ironic, the music suggests amazement and surprise. But Michal's patter music makes her sound scolding and almost irritating.

The score's directions do not indicate how close Michal is standing to David when she speaks these words. But since David immediately responds, he was obviously close enough to hear her, and he says: 'The dance and the songs are acts of homage, like prayer' (198, last measure). Michal turns from him in anger, and remains standing there. David and the chorus continue to sing God's praises and to dance ecstatically. David sings of Miriam dancing well when Moses parted the waters; of Jephtha's daughter also dancing well to greet her victorious returning father; of the virgins of Shilo dancing during the wine harvest; and of all the daughters of Israel who danced before Saul singing of his victories over the Philistines.

David ends with a verse proclaiming it is the turn of Jesse's son to dance before the Ark. These lines are sung rhythmically, while David continues to dance. It is interesting how the librettist has made David so aware of his place in Israel's history. The reference to the women dancing before Saul shows David's complete unawareness of the effect that dance had on Saul. This scene portrays an innocent and appealingly energetic David. As the chorus repeats his line about Jesse's son dancing before the Ark, David continues, in a slower tempo but still dancing (201-205):

A dance that should be rapture, ovation, exaltation, ascension, as the earth vibrates beneath our feet, our hearts beat stronger and stronger in unison... and my soul suddenly bursts forth toward Yhwh...

Over David's singing, a complex chorus variously sings of Jesse's son, of the Holy Ark of the Covenant, and a Hallelujah chorus. Only near the end does the full chorus unite in singing Hallelujah and 'long live Yhwh' (206-207). The Ark is brought out of the sanctuary and the religious ecstasy increases, until the crowd collapses on the ground. David bows before the Ark and God. In an *a cappella*, proclamatory passage, he sings of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who made a covenant with the Israelites. When he relates God's words, the orchestra joins in lyrical measures (208, top). In this covenant, the Israelites would inherit the land of Canaan and wander no more. The chorus joyfully repeats his words in louder and stronger music, in a kind of *fugato* (209).

David rises and commands the Levites to remain with the Ark and carry out the sacrifices, and tells his wives to re-enter the house (these lines are spoken, not sung; 210, 2nd-3rd staves). Michal remains alone on the terrace; she closes her fan with a loud, dry sound on the banister. Then she confronts David, singing (210, Reh. 160) (Fig. 34):

My Lord the King has surely not finished exhibiting himself in a nightshirt in front of the servants. If only the King were now dressed in a decent fashion! But what has the King done with his crown, robe and embroidered cloak?

The music changes abruptly from calm, measured and relatively tonal phrases, to faster and drier music, bordering on comical, with heavily accented minor seconds played repeatedly in the horns and winds. Michal must sing jagged 16th-note phrases at an almost impossibly quick tempo. The patter sound of these rapid notes recalls some of Sophie's music in Act 2 of Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, but in that case, the music depicts nervousness, while here it is more the sound of annoying chatter. On the words 'in his nightshirt,' Michal's earlier 'theme,' a kind of mocking sound, is heard briefly (211, m. 2). The sung notes are often in extreme dissonance with the orchestra, and minor seconds and chromatic intervals predominate.

There is no conclusion or resolution to this short and very fast solo, but as soon as Michal stops singing, the music abruptly softens and slows down. The orchestra under David's next lines plays quarter notes, in sharp contrast to the immediately preceding measures of 16th-note cascades. Musically and even textually, this portrayal of Michal is of a nag rather than a wronged woman.



Figure 34. Milhaud: Michal Confronts David.

David responds (211, bottom):

To be equal to the humblest of Levites, I have laid my crown, my robe, and my embroidered coat on the altar of the last step (étape). And it was not for the servants, but for the Eternal that I danced. The Eternal who, in order for me to reign in Israel, preferred me to your father and to his descendents. And before the Eternal I am ready to lower myself even further, to render homage to His Majesty. Go, Madam! And may God help you to not feel too heavily the weight of your mistake.

Most of the lines are sung calmly though not lyrically. Only the final words (starting with 'Go') are much stronger and more heavily accented. The final word, mistake ('faute'), is sung on a loud c' sustained for 3 full beats (213, m. 3 after Reh. 185). This is not a gentle farewell.

David turns back to continue blessing the people for their fervour, as Michal withdraws. The chorus blesses David and sings a soft Hallelujah chorus under David's closing words of thanks to Yhwh, ending on a high and sustained e' over a soft C-major chord (214, last measure). These final pages have an almost liturgical sound. [L.A. stage directions: Michal watches David defiantly as the scene ends with David humbling himself. In the score, she has clearly withdrawn before the end of the scene.]

An 'Interlude' (Scene 2) follows. [In the L.A. stage directions: David and Michal are left alone, and in pantomime, David is looking at her in anger and she moves as if to speak to him, but he turns away from her. Michal exits. A group of figures representing 'Time' appears, and as David passes them, they remove his breast-plate and other garments, until he reaches the end of the line as an old man, in only his purple gown.] In the score, the Interlude contains only two lines of music (215, 1st-2nd staves), so Milhaud's intention for staging is unknown.

A chorus relates that God punished Michal with sterility for her pride (2 Sam. 6.21-22; no reason is given there), and David rose to the summit of his glory. The expansion of his empire is described and David acclaimed. The first part of the chorus is unaccompanied, and the next part is spoken (there is a note indicating that the chorus must articulate and almost shout) over a fairly atonal and rhythmically complex accompaniment (216-218). A more lyrical section follows, introduced by flute and harp solos (218, m. 2), when the chorus sings of David as the sweet chanter of Israel inspired by heaven, star of Jacob, Lion of Judah, and flame of Israel. They conclude with a quote from Proverbs (Prov. 16.20), 'Happy is the one who trusts in the words of the Eternal' (219, last measure).

In the biblical text, the reason for Michal's sterility is never explained, though many commentators have assumed it was a punishment from either David or God for her arrogance. David remains blameless in this libretto, and Michal is depicted in such a way as to make this libretto's conclusion almost a logical one. But the large gap in the biblical narrative—what happened

to alter Michal's feelings towards David in the intervening period?—is only amplified in this libretto. Both Michal and David were convincingly depicted as lovers earlier in the opera (though that scene was not included in either the Los Angeles or Hamburg performances). No reason is suggested for the change in both their feelings, unless the audience is supposed to so completely sympathize with David that we turn against Michal when she is portrayed as unreasonably critical of his behaviour.

Milhaud's opera is significantly the only work discussed in this book that includes the scene between Michal and David during the procession of the Ark. There is an attempt to depict her attitude and personality through both new text and music. The impression from the score is that of a nagging and chattering woman. But a more accurate impression could only be gained from either seeing the opera performed, or hearing the scene. It is very unfortunate that it was not included in the only available recorded performance.

Testi's opera, based on a play by Gide, alters the original narrative almost beyond recognition. Yet some of these alterations throw new and fresh light on the interior lives of the characters.

In this version, Saul and Jonathan do not go off to fight at Gilboa. Instead, they wait together in a pre-arranged spot (a cave) where David is to send them a warning when they should flee. This warning will consist of three trumpet calls. When Saul hears the second trumpet call, he realizes he must move. But he is hindered by his lack of will (323):

My will! I am calling to it right now as a shipwrecked sailor hails a ship he sees disappearing in the distance.

Hearing the third trumpet call, he knows it is too late (325). He exits the cave and sits on the ground, speaking dreamily of goatherds and grass bathed in dew. These passages are slow and their chromaticism recalls Debussy (326). Saul is aware a soldier is approaching from behind, and his last words are:

Oh, it is a very cowardly temptation, it comes to attack me from behind.

The blow itself is vividly portrayed in a *sfff* chord cluster played by the trumpets (327, m.4), which have been heard throughout the scene as warning calls. The soldier rips the crown from Saul's head and takes it to David, who now appears. He immediately orders the soldier who killed Saul to be killed and his body fed to wild animals. The major departure from the biblical story is that this soldier killed Saul as an act of war, not out of mercy when Saul begged him to, as in the Bible. David's music here is some of his strongest and most dramatic up to this point. His voice reaches *f#'* when he commands the soldier be killed (327, last measure):

Shame on whoever lifts a finger against my God's chosen one! He has made all the weight of this crown fall on my head.

The time signature in this section changes in every measure: 4/8, 3/16,2/8, 4/4, 4/8, etc. (328, #62), an unsettling instability for the listener, perhaps reflecting David's rage. After placing the crown on his head, bent over and softly he says, 'I did not detest you, King Saul'. These words are unaccompanied, except by one sustained note (330, m.7 after #64). The effect is to give David more power, even though this device is often used to suggest vulnerability in a character. The measures between his words are filled with the same kind of repetitive *ostinato* heard throughout the opera, but in this case it is played on the harp to link it with David. Hearing of Jonathan's death, he laments, unaccompanied:

Unhappy soul! May he be laid down next to Saul and let death reunite them. Sadness fills my soul.

David's lament is re-phrased in an interesting way. It is probably the only place in this opera where the text is more restrained than the original text, in which David expresses much more feeling for Jonathan. He seems oddly unaffected and flat in both the play and the operatic conclusion.

His lament opens in C major (332, #65), which has been associated with David in several key places. It is nonetheless an unusual choice for a funeral elegy. It also opens *ff* and every bar wavers between C major, C minor, and the related A minor. The constant tonal shifts create an unstable mood, which may be what Testi wanted more than the depiction of grief.

Mountains of Gilboa: may there no longer be honey nor dew on your slopes! [As he leans over Jonathan] I did what I could, Jonathan! My brother! Let the bodies of Saul and the prince be carried back to the palace. Let the people form a procession, and let them accompany my grief with their sobs and lamentations (332, #65).

The final line is all sung on two notes, e' and c#', against a sustained E. This clearly establishes A major as the key, rather than a minor key as would be the expected choice. Musically, the ending is strangely unsettled. The final measures are a frenzy of groups of heavily accented 16th-notes in changing time signatures—from 4/8 to 3/16 to 2/8 and back, all ff, with strongly accented intruding trumpet calls.

The last phrase in the play is: 'Let funeral music resound' (Gide, 151). It is interesting that Testi chose to exclude this phrase, which would have led so perfectly into funeral music. The final note of the opera is a sustained E, with dissonant notes lingering from previous measures. This note hints at C major, but it is the first inversion of that chord and therefore, leaves the listener with a very unresolved and unsettled feeling. It suggests that though David is now king, all is not well in his kingdom (Fig. 35).



Figure 35. Testi: Finale.

The music of this conclusion, and the opera as a whole, conveys the impression that there is no true happiness to be found, only sadness and the inescapable sense that something is not right and cannot be made right, no matter who wears the crown.

Conclusion

Common to almost all the works that treat these chapters of the narrative, both nineteenth and twentieth century, is a lengthy and moving dirge over Saul and Jonathan, and an equally lengthy and impressive procession with the ark into Jerusalem. Many works end with this procession, even those with David in the title. The closing choruses praise David and God (Handel, Hiller, Nuhn, Parry). Only a few oratorios and operas depict David's later story. Works which conclude with a triumphant David have a clear agenda: to present an unsullied portrait of David and to affirm he was clearly God's choice as ruler.

In the nineteenth century, two German oratorios omit David's description of Jonathan's love for him (1.26: Reissiger and Nuhn). Parry's oratorio does not even include Jonathan, so no verse referring to him is included. Michal is present at the battlefield in several works (Hiller, Nuhn, Parry, Buzzi). She is actually the one who receives the news of Saul's death in Hiller, and is with Saul just prior to his death in the Buzzi opera (which deviates throughout from the biblical narrative). David and Michal are both included in the mourning chorus in most works. This continues the trend (discussed in earlier chapters) of increasing Michal's presence and role in the story, for dramatic purposes.

In the twentieth century, those librettos that adhere to the biblical plot include David's description of Jonathan's love (1.26), with the exception of Nielsen, whose librettist softened the words to make them less suggestive. The twentieth-century works include lengthy laments and processions, but in music that is more creative and unusual than that of the nineteenth century. For example, in Honegger's oratorio, the lament is spoken over a wordless vocalise—highly effective. Brown employs similar devices for his lament, and both these oratorios end after very long procession scenes. Gabriel deviates dramatically here as elsewhere from the biblical text, as in his libretto Jonathan himself announces Saul's death and proclaims David king. This avoids the necessity of including David's suggestive words about Jonathan's feelings in his dirge.

Operas tend to take even greater dramatic license. In Nielsen's opera, Jonathan sings of his love for David as he dies onstage. Saul sees his body and kills himself after a tirade against God. David and Michal are both at the battlefield and sing a lament over the two bodies. Milhaud's libretto adheres closely to the biblical text, but in addition to David's description of Jonathan's love for him, the dirge also includes David's proclamation of his own love for Jonathan. In the Testi opera, based on Gide, Jonathan and Saul are together just before Saul is killed onstage. The lament is shortened in this opera, but David and Jonathan had proclaimed their mutual love in several earlier scenes.

Milhaud's opera is the only work discussed here that includes a reconciliation scene between Michal and David when she is returned to him, as well as Michal remonstrating with David over his display in the procession. Her portrayal is not a positive one, and the transformation from her earlier portrayal in the opera is left unexplained.

The dirge over the mighty who have fallen is one of the most celebrated chapters in biblical literature. Music enhances this text through a variety of technical devices, illuminating it with colours and textures that bring the listener into an orbit of lament more moving than any unsung text. The same can be said for the musical settings of the procession with the ark. The music depicting the exaltation and thrill of that moment pulls the listener into the scene as it might have been on that imagined day in Jerusalem, thousands of years ago.

Chapter 9

DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

Summary of 2 Samuel 7-8, 11-12

I am including a brief summary of chaps. 7–8 in addition to 11–12, the focus of this Chapter, in order to set the stage for the events in the later chapters.

- 7 David starts feeling guilty that he lives in a palace while God abides only in a tent. He wants to build a Temple. But God tells Nathan (first mentioned here) that it will not be for David to build him a house, rather his offspring ('I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to Me'). Nathan passes this on to David. David speaks to God at great length in very flowery, different language than we've heard before from him.
- **8** God gives David victory everywhere, and he becomes the great conquering hero. He collects plunder from Edom, Moab, Ammon, the Philistines and Amalekites, dedicating everything to God. David reigns over all Israel and executes true justice.
- 11 This is the 'turn of the year', when kings usually go out to battle (though from the story thus far, it doesn't sound like this is a seasonal activity). David, however, sends Joab out and he stays in Jerusalem. Late one afternoon he is strolling on the roof of the palace. He spots Bathsheba bathing, sends for her, and sleeps with her (whether or not the sex was consensual is not indicated). She sends a message afterwards telling David she is pregnant. He orders her husband Uriah home from the front and tries to get him to go home and sleep with his wife. He tries twice, even getting him drunk, but Uriah will not do that while his officers are in the field. So David writes a letter to Joab, which he sends with Uriah, instructing Joab to place Uriah in the front line where he will be killed in the coming battle. Joab does this, and sends a full report to David. When Bathsheba finds out her husband is dead, she laments. After the period of mourning, she is brought to David to become his wife, and she bears him a son.
- 12 God is not pleased with David's actions, and sends Nathan to tell him. Nathan tells a parable about a rich man with many herds and a poor man who has only one little lamb. The rich man steals the poor man's lamb to prepare for a meal for his guest. David is outraged and says the man

should die for showing no pity. Nathan tells him 'You are the man!' and quoting God, expresses his displeasure with David's immoral actions. He also announces the punishment to come: 'the sword shall never depart from your house'. David admits his guilt and repents, and Nathan informs him that God will not kill him, but instead will kill 'the child about to be born' (which in 11.27 was already born). In the next verse, God afflicts the child that Bathsheba had borne to David, and the child becomes very ill. David entreats God, fasts, lies on the ground all night. Yet after seven days, David sees the servants whispering and understands the child has died. He gets up, bathes, changes his clothes, and eats. His courtiers don't understand the change in behaviour, but he explains that his earlier behaviour was an effort to change God's mind. Now that the child is dead, nothing he does will bring him back. He consoles Bathsheba, then sleeps with her and she bears another son whom she names Solomon. God favours him and sends a message through Nathan that his name is Jedidiah.

Commentary

Why does David commit adultery and murder—boredom? Sense of limitless power? Lack of regard for his subjects' rights? Lust followed by fear of discovery? No matter which of these it is—and the writer never gives us a hint at the 'right answer'—it does not involve a noble flaw. David does not do the wrong thing while trying to do the right thing, like Saul. He just does wrong willfully (Exum 1996: 143). Why such a flawed character would be written about at all is another unanswered question. There were probably stories about such a person circulating for centuries, and at some point the writer wanted to record his life for the historical record.

There are many disturbing aspects to the account of Bathsheba and David's initial encounter, as well as gaps in the narrative. The ambiguity has led to a wide range of interpretations around the simple issue of Bathsheba's role: Was the act of bathing innocent or intentionally provocative? If innocent, then surely she is blameless. The text and later commentaries never blame her for adultery, implying she was coerced, if not actually raped. Even if Bathsheba slept with David because she was intimidated, formally she was not forcibly raped, so she was still an adulteress in common understanding (Frymer-Kensky 2002: 149). This really depends on how rape is defined, since it could be argued that intimidation is force as much as physical force.

The reason so many have felt the need to fill in the blanks in this story is that it is one of the briefest and most abrupt biblical passages to relate such events. One and a half cold, stark verses (11.26-27a) sum up the condition of a woman who has had an adulterous encounter, become pregnant, lost her husband, married the King of Israel, and borne his child. Only five actions—three on David's part, two on Bathsheba's—are minimally described.

David sent, he took, he lay—verbs signifying control and acquisition. By contrast, Bathsheba 'came' and 'returned'. The sexual act itself is reported very rapidly, with minimal dialogue; the elaborate scheme involving Uriah is much longer and has much more dialogue. Alter thinks this implies that the writer is directing our attention to the murder, not the sex act, as the major crime (Alter 1981: 182). In fact, twenty verses are consigned to Uriah's role in the story, and he is mentioned 18 times (compared to only 12 times for David). The male writer (or reader, for that matter) would probably not have found fault with the sexual encounter.

An intriguing possibility suggested uniquely by Halpern is that Bathsheba at some point 'transmitted her view of events to her son...(she) is insulated from blame even more seamlessly than are David and Solomon' (Halpern 2001: 406, ascribing this idea to David Noel Freedman, in correspondence). The issue of who actually wrote the history of David's reign is dealt with most intriguingly in Stefan Heym's novel, *The David Report* (see Appendix 3).

There are three main points in my discussion of Bathsheba: (a) The act of bathing: ritual or not? (b) Possible motivations. (c) The aftermath.

a. *Bathing*. The initial act of bathing is usually interpreted to signify that Bathsheba was purifying herself after her period, as v. 4 relates to a woman's impurity and her sanctification:

וַיִּשֶׁלַח דָּוָד מַלְאַכִים וַיִּקֶּחֶהָ וַתָּבוֹא אֵלֶיו וַיִּשְׁכֵּב עִמָּה וְהִיא מְתְקַדֶּשֶׁת מְטֵמְאַתָה וַתַּשֶׁב אֶל בֵּיתָה.

And David sent messengers, and they took her, and she came to him and he lay with her, and she *sanctifies* herself from her impurity, and she returned to her home.

In spite of serious syntactical, grammatical and exegetical problems in the verse, it has generally been assumed that Bathsheba was bathing to purify herself from the impurity of menstruation, alerting the reader to her fertile state. This interpretation is widespread.

In his recent commentary, McKenzie states unequivocally:

A woman was ritually unclean during her menstrual period and for seven days thereafter (Lev. 15.19-30). At the end of the seven days, she was supposed to bathe, after which she would be ritually clean (Lev. 15.13, 28). It was this bath that Bathsheba was taking when David saw her (McKenzie 2000: 157).

But the Leviticus texts do not actually say this: Lev. 15.13 refers to one with a discharge; verses dealing with female discharge are completely separate. Nowhere in vv. 19-30 is there any mention of an obligation to bathe; v. 28 makes it clear that the passage of seven days after the last discharge would automatically make a woman clean. Frymer-Kensky notes that this interpretation is anachronistically based on later rabbinic law, improbable for the time of David. Bathing in the Bible is never described

as a rite of purification for women, and women are not described as bathing after menstruation. Menstrual 'impurity' is time-linked and time brings an end to it, not bathing. Therefore Bathsheba's bath on the rooftop was probably simply a bath, having nothing to do with postmenstrual purification (Frymer-Kensky 2002: 147). This commentator is the only one to disagree with the common interpretation. She asserts:

[Bathsheba is] washing off the impurity that comes with all sexual relations, even licit ones...the phrase does not refer back to the bath that she was taking when she was first introduced, but to postcoital purification (Frymer-Kensky 2002: 147).

In other words, if the verbal form is read as a present participle, then Bathsheba is purifying herself *after* sleeping with David. It is possible to read this way, because this is the actual sequence of verbs.

Tarja Philips notes that in the books of Samuel the term מחקר never has the obvious meaning of purifying oneself from bodily impurity, such as the impurity of semen. In Bathsheba's story, the washing in v. 2 is not described as purification. But the two different versions of v. 4 in Qumran (where the idiom 'from her impurity' is missing) and in MT suggest that the verse has overcome changes during its transmission. The changes reflect different attitudes towards menstruation, its impurity, and the ways of removing the impurity (Philips 2006: 25).

The original non-priestly emphasis on menstruation's relation to fertility was replaced by the priestly emphasis on its impurity; and a new connection was created between vv. 2 and 4. Originally, Bathsheba's washing in v. 2 is mentioned as the sexual stimulator that led David to have sex with her. The editor who created this connection assumed that the impurity of menstruation is removed by washing in water. Since this assumption is not based on Lev. 15.19–24, in which the impurity passes after seven days without washing, it thus reflects a habit of washing in a later period. The parenthetical clause and its connection to v. 2 seem to be secondary and late. They therefore prove nothing about the ways of removing the impurity of the menstruation in the first temple period (Philips 2006: 25-28).

Archaeologist Jodi Magness comments on this issue:

In antiquity, Jewish purity laws applied primarily to the temple cult. So, all Jews were required to purify themselves before entering the temple (entering God's presence). Generally speaking, only priests had to worry about maintaining purity on a more regular basis. It would have been necessary for Bathsheba to bathe if she was going to enter the temple or if she was about to come into contact with someone who was going to enter the temple. Whether it was just a bath or ritual immersion depends on the context of what Bathsheba was doing. I don't know that we can establish one way or another which it was (pers. comm.).

We do not even know if someone bathing would be naked, and that David could see that she was very beautiful does not answer this one way or the other. Someone bathing on a roof might keep some light clothing on and only use a bowl. In spite of this, plenty of interpreters have built at least part of their interpretation on the assumption that she was naked. The story leaves space for gaps to be filled on second and subsequent readings (Firth 2008: 8).

Ambiguity within the narrative is not resolved, because even by its end we do not know what motivated any of the characters to act as they did. Similarly, many of the actions described in 11.2-4 can be interpreted in several ways, but the narrator gives no guidance on them. For example, when David sent to inquire about the beautiful woman he saw bathing, we do not know if that meant dispatching someone to the house to find out or if it meant summoning someone to come to the roof and look with him to provide the necessary details. If he had indeed sent someone to the house to find out who Bathsheba was, then it might lead to a rather different reading of her actions when she finally comes to David. It is also clear that David is not the only one watching, for he says to someone not identified (probably an attendant) 'Is this not Bathsheba...?' (Firth 2008: 8).

Bathing is considered sexually suggestive or provocative only when it is a woman doing the bathing, because it provokes male desire. When David later exposes himself while dancing, the sight provokes Michal's anger rather than desire (Exum 1993: 188)—although Michal herself suggests that it may have aroused something different in the women watching him.

b. *Motivation*. The idea of a deliberately provocative Bathsheba may have first arisen through Jerome's Vulgate translation. Instead of 'from the roof' for מעל הגג he wrote *ex adverso super solarium suum* or 'opposite him on her terrace', implying that Bathsheba knew she could be seen. A commentator who points this out also wonders 'what the wise monk of Bethlehem could have been thinking when he translated the passage this way' (de Robert 2002–2003: 58). This translation was not retained in the later King James Version, however.

Many male commentators are too quick to blame Bathsheba, and Exum points to the responsibility of the narrator, who after all was the one who decided to portray Bathsheba in the act of bathing. The narrator, using David as his agent, makes Bathsheba the object of the male gaze. Since the narrator chose to portray her bathing naked, how can we blame her or assume she might have known she would be seen? Readers of this text are watching a man watching a woman touch herself (supposedly purifying herself after her period, implying where she was touching). Looking at the female body is a cultural preoccupation and an accepted expression of male sexuality (Exum 1993: 187-89). Many male commentators refuse to see any hint of coercion in David's actions. Some suggest that since the writer does

not relate any resistance on Bathsheba's part (even though she was married), he is implying that she consented, in fact was even happy to accept David's offer (Lemaire 2002–2003: 51). The more probable reason for the writer's reticence is his focus on David and lack of interest in exploring Bathsheba's feelings.

Some male commentators believe the text hints that 'she asked for it', suggesting that Bathsheba may have placed herself so as to be seen by David. Bailey argues that Bathsheba is a 'prime mover, a willing and equal partner to the events which transpire', and he turns the whole David-Bathsheba narrative into a 'tale of political deal-making and intrigue' (Bailey 1990: 85).

Unfortunately even some feminist commentators have been swayed by these ideas. Klein suggests Bathsheba 'may well have been purifying herself on her roof with the hope of seducing King David into seducing her' (Klein 2004: 60). Klein not only assumes Bathsheba's act was deliberate, she additionally assumes Bathsheba wanted to have a child and was married to an infertile man—none of which is even vaguely suggested in the text. Uriah was a soldier and hence was not home much of the time. The reader is not told how long they had been married, or anything about the marriage.

Klein proposes that it was Bathsheba's burning desire for a child that led her to 'exploit her sexual allure as a temptress' to gain her objective, adultery with the king (Klein 2004: 61). She goes on to compare Bathsheba with Tamar and Ruth, also initiators of a sexual act that would lead to progeny. She claims all these women want motherhood, and 'make themselves the object of male desire but exhibit no sexual desire themselves' (Klein 2004: 62). The biblical writer had no interest in women's sexual desires or pleasure, but this should not be taken to imply the women were void of either. Elsewhere Klein concludes that 'Bathsheba, childless, may be presumed to desire conception' (Klein 2004: 63), another glaring example of reading into rather than from a text. Of course, women in that era wanted and needed sons to give them status and to fulfill their role. But this is a generality, and since the writer never intimates that Bathsheba experiences this need, there is no reason to presume these motives.

Even commentators who suggest Bathsheba might have been raped, ultimately consider Bathsheba the instigator based on the later history. Assumptions such as 'Bathsheba knew when and where [David] slept' based on the fact that David could see her from his rooftop (McKenzie 2000: 182) are not text-based. Lemaire similarly states that Bathsheba seems to not be trying in the least to hide even though she knew well that she could be seen from the terrace of the palace. Therefore, he concludes, it is not improbable that this was a kind of provocation (Lemaire 2002–2003: 50). But it is by no means a given that Bathsheba could see up to the king's roof as clearly as he could see down! Surely a king's palace would have had a parapet or high wall protecting him from enemies or curious onlookers. Even a penthouse

suite in modern times would not be as clearly visible from below as balconies on lower floors would be from the penthouse.

It is therefore not necessary to assume Bathsheba knew she was being watched, let alone that she wanted to be seen. Moving from this false premise to statements such as 'Bathsheba's scheme worked better than she could have imagined. It landed her in the royal household' (McKenzie 2000: 182) is both reading into the text with a sexist bias, and reading backwards.

More recent commentators continue to read the story backwards in this way. Lemaire points out that the Queen Mother was the highest position a woman could occupy in Judah, and that therefore it was understandably sought by ambitious women. This, he concludes, 'was obviously the case with Bathsheba' (Lemaire 2002–2003: 49). The word 'obviously' (*visiblement*) is the leap that is not convincing. He bolsters his assumptions by quoting other commentators, such as G.H. Jones, who states that Bathsheba was 'apparently as intelligent, ambitious and crafty as she was beautiful' (Jones, *The Nathan Narratives* [JSOTSup, 80], quoted by Lemaire 2002–2003: 50). The subtle implication is that Bathsheba would only *not* have taken advantage of her proximity to the palace's terrace, if she was not intelligent or crafty.

Exum points out that David, not Bathsheba, is the offender in this story. Rabbis writing in the Talmud were much more concerned with the question of David's guilt, yet closer to modern times Bathsheba became the focus. The narrator chose to portray Bathsheba naked and as the object of David's lust. Commentators who imply Bathsheba may have desired the king's attentions perpetuate the crime (Exum 1993: 174). Yet Aschkenasy makes this suggestion by reading backwards. She notes that in every scene where she appears, Bathsheba first seems to be guileless and naïve, yet her acts always turn out to be beneficial to her. If reading the full story reveals that nothing about Bathsheba is ever innocent or casual, it would be reasonable to assume the scene in which she is seen bathing was also planned—even if the writer does not suggest this. A different conclusion would be that the passive woman seen in the first episode evolves into a shrewd manipulator in the last episode, which transpires many years later. The biblical writer leaves gaps so that the reader will consider different possibilities (Aschkenasy 1998: 115). Aschkenasy is reading the story as if it were unbiased history, and the narrator/writer had no stake in telling it with a particular slant. If the story is designed to reveal Bathsheba's wily character on a closer reading, this itself could be part of the writer's intent.

Even though it is suggested that Bathsheba allowed herself to be seen, the reader has no way of knowing if this is true. Exum wonders if it is coincidence that Bathsheba is bathing and visible just when David is strolling on his roof, or if it is a 'test' for David. Possibly the writer's motive was to show David's weakness and inability to resist temptation. Yet later commentators ignore these subtleties, and blithely refer to the 'seduction'

scene even though there is no intimation that either of these two seduced the other (one recent example is Brigitte Donnet-Guez in Yod no. 8, 2002–2003: 66: 'Chapter 11 recounts how King David seduces Bathsheba'). Later this same commentator admits that it would have been forbidden to ignore the order given by a king; yet, Bathsheba should have disobeyed, ignoring David's royal position, since his demands contradicted the laws of the Torah (Donnet-Guez 2002–2003: 81). These laws would hardly have been on the mind of a woman summoned by the king who knew her life would be in danger if she refused him.

Trevor Dennis, in a less common view, highlights Bathsheba's vulnerability. The narrator chooses to show Bathsheba bathing naked, which the reader could view as provocative behavior. But if she did not know David was watching, then she is vulnerable and actually humiliated (Dennis 1994: 145). Josephus writes that David saw Bathsheba bathing 'in her own house', which puts David 'in the position of a despot who is able to survey and choose as he pleases' (Fokkelman 1981: 51). Frymer-Kensky points out that Bathsheba was not out to get anything by using her beauty. The Bible in general, she notes, 'does not consider beauty a power or strategy of women'. In fact, Bathsheba's beauty is her vulnerability, not her power. Beauty only begins to be seen as a power of women in the post-biblical period (Frymer-Kensky 1992: 140, and 262 n.132).

c. Aftermath. The reader is never told of Bathsheba's reactions to being brought to live with the man who had seized her without a word (that we know of). Was she flattered or frightened? Attracted to David's fame and power or terrorized by them—or both? By the rules of Israelite society, she had no right to consent. But in this new world of powerful kingship, did she have a right to refuse?

Legally, an unwanted pregnancy in that world would have been a woman's problem. In the eyes of society, Bathsheba would have been considered an adulteress, no matter what the circumstances. In fact Josephus wrote that she sent word to David immediately to ask him to contrive a way to conceal her sin, lest she be put to death as an adulteress (*Antiquities* 7.7.1). Adultery was a serious transgression in the ancient world, including Israel (as it still is in many societies today, such as African and Islamic). Texts from Ugarit and Egypt call it 'the great sin', and law codes prescribe death for adultery. But some kings have considered themselves exempt from these strictures. In ancient patriarchal conception, the woman belongs to her husband, yet all subjects belong to the king. So the fact that Bathsheba was married didn't make much difference to 'the imperial and imperious David, who said: Whatever the king desires should be his' (Frymer-Kensky 2002: 145-46).

What about David's reactions? He was faced with the choice of suppressing a scandal, protecting Bathsheba, or making sure the son's paternity

would be attributed to Uriah. The writer makes obvious David's increasing exasperation at Uriah's steadfast refusal to go home to his wife.

Halpern posits that Solomon was Uriah's son, offering several cogent arguments. He points out that covering up his dalliance with Bathsheba was hardly necessary for David to do, because Bathsheba would have her child whether Uriah was dead or alive. If he wanted to cover up his infidelity with a married woman, David would logically have had Bathsheba killed. But if he wanted to marry her, he would have been better off bribing Uriah or simply posting him to a distant spot and forcing a divorce. David hardly would have been worried about remaining within the law, based on his other exploits (Halpern 2001: 405). But Halpern does not discuss the fact that it was *Bathsheba* who was at risk of being killed for her infidelity, not David.

The issue of whether David ever loves Bathsheba (or vice versa) is left unanswered. The minute she announces her pregnancy, his interest is in the paternity of the child, conceding her to Uriah from the start. This does not suggest great love. Once pregnant, Bathsheba is de-sexualized—this is how patriarchy severs the relationship between eroticism and procreation to render a mother's sexuality non-threatening (Exum 1993: 191).

Later, Bathsheba's reaction to the death of her first child is also not described. That entire episode is told from the point of view of the servants, and David's actions. The reader is told that David consoled Bathsheba, but this is all we are told of her own feelings. The function of consoling her would seem to be to prepare her for her real job: to make another child for David (Bach 1997: 135-36, 157).

David's reactions to the infant's death have been subject to many commentaries. His approach to grief seems calculated and unfeeling. Why does he seem to mourn more before the child's death than after? One interesting and well-supported theory is that this child is a sacrifice. When Nathan tells David that God has 'remitted your sin', the verb used is 'העביר') (12.13), suggesting the idea of 'transfer, or cross over'. God, the text is saying, didn't erase the sin but transferred it. The use of this verb implies that the king's sin passed to his son, and through sacrifice, from the son to God. God did not forgive, but took the life of the child once the sin had transferred to him. The child, this commentator suggests, is the scapegoat for David's sin (Nutkowicz 2002–2003: 35-36).

Nutkowicz believes the fact that this son was never named is symbolic, because naming almost always follows birth announcements. The name, in the ancient Near East, is equivalent to being itself, and naming is causing to exist. So this child was never really granted existence apart from his parents. Taking this defenseless child was a severe punishment by God; for David, it was like removing a part of himself. To further bolster her theory, Nutkowicz points out that the act of sacrifice is usually a gift that demands reciprocity, and this motif is also present. God pardons David and promises him an

eternal reign. In addition, David does not follow the normal mourning rituals precisely because this was a sacrifice, making such rituals inappropriate. Instead, he observes the rituals of purification demanded after a sacrifice, namely washing and changing clothes (Nutkowicz 2002–2003: 37-38).

The rabbis attempt to exonerate David in numerous ways, even utilizing extensive quotes from Psalms (supposedly composed by David) to prove he could not be guilty. Many librettos follow a similar practice. But the rabbis never deal with the issue of Bathsheba's guilt or innocence. Early commentaries by the church fathers, on the other hand, not only blame Bathsheba for displaying herself, they even distrust her grief over Uriah. Calvin branded her mourning as 'fiction' and 'farce', concluding that her grief was feigned. Obviously there is no way Calvin could know this, or even find it buried in the text itself (Thompson 2007: 202).

The Music

Few musical works include David's later story. As mentioned earlier, the majority conclude triumphantly with Saul's death and a proclamation of David's victory and ascent to the throne. Chapters 11 and 12 are briefly referred to in narration in two nineteenth-century oratorios and one twentieth-century oratorio. Bathsheba has a voice in two twentieth-century operas. Milhaud treats chap. 11 in flashback, the same technique utilized in a very different twentieth-century opera by Ezra Laderman, which was produced by and for CBS television and which focuses entirely on the Bathsheba—David—Uriah story.

Nineteenth-Century Works

Reissiger's oratorio includes a dramatic recitative (No. 17) for Nathan and David. It opens with a low trill in the orchestra, an ominous sound. This is followed by several excited phrases leading to more trills which introduce the narrator (sung by a bass) who sings (125, m. 8):

Then David became great before Israel, and Satan stood against him, and the anointed of God had Uri killed for his wife's sake.

The interest in the text here is the inclusion of Satan, subtly absolving David of guilt, while at the same time ironically including 'the anointed of God' to suggest both Satan's power and the serious nature of David's sin. There is a reference to Satan in 1 Chron. 21.1, where Satan 'arose against Israel and incited David to take a census'. There is also a rabbinic midrash in which Satan causes the screen covering Bathsheba to be broken. Satan is basically blamed for David's sin with Bathsheba, for how could he resist her once she was revealed? (*BT* Sanhedrin 107a).

Nathan, cast as a bass to exemplify authority and gravitas, sings a shortened version of the parable in a simple, almost folk-like melody (126, m. 24-33).

This is an effective device, since the music seems to describe an innocent tale, but the listener knows the underlying motive behind the story.

When David responds, the tempo immediately increases. Most of the dialogue that follows is sung as recitative, with constant tempo changes, and accompanied only by occasional sustained chords (127). The mood changes when David cries out his guilt (12.13), loud chords punctuating his words (127, m. 152-154). He sings a short aria (No. 18) to the text of Ps. 27.7-9. The opening measures are very soft, and the accompaniment is a series of descending 16th-note slurs, typically used to express grief but also a very Schubertian device. Over this sighing accompaniment, David sings mostly eighth-or quarter-notes on long lines, very contrasted with the orchestral part (128). This music transmits a desperate plea for forgiveness more effectively than any text alone could.

The chorus reprises David's melody, with some variants (129, top), to an amalgam of several Psalms texts. They sing 'Flehe' ('Entreat') several times, on two 8th-notes with a rest between them, a breathless effect. Under this, the orchestra plays ascending and descending 16th-note slurs (129, m. 13-14).

David re-enters, again singing a sustained line over descending 16th-note slurs, until he reaches the word 'Schuld' ('guilt') on which he reaches a', and the orchestra now plays *ascending* 16th-note slurs for this one measure (130, m. 22). This suggests increased hope as well as excitement.

The composer chose to focus only on David's repentance, considered a crucial element in God's forgiveness. Traditional interpretation considers David's sincere repentance the key in his being allowed to continue his reign, even after his sin with Bathsheba. The biblical writer was suggesting that the sin was overcome through David's repentance, and Reissiger has illustrated the depth and sincerity of this repentance through music.

In **Macfarren**'s oratorio,¹ the text for the duet between Nathan and David (No. 6: Prophecy) is 1 Chron. 17.7-8, 11-14 (a retelling of 2 Sam. 7. 4-16), in which Nathan prophesies that David's seed will be raised up and his kingdom will last forever. The biblical verse in which God speaks to Nathan in a dream (1 Chron. 17.3) is not included. There are other minor changes in the libretto: in v. 11, 'I will raise up thy seed after thee' is followed by 'which shall be of thy sons', which has been eliminated from the libretto. In v. 13, God says 'I will be his father, and he shall be my son', but in the libretto the words Father and Son are capitalized to suggest the line leading to Jesus. God is only referring to Solomon in that verse. Of course, the capitalizing of the words would not be an audible element, yet it suggests

1. No musical figures will be shown since this score can be accessed at an online archive: http://www.archive.org/details/kingdavidoratori00macf.

the composer's orientation (which will become increasingly obvious later in the oratorio).

The music changes frequently to reflect the text. When Nathan sings of God taking his mercy from Saul, rapid ff descending chords are played, a one-measure impression of Saul's rapid descent (60, last measure). The next phrase, 'But his throne shall be forever' takes Nathan to his highest note, a', which is sung ff and sustained for five beats (61, top). This stresses the importance of the phrase, which is immediately repeated by the chorus sustaining the same high A (a''). This closes the scene (61, 2nd staff, m. 2).

David sings an aria (No. 7) set to 1 Chron. 17.16-19, in which David thanks God. It starts softly as a kind of recitative, as David asks 'Who am I?' in two successive phrases, reaching a higher pitch the second time to stress the repetition and increasing anxiety behind the question (62, top). Harp arpeggios introduce the song itself (62, last measure). The opening section sounds less like a traditional anthem than the second part, which is slightly faster but also has a more regular accompaniment of strummed 8th-notes in the harp, lending a prayerful quality.

The pleading nature of the text is heightened by several large vocal leaps: in the opening measure, David sings 'O' on an ascending seventh, d-c' (64, Reh. B). Several measures later, on 'according to Thine own heart', he sings phrases with increasingly larger ascending intervals—f#-c#, to d', then to e' with corresponding tonal modulations (64, 2nd-3rd staves). There are also two deceptive cadences in these measures: F#7 moving to A7 (instead of B major or B minor) and then A7 to G major (instead of D major), all interesting harmonic modulations. Leading up to the conclusion, the voice ascends to f#', quite high for a baritone (65, 3rd staff, m. 4). The aria ends with an echo of the melody played by the oboes (65, bottom). This aria is one of the most harmonically inventive and musically interesting in the oratorio.

A chorus follows (No. 8), to the text of Luke 1.32, 33, part of the so-called 'Annunciation'. Macfarren makes one small change: in v. 31, the angel tells Mary her son's name will be Jesus; v. 32 opens 'He shall be great', but in the libretto, the opening words are 'The seed of David shall be great', identifying Jesus as the seed of David. Macfarren also changes 'the Lord God *shall give* unto him the throne of his father David' to 'the Lord *hath given* him the throne...' in the same verse, suggesting this prophecy has been fulfilled.

The opening section is accompanied only by organ, underlining the religious tone and message. The lengthy chorus is a fugue which, after other instruments have joined the organ, becomes an inverted fugue (the same melodic line sung in reverse). This chorus was singled out for praise by Macfarren's critics, who considered it a tour de force. The use of a New Testament text implying Jesus came from the line of David so early in the oratorio hints at Macfarren's agenda.

The narration that follows this chorus (No. 9) is based on 2 Sam. 2, 3, 14, 15, 27. This is one of three places Macfarren uses a narrator instead of a first-person account (the others are No. 15 and No. 23). The narration jumps from David's sighting of Bathsheba straight to his ordering the death of Uriah, completely eliminating the taking of Bathsheba and her pregnancy, and her mourning the death of Uriah; not even her name is included.

The narrator's lengthy recitative/aria opens in the broad time signature of 12/8. (77). The strings play a conventional accompaniment of four groups of 8th-note triplets, over which a clarinet plays a lyrical Mendelssohnian tune. The narrator (contralto) sings her text in an unaccompanied recitative, while the tune is played between the sung measures. When the text 'and he saw from the roof' is sung, the music becomes more agitated and slightly more dramatic chords are played for one measure (78, m. 3). That is a musical way of suggesting heightened emotion.

The next section (78, 3rd staff, m. 2) switches to 4/4 time, marked *agitato*, with a rapid 16th-note group introducing the line 'And David sent and enquired after the woman'. This is followed by a new theme, heard over an accompaniment of four groups of two 8th-note figures. Over this, the violas and then flutes and violins play little *seufzer* phrases: sighing groups of descending half-steps alternating with descending fourths (78, 4th staff, last measure), a panting effect. This musical trope usually stands for melancholy, but here could also represent David's curiosity and longing. After a few measures of this poignant music, the tempo increases and a group of rising arpeggios and rapid 16th-note groups introduce the question 'Is not this the wife of Uriah the Hittite?' (79, 2nd staff).

A rapid descending 32nd-note figure introduces the text about David writing a letter to Joab (79, bottom, 80). The libretto completely omits the initial meeting between David and Bathsheba. Presumably the audience of that period was biblically literate enough to fill in the blanks, but Macfarren may not have wanted to offend sensibilities by including the less palatable parts of the story.

When the order is given to 'set Uriah in forefront of the hottest battle', that measure is sung in D-flat major, but the word 'battle' is sung on a descending octave on D with an augmented triad beneath it—an unexpected and dissonant moment (80, 3rd staff, m. 2). The same triad is repeated on ascending chords, before the final line 'that he may be smitten and die' is sung. The last two words are sung on a descending seventh, ending on an accented g, a dramatically low note (80, 4th staff, last measure). Low pitches in a contralto voice are often used to signify death. In the last part, a high *pp tremolo* plays a G7 chord, leading to an augmented triad in rapid triplets. The augmented triad used so extensively here has traditionally been known as a 'devilish' sound, so this is Macfarren's way of suggesting the impropriety of the actions described.

An orchestral interlude marked *allegro con fuoco* ('fast and fiery') follows. It is in cut time, 4/4 sounding like 2/4, giving it an excited sound. This music is clearly meant to represent the battle, for at its conclusion there is a sustained rest, followed by the words 'And when Uriah was dead' sung unaccompanied (82, top). Several measures of soft sustained chords follow, with a repeated unison D sounding like a death knell. The tonality, though marked as E-flat major, is uncertain. There are many suspensions in this section, creating a sense of anticipation. When the narrator sings 'David sent for the woman', an A-flat major chord is played in the third inversion, a sound of uncertainty. More uncertain chords follow as the narrator concludes 'and she became his wife' dropping down to g. The tonal uncertainty combined with the low pitch do not suggest a happy conclusion.

A short orchestral interlude follows. Then over a sustained G in the orchestra, the narrator sings 'But the thing which David had done' while the G moves up to an A flat, a strong dissonance against the sung g on the word 'David' (83, m. 3). These two measures are accompanied by very low notes in the orchestra, a foreboding sound. The words 'displeased the Lord' feature another A flat-G dissonance on the word 'displeased' (83, m. 5). After these dissonant moments, the final word 'Lord' surprisingly is sung on g' with a soft G-major *tremolo* in the orchestra. The switch from dissonance to assonance could be interpreted as a subtle religious message.

An *a cappella* chorus (No. 10) now sings text from the litany of the English Church, set to an ancient melody. This devotional chorus is a church prayer and its relationship to the story is the text: it is a prayer to God to spare them and deliver them from deadly sin and the deceits of the world. This clearly suggests David at this moment in the story.

A setting of Nathan's parable (12.1-4) follows (No. 11). The tempo is *largo maestoso*, majestic and broad. It opens as a recitative, and the aria begins at the words 'The rich man' (89, Reh. A). The melody is a lilting tune in 3/4 time with repeated 8th-notes accompanying; it almost has the sound of a popular Victorian ballade, perhaps because of the 'storytelling' nature of the text. When Nathan mentions the 'one little ewe-lamb', the accompaniment changes to arpeggios in the winds and the tone of the music becomes more wistful from here (90, 4th staff).

In the second section, before Nathan mentions 'the traveler', strings play repeated *staccato* triplet figures, an ominous sound (92, Reh. B). The narrative about the traveler is accompanied by three groups of triplets, a more agitated sound than the previous accompaniment. On the text 'poor man's lamb', the voice descends from g'-f#'-e-flat', a modal sound that creates an unsettled feeling. These intervals are repeated in the orchestra. The remainder of the text is sung to more unsettled tonality until a climactic g' is held for four beats over a G-minor chord in the third inversion (4th

staff, last measure). The orchestra plays a few loud and strong measures before concluding on a unison G.

A duet between Nathan and David (No. 12) follows directly from Nathan's aria, beginning with David's response and their biblical dialogue (2 Sam. 12.5, 7, 9-13), omitting the narrator and with occasional minor changes. David enters dramatically, singing 'As the Lord liveth' on an ascending seventh, *f#-e'*. He ends his opening passage on *f#* and Nathan sings the same note (an octave higher) on 'Thou' which is sustained for four beats (94, 3rd staff, m. 3-4). In an addition to the biblical text, David responds with a question: 'Am I the man?', which opens on Nathan's ending note. This question makes David seem more innocent and ingenuous than his biblical counterpart.

Nathan's next words—quoting God—are sung to very strong proclamatory music, frequently accompanied by repeated 8th-note chords played by horns (95, 2nd staff). Nathan continues with this strong music until he accuses David of doing 'evil in His sight', at which phrase David—again ingenuous—asks 'to do evil in His sight?' He repeats the musical phrase just sung by Nathan. The key changes unexpectedly to F# minor, with a pounding C# in the orchestra accenting the third inversion and lack of resolution. David holds c#' for nine beats, and only on the final beat does the key resolve back to C# major (96, 2nd staff). This music is strongly suggestive of a question filled with doubt, and a response.

Nathan continues his accusation, relating everything David did. This is also a reminder to the audience, since the taking of Bathsheba was not depicted earlier. The music is dramatic and ominous, including sinuous chromatic ascents in the bass (96, 3rd staff, last measure, and elsewhere), and quick, gasping phrases in the orchestra at the text 'the sword shall never depart from thy house' (97, 1st-2nd staves). This section is in a high range for Nathan, with 'house' sung on g#', 'sword' on a', and the final 'house' on f#' sustained for five beats (97, 3rd-4th staves).

David confesses that he has sinned, and sings 'Lord' on an ascending octave leap, *B-b*, with the second note sustained for eight beats while the orchestra descends under his voice, creating a deeply heartfelt moment (98, top). Nathan proclaims that God will raise up evil out of David's house, these words followed by a long *ff* chromatic descent (98, bottom) leading directly into a new section. The time changes to 2/4 and *adagio* (very slow), with an accompaniment of harp and *pizzicato* violins playing groups of 16th-note triplets.

The text for this part of the duet is Ps. 51.3-4, 'I acknowledge my fault'. David opens, then Nathan sings the same melodic line in another key, changing the first person confession into third person and echoing David's sentiments. But it is not an exact echo, since there are small changes in rhythm and even in the notes themselves. The two voices come together

occasionally, sometimes singing a line homophonically, other times as more of a *fugato* to show each in his own thoughts. This highly melodic and expressive music, with its strong Mendelssohnian echoes, is one of the musical high points of the oratorio.

Another anthem is now interjected into David's story (No. 13), a contralto solo to the text of Matthew 16. 26-27. This text is about the man who gains the whole world but loses his own soul. It is clearly a reference to David in the previous scene.

This is one of the lengthiest musical portrayals of the Nathan–David scene I have found. Many different emotions are suggested musically: fear, longing, and doubt among others. In common with many other works, David's repentance is portrayed through highly expressive and convincing music. The mood changes constantly, and Nathan's voice throughout is stronger and more certain than David's. Macfarren uses choral interludes to convey his religious message, which is a Christian one relating to Jesus's lineage through David. This is the only musical work I have found that so blatantly tries to put across that message.

Twentieth-Century Works

In **Honegger**'s oratorio (Part Three), the narrator relates how God blessed David and how successful he is in all things—until 'sin entered into his heart'.

For he saw from his roof-top the unblemished beauty of Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, bloom in the garden of pomegranates.

This is followed by the 'Song of the Maid-Servant', [18] a contralto solo with text inspired by the Song of Songs. A repetitive and languorous modal melody is played in French horn and cor anglais.

This solo seems not so much to represent Bathsheba as to establish the mood and setting in which David first saw her. Morax, the librettist, probably wanted to suggest eroticism in a biblical context by quoting and paraphrasing Song of Songs (This was frequently done in musical settings of *Ruth*; Leneman 2007: 95, 117). The story of David and Bathsheba is told much more extensively in the play on which the libretto is based, but was shortened drastically in the oratorio version. Smither proposes that the shortened version would have been 'more acceptable for performance in churches' (Smither 2000: 660).²

2. In a glaring error, Clark in his programme notes writes that the narrative includes 'his adultery with—and the murder of—Bathsheba' (Clark 2003). It is possible that an editor removed the words 'Uriah' or 'her husband' but it is nonetheless disturbing to think of how many concert-goers who read this note left the concert with a complete misconception about the story.

After the song, the narrator relates how David, after seeing her at her bath, took Bathsheba, married her and had her husband Uriah killed. God's wrath falls upon Bathsheba and David's first child. When the baby dies (12.18), David begs for God's mercy (12.19-20). The penitential psalm (almost verbatim Ps. 51.3-4) that follows [19] is sung by the chorus, although the words 'wipe out my transgression' clearly are to be understood as David's.

The tempo is marked *grave*, very slow, and the time is a broad 12/8. Muted horns and brass play six heavily accented chords per measure, while cor anglais and bassoon play a descending slur phrase, a *seufzer* (133). These effective musical markers of grief, suggestive of a funeral march, introduce the chorus. The male and female choruses follow one another as in a *fugato*, with the steady and heavily accented quarter-notes an orchestral *ostinato* throughout. This chant of grief has echoes of Gregorian chant.

In a departure from the biblical account, Nathan reproaches both the king and queen for their great sin, for which their baby died; in the Bible only David is chastised (12.9). The text of the next chorus [20] is a paraphrase of the psalm just heard (Ps. 51.6-8) and of David's words to Nathan, 'I have sinned against God' (12.13):

I was conceived in sin, in evil was I born. I have sinned, I have greatly sinned... Have mercy, O God...wash me of my iniquity.

The music is appropriately slow and mournful, with a particularly moving trumpet wail throughout. The opening measures are sung by basses and contraltos in unison, setting the tone for the relatively low pitches of the entire chorus. Later sections, in which the male and female voices follow one another, are comprised of descending lines. The predominantly chromatic intervals are typical music for depicting grief (139, Reh. #2). Organ, included in this chorus, lends it a religious feeling. The final two lines are punctuated by heavy drumbeats, underlining the funeral march rhythm. This chorus ends on a dissonant and completely unsettled note (143).

In this oratorio, as in other, earlier ones, Honegger and his librettist focus on David's repentance in very emotionally moving music. The narrative about Bathsheba is brief, because they perceived the most important element in the story as David's sincere penitence. The music leaves no doubt in the listener's mind of not only his sincerity, but his deep remorse and pain. This is yet another example of music's power to persuasively project feelings to an audience more than even a dramatically recited text could.

Milhaud's Act 4 Scene 2 is a duet between David and Bathsheba that takes place as their firstborn child is dying. Their initial encounter is not included in the opera, but is referred to in this duet. They both express sadness and regret at what happened between them. The stage is bathed

in moonlight. David and Bathsheba, dressed in dark costumes as if in mourning, sit at opposite ends of the stage throughout the scene. As they sing this duet, they 'step on' each other's lines more and more, so their voices come together more near the end of the duet. Milhaud's stage notes say that 'tenderness should combine with despair'. Collaer comments:

This scene contains no strong nuances, no violent exclamation. There is no revolt, rather only resignation and transfiguration. Their distress is expressed in the sweetness of an almost ineffable tenderness. Their heartbreak and moral anguish are barely perceptible in the music. These emotions are suggested in the orchestra's very large interval leaps, in a weak nuance of intensity which underlines the cruel tension better than large gestures or vocal outbursts could (Collaer 1982: 235).

Bathsheba: It has been a year already, on a clear and starry night like

tonight. Did we know, David, what that night would hold for

both of us?

David: I had seven queens and ten favorites, Bathsheba! But ever

since that night when I saw you, I forgot them all, and on my

lonely couch I couldn't stop moaning.

The general mood is wistful and nostalgic, even bittersweet, giving the impression of two people who have come to terms. The libretto suggests they first met a year before, but if their seven-day-old baby is dying, it would have been only nine months since their initial encounter. The device of telling their story in flashback is very effective, and was subsequently used by American composer Ezra Laderman in his 1971 work (this Chapter, p. 295). A wistful mood is created in the opening measures of music, with numerous halting, descending figures, which sound like a lament--especially when played on the clarinet (220, top). In addition, the large interval leaps Collaer mentions are heard in the clarinets: d''-e flat', then e'-d'', a''-e'', finally g''-e flat (220, m. 1 after Reh. 40). This last interval is almost two octaves. (A similar pattern recurs throughout the duet, particularly audible at Reh. 80 and m. 3 after Reh. 80) (Fig. 36).

When Bathsheba first utters David's name, there is a held f#'' in the orchestra which she echoes with her f#'—but within the F#-major chord, a suspension is created by an intruding G# (220, m. 1 after Reh. 45). This is heard not as a dissonance so much as a moment of anticipation. David's opening lines are accompanied by the four measures of music that opened the scene, and his closing two measures match Bathsheba's.

David: If only the terrace in the palace had not overlooked the other

terraces...

Bathsheba: If you had not been looking through the trellis at midnight into

the courtyard of Uri's house...

David: If there had been no basin out there in the courtyard of your

house for your ablutions...



Figure 36. Milhaud: Bathsheba.

Bathsheba: And if the full moon had not been shining as brightly as the

sun at dawn...

David: If you had not appeared as the most beautiful of all women,

and if your beauty in that dazzling glare had not so enraptured

my heart for all time...

Bathsheba: If you had not desired my beauty... If you had only turned

away your eyes from my image... turned away your eyes...

David: If only you had not been in my eyes more to be dreaded than

all the armies of the world...

This section is faster than the previous part. As they remember their first meeting, they become increasingly more excited. Bathsheba begins her first phrase 'If you had not...' while David is still completing his. Her musical phrase begins as an exact echo of David's, even starting on the same note (221, m. 1 after Reh. 55). The moonlight by which David first saw Bathsheba is painted musically by rapid descending flute arpeggios (221, m. 2 after Reh. 55).

David's next phrase is a variant of the theme just heard. Bathsheba's next phrase starts a fifth higher than the previous one, reaching g'' on the word 'moon' (*lune*) (222, top). David starts his next phrase while Bathsheba is still on the final measure of hers, bringing their voices together for a full measure (222, Reh. 65). The measure after this one is the last in which David is heard alone, and he sings his highest note here, f' repeated on four 8th notes. Under his voice, the oboe plays plangent groups of triplets (222, m. 1 after Reh. 65), a lamenting sound. The two voices singing increasingly higher pitches is a musical depiction of ardour, though the music is tinged with regret.

From this point on, the voices are always together. This is usually a musical indication of emotional intimacy, but since there are few moments

of homophonic singing, barely audible at this tempo, the effect of closeness is somewhat mitigated. For example, when Bathsheba sings her final 'If only' phrase, she starts on g'' while David is completing his previous phrase and is singing e flat; the orchestra, however, is simultaneously playing E flat-B flat, an open fifth, and a C-minor chord, plus an intrusive D (223, Reh. 70). So while the voices are in harmony, multiple different harmonies are heard and the vocal homophony would not be obvious to the listener over the polytonal texture.

Throughout this duet, the voices are singing very different lines and phrases simultaneously, suggesting a lack of connection and indicating that David and Bathsheba are not really addressing each other, but rather musing aloud. (Like many couples, they are not really listening to each other). Near the end, when David compares Bathsheba's power over him as exceeding 'all the armies of the world', the bassoons and horns play a few distant martial-sounding chords to colour the phrase (223, 2nd staff). As David is completing that phrase, Bathsheba repeats 'from my image' on a slow ascending B-flat major scale, ending on a g" sustained for two beats. This is heard as a suspension over David's last note of d, while the harp plays a rising series of B-flat major chords. When Bathsheba sings her last note, f'', the key seems to be resolved. But the harp repeats the same four notes of the scale in rising octaves, ending abruptly on the last note. It is an unsettled and completely unresolved ending. Bathsheba rises and exits while the concluding notes are still playing. In the next measure, the 'lament' theme that opened the duet is heard again (223, last measure).

The scene is interesting for its additions and changes. First of all, both David and Bathsheba talk of their original encounter as occurring at midnight, under a full moon. This idea may have come from the Bible's mention of 'late afternoon', possibly elaborated in a later midrash.³

The most interesting omission is any mention of David's role in Uriah's death. This is only touched on obliquely later, in Nathan's parable. The choice to leave out this crucial piece of the story seems to be an example of whitewashing David's image. But the librettist may have been suggesting this was a subject David and Bathsheba did not talk about.

After Bathsheba leaves, David continues to sing of his love for her, quoting Song of Songs lyrics (these two pages, 224-225, are not on the recording.) The two-note 'lament' theme is repeated throughout, often in very large intervals (i.e., an octave plus a major sixth, *f"-a flat*, at Reh. 80). David sings (Fig. 37):

I conquered all the armies, but could not prevent love from enveloping me in its flame. Love is sweeter than honey, love is stronger than the lion,

3. Author note: This midrash was also obviously familiar to my father, an artist, who painted the scene in the moonlight.

Love is as strong as death (Song 8.6).

Love is an inextinguishable fire.

And not even rivers cannot drown it (Song 8.7).

Would I have weakened if Joab, like an evil angel, had not tempted me?

David's reference to 'weakening' here presumably refers to his order, transmitted through Joab, to place Uriah at the front lines to ensure his death in battle. This is not so much a veiled confession of guilt, as of weakness. Nothing in the biblical text ever suggests Joab had an active part or 'tempted' David, although he was complicit in the plot.

The music in the first part of this solo is very similar to the opening of the scene. The excitement builds at the line 'Love is strong as death', which starts on e' and descends in whole and half steps, creating some sharp dissonances as an E flat is heard in the orchestra against David's sustained e'. The descending slurs that are the theme of this love scene are heard momentarily sped up, played as 16th notes instead of eighth notes (224, m. 1 before Reh. 85). When David sings of love as an 'inextinguishable fire', much of the ascending vocal line is chromatic (225, top), a subtle nod to Wagner. The descending slurs in the orchestra continue, in smaller intervals.

The piccolos introduce a new variation on the theme, with the first note of the descending slurs now played on quarter notes. Previously they were all eighth-notes, and this broadening of the theme signals a change in mood. The slurs are also played in a very high register here (225, 3rd-4th staves). When David sings of being 'tempted' by Joab, the oboes repeatedly play an interval with a plangent crying sound (225, Reh. 95).



Figure 37. Milhaud: David to Bathsheba.

Bathsheba re-enters and they talk about their dying baby:

David: Bathsheba, how is our little boy? A little better, his fever is dropping.

David: Is he out of danger? Bathsheba: Not yet, not yet.

David: Only the All-powerful can cure him. Bathsheba, for seven

days we have fasted and slept here on the floor, may God take

care of our child!

This libretto gives Bathsheba a much more active role in the drama of their dying child. The biblical version focuses entirely on David, and only he fasts and sleeps on the floor. The brief scene opens with David gently singing 'Bathsheba, Bathsheba', a phrase he repeats again a few measures later (225, bottom; 226, top) and sung very tenderly. When David asks if the child is out of danger, his voice rises much higher than in his opening phrase, betraying emotion, while Bathsheba's response in marked contrast lies very low in the soprano register and includes a diminished octave leap from $b'to\ c'$ on 'yet' (encore; 226, m. 1 before Reh. 105). David's voice rises and grows stronger as he speaks of God's power, and he is accompanied by muted trumpets (226, m. 1 after Reh. 105). This suggests both a martial sound and a foretelling of death.

A short solo for David was omitted from the recorded performance, possibly because the text is too disturbing (227):

If only I were like the unfaithful, who reassure themselves by saying: There is no God! The assassin lies in wait to take the innocent, drags him into his net and says to himself: God forgets! God saw nothing.

The music in this short section is highly dramatic. When David entertains the thought that there is no God, his voice leaps astoundingly from f' down to B flat, an octave plus a fifth (227, m. 2-3 after Reh. 115). It rises gradually back up to f' on the next phrase and then descends chromatically when singing of God dragging the innocent into his net (227, m. 1 before Reh. 120). The sinuous chromaticism suggests the idea of 'dragging'. On the word 'net', a very high trill is heard in the orchestra, while low and heavy staccato notes hammer out large intervals (227, Reh. 120). Under rapid descending chromatic passages, David sings the final two lines very low in his range--on B flat (227, last measure). This short solo is a powerfully dramatic moment, both textually and musically. The notion of David questioning God was also explored in the 1983 film.

After this soliloquy, Nathan enters and tells David the parable (12.1-12; 228, m. 2). Several commentators have noted an unusual music moment in this scene; in fact, Milhaud himself wrote about it (a letter re-printed in Milhaud 1982: 189 and discussed in Milhaud 1987: 274). Milhaud quotes a rare 12-tone row of notes used by Mozart for the second appearance of

the Commendatore statue in his opera *Don Giovanni*. Since the role of the statue at that point in the opera is to tell Don Giovanni of his fate, Milhaud saw the similarity to Nathan's proclamation and used the same serial eightnote motif, to which he added four more by transpositions and inversions, underlining Nathan's vocal part (Collaer 1982: 236; according to Milhaud, it was a series of nine notes which he completed with three notes in the bass: Milhaud 1987: 274). (The 'series' is in m. 456-461 of the conclusion of Act 2, scene 15, of *Don Giovanni*. In *David*, it is found in Act IV, Scene 2, Reh. 125-155, m. 5 after Reh. 160-190, 195-200). This use of the 12-tone system gives Nathan's part a unique sound resembling Schoenberg, founder of this system.

The row of notes is introduced in tubas and bassoons, picked up by clarinets and flutes as it rises eerily and ominously (228, Reh. 125). The 12-tone system is used throughout Nathan's recounting of the parable, creating a different language for the only 'prophet' in the story. When he asks for David's verdict on the rich man, only a drumbeat and soft dissonant trombone notes are heard, as David repeats 'my verdict' and then states that the man must die (229-230, Reh.160). After a loud chord in the brass accentuated by kettle drum, Nathan announces 'You are the man!' with a descending octave leap on the last word as the orchestra is silent (230, m. 4). Then the 12-tone system re-enters for Nathan's prediction of God's punishment. The rhythm in this final section becomes more excited and complex; for example, Nathan sings two quarter-notes, dotted eighths or 16th-notes over triplets in the orchestra (230, Reh. 180). This rhythmic complexity continues till the end of Nathan's part.

David begs God for forgiveness, quoting Psalm 51 which is known as 'A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him after he had come to Bathsheba' (JPS). The phrase 'Have pity, my God!' is interjected between other verses several times, each time to the same music. The phrase is sung on one repeated note, *d'*, with the dissonant orchestral part played only on the second and fourth beats (232, Reh. 205, m. 5 after Reh. 205, m. 1 before Reh. 215). This creates an anguished sound. Yet the aria is more bombastic than prayerful, musically suggesting the closeness of anger and anguish. Only in the final measures does the agitated orchestral part slow down as a descending oboe line accompanies David's final plea (234, m. 4 after Reh. 225). The clarinet repeats this line and ends on a G# which becomes an enharmonic for A flat and thus part of the F-minor chord that opens the next measure. Enharmonics usually signal a change in scene or mood.

Bathsheba re-enters, screaming that the baby has died. Bathsheba once again has a more active role here in the opera than her biblical counterpart. In the biblical version, it is the servants' whispering that alerts David to his baby's death (12.19). In the opera, after Bathsheba announces the death, violins softly play slow ethereal descending chords. These end on a tonal

G-minor chord in the unsettled third inversion, as Bathsheba sings 'Pity' on a sustained g''. Slow descending slurs are heard in the orchestra for the next several measures, when David sings 'one day I will go to him, but he will never return to me' (12.23). This line ends on c#, in dissonance with the orchestra's sustained C-major chord. The orchestra stops as David sings 'My God, it was your will' on an e, the first inversion of the C-major chord just heard. This leaves a feeling of optimism tinged by uncertainty. The body is carried out. [L.A. stage directions: the scene ends with David leaning over Bathsheba and crying.]

As the chorus of Israelites sings, David raises the heartbroken Bathsheba and leads her away.

David in this opera shows more emotion than in the biblical text, for example breaking out in tears at the death of their child (though this is not indicated in the original score, only in the L.A. stage directions), and in his very emotional lament. Humanizing David was a goal of all artists, librettists and composers. Sensing the lack of demonstrative emotion in the portrait of the biblical David, they tried to remedy that image by re-telling parts of his story.

But Milhaud's interest went beyond humanizing only David. He gives Bathsheba dimensions that no other composer does. Refreshingly, she is not portrayed as the seductress envisioned by so many artists and commentators. This is no simple love story. Musically, textually and dramatically, this scene succeeds in suggesting the ambivalence and ambiguity of Bathsheba's feelings. She is shown as the grieving mother, a part her biblical counterpart never plays. She is given a voice, one that suggests the conflicting emotions the biblical Bathsheba may have felt, but whose creator did not allow her to express. Milhaud's Bathsheba, even though given only one brief scene, is a three-dimensional woman. She is the person barely glimpsed between the lines of the biblical text, but imagined by readers of every generation.

The story of the opera *And David Wept* (1971) by **Ezra Laderman** is based on 2 Samuel 11, but is told entirely in flashback, and from three different viewpoints: David's, Bathsheba's, and Uriah's. The libretto, by Broadway lyricist Joe Darion, is entirely original text. In this retelling, there is no doubt at all about Bathsheba's role: she is a seductress from the first moment she enters. David is cast as a baritone, but in quite a high tenorial range. Bathsheba is uncharacteristically a mezzo-soprano, suggesting maturity as well as seductiveness. Uriah is a bass-baritone, which lends his character more gravitas than David's.

Though this version is a love story between David and Bathsheba, their voices are not the conventional choices for depicting a love relationship, which would be tenor-soprano. This is probably to suggest their more advanced age: the characters are remembering events that took place many

years earlier. Uriah is actually speaking from the grave, a very unusual and effective device. Every scene in the opera is a flashback account of an earlier event

Part 1. The opening measures are very fast and jazzy, accentuated by snare drums with trumpets and other horns playing a quick and upbeat tune together with piano. The music slows and a modal-type melody is introduced in clarinets and echoed by the horns. This leads to David's entrance:

The Prophet Nathan said 'Thou art the man!' I could not deny it. Indeed, I was the man.

David continues talking for several measures, with the opening jazzy music played in the measures between his speech. He confesses to taking another man's wife and murdering the man, for lust, and says he knows such things can't be hidden from God. As David says he is old now, a motif of several rising and falling notes is heard for the first time (3, last measure). This is a variant on a theme that will be heard in Bathsheba's first aria and later in the opera. David continues:

In that one summer evening my titles increased threefold—David the King, David the Adulterer, David the Murderer.

After this rather serious confession, the rollicking music of the opening is reprised, ornamented by trills and heavier instrumentation to make it even more raucous. This music could possibly be heard as mocking, but in any case it seems out of sync with the text, to this listener.

David's first sung lines recount the story of his encounter with Bathsheba (5, Reh. C). The music is marked *sostenuto* in 2/2 time, a very slow beat. Under sustained, repeated chords, with prominent harp, David sings to a simple ascending melody:

Fourteen marble steps up to the palace roof, Up to the palace roof for a breath of evening air...

In the next two measures, David sings 'Nothing more, nothing more' to a wistful descending motif, off the beat, creating a sighing effect. Strings join the orchestra here, creating a more lyrical sound. David continues:

And what did I find... There in the cool evening air?

The last word is sung on a very long note, held for 10 beats as the accompaniment underneath becomes louder and increasingly more dissonant. He continues:

Murder I found, passion I found, death I found, life I found, lust I found, love I found, tears and tenderness, joy and despair, there in the cool evening air. Bathsheba I found.

These dramatic, dissonant, chromatic passages are marked by constantly changing tempo and rhythm, with very few tonic chords. The first mention of 'Bathsheba' is sung on an ascending octave leap and *pp* (7, m. 2), a noticeably larger interval than any other in the aria and a very romantic sound, with swelling strings doubling the voice. In the closing measures, a harp solo reprises a theme from the aria. The final measure leads directly to Bathsheba's entrance.

Part 2. The measures preceding Bathsheba's first words feature 'oriental cymbals', which have a bell-like sound, and the plangent tones of a cor anglais, both musically 'painting' Bathsheba. Her opening monologue is spoken, not sung:

That summer... Every evening that summer I went up to the roof with my hand maidens to bathe beneath the blue-grey evening sky. Well, it was hot and I wanted cool water on my skin. True, my roof lay hard beneath the palace windows, but what of that? It was hot and I wanted to bathe. Every evening...

The cor anglais and insistent cymbal-bells predominate under these spoken words, a sound of poignant longing but possibly also mocking. In the next section, which is sung, the rhythm becomes more stately and subdued, yet the time signature vacillates constantly between 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4, creating a sense of instability and urgency. The vocal line is in the middle to low mezzo range, the most sensual part of this voice (9, Reh. G-H):

Will he never come to the window? Will I whore to the empty skies, and never feel the touch even of his eyes? Must I curse the impatient darkness that comes too soon to cover me, and tells me once again, 'Alas, he did not see.'

In the second part of this aria (11, Reh. J), the orchestra plays Bathsheba's opening melody under her new melody, the complexity intensifying the emotion (Fig. 38).

Oh David, David, Singer of sweet songs. Beautiful above all men, King above all kings. Oh David, David. How many evening more will you make me offer up these breasts, this heart, these aching loins to the sterile summer sky. Oh David, David...

The repetitions of his name are sung on descending seconds, a motif of both longing and despair (10, Reh. I). This theme will become a *Leitmotif* throughout the opera. The solo ends with a melismatic, 'wailing' passage extending over several measures, accompanied by bells and echoed by clarinets (10, bottom). When Bathsheba sings of the 'sterile summer sky', her notes are doubled in the xylophone, another 'orientalizing' effect. On the second repetition of this passage, cymbals accompany her cries of 'David, David', and then the clarinet doubles her notes (12, top). The melismatic passage is more prolonged this time. When she stops, a xylophone signals a



Figure 38. Laderman: Bathsheba.

change. A new musical figure appears when Bathsheba notices a shadow on the palace roof. Exulting that it is David, she says (12, Reh. K):

At last, at last! You fool, you took so long!

Obviously there is no question here of Bathsheba's motive: she is depicted as a seductress taking the initiative, deliberately trying to entice David. Through the musical devices, it is an all-too-convincing portrait of a scheming woman. This is the same kind of gap-filling engaged in by male commentators discussed at the beginning of this chapter, as well as in artistic and film representations of the story. It makes for a better story, especially for a television audience, and this reading is probably the most obvious one for a Broadway lyricist. Depicting an unwilling married woman subjected to the king's whimsy would not have made for good theatre, nor been suitable for the commissioners of the work, CBS television.

Part 3. The next person to speak is Uriah—from the grave. The measure preceding his first words features a tamtam (gong) (13). Uriah speaks caustically, accompanied only by drums playing more and more insistently:

I speak wisely enough, now that I speak from the grave...as usual, I was the last to know...the husband is the last to know. True, no one spoke a word, yet the word came seeping out of the earth like the overflowing filth from a soldier's latrine.

Uriah goes on to describe his feelings the night he understood what had happened. In the biblical text, it is never clear if Uriah knows what transpired

between his wife and David. Theories abound, but the writer of the story wanted to keep us guessing. In this libretto, there is no guesswork. A highly dramatic story is created by going under the assumption that Uriah knew, and depicting his mixed reactions in both words and music. Uriah's music is differentiated from both Bathsheba's and David's by the predominance of dissonance. Uriah is not settled, calm, or content in his reminiscing as David and Bathsheba are. His opening sung words are (14, m.5 after Reh. L-M):

Shall I think of love? Shall I boil with hate? Shall I dream of vengeance? Is it all too late? Shall I think of crying? Is it time for blood? Shall I lie here silent and fill my mouth with mud?

The jagged musical phrases, suitable to these graphic words, are full of chromaticism and unusual intervals. In the next section, the same musical devices are used as Uriah remembers the many times he made love to Bathsheba, how he knew 'her body and her hunger', but never knew 'what lay behind her eyes'. The section ends as Uriah speaks again, closing on the words 'This coupling was pregnant with death' referring to Bathsheba's lying with David. The final chord is unresolved (16, last measure), unlike the ending of the previous two sections.

It is interesting that Uriah consistently blames Bathsheba rather than David. Because of her portrayal here as a schemer, the audience is invited to share Uriah's viewpoint.

Part 4. The next scene opens with David speaking of his regret. A new musical motif appears, dissonant and rhythmically unsettled. He talks of being held to a higher standard because he is King David, but of being completely unable to resist Bathsheba. Displaying ambivalent feelings, he says:

Oh God, You ask too much, for You gave me the power But You gave me not the strength.

I saw the woman and I had to have her.

And to this day I know not how it could be so wrong and taste so sweet.

David is confessing to weakness, not to an abuse of power, because in this version his feelings for Bathsheba are reciprocated. The singer puts particular stress on the final word 'sweet', creating some sympathy for David. After all, he was only having a good time.

David continues speaking rather than singing, waxing lyrical about the time of year, 'earliest summer', how everything was in blossom and 'the world was full of sweet beginnings' (19, Reh. Q). In the biblical narrative, the time of year is usually interpreted to be spring. The accompaniment includes orientalisms and unexpected instruments such as harpsichord, possibly standing in for the lute mentioned in the lyrics. A very particular orchestral texture serves as background to David's reminiscences, gradually becoming more lyrical and melodic. This leads to David's love song to Bathsheba:

My lute overflows with sweet sounds, My throat blossoms with song, And the song is a word, And the word is a song, Bathsheba, Bathsheba.

The next stanzas sound less and less like the biblical David (21-22, Reh. S-V):

My eyes are timid lovers caressing the blossoms of your breasts... My body thirsts for you, Bathsheba... Hand in hand we will wander down to the valley of Kidron, and learn about each other all the things that lovers learn...moon-soaked leaves shall be our bed... How fierce and sweet are the beginnings of love

The imagery in this text reflects a scene in the 1951 film, where the two lovers lie in an open field. Television and movies of that era could portray love, but not lust. Occasional orientalisms, such as the sound of a tambourine when David sings of wandering together 'down to the valley of Kidron', establish a sense of place. The accompaniment throughout the aria is made up of constantly moving 16th-notes, like a strumming harp, to mimic the lute. The first time 'Bathsheba' is sung, the melody recalls Bathsheba's earlier singing of David's name (21, top). When David sings her name, there is also a faint echo of 'Maria, Maria' from Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*—either a deliberate or inadvertent reference to another story of forbidden love (*West Side Story* was a very popular Broadway hit in 1957 and successful movie in 1961).

There are three stanzas in the aria, each sung to a different melody, and each followed by the call to Bathsheba. Every time the theme is repeated, the notes are longer and higher, reflecting a steady buildup of tension and emotion. On the last repetition of 'Bathsheba' in each stanza, the voice reaches the highest note in the aria, f', to depict David's passion. On the final repeat, the f' is sustained for four beats and then slides up to f#' while the orchestra modulates to D major (24, bottom). This rare tonal moment is followed by several tonal measures. The final line of singing starts in E-flat major, moves to C minor, and ends up at B-flat7 which resolves to E-flat major. The first stanza of the love song was also in that key. The orchestra concludes with a reprise of the opening melody of the love song that ends on a $f\!f$ tonic E-flat major chord in a very 'Broadway' sound (25, Reh. X). David speaks an additional line: 'It has been written that sweet beginnings can turn to bitter endings'.

This is a David of myth, far from the harsher reality of the biblical portrayal. The lyrics in this section portray a young, innocent lover rather than a king who has taken other women in his ruthless quest for power. It is hard to imagine this soft David ordering Uriah killed.

Part 5. Bathsheba opens with a soliloquy about her loveless and barren marriage to Uriah. The music that introduces her is sad and modal, played

by cor anglais interwoven with viola. These two instruments continue their duet during Bathsheba's opening words. Though the librettist has turned Bathsheba into a seductress rather than a woman taken against her will, he has also given her more dimensions by portraying her as unhappy in her marriage (this idea was also used in the 1951 film). She describes Uriah as a good and upright man, while also a dull and stupid one. On each of these adjectives, a cymbal crash is heard, lending almost a comical and burlesque quality. She also feels he was more dedicated to fighting wars than to her. In a rather ribald remark that makes Bathsheba even more vulgar than she has seemed up to this point (and probably quite shocking to the television audience of that era), she says of Uriah (28, top):

He loved his horse more. Certainly he always mounted more eagerly into that saddle than any other.

The two measures following this line comically mimic a horse. In more thoughtful words, Bathsheba continues:

What I was to him, I swear I do not know. Call me enemy and he would have leaped upon me with savage cries, but call me not wife, for his heart was not in such encounters.

Uriah interjects one line: 'I was a man of war'. Bathsheba argues that he was a 'thing of war, not a man', that she loved David because he was a true man of war. Cymbal crashes underline her words. Then she speaks of her fear on learning she was pregnant. This is followed by a poignant aria, 'I am with child' (30, Reh. A), which features a moderately tonic and tuneful melody, but with some surprising atonal moments and much dissonance in the accompaniment. For example, the opening chord in the first measure is A major with an intrusive G#, and Bathsheba's first note is g#' in an E-major phrase (30, 3rd staff), discordant with the A-major accompaniment. This discord between the voice and the accompaniment continues throughout the first section, musically portraying her uncertainty (Fig. 39):

I am with child. A secret thing grows within me. For others it would be a thing of joy, a thing to tell with trumpets... To us it is a secret thing.... God says I am blessed with fruit, and Israel says I am an adulteress, to be stoned to death in an open field; and the laws of Israel are the laws of God... David, my king, my love, what am I to do? I am with child.

The music changes at 'God says', becoming much more dramatic and less lyric, with trumpets blasting loud chords. The phrase 'laws of God' ends on a G-minor chord, a rare moment of tonality, though in the first inversion. When she next sings 'What am I to do?' a harp plays an ascending figure, standing for David. The aria reaches its loudest and highest note, f#'' on 'David, my King', in a measure filled with unusual intervals (30, 1 measure before Reh. D): g#'-c'' (diminished fourth)-f#'' (augmented fourth)-f'' (half-step)-d''-f'.



Figure 39. Laderman: Bathsheba.

These last notes seem to indicate a move into D minor, but while the final f' is held in the voice, the orchestra plays a heavily accented minor third chord of B-flat-D-flat, immediately indicating B-flat minor, jarring in the same measure as a D natural.

Bathsheba sings 'What am I to do?' four times, softer each time, until the pitch drops in the final measures, which are to be sung *ff* even though they are in a low range of the voice, down to *b*. The aria ends surprisingly on a tonic C#-minor chord, the same ending as the first section of the aria and on the same text 'I am with child' (31, m. 3 after Reh. C).

These passages that explore Bathsheba's inner turmoil are of particular interest, since Bathsheba's reaction to her pregnancy is never even hinted at by the biblical writer, who does not mention the threat of stoning either. It is also interesting how she refers to 'us', as in 'to us it is a secret thing'. In this version, she and David share the guilt and the worry.⁴ A very fast

4. The 1951 film also takes this more modern approach. The risk of death, interestingly,





Figure 40. Laderman: David.

section marked *agitato* follows immediately (33), marked by a new and heavily marked rhythm of 6/8 alternating with 5/8 measures, creating an agitated, unsettled feeling. David sings very rhythmic and *marcato* phrases, increasing steadily in pitch and volume (Fig. 40):

She will not die! Quote me not laws! Ask me not why! I see before me a pit yawning, deeper than the deepest deeps of Hell... Let the priests shout! Let the people demand! I cannot let her die! She will not die!

The musical phrases are hammering and repetitive, punctuated by horns and drums. David sings repeated eighth notes, initially together with the 6/8 accompaniment (33, Reh. E), then switching to a stronger rhythm of four sung eighth notes against 6/8 in the accompaniment (34, 7 bars after Reh. F). This section also takes David into the upper reaches of the baritone range: f' and g' (34, bottom) (although the composer wrote alternate lower notes for the singer unable to sustain that range). At the end of this section, the time signature alternates between 6/8 and 9/8 (36, Reh. I). The longest held note is the final repetition of 'why', held for five measures during which the rhythm of the underlying accompaniment fluctuates constantly (36). On the final, insistent line, each of the four words is sustained for a full

can be found much earlier, in Josephus's account: 'She conceived with child, and sent to the king, that he should contrive some way for concealing her sin (for according to the laws of their fathers, she who had been guilty of adultery ought to be put to death)' (*Antiquities*, 7.7 §131).

9/8 measure, descending a half-step each time. Most of the accompaniment throughout this aria is dissonant, but it ends on an open fifth, B-flat-F—neither tonic nor dissonant, but unsettled. This sense is underlined by an insistent prolonged trill on a higher F in the flutes.

This is a musical portrait of an angry, powerful, and determined man. The issue of a threat to Bathsheba's life is not even present in the biblical story, but it creates tension and drama, allowing the writer to give David a heroic and gallant aspect. The cinematic David speaks the same words in the 1951 film. It is hard to imagine the David depicted in 2 Samuel going to any lengths to save Bathsheba or any of his other wives.

Part 6. Uriah speaks of his fear and trepidation at being called back from the battlefield to his home in Jerusalem. His speech is accompanied by tambourines, harshly dissonant chords, and repetitive kettle drum beats. He knows David has been with his wife, and does not understand why he would be needed. In harshly dissonant, jagged phrases marked by both chromaticism and wide vocal leaps, he sings (38, Reh. J):

Bathsheba, you are a whore, and I am bereft and riven! If he took you, he took you, but this I know, what he took he was given!

This is the first place the libretto has even suggested Bathsheba might have been 'taken', yet the Bathsheba in this version is apparently of such loose morals and sexually available, that even her husband is sure she did not resist. This is 'blaming the victim' taken to extremes, except that Bathsheba is never portrayed as a victim in this opera.

The next section explores Uriah's ambivalent feelings for David, an aspect of the story that has not been explored elsewhere. In the biblical dialogues between the two men, no emotion of any kind is even suggested, so Uriah's tirade in this libretto is original and compelling gap-filling (39). As in earlier passages, Uriah's music is full of dissonant jagged phrases marked by both chromaticism and wide vocal leaps. The time signature vacillates between 3/4, 2/4, and 4/4, reflecting uncertainty. One phrase in the middle of the aria, referring to David's name living on, is spoken, almost like an aside (39, last measure) (Fig. 41):

I gave my life into this man's hands! I came a stranger to a strange land, and I have risen high...but what will happen to me now? This king is a giant among kings! His name will live for a thousand years when we are all dust ...

The second sentence is an interesting quote from Exodus (2.22) where it is spoken by Moses when naming his son. Perhaps it is meant to subtly link Uriah with earlier Israelite history. Uriah continues:

I loved this king and all I wanted was to serve him...now if I find he is a man who lusts and whores like any other man, does this make him any less a giant



Figure 41. Laderman: Uriah.

for the ages? And if he has taken my wife, here is the worm that secretly devours my guts... Do I really care?...

For my stupid honor's sake I have no choice, I have to care. But wife, I swear to you, if it were not for that, I would toss you on his table and wish him hearty appetite! Oh wife! You slut! You bitch in heat! You have ruined your husband, and you have dirtied a king!

This section is marked 'martial' and is more stately and less agitated than the first section. The martial sound of snare drums recalls Uriah's role as a soldier in David's army. The line 'Do I really care?' is sung softly on an ascending chromatic line (41, Reh. N), a sound of puzzlement. He sings the phrase about honour on an augmented ascending octave and descending augmented seventh, both unusual intervals (42, top), though he virtually shouts it out. Uriah's final line, 'what to do, what to do', is sung very softly, and after a rest, only a single *ppp* note is heard in the orchestra (43, top).

In this reading, Uriah is more upset about the shame and dishonour Bathsheba has brought on him and on the king, than about personal feelings. The importance of shame and honour is in keeping with ancient Near Eastern values and these passages therefore have a certain ring of authenticity.

Part 7. This section opens with measures identical to those that opened the entire work, a lilting, staccato theme, establishing this music as a Leitmotif

for David. He talks here about how strange women are, how they seem soft and pliant but can be so hard. He then says (44, top):

When I told Bathsheba the shameful plan, she did not pale, she did not weep. To tell it truly, she did not turn a hair.

There is no suggestion in the biblical story that David ever shared his plan to bring Uriah home and encourage him to sleep with Bathsheba, which would have absolved him of the responsibility for her pregnancy. Colluding this way makes the Bathsheba—David relationship seem like an intimate one, something never suggested in the biblical text. This reading does not overtly contradict the original text and certainly adds interest. It additionally makes Bathsheba complicit and less innocent, while making David bear less of the guilt.

Bathsheba speaks immediately after David (44, Reh. Q), and the music introducing her here imitates the orientalizing music of her first appearance, suggestive of a *Leitmotif* with variations, and marked by the use of bells. Her caustic side is evident again in this phrase, as she comments on agreeing to sleep with her husband when he returns. The lyrics must have seemed risqué in 1970s television (45, top):

This much I knew, it would not be very wearing, and it would not take very long.

Though they are not together in this scene, David and Bathsheba are each separately commenting on what is going to take place. Right after Bathsheba's comment, David wonders if 'women love less deeply than men'. Bathsheba next comments that love is not only physical connection, that she agreed to do this for her own safety:

Because I had no appetite to die of eating stones. But I swear, if the mortal peril were David's and not mine, I would do it just as quickly for his sake alone.

The orchestra plays repetitive, mocking phrases over her words (45, bottom). At the end of the second phrase, the tempo broadens and a loud harp *glissando* is heard. This sound always recalls David. Bathsheba then asks the same question David just did, in reverse—do men love less deeply than women? (46, m. 1 before Reh. S).

David muses on how his love for Bathsheba changed when she agreed to his plan, with very dissonant phrases in the orchestra under his words. This leads into a long love duet (47, Reh. T). The text could be used for any story of forbidden love, and seems quite distant from the King David of the Bible:

All sweet beginnings quickly end, and blossoms have to die. Now fruit bedecks the heavy limbs beneath the autumn sky. Bitter fruit, where harvest joy should be. Bitter fruit God gives to you and me. A secret love, a stolen love, we weep and cheat and lie. But oh my love, my secret love, I cannot you deny.

As in other arias and duets found in this work, the melody initially seems very simple and straightforward. It starts in 3/4 waltz time, to be sung 'freely', but both melody and accompaniment are full of surprising harmonic twists somewhat reminiscent of Shostakovich. There is no tonal centre, even though some of the sung lines seem to be in a particular key. This is a musical portrayal of uncertainty and discord. The voices sing in unison virtually throughout the duet, with occasional solo lines echoing a previous phrase to reinforce what they are both feeling. This is a musical way of indicating agreement between the singers—a 'meeting of minds'—in spite of the discordant harmonies.

On each repeated refrain 'Bitter fruit', the rhythm abruptly switches from 3/4 to 2/4 (48, Reh. V, 51, Reh. Y), imparting a sense of urgency and instability. At the conclusion of the first 'Bitter fruit' refrain, David holds a g# while the orchestra plays a C#-major chord; his voice slides to c#, but this suddenly becomes an enharmonic D flat (50, Reh. W). The enharmonic shift, along with the sudden time change back to 3/4, signal a change in mood. The second stanza of the duet starts on d flat, initially in D-flat minor. This is a half-step lower than the pitches of the first verse, and the entire verse is sung in this tonality. Though subtle, the lowering of the pitch suggests a darkening of mood.

In the conclusion, the tempo slows down noticeably. The voices close on a C-minor cadence which brings the two voices initially to a C-minor third and then to a unison c (52, top). The orchestra, however, plays an A-flat major chord together with the C minor, a strong dissonance which is sustained and even underlined with a final unison C in the orchestra. It is an unsettled. 'bitter' ending.

Part 8. The next scene moves away suddenly and dramatically from the banality of these love lyrics. Uriah struggles with the decision of whether or not to go to Bathsheba. He has understood she is pregnant and that this is the reason he was brought back. He debates the pros and cons of letting the king have his way, and in the very dramatic ending of this soliloquy, he decides he simply cannot take part in the charade.

All the sections dealing with Uriah's feelings feature the most interesting, harshly dissonant music, and are the most dramatically compelling moments. Uriah has been sidelined in most commentary, whether ancient or modern. Yet it was ultimately his refusal to sleep with his own wife, for whatever motive, that launched the series of family catastrophes within David's house. So trying to understand his motives and reactions is a worthwhile venture. The character of Uriah has not been explored in any other musical work, to my knowledge.

Once Uriah has understood the purpose of his visit home, he says, in very strong language (53, Reh. Z):

I was to perfume out the stench of their adultery, save her life and his virtue and in return—what? ... If I did not do this swinish deed, my life was ruined. But if I agreed, would my career not blossom? For would I then not have a wife beloved of my king and a child beloved of my king?

These words are spoken, virtually shouted, over a strident, rhythmically complex and dissonant accompaniment. Unusual instrumentation such as xylophone, drums and other percussion strongly punctuate quick, loud bursts during pauses in Uriah's tirade (52-53). A relentless cymbal roll is heard, and a low *ostinato* phrase, occasionally punctuated by loud sustained high trumpet blasts. It is a musical depiction of mental confusion and chaos. A low rumbling drumbeat is played as Uriah describes staggering drunk from the palace towards his own house (54, Reh. A), where he began to push the door open until a cry rose inside him, 'I will not do it!'

Just before and after Uriah sings his phrase, two heavily accented chords are played in quick succession: E major and C minor, a startling and chromatic succession (starting on different inversions, with G# to G as the successive top notes). This becomes a recurrent phrase played at significant points in the aria. Uriah's line is sung very loud and high in the bass-baritone range, on *e-flat'* (56, Reh. B).

A lengthy, very fast-paced aria follows, with changes of mood marked by tempo, rhythm, and tonality changes in the accompaniment. In the first section, in a measured 6/8 rhythm, Uriah is calm and rational and understands it would be the best thing to do:

She is only a woman and he is a great king And nobody need ever know And I do not want to die for this, and... I will not do it!

As he sings these words, each phrase is a step higher in pitch, depicting his increasing excitement. He reaches e' for his repetition of 'I will not do it' which is sung mostly on this note before descending an augmented octave to d# on 'not', with the final two notes almost in A major, but with a dissonant C in the bass (57, top).

In the next section, Uriah sings, in slightly calmer music, of being confused and afraid. Gradually building in volume, as the orchestra also becomes more strident, he addresses the 'God of the Hebrews', shouting: 'I am a man! I will not commit adultery with my own wife!' (58, Reh. D). From the previously regular 6/8 time, the music now shifts between measures of 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4, creating instability. This instability is also reflected in the angular phrases of the vocal line, which moves rapidly between octaves and executes rapid large leaps of sevenths and augmented sevenths. Uriah proclaims his belief in the God of the Hebrews, and prays to this God to punish the adulterers:

I come late to You, not by birth, but by choice,
And I believe in You, and now I pray to You: Punish them!
Almighty God, punish them!
Any little god would do it, any little Bedouin god
Made of wood or stone would do it.
For the evil of it, for the foulness of it.
Strike them down!

When Uriah begins praying to God, the music is calmer and marked by steady repeated figures of seconds (59, top). These quieter passages do not have the interval leaps that re-appear every few measures as Uriah again becomes enraged. In the measures before and after he sings 'Punish them!' the same two heavily accented E-major and C-minor chords heard earlier and played in quick succession are heard again. When he tries to be persuasive, his music softens again for a few measures.

It is very interesting that Uriah tries to sway God with the argument that 'any little Bedouin god...would do it'—is he trying to shame God into agreeing? Arguing with God this way is a bit in the style of the Patriarchs. There is no suggestion anywhere in the biblical text of Uriah being anything other than a Hittite, but having him accept the Hebrew God might make him more sympathetic to a modern audience.

The two-chord theme is heard three more times in the final line of music (61, top). After a C-minor chord in the orchestra, Uriah sings 'Strike them down' on an A-minor cadence, ending on d'. He sustains that note while the orchestra repeats the E-major-C-minor combination, very strident against his d'. His last three words are sung on e-flat', in harmony with the orchestra's C minor but momentarily dissonant when E major is heard again.

This is some of the most violent and turbulent music in the opera; it could almost represent *God's* voice thundering, rather than Uriah's. The composer was obviously inspired by Uriah's sad situation and both he and his librettist depict a man consumed by anger and hopelessness. This is a fascinating portrayal of a character who is given only one sentence in the Bible (1 Sam. 11.11) and is largely neglected by later commentaries.

Part 9. The music in the next scene contrasts markedly with that of the previous section. The time is a very slow 4/4 and half-notes are played over a steady drumbeat that creates an ominous mood. David speaks of Uriah's refusal to do what he was asked, thereby sentencing Bathsheba to death as an adulteress. Then he realizes that since it was Uriah's decision, he should die, not Bathsheba. Ominous, harsh cluster chords punctuate the next section, in which David recalls the 'madness' that overcame him, moving him to commit the deed which, thirty years later, he still cannot understand (62, Reh. G). He is angry at Uriah for forcing his hand:

I curse him to this day for what he did to me. No one really had to die...

When he speaks this line, violins play strange, rapid *pizzicato* passages, a sound of anxiety. The final line leads into a trio, with the repeated refrain 'Someone had to die'. The refrain has echoes of 'I tell you, I tell you, we must die' from 'Alabama Song' in Kurt Weill's 1930 work, *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, though the lyrics bear no resemblance to that work. The opening section is in a simple 4/4 time, very slow and deliberate. The voices sing mostly in unison, while *ostinato* repeated B flats and steady drumbeats continue for several measures (63, Reh. H):

The wind blows cold and all through the night the mournful jackals cry, and you feel it deep in the marrow of your bones when someone has to die.

Each character then sings a single line—Bathsheba about tossing in her bed, Uriah about dying ('I bit the ground') and David about pacing in the palace, followed by a repeat of the refrain 'Someone had to die'. Bathsheba then speaks for several measures, trying to understand why Uriah refused to sleep with her, and commenting on how taken men are with words like honour and justice. The portrayal of her as heartless towards Uriah but completely devoted to David continues here, as she states that the child she was carrying was:

...the child of a king, and if my husband's life was the price of it, so be it! I would have paid more... (66, top)

The strophic trio is repeated three times, in unison only the first two times, and with different text on each repeat. After the second repeat, rumbling drumbeats are heard at the conclusion of the refrain. This introduces Uriah, who now speaks of his return to the battlefield after his visit home. He still does not understand why David did not kill him. He wonders what he might have done had he opened the dispatches (which sent him to his death), and thinks he would have delivered them anyway (68, last measure). This is a convincing portrayal of how Uriah might have reacted to the situation. In the final strophe, Uriah's music is a third lower than the Bathsheba-David vocal line, musically separating them. The final 'Someone *has* to die' is repeated three times (changed from 'someone *had* to die), with the three singing in unison again, and each repetition sung a third lower than the previous, ending in B minor

Part 10. The next scene brings us to the present. Uriah opens with the line 'Someone had to die', in the past tense. He also refers to himself in the third person: 'Of the three of us, of course it had to be Uriah the Hittite' (71, top). He speaks about having seen Nathan accuse David and seeing all the predicted punishments come to pass, all from his grave (71). Bathsheba interjects that David is now old, 'empty and dry...not David anymore'.

While she speaks these lines, the orchestra plays the melody of 'Someone had to die' just heard (72, top; echoing 64, m.3). David enters, singing rather than speaking his lines (72, Reh. M):

I am cold. I am always cold now. They gave me a young maiden to warm me, but nothing can warm me. All my fires are cold grey ash.

The time signature changes from measure to measure, going between 4/4 and 5/4, and open fifths predominate, along with chromaticism and some dissonances. There is also a repeated figure of two slurs, a sad and lamenting sound (72, Reh. M). This is a musical portrait of a very different David: resigned, uncertain and empty. It is the beginning of a long finale which works to build sympathy for David. In this libretto, his tears and repentance have totally wiped away any sin. This is often considered to be the message of David's story, and the power of repentance is highlighted in many musical works, as has been illustrated elsewhere in this chapter.

Bathsheba says, 'Oh God, he has been punished enough', over the repeated slurs depicting pathos (72, Reh. N). David then sings the same words, and continues (73):

I committed one loathsome deed so long ago...can it be that this one deed has put a shield of ice forever between me and the warmth of God?

The notes sung to the words 'so long ago' are sustained and sung very softly, and the phrase is repeated twice for emphasis. The first note is *e flat'* with an E-flat minor chord underneath—but played simultaneously with a C-major chord, a strong dissonance even more pronounced against David's closing sustained *b*.

Right after this phrase, the tempo picks up. This is the first time David has spoken of his relationship with God, and the measure introducing his brief prayer includes a melismatic passage that creates a liturgical sound suitable to prayer (74, top). In the following measures, he asks God repeatedly 'How shall I atone?' The dramatic music includes the same slurs just heard at the scene's opening, where they created a lamenting sound. Here they are doubled, becoming fast and accented 16th-note slurs, repeated many times under David's words (74, 1st-3rd staves). The effect here is of urgency rather than pathos.

In a not very subtle attempt to build sympathy for David, Bathsheba says (74, bottom):

I think Uriah can lie easy in the grave, for I have seen his blood, spilled by David's hand, washed away many times over by David's tears. He brought greatness to Israel and glory to God, this King of Kings, but in his own house, I have watched him weep.

David picks up this theme and sings, in rhythmically and harmonically unstable measures, of all the times he wept (75, Reh. P). Speaking of himself

in the third person, here on page 76 the title of the work appears for the first time: 'And David wept'. He sings of weeping for his dead firstborn with Bathsheba (the first and only place the death of their first child is mentioned), for the rape of his daughter Tamar by his son Amnon, and for Absalom's murder of Amnon. (Neither Jonathan nor Saul is ever mentioned in this work, which focuses exclusively on the David-Bathsheba-Uriah triangle.) Each repetition of the words 'And David wept' is sung on descending minor or major thirds, sometimes extended into longer phrases (76, 1st-3rd staves). The biblical David is not said to weep in any of these three instances. Bathsheba speaks next of Absalom, 'the one true child of his heart', being slain, and now 'David weeps', in the present tense. This is the only biblical instance of David weeping.

A lament for Absalom follows (77, Reh. R). The opening measures consist of several loud descending figures, conventional music for mourning, including prominent and frenzied harp passages. The orchestral introduction vividly portrays David's emotional state, and his music is very heartfelt. The musical line continually moves towards a tonic F minor but only reaches it at the end, after several dissonant intrusions (78, Reh. S) (Fig. 42).

The orchestra repeats the opening measures of the lament, this time ending in F major when Bathsheba enters. Much mellower, she now says (78):

He is not David anymore, and I am not Bathsheba. Now we are only an old man aching to die, and an aging woman busy with plans to make her own son king of Israel. But when we first came together, it was like the bursting of stars!



Figure 42. Laderman: David's Lament.

This is one of the few librettos discussed in this book that includes the older Bathsheba who plotted to put Solomon on the throne (see Appendix 1). As she continues to reminisce, the musical theme of her earlier cries to David—'Oh David, David'—are heard over her words which also refer to the 'echoes of old songs' the audience is hearing. On her final line, a tambourine is heard, recalling their first meeting:

I am not a woman much given to stars, but sometimes at night, Even now, I am seized by a fever of remembering, and the shadows of old flames dance on the walls of my chamber, And the echoes of old songs tear at me...
I was his greatest blessing, and his greatest curse.

Bathsheba cries to God for forgiveness for David (80, Reh. T):

Everything he did, he did for Israel, everything he took, he took for Israel, save only one thing, Bathsheba. Bathsheba he took for himself. And now this is I, Bathsheba, crying to God for a tainted lost love. Crying for David. Oh David, David.

The rhythm of this aria is steady and calm, marked by wide or unusual intervals in both the vocal part and the orchestra that doubles her lines (80, Reh. T). The opening measure starts with an augmented fifth, and the next measure, with an augmented seventh. Some of these intervals reappear an octave higher. It creates an emotionally charged, almost wailing sound, building to the climactic phrase 'Crying for David' which starts on g'' (81, top). The repetition of 'David, David' recalls the much earlier scene (10, Reh. I) when Bathsheba sang of waiting for David to notice her. This theme was just heard in her recitative. Its sound is altered here by a sustained harshly dissonant chord in the orchestra, heard under the final repetition of 'David'. This phrase extends the first syllable over five measures, to be sung 'freely', creating the sound of a wail or chant (81, Reh. V).

The next section (81, Reh. W) is faster and the accompaniment changes from a steady group of legato 8th-notes to heavily accented dissonant chords heard mostly in trumpets. Bathsheba is arguing with God, telling him David could not help himself, and that she is equally guilty. The first few lines build in volume and excitement, and then she calms down. The final section (82, Reh. X) is slower and softer, marked 'calm'. The *pp* accompaniment is flowing as she prays to God:

Reach out Your loving arms to him, envelop him in Your unbounding mercy. Take away the tiredness from his old bones and the grieving from his heart. Let him rest, let him rest.

Her opening note is *a-flat'* over an F-minor chord with an intrusive A. But the A is actually a leading tone, as Bathsheba's voice immediately moves up to *a'* and the orchestra follows, making the key F major (82, Reh. X). There is no clear home key in this short prayer, but it is fluid as is the time signature,

which alternates constantly between 2/4 and 3/4. This gives the prayer a sense of spontaneity. The first 'Let him rest' ends on a' over an F major chord. The second ends on b-flat', still over A major. The final repetition ends on c#'' sliding up to d''.

The closing chord in the bass is B-flat minor, but the C# in both the orchestra and Bathsheba's voice is an enharmonic D flat, which slides up to a pp D, creating a harmonic and settled B-flat major conclusion.⁵

Part 11. In the next scene, Uriah joins in the general prayer for David's forgiveness. The music recalls his earlier scenes, and this musical reminder of the younger Uriah heightens the contrast with the man who sings now of understanding 'that a man and a woman can find in each other things I never knew' (84, top). Uriah believes David arranged his murder in such a way as to be caught and punished for it. With new understanding, he continues to laud David:

When I hated him most, I must have loved him a little. For I saw him gather together a flock of quarrelling shepherds and make of them for one brilliant hour the greatest nation on earth. He was a man that any man could love, and not be ashamed to say it. He was a man!

Throughout this aria, up to the climactic 'He was a man!' the same dramatic pair of chords that punctuated Uriah's much earlier aria is heard repeatedly. This ties all of Uriah's part together, and is a musical way of showing him to have come full circle (86, bottom). The line about David being a man loved by men may be an oblique reference to Jonathan, who is never mentioned in this work.

David's next aria (87, Reh. B) opens with slow harp arpeggios, in a broad time signature of 2/2 and with pronounced dissonance.

Oh Lord, I tried to do Your bidding with all the strength You allowed me. And though I have sinned, forgive me. I am only a man. Only a man.

In the opening measures a C major chord is heard in the bass, in the third inversion, against E major in the treble range—an interesting use of bitonality. David sings his opening line, 'A man, only a man' (picking up on Uriah's final words), on e', a note common to both chords in the accompaniment. As David concludes this phrase, the theme of his first words in the opera is heard

5. This is the sound on the recording. In the score, however, the D-flat in the bass is not changed to D-natural, and this would create an intrusive dissonance, sounding B-flat minor and B-flat major simultaneously. This harmonic pull between relief and tension definitely does not stand for the 'rest' indicated in the text, but there is no way of knowing which ending the composer intended, since Professor Laderman did not respond to repeated requests to resolve this issue.

faintly in the wind section (m.4 after Reh. B). This is the theme to 'Fourteen marble steps up to the palace roof' which was then heard in B-flat major. The same melody is now heard, briefly, in C major, after which brief phrases from that early aria are woven into the accompaniment. Then David himself prays for forgiveness.

The repetition of the last words is sung *pp* and ends on a tonic G-minor chord. This is immediately followed by rapid 16th-note figures leading to a much faster and more agitated section, marked by the complex rhythm of two 8th notes sung against triplets in the orchestra. The music becomes increasingly more strident and dramatic as David lists his accomplishments to God, claiming they were all for his people and for God (88, Reh. C):

I smote the Jebusite, the Philistine, the Moabite for You...I brought the sacred Tabernacle out of the wilderness...and I fought and clawed and planned and built a great golden city for the Lord, Jerusalem.

The opening phrase is sung *a cappella* in a rhythm that imitates speech, although it is sung on heavily accented notes (88, 3rd-4th staves). The next phrase is similar in sound but the orchestra doubles the vocal line. The voice softens when David sings of bringing the sacred Tabernacle, and the music is briefly more lyrical. But David repeats the phrase twice, and the repetition is sung *fff* and very *marcato*. The mood changes again, and trumpets play suggestively as David sings jagged phrases describing his struggles, until he reaches the final climactic phrase, about building Jerusalem.

This section is much slower and marked *Maestoso* (majestic). The phrase is repeated twice, *ff* and very heavily *marcato*. It is sung on a single note, *d'*, repeated several times while the orchestra beneath the voice descends in thirds (89, Reh. E). Both times the final word Lord is sung on a sustained *d'*, with an intrusive C# in the bass, an unsettled dissonance (89, m. 1 after Reh. E). On the repetition, the chord modulates to G major and then G minor, and this chord is held while the music suddenly becomes calm and *legato*, as if David had spent himself in this frenzy. The next section opens in D major against the G-minor chord. David sings more lyrically now (90, top):

All this I did, oh Lord, with Your strength, with Your wisdom, with Your blessing. Now I can do no more, forgive me oh Lord, let me rest.

The opening phrases start progressively higher in pitch, while 'Now I can do no more' is sung on descending notes and repeated on a lower pitch a second time. The final word 'rest' starts on a D flat within a B-flat minor chord, but the voice and the treble part of the accompaniment both slide up a half-step to a D. Bells are heard, suggesting a 'heavenly' sound, as the chord resolves into B-flat major.⁶

6. In the score, the D flat remains in the bass, creating the same dissonance just heard on 'Lord' in the previous section. These conclusions ring in the ear as a disturbing lack

Uriah sings immediately after David (90, Reh. F), asking God for forgiveness both for David and for himself. In calm and relatively tuneful music, he sings:

Let him rest...For now he is old and tired, and all his vows have been kept, and all his sins have been paid for, and all his tears have been wept. Give him peace, oh Lord, let him rest in the bosom of the Lord.

The opening measures recall the conclusion of Britten's *War Requiem* 'Let us sleep now' with a similar goal: after the war, the many deaths, the suffering, it is time to forgive and rest. It is a powerful though subtle allusion.

Bathsheba continues in the same vein. In this section, both she and Uriah use biblical language and imagery that has not appeared before (91, Reh. G):

Send seven golden angels, in seven golden chariots, with seven golden trumpets to blow. Send the seraphim and the cherubim to greet them as they go.

This section ends on an A-major chord. The number seven is a clear biblical reference, as are words like 'chariots', 'seraphim', and 'cherubim'. Uriah continues:

Gather Isaac and Joshua and Moses and Abraham, and all the great host of the blessed, let them take him in their mighty arms and bear him to his rest.

The music throughout this section becomes increasingly stately. The final chord is a tonic A major in the first inversion, which was just heard in the conclusion of Bathsheba's section. The ear expects the chord to resolve into a D major tonality. Instead there is a recapitulation of Bathsheba's much earlier repetition of David's name, starting on an unexpected C in an uncertain tonality. The melody recalls Bathsheba's call of longing to David, when he had not yet spotted her bathing (12), but with slight modifications in the intervals, and a buildup to much higher pitches. Most significantly, Uriah sings homophonically with Bathsheba here, a minor third (plus an octave) below her melody. So the call of longing, which set off the chain of events leading to this moment, has been transformed into a song of praise (93, Reh. H; this section and the next were not included in the televised production):

For he is David, David, a golden King among men, and never in all of Israel shall there be his like again.

The next section includes two measures each for Uriah, Bathsheba, then David, singing similar *ad lib*. groups of melismatic 16th-notes, without a time signature or clear tonality. In David's line, which is the longest, the groups are highly chromatic. The impression would be of a kind of wail, an unstructured

of resolution, if indeed that is how the composer intended them. But since the composer did not respond to my question, his intention will remain unknown.

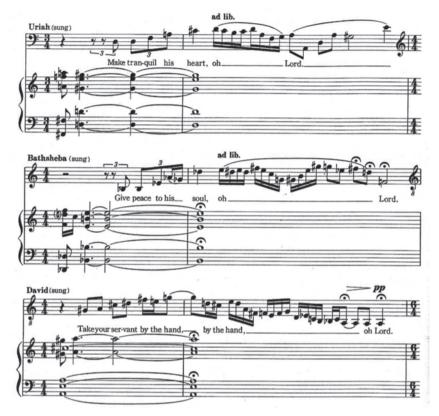


Figure 43. Laderman: Finale.

outpouring of emotion, as well as a liturgical chant-sound. It is unfortunate that this was not included in the original production; it would have been interesting to hear how the singers interpreted these lines (Fig. 43).

The final trio (95, top) starts in unison, but in the second measure the voices split, with David's and Bathsheba's in homophonic thirds but Uriah's in dissonance with theirs. For example, in the second measure, Bathsheba sings a' with David's f', while Uriah sings e, and the orchestra beneath them goes from B flat to D. The section is less melodic than what came just before or after it. This pattern continues for several measures:

Now let him rest forever, here in the city of David, here in the earth You gave him, here in the bosom of the Lord.

The next 'Let him rest' section (95, Reh. I) opens with David and Uriah singing in unison, later joined by Bathsheba, still in unison. This pattern is interrupted for a few measures (97, Reh. J), and the final page is once again all unison. In measures marked ff, punctuated by marcato chords and time signatures that change in every measure, they repeat the text (98). The

orchestration is bombastic, with drums, brass, and harp all joining the high and ff vocal parts.

The final 'Oh Lord' is sustained for several beats on an F# which shifts momentarily to F over a D-minor chord, but the voices slide back to F# marked fff and sustained. The harp plays a triumphant final rising arpeggio before the voices and orchestra abruptly break off. This upbeat dramatic ending is tonic and major, suggesting a positive outcome to the story. Musically it is clear that the forgiveness has been granted. That would seem to be the point of the opera.

We may not agree with this opera's portrayals of a young and romantic David or a lusty and vulgar Bathsheba, but they must have truly come alive on television. Uriah is particularly interesting because he has been ignored by so much post-biblical interpretation and midrash, yet here he is a man of flesh and blood. He is conflicted and angry, very real and believable emotions considering his story. This portrayal makes Uriah's willingness to forgive at the end even more dramatic.

The final scenes are infused with God and biblical language, and have a different tone than the rest of the opera. This would be expected from an oratorio, especially of an earlier era. But here it seems artificially pasted on to what is essentially a modern re-telling of the story, almost as though the composer and librettist suddenly felt they had to justify the term 'sacred' for this work. They may have been assuring that no viewers would be offended, or following the dictates of their sponsor, CBS television.

Conclusion

The only element common to all these works is the expression of David's repentance through exceptionally moving music. This is the primary focus for the two nineteenth-century oratorios, neither of which even mention Bathsheba's name. Though Honegger's twentieth-century oratorio does mention Bathsheba—in fact, both she and David are blamed for his sin—the focus there is also largely on repentance. The repentance is expressed, in the biblical story, after Nathan has told his parable. The parable is included in all the oratorios, though only briefly in two of them, and also in Milhaud's opera.

The two twentieth-century operas, though also underlining the importance of David's repentance, create three-dimensional characters in believable interactions. But apart from that, there are enormous differences between the two works. David and Bathsheba look back with some regret at their encounter as they watch their baby die, in Milhaud's opera. No blame is assigned to either David or Bathsheba in this libretto. Laderman, on the other hand, has created a bawdy and scheming Bathsheba that could have been dreamed up by any one of the sexist and biased commentators discussed

earlier in this chapter. The David-Bathsheba 'love story' as imagined in this short opera is more cinematic by far than biblical. Even the portrayal of an unhappy marriage between Uriah and Bathsheba was suggested in the earlier film version. But in its favour, this work explores Uriah's conflicted feelings in a compelling way, an element found uniquely here.

These two operas re-tell the story in vastly different ways. Even if neither interpretation matches the listener's own notions, there is great satisfaction in seeing the participants in this biblical narrative brought so vividly and imaginatively to life.

Chapter 10

DAVID'S LATER STORY: TAMAR, ABSALOM, AND THE DEATH OF DAVID

Summary of 2 Samuel 13–19 and 1 Kings 1–2

13 An unspecified amount of time later [after the Bathsheba incident], David's son Amnon becomes infatuated with Tamar, sister of Absalom, his step-brother. He is so sick with love that he asks his friend Jonadab for advice. Jonadab suggests Amnon pretend to be sick, and then ask for Tamar to come and prepare him some nourishing food. David comes to see his sick son, hears his request, and forwards it to Tamar in the palace. She does as she is told, comes and bakes little cakes for Amnon. He sends all his servants out and tells her to come closer. Then he grabs her and tells her to lie with him. She pleads and suggests he speak to David, who will not refuse her to Amnon. But he doesn't listen; he overpowers and rapes her. Afterwards he hates her and throws her out. She goes to Absalom, who understands what happened and tells her to stay in his house and not to brood about it. David is upset when he finds out, but does nothing. Absalom nourishes great hatred for Amnon.

Two years later, Absalom is holding a big sheep-shearing festival and asks David to come, along with his whole retinue. David refuses, saying it would be too much of a burden. So Absalom suggests at least Amnon and all the other princes (brothers) be allowed to come. David first refuses, but gives in at Absalom's urging. Then Absalom instructs his servants to strike Amnon dead when he gets drunk, which they do. The other princes flee. A rumour reaches David that all the princes were killed, and he is beginning to mourn, when Jonadab tells him it is only Amnon, whom Absalom had decided to kill after Tamar was violated. Absalom flees and David pines for him longer than he mourns for Amnon—three years.

14 Joab sees that David is pining for Absalom, so he brings a wise woman from Tekoa to make up a story for David. She tells David that she had two sons, one of whom killed the other, and now her clan wants the guilty one brought back from banishment and killed. She wants the son back, but with a guarantee he won't be harmed. David reassures her that he can do this, and then she tells him he should do it for his own son too. When he realizes she

made up the story to get him to agree to bring Absalom back, he asks her if Joab was behind the scheme, and she admits he was. David tells Joab to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem, and Joab prostrates himself and thanks him. Absalom is next described as very beautiful, unblemished, and with an astounding head of hair.

Two years pass and Joab does not send for Absalom to go before the king. Absalom sends for Joab twice and gets no response. Angered, he sets Joab's field on fire to get his attention—which he does. Absalom is summoned before the king, prostrates himself, and the king kisses him.

15 Absalom starts juggling for power, standing at the city gates and telling passing Israelites what he would do if he were judge, and winning their hearts. After a few years of this, he asks David permission to go to Hebron, to fulfil a vow he made. He gets permission. But once there, he starts a conspiracy to become king of Hebron. David gets word of this, and (for some reason) feels threatened and orders everyone to leave the city. He only leaves behind ten concubines, to mind the palace. People in the countryside weep as the troops march by. The Levites come bearing the Ark, but David orders them to take it back to Jerusalem, because he expects to be back and in God's favour. David and the troops weep as they climb the Mt. of Olives. His friend Hushai appears, and David asks him to return to Jerusalem and be his spy.

16 David encounters the servant of Mephibosheth, who brings him supplies. He also tells the king that Mephibosheth remained in Jerusalem, thinking he will now regain the throne of his grandfather Saul. Just then a member of Saul's clan, Shimei, starts shouting insults to David and throwing stones. David's men want to kill him, but he says God is behind it, and one day God will make it up to him.

Absalom enters Jerusalem with his counsellor Ahitopel (who used to serve as David's advisor). Hushai convinces Absalom that he has switched sides. Absalom asks for Ahitopel's advice, and he tells Absalom to sleep with David's concubines in the sight of all Israel; this will encourage his supporters. They pitch a tent for Absalom right on the roof, and in full sight of all the people, he goes into the concubines. (It would seem that hair was not the only thing he had in abundance).

17 Absalom asks for strategic advice from both Ahitopel and Hushai, and God causes Ahitopel's sound advice to be ignored. Hushai relays the advice through two spies, who are spotted by one of Absalom's supporters, but are then hidden in a well and not found by Absalom's men who come out to search (this story has strong echoes of the Rahab story in Joshua). The spies reach David and he and his men all cross the Jordan. When Ahitopel realizes his advice is no longer being followed, he goes home and hangs himself. Absalom is in hot pursuit of David as the chapter ends.

18 David musters tens of thousands of troops. He is dissuaded from joining the battle because he is considered too valuable. He asks the troop

leaders to deal gently with Absalom, for his sake. Absalom's troops are routed by David's, the battle taking place in the forest of Ephraim and beyond. Absalom is riding a mule, and as he passes under a great terebinth, his hair is caught and the mule keeps going. Suspended this way, he is an easy target. Joab asks the men who report seeing Absalom why they didn't kill him, and they say they all heard the king's order and would never disobey. Joab drives three darts into Absalom's chest, after which ten of his young armsbearers finish him off. Then Joab sounds the horn to give up the pursuit. They throw Absalom into a large pit in the forest and pile stones over it. Joab chooses which man should bring the tidings to David. David is waiting between the two gates, using cognitive dissonance when he spots the runners approaching. He tries to convince himself that Absalom is safe.

19 When David finds out the truth, he goes to the upper chamber of the gate and moans 'My son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you!' Joab finds out about David's reaction, and realizes the victory has been turned into a day of mourning. So he confronts David, telling him he has humiliated all his followers, that he loves those that hate him and hates those that love him. If David does not come out and greet the people, Joab warns him that not a single man will remain his supporter. David listens to his advice and goes to the gate, where the troops all present themselves.

Much political maneuvering follows, with supporters of Absalom trying to save face (like Shimei and Mephibosheth) and Judah and Israel arguing over whose king David is.

1 Kings 1 King David is old and always cold, so his courtiers find a young virgin to keep him warm. Abishag the Shunammite, a very beautiful virgin, waits on him but they do not have sex. Meanwhile another son, Adonijah, starts angling for the crown and boasting that he will be the next king. Nathan gets wind of this and tells Bathsheba to go straight to David and remind him of his promise to her that Solomon would succeed him. Nathan says he will follow Bathsheba into David's room and confirm what she says (5-14).

Bathsheba follows his instructions. When she is still talking, Nathan is announced and he enters. He repeats what Bathsheba has just told David, in a more expansive version. David's response is to have Bathsheba summoned (the text never mentions that she left). David says he will fulfill the oath he swore to Bathsheba to make Solomon king (such an oath was never recorded in earlier text). Then David orders Nathan, along with Zadok and Benaiah, to be summoned (the text doesn't mention Nathan's departure; it would seem only one person at a time can enter). He orders Solomon taken out on David's mule and publicly anointed king.

They follow his instructions, and after the horn is sounded, there is great merrymaking. Adonijah and his guests hear the uproar and one of their men runs in and tells them what has just happened. They are all worried and they scatter. Adonijah grasps the horns of the altar in the tent to protect himself. Solomon swears not to harm him, and sends him home.

2 David's dying words to Solomon start with a Deuteronomistic passage about following the ways of God. After this opening, he talks more like the godfather, giving instructions to Solomon about how to finish off David's enemies. At the end of the speech, he dies. Musical settings that have included the story to this point generally end here.

Adonijah now approaches Bathsheba with an odd request: to ask Solomon to let him have Abishag as his wife. Bathsheba passes on the request to Solomon, who predictably sees this as a request for the throne. He has Adonijah killed that day. Now Joab is also afraid, since he was on Adonijah's side. He too takes refuge by grasping the horns of the altar, but Solomon has him killed there, to avenge the innocent blood he had shed during David's reign. Next in line is Shimei, who had insulted David. He is allowed to live on condition he never cross a certain boundary (the Wadi Kidron). But when two of his slaves escape, he must cross the wadi to get them. When word reaches Solomon, he has Shimei killed. Now the kingdom is secure in Solomon's hands.

Commentary

Tamar

Many scholars have seen the story of David and Bathsheba's first encounter, the subject of the previous chapter, as a parallel story to that of Amnon and Tamar. The parallel theme is unlawful intercourse, and many have interpreted the story of Amnon's abuse of Tamar as David's retribution for his behaviour towards Bathsheba. The writer suggests the analogy right from the outset, showing Amnon lying in a sickbed in order to summon Tamar and rape her, not long after David has been shown getting up from his siesta bed to watch Bathsheba and then summon her to the palace, where he most likely takes her by force. Both prohibited sexual acts ultimately lead to murder and political disarray (Alter 1999: xxiii).

Similarities and differences between these two stories bring other issues to the fore. One similarity is the frequency of movement from one house to another, once again subtly hinting at the theme of 'knowing your place'. Another is the abuse of power by a male of the ruling class; however, David was the most powerful man of his time, where Amnon only thirsted for such power. David's act was initiated from a rooftop, symbolizing his position, whereas Amnon's was essentially started from a lying position, feigning illness in his bed. David chose a married woman, while Amnon foolishly chose his own sister, a virgin, which could bring neither of them any gain. David does not seem to have a plan, but acts impetuously, while

his son plots and schemes but in the end gains no advantage. Such contrasts can highlight some less obvious elements of each story. In comparison to David, (hardly a role model in any case), Amnon comes off looking weak, powerless, and not very clever. Yet a woman victimized by either kind of man is still a victim.

The story of the rape of Tamar can stand on its own as a novella, but is better understood in the context of the surrounding chapters. Family relations seem to be the author's primary interest in this story, as they are in much of the books of Samuel and Kings. The term 'sister' for Tamar, in reference to either Amnon or Absalom, occurs eight times in this story. The term 'brother' in reference to Amnon or Absalom occurs nine times. As Bar-Efrat points out, the author is 'presenting the actions of the characters in light of the family relationships between them, thereby expressing an implicit judgment: either these actions are appropriate to these family relationships or they are not' (Bar-Efrat 1984: 245). The frequent repetition of 'sister' and 'brother' also highlights that particular relationship. The word 'son' appears three times, but 'daughter' is not to be found. In a succession story, obviously only sons count. (The one exception is when Absalom later names his daughter Tamar, possibly in memory of his sister.)

One family member who never even makes an appearance throughout this story is Tamar's mother. Biblical mothers rarely have a role past childbearing. The modern reader would assume Maacah (assuming she is alive, for which there is no evidence) would have reprimanded Amnon, tried to comfort her daughter and to persuade David to punish the rapist. Yet Tamar apparently does not even live in her mother's house, since after the rape she goes to live with Absalom in his house.

Amnon and Absalom are both called David's sons in the text, but Tamar is never referred to as his daughter, possibly indicating this to be an insignificant relationship. Also, David is only called King David once in this chapter, when he hears of the rape. Elsewhere he is simply 'the king'. This might show a deliberate contrast between his roles as father and king. In relation to Tamar, however, neither role seems significant. David's feelings for Tamar are never discussed. She is the only one of his daughters that is named in the books of Samuel. But of their relationship, the reader is told nothing. In fact, the story never refers to David and Tamar as father and daughter. Trible sees in this a narrator's intent to show the father identifying with the son, the adulterer supporting the rapist (Trible 1984: 53). But it is also possible that narrative convention was to not mention father and daughter together.

The primary interest of the chronicler of David's rise and fall is David himself, as we have seen throughout this book. Ultimately every story in these narratives, including the rape of Tamar, revolves around his central and powerful figure. David's saga is filled with conflict between the public

and the private, the intermingling of sexuality and politics, and the role of power in both. But the public and private are not really separate spheres in these narratives. As Schwartz points out, 'politics *are* sexual, and sexuality is political' (Schwartz in Rosenblatt [ed.] 1991: 201). These elements are highlighted in this story. David's reaction, or lack thereof, to the news of Amnon's rape of Tamar has been read as a sign of conflict between his public and private worlds. Fokkelman believes that David's inaction shows that his rage is a mask of his powerlessness (Fokkelman 1981: 100). He was powerless because he did not want to punish his favourite, first-born son, the heir to the throne.

If David had either punished him or compelled him to marry Tamar, Absalom would not have needed to avenge his sister. Halpern posits that David believed Amnon's rape of Tamar was a fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy, and that Amnon was acting as Yhwh's agent. Therefore he could not punish him (Halpern 2001: 41, 358). Ultimately David's love for Amnon was far more important than the pain or hopeless situation of his daughter. In spite of David's lack of any reaction to the news of his daughter's rape, a male scholar as recently as 2000 inexplicably includes Tamar in a list of women in David's life (among them Bathsheba, Rizpah, and Abishag) who 'bring out his more human qualities' (McKenzie 2000: 46). Perhaps McKenzie meant to say his human weakness or failings.

One lesson of the stories of both Bathsheba and Tamar is that 'erotic attraction can cause men to abuse their superior position and strength'. At the same time, the Bible never explicitly discusses this dimension of sexuality, except in the *Song of Songs* (Frymer-Kensky 1992: 197, 275 n. 59). Yet the kind of abuse indulged in both by David and Amnon is not condoned, since both men are punished. And the rape of Tamar is described in such a way as to move the reader to feel repugnance towards Amnon. It is reasonable to assume the ancient reader of this text would have been similarly moved, and that therefore this was the author's intent. As one commentator succinctly puts it: 'Why else include the episode at all?' (Smith 1997: 130, 133).

The motives of biblical characters are generally left to the reader's imagination. That is certainly the case in this narrative. What compelled Amnon to do what he did? In what ways was his motivation linked to David and the succession? Trying to understand Amnon's motives involves a careful reading and separating out the strands of the narrator's viewpoint and Amnon's words. Sometimes the narrator confirms a character's words, while other times he actually adopts the character's viewpoint. Thus in the first verse of this narrative, the narrator informs the reader that Amnon loved Tamar. This is confirmed in Amnon's own words to Jonadab a few verses later.

It is never clear if the narrator really believes Amnon loved Tamar; based on his actions, it is hard to believe anyone who knew the outcome of that 'love' would have called it such. Love as portrayed in the Bible is a very positive emotion, never just physical lust. So possibly the narrator is reporting the 'love' with some irony. By combining direct discourse and narration, two points of view are presented, the narrator's and Amnon's. The reader can then decide which is the more accurate representation (Berlin 1994: 64-65).

The rabbis in the Talmud described Amnon's love as 'transient', comparing it unfavorably to David's love for Jonathan. The exact passage reads: 'Which is the love that depends on a transient thing? Such was the love of Amnon for Tamar; and which depends not on a transient thing? Such as was the love of David and Jonathan' (Babylonian Talmud, *Aboth* 5.16). But psychological portraits have limited validity, since the writer probably portrayed Amnon this way after the fact. In other words, since the writer knew the outcome of the story, he tried to portray the kind of person who could act in that way. In addition, rape is understood today as a crime of violence, not sex. Therefore the question of love does not enter into it. Some have seen the root of the incident in fraternal friction, which has its germ in the brothers' matrilineage (Halpern and Levenson 1980: 513-16).

Along these lines, it is possible that Amnon devised the whole scheme not out of love or even lust for Tamar, but merely as a way of getting to Absalom, whom he hated from birth. He would have understood that the dishonouring of a virgin daughter was the ultimate shame for a family, and that it was the brother's duty to avenge his sister's shame. Presumably as the first-born he felt immune from punishment by his father (and rightly so), who was also dishonoured. In any case, if the family structure was basically fratrilocal (as Tamar's going to live with Absalom would seem to indicate), then the primary injured party would be Absalom. In this thesis, Tamar is a mere pawn in a political battle, not an uncommon role for women in many eras. Many commentators have seen Absalom's motive for killing Amnon two years later as more political than personal. He was next in line to the throne and this fact certainly would have influenced his decision. Avenging Tamar may have been a factor but it was probably not the primary one.

When Tamar, a virgin daughter, is sexually assaulted and shamed, the result must be death for the one who destroyed her sexual purity, consonant with the values of an honour/shame society. Incest and rape are both symbols for the dishonouring of family members. Tamar is shamed by her loss of sexual purity; acts of shame and violence lead to the brothers' destruction. So honour and shame, bound up in these stories with friendship, marriage, family life, and war, are interrelated with the political (Stansell 1996: 74). Personal stories subsumed under political ones are a hallmark of the David narratives.

The shame of Tamar is an example of the double standard. The rapist Amnon shows no sense of shame at his act; yet Tamar, the victim, is depicted as feeling great shame. Since it is known today that raped women typically experience shame, this is a psychologically astute portrayal. It is also a way of 'passing the blame'. Why would Tamar be ashamed if she didn't feel in some way responsible for what was done to her? (Beal and Gunn 1997: 26). Like the theme of shame, where the wrong person feels shame, the theme of sin and punishment is also turned on its head in this story. Who is the sinner and who is punished? Tamar is the innocent pawn in a power struggle, yet she suffers the worst punishment, a living death. Both brothers meet a violent death, and this is supposed to be retribution, but the writer apparently did not perceive Tamar's hopeless future as a punishment, merely as a reality.

Another theme turned on its head here is that of deception. Commonly practiced by powerless women in the Bible with no other means at their disposal, deception is practiced here by the males, Amnon and Absalom. In their particular social setting they themselves were relatively powerless until they could supplant their father as king. Amnon's powerlessness is highlighted in the role reversal: Tamar is not the femme fatale luring men with food or wine, because the *man* is here using food to trap the *woman*, which functions not only to reinforce Amnon's evil nature but also his unworthiness. In Bach's words, 'he is no better than a scheming woman' (Bach 1997: 185).

Tamar speaks eight words for every one of Amnon's, an unusual discrepancy in biblical narratives. Yet her name never prefaces her speeches, only the pronoun 'she'. This contrasts with the speech of male characters, whose introduction includes their proper names. Trible suggests the narrator is hinting at Tamar's powerlessness with this device: without her name, Tamar lacks power (Trible 1984: 46). Since the narrator was part of the same world view, he is showing both Tamar's weakness and namelessness as a reality.

Absalom's motive for avenging the rape of his sister could have been his love for Tamar, but some suggest that since the elimination of Amnon moves Absalom closer to succession to the throne, this motivation for the murder of Amnon cannot be discounted (Fewell and Gunn 1992: 145). But as Bar-Efrat points out, both the narrator and Jonadab state that the motive for the murder was 'because he had forced his sister Tamar', leading to the logical conclusion that the motive was not Absalom's political ambitions (Bar-Efrat 1997: 274)—or at least, that the writer did not want us to think it was.

Tamar's special garment is referred to as the kind worn by 'virgin princesses'. Most biblical references to 'daughter of the king' are simply part of an identification. But the reference to Tamar as a 'maiden/virgin princess' ('for maiden princesses were customarily dressed in such garments', 13:18) is found nowhere else. Daughters are so seldom mentioned, especially in genealogy lists, that the mere existence of the above references is significant. However, an important clue to the attitudes towards 'daughters of the king'

may be found in a reference to Jezebel. After she has been unceremoniously thrown from the window and trampled to death by horses, Jehu then orders her to be buried, for 'she was a king's daughter' בת מלך היא, 2 Kgs 9.34). If even a heathen woman who was considered evil deserved a proper burial simply because she was a king's daughter, this implies these daughters were held in very high esteem, even if this was due only to their proximity to power. It might also be due to their importance as pawns in a power struggle.

Absalom names his daughter Tamar, and of his four offspring, she is the only one whose name is given. Since the other three children are sons, this is completely against patriarchal practice. Alter asserts that this Tamar was surely born long before the rape of her aunt, because she is named here as a beautiful *woman* (14.27) and it is unlikely that so many years would have passed (Alter 1999: 281). Trible sees this as the narrator's attempt to not let desolation be the final word for the story of Tamar (Trible 1984: 55).

Another possible—and intriguing—explanation for some of these anomalies is that the Tamar in this story was Absalom's daughter rather than his sister. Reading the story with this 'what if...' question, as Sasson does (Sasson 2001), resolves several puzzling issues. First, Sasson points to the introduction of Tamar as Absalom's only daughter (2 Sam. 14.27: אחת). This formula typically introduces women who are featured in a subsequent narrative, or who are credited with a given number of children. But Tamar has no story attached to her; she is only described as beautiful. The vocabulary of 2 Sam. 13.1 is almost identical, except there the story of the rape follows immediately. This anomalous reference to Tamar could therefore be considered vestigial, a remnant from an earlier, fuller exposition (Sasson 2001: 186-87).

It is true, as mentioned previously, that the words 'brother' and 'sister' are invoked almost 20 times in the narrative; Sasson considers several of these to be gratuitous. He computes the possible ages of Amnon and Absalom at the time of the rape and concludes that they were no longer very young. He proposes that it is difficult to imagine Amnon's violent passion for an unmarried woman he has known most of his life. In the story, Amnon seems taken by the 'freshness, youth and inviolability of Princess Tamar' (Sasson 2001: 190).

This rendering of the story also resolves the question of Tamar's telling Amnon that David would not deny her to him. Sasson firmly states that nothing in either Hebrew or Canaanite culture ever allowed marriage between a brother and sister. Hebrew law is strictly opposed to it (Sasson 2001: 189). Tamar's assurance to Amnon may have only been a stalling tactic, but some commentators have insisted that such a marriage was possible. It would have been so only if she was Amnon's niece, as in Sasson's scenario.

Another linguistic problem is resolved by Sasson's reading. In verse 12, Tamar begs Amnon not to do this 'vile thing' (נבלה), which many

commentators have read as a reference to incest. Yet the noun is found in several other places (i.e., Deut. 22.21; Josh. 7.15; Judg. 19.23-24; 20.6, 10) and always refers to sexual sin. Tamar was not talking about incest because sex with her uncle would not have fit this category.

Amnon is depicted as crazed and obsessed, not in love; and his irrational hatred of Tamar after the rape is borne out by modern studies which conclude that rape is rarely a sexually enjoyable experience, even for the rapist, and that the response to this disappointment is anger and even disgust (Ashkenasy 1998: 164 n. 21). This shows a surprising level of awareness of the psychology of rape. Amnon's hatred for Tamar after the rape is underlined by the writer's use of ten words (in Hebrew) used for the subject of hatred against only three for the emotion of love (Bar-Efrat 1997: 266).

Yet at the beginning of the story, Amnon as described by the writer does not elicit negative feelings. A reversal in the reader's attitude happens only gradually, ending in feelings of disgust. It has been suggested that the main objective of the narrative is to depict Amnon as a 'thoroughly bad character' and in this way also create more sympathy for Absalom. The ability to elicit gradual change even in such a short narrative is an example of the biblical writer's abilities. The handling of the time element in this narrative seems designed to disparage Amnon, because the rape scene is the longest part of the story (Amit 2001: 130-31).

Several elements unique to this chapter are not found as abundantly in other biblical narratives. There is rapid and frequent change of scene throughout, enabling the reader to visualize the action as it unfolds. Most striking is the abundance of dialogue, absent from so many other biblical narratives. Another unusual quality of this narrative is the high concentration of direct information offered by the narrator, who is omniscient enough to relate the internal states of the characters.

The reader is able to interpret the behaviour of the different characters based on the knowledge transmitted about their motives and feelings. For this writer, emotions are considered as important as external behaviour. Other biblical narratives also show an interest in the inner lives of characters, but the underlining of emotions in this one is unique. Though omniscient, the narrator is not conspicuous; in fact, most of the narrative is composed of scenes, and roughly 40% of dialogue. So the narrative technique reinforces the dramatic content of the narrative, which draws in the reader (Bar-Efrat 1997: 276-77).

The action of this drama moves from one 'house' to another, which was probably very clear to the reader of that day but is much less so for today's reader. For example, it is never clear if Tamar lives in David's palace while each of her brothers has his own house, and the distance between houses is unclear to the modern reader. When Tamar goes to live under Absalom's protection after the rape, it seems that she has not been living there prior to

this time, but this is not spelled out. David's wives presumably lived in the palace with him. How much—if any—interchange existed between David's wives and their daughters was of no interest to the biblical writer, who did not even explore David's own relationship with his daughter(s).

There are interesting parallels between this narrative and *Song of Songs*. First is the frequent use of 'my sister' in an amorous context, and also use of the term 'sick with love' by Amnon. In *Song of Songs* 2.5 and 5.8, the expression 'faint with love' (חולת אהבה) appears, with the Hebrew root for 'sick' (חלה). This root when in the reflexive can mean several things: 'to become sick', 'to make oneself sick', or 'to pretend to be sick'. It is found three times in the opening verses of the narrative: when Amnon says he is sick from his love for Tamar, when Jonadab tells him to 'pretend' to be sick, and when he actually pretends in front of his father. Either Amnon was really sick all three times, or was faking it all along. The verb shifts in meaning throughout and any translation is part interpretation (always true, but especially so when dealing with verbs like this).

The Bible does not condemn rape victims. If a girl cries out when attacked, she is considered innocent. Why was Tamar silent, both during and after the rape? During the rape, which took place in a palace, we could assume there was help nearby. A medieval Christian commentator, Denis the Carthusian (1402–71), suggests she may have been trying to save her brother Amnon, to spare him a death sentence. She surely struggled against him vigorously, which could explain why his love turned to hatred (Thompson 2006: 206).

Since Tamar only cried out afterwards, would she still have been considered a rape victim? We are never told if she is, but assume not. She is also betrayed by Absalom, who tells her to be quiet for the good of the family. No one looks at her as a person. For Amnon, she is an object of lust and then hate; for Absalom, a crisis to be contained. Tamar's own feelings never enter into their consciousness or plans (Frymer-Kensky 2002: 166-67). Yet the writer creates sympathy for her, gives her extensive text and clearly empathizes with her. It is fair to claim that he was just describing the brothers in a negative but realistic way.

Bach suggests that Tamar's 'He won't keep me from you' rather than being only a desperate tactic, might reveal feelings for Amnon on her part. Perhaps, in this scenario, her grief and shame were made worse when she realized that Amnon would never marry her (Bach 1997: 151). This is a plausible suggestion not contradicted by the text, and adds interest to both the story and to the character of Tamar. It is also suggested subtly by the composer Josef Tal whom I discuss in this chapter.

When Amnon sends Tamar away, he tells his servants 'kindly send this one away', showing more politeness in addressing the servants than towards the woman he once 'loved' and has just raped. Understanding language usage is certainly crucial to grasping the intent of a passage. For example,

some have noted a similarity in the terms used for Tamar's mourning—putting dust (or ashes) on her head, tearing her sleeves, placing her hands on her head—and those customarily used for widows (Schwartz in Rosenblatt 1991: 105). It is reasonable to assume Tamar would take on these customs, since she was in a sense mourning for the husband (and children) she would never have.

Rabbis writing in the Talmud, apparently unsettled by Amnon's change of heart, suggested that Amnon was wounded in the struggle. R. Isaac's farfetched explanation is that Amnon became entangled in Tamar's hair, and this mutilated his private parts (Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 21a). The rabbi was clearly influenced by the story of Absalom's death, which occurs when his long hair becomes tangled in the branches of a tree. But the notion of a woman's pubic hair *mutilating* a penis can only come from a man with very limited sexual experience, if any, and a misogynist fear of women. This is an egregious case of men defending one another in spite of glaring evidence of wrongdoing.

The story displays a certain amount of compassion and even respect towards the female victim, and also allows the woman to speak and reveal her personality. Trible points out that the description of Tamar as a 'desolate' sister (13.20) in the house of her brother Absalom, uses a word that elsewhere connotes destruction by an enemy or being torn to pieces by an animal (Lam. 1.16 'my children are forlorn'; 3.11) (Trible 1984: 52).

Feminist analyses have shown that rape and sexual violence, including incest, are inherent to patriarchal societies, often reflecting a logical consequence of the dominant power structure. The rape is a logical consequence of the current power relationships, the united cooperation of Jonadab, David and Amnon. Even Absalom forces Tamar to keep silent. Yet the reader is inclined to blame only Amnon and to feel some sympathy for the other men.

Stories involving sex and violence in the world of the Bible provided an assessment of the political status of the households to which they belonged. Amnon's use of sexual violence was a bid to control David's household. As a virgin and marriageable woman, Tamar represented the potential for growth of her father's and brother's households. Amnon may have raped Tamar in hopes that his actions would assure him the right of becoming monarch. He may have been challenging David by raping Tamar, but of course this is only hypothetical.

A confluence of allusions to the Joseph story contributes thematic depth to this story. The tale begins with reference to Joseph's reconciliation scene and moves backwards to the ornamental tunic, worn uniquely by Joseph and Tamar. The allusions are found in language parallels between the two stories. Amnon gives the order to 'take everyone out from before me' (v. 9), using the identical words that Joseph uses (Gen. 45.1) when he clears the vice-regal chamber before telling his brothers who he is. In that story, the

same words were a 'preface to a great moment of fraternal reconciliation' while now they are a 'prologue to a sexual violation of the fraternal bond' (Alter 1992: 114-15), creating a clear irony.

The parallels continue with the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39.7-18). Alter notes that the dialogue in the story of Amnon and Tamar seems to be a conscious allusion to the technique used in the episode of Joseph and Potiphar's wife. Both Amnon and Potiphar's wife accost the object of their lust with the same words: 'Lie with me', with the significant addition of the words 'my sister' (Alter 1981: 73). Both Tamar and Joseph protest vehemently and at length. However, it should be noted that initially Amnon tries to persuade Tamar to submit voluntarily, even though he is holding her as he asks. He begins by starting gently, not with only the blunt phrase 'Lie with me' as in the Joseph story. The rape highlights the primary difference, in that Potiphar's wife is not strong enough to force Joseph to lie with her, while Amnon's strength is underlined in v. 14 by the use of three different verbs: 'he was stronger than she, and ravished her, and lay with her'.

The DOTAL CORLING CORLING THE 'coat of many colours' is worn only by these two characters in the entire Tanakh. This doesn't mean no one else wore such a coat, but there could be significance in the fact that it is only worthy of mention in these two instances. There are other interesting parallels in the fate of these garments, since in both stories they are torn and bloodied. In Joseph's story, the garment is torn and bloodied to prove to Jacob that his son was killed by wild beasts. In Tamar's, she herself tears the garment in a gesture of mourning (and one might assume some blood on the garment as a result of the rape). Jennings points out that this garment is worn by figures who are both described as particularly beautiful, and who are assaulted by their brothers (Jennings 2005: 180).

One commentator has suggested this garment may be a kind of sacred robe. There was a long tradition of a king appointing a daughter as a high priestess in Judah-Israel. David might have conceivably instituted an Israelite version of this custom when he established his dynasty. This could explain why David sent Tamar as an intermediary between a sick member of the royal family and Yhwh. She may have been performing a purification rite of some kind for Amnon, and for this reason went to him attired in her sacred garment (Bledstein in Brenner [ed.] 2000: 78). This theory is not entirely implausible, and adds an interesting twist to Tamar's story.

Potiphar's wife rips a piece of Joseph's coat (no longer the DOTED) to hold as evidence of his 'attack', another use of this theme. The special robe seems to be a symbol of an exalted position, but it does not protect either of its wearers. The supposedly dominant and more powerful character in one story, Potiphar's wife, loses in the end, as does Amnon—but after achieving at least his immediate aim. Yet their victims' fates couldn't be more different: Tamar is disgraced, while Joseph, after some time in jail,

rises to the heights of power. Many feminist scholars have cited this as further confirmation and reinforcement of the patriarchal order.

Another parallel theme is how guilt breeds hate. Amnon hates Tamar after raping her, while Potiphar's wife turns against Joseph when he spurns her advances. Both are psychologically feasible reactions. Potiphar's wife is easier to understand, as hers would seem a logical response to being rebuffed and humiliated. Amnon's hatred has been explained in psychological terms but still leaves the reader puzzled (Sternberg 1987: 532 n. 8).

This is a story about power: who has it, who does not, and who wants it. Power was not necessarily a corollary of a title, for the story makes clear that even a prince had to struggle for it. This is also a story of how women were used as pawns in the power struggles of men. Ultimately Tamar's story is only a footnote in the larger story of King David's reign and the struggle for the succession. Tamar was a pawn, a means to an end. Though she is portrayed sympathetically, and the men involved with her are ultimately punished, no one is punished with the same living death. This is a modern reading, of course, and the writer's attitude towards Tamar remains a mystery. But the writer depicted the society he knew, and women in that society were merely objects. As such, they could either help or hinder men in their constant struggle to gain power over one another. Though a princess is at the heart of this story, it remains a story of power and princes.

Bathsheba

Bathsheba seems to switch roles in 1 Kings 1–2, when trying to secure the throne for her son Solomon. She finally has the power of speech here; yet some commentators believe she possesses no more authority than she did earlier when she was merely the object of David's desire. She depends on Nathan, the prophet, to authorize her son as David's successor. She has simply been exchanged from one male to another. Transformed from sexual object to Queen Mother, in her final scene she is heard and not seen. She is a stronger and more active character than she was in her first appearance; yet the image of Bathsheba bathing is the one most strongly associated with this character, possibly due to the long painterly tradition of depicting this scene and not later ones featuring Bathsheba as queen mother.

Abishag

Some commentators have suggested a Canaanite subtext to the biblical story. Summoning a virgin to heat the great king in such a matter-of-fact manner seems to echo pagan habits. In that culture, however, service as a temple prostitute or even ritual sacrifice would have been the fate of the non-Jewish counterpart of Abishag. By in a sense re-writing the Canaanite practice, the biblical writer 'evades the pathos of Abishag's status' (Baumgarten in Hirsch and Aschkenasy [eds.] 1984: 137; he unfortunately offers no citations).

The meaning of the term used for Abishag, DCL, is not certain. The verbal stem from which this noun comes means 'to be of use or service, benefit' (BDB, 698), hence the common translation of 'attendant' (JPS). There is only one other occurrence of the word in the Bible (Isa. 22.15) where it seems to stand for a male court official and is translated 'steward' in JPS.

Some commentators believe that the point of bringing Abishag to David was to test his virility. When the servants discovered that he did not have sex with her, and was therefore impotent, they realized it was time for him to go (McKenzie 2000: 177). This is also proposed by Camp, who notes that the abrupt shift from David's impotence to Adonijah's self-elevation to the throne suggests that Abishag had been brought to David to test his virility and thus suitability to the throne (Camp 1992: 99). Whether or not this is the case, Abishag is not given a voice, so her personality and responses to the situation remain unknown.

The only libretto to include Abishag as a character is Milhaud's monumental opera. An earlier work includes an aria for the Shulamite, which presumably was meant to be Abishag.

The Music

Very few musical settings include this later part of David's story. Tamar's story (chap. 13) is only occasionally alluded to in librettos: in one nineteenth-century and one twentieth-century oratorio (Macfarren, Honegger) and one opera (Milhaud). One twentieth-century chamber opera is based entirely on the narrative, Josef Tal's *Amnon and Tamar*. Macfarren's oratorio uniquely includes a scene with the widow of Tekoa (chap. 14). The first part of this chapter will include chaps. 13–14. The second part will cover the remainder of chapters from 2 Samuel and from 1 Kings 1–2.

One twentieth-century oratorio (Honegger) includes verses from most of these chapters, and Milhaud's opera expands on many of them. Several of these works include a moving setting of David's lament for Absalom, such as Reissiger, who also includes a David-Solomon scene. The lament for Absalom is one of only two texts from the books of Samuel that has been set to music as a concert piece; the other is the text of David's elegy over Saul and Jonathan (see Appendix 2).

CHAPTERS 13-14

Nineteenth-Century Works

Macfarren includes narration based on 2 Sam. 13.22, 28, 37, and 14.1-2, selectively leaving out crucial verses. For example, the narration opens with the line 'Absalom hated his brother Amnon' but completely skips the Tamar-Amnon episode that led to this hatred. In Macfarren's version, the

wise woman of Tekoa approaches David without instructions from Joab. It is interesting that he makes this woman more independent, but it is not true to the original narrative. None of the political infighting so central to the narrative is included in this libretto. [No musical figures will be shown since this score can be accessed at an online archive: http://www.archive.org/details/kingdavidoratori00macf.]

The narrator (contralto) relates the events in unaccompanied recitative (No. 15), with quick dramatic passages in the orchestra between her measures. When she relates that Amnon was slain, her voice drops to *b flat* (128, top). She sings 'he mourned' several times on descending seconds, a slur echoed in the oboes the first time, a plangent sound (128, 2nd staff). In addition to the slurs, the contralto sings a descending seventh, *b flat'-c'*, followed by another, *g'-a*, very low in her range. Macfarren has again altered the sense of the text, because the line 'David mourned for his son many days' refers to *Absalom* and not to Amnon in the Bible. The fact that David mourned more for the living son who killed his brother, than for the dead son, was presumably too unpalatable for Macfarren or the audience of his day. David is depicted as longing for Absalom in several very expressive measures that end in the lowest contralto range, on *g* (129, bottom).

When the narrator describes the wise woman putting on mourning apparel, a very striking dissonance appears in the orchestra, repeated three times: a pleading little descending phrase, a diminished seventh b flat"-c#" in the violins, marked with a slur, is heard together with a held a'. This is a poignant interval, but a sharp dissonance is created by the sustained a' under it. This same exact pattern is repeated two more times, each in a higher key: c'''-d#', against a held b'; and d'''-e#", against a held c#". The dissonance might sound almost mocking, or it could increase the pathos. It is difficult to tell the composer's intentions, but it is an unusual musical moment.

A lengthy duet between David and the 'Widow of Tekoa' (No. 16), usually called the 'wise woman of Tekoa', follows. This is the only musical work I have found that includes this scene. The verses included (from 2 Sam. 14) are 4-7, 10-14, 17, and 19-22.

The duet opens in D major, with the orchestra playing excited groups of 32nd and 16th notes. The widow enters on the third measure, singing 'Help' on d'' sustained for four beats (132, 2nd staff). David immediately responds, 'Woman, what faileth thee?' When the widow responds, she is told to sing singhiozzando, 'choking', and to create this effect she sings short 8th-notes off the beat: 'I am indeed a widow...and...had two sons', the final word sung on f#'' (133, 2nd staff).

The same halting rhythm continues as she relays her story. An effect of breathlessness is created with the broken rhythm. A critic of the time felt that it suggested 'the suppliant's simulated grief and agitation' (*Atheneum*, November 24, 1883), but it is hard to distinguish real from simulated

emotion in music. When the widow quotes the family that has risen against her, 'Deliver him that slew his brother', the key abruptly shifts to F major and the sung notes are on the beat, differentiating these passages (134, 3rd staff). The key modulates continually while she is relaying their speech, ending in A major as she sustains an a'' on the last word (135, 2nd staff).

David's response is sung as a recitative, to steadier and more *legato* music (135, Reh. A). The widow's next section contrasts greatly with this, as it is a lyrical outburst accompanied by Mendelssohnian 16th-note groups (136, 2nd staff). Near the end of this section, the widow sings of 'the revengers of blood' and the last two words are sung on an augmented seventh leap (d'-c#''), a dramatic sound in the context of this placid solo (137, top). David responds in the same vein (137, m. 3).

The widow continues in a faster section with the same continual rolling 16th-note accompaniment. When the widow finally mentions David's banished son, after she sings 'his banished' in C major, David repeats 'My banished' starting in A minor and moving quickly through G7, all in the space of four beats (139, bottom). These many tonal changes suggest emotional turbulence.

The concluding section features the two voices together singing a contrapuntal duet (141, m. 3). The bass line moves much more than the soprano, serving almost as its accompaniment. This could also suggest more firmness in attitude or purpose in the widow and more uncertainty or emotion in David. At the conclusion of the duet, David sings alone, in more rhythmic and resolute music (142, 2nd staff, last measure).

When he agrees to bring Absalom back, the final word of the phrase '...the young man Absalom be brought again...' is sung on an ascending scale ending on c#, relatively high for a baritone voice and sustained for five beats (142, bottom). Under the voice, a high tremolo is heard playing first an A7 chord, with steady 8th notes playing A in the bass, followed in the next measure by an augmented triad. These lead up to the climactic d' on 'today' with a solid D major chord in the orchestra (143, top). The time signature changes to 4/4, which immediately alters the mood, and David sings an anthem-like melody to the text 'my heart believeth that I may find grace...' At the end of this eight-measure tune, the widow repeats the same melody a fourth higher, starting with a long sustained f#" and singing the tune in G major (143, 3rd staff).

The remainder of the duet begins as a *fugato*, each voice imitating the phrase just sung by the other (144, Reh. F). This is followed by several measures of homophonic singing, where they are singing the same 'anthem' melody just heard but now in harmony with each other (145). The soprano reaches a high B (b'') (145, bottom), a dramatically high pitch. In the concluding measures, the soprano sustains an a'' for seven beats (146, 2nd staff) before the voices conclude on a unison D with this note played on heavy 8th-notes under the orchestra's triumphant repetition of the duet theme.

The most interesting feature of this duet is that it was included at all. The woman of Tekoa is called a 'wise woman' in the biblical text, yet it is Joab who tells her to pretend to be a widow. If the audience doesn't know this background, the scene would take on a very different meaning. But in any case, the story obviously inspired Macfarren to give this woman a voice. The mood in the lengthy duet varies from pathos to hesitation to triumph, and the woman's music underlines her persuasive skills.

Twentieth-Century Works

Milhaud's opera, to my knowledge, is the only musical setting that encompasses virtually the entire narrative of David's story. Very few scenes are excluded, which accounts for its great length and possibly also its disappearance from the repertoire. Many scenes that are only dry narrative in the Bible are enacted, greatly heightening the drama and interest.

In a quick but fairly accurate summary of 2 Samuel 13–15 (Scene 3: Interlude—not in the recorded performance), on a high level of the stage, the story described by the chorus/narrator is visible in pantomime and dance. Tamar is seen entering with a servant and attacked by her brother Amnon, who forcibly tries to embrace her. Absalom appears and kills Amnon, witnessed by the horrified Tamar, who runs off with her servant. Absalom and his henchmen carry off the dead Amnon. Another group is seen conspiring with Absalom, and they all enter the palace of the king. During this pantomime/dance, the chorus sings:

David consoled Bathsheba, and she bore him a second child: Solomon. And the King cherished him above all others of his offspring. But meanwhile, to expiate his sins, no sooner had his sons grown to adulthood than tragedy overtook them. Ah! Tamar, who was forced by her half-brother Amnon; Absalom, to avenge Tamar, assassinates Amnon. Then, rid of his rival at last, impatient to succeed his aged father as king, he plots and schemes and stirs up old feuds and disputes, fomenting revolt among the tribes, ending up by threatening the king in the royal city.

In an attempt to telescope the action, Absalom is shown immediately killing Amnon in front of Tamar, a total misrepresentation of the biblical account. He actually kills Amnon two years later, and Tamar is not present. The comment that David prefers Solomon to all his other sons is common in later interpretations, though nowhere suggested in the biblical text, which states only that God favoured him (2 Sam. 12.24). This has been interpreted to imply that David did as well. The other interpretive passage here is that Absalom was 'impatient to succeed his aged father as king', suggesting he was eager to get rid of Amnon and may have used Amnon's rape of Tamar merely as an excuse. Commentators have suggested this motive as well, but it is not clear why Absalom would need an excuse to kill Amnon.

The story of Amnon and Tamar is spoken by the chorus, not sung, while the sopranos and basses sing sustained single unison notes above them, and the orchestra plays short jagged phrases unrelated melodically to either (236-238, Reh. 15-25). The effect is very dramatic. The pattern changes only in the closing measures, when no notes are sung and all the voices speak the text (or shout it, since it is marked *ff*). A quick passage in the orchestra precedes the unexpected unison A that ends this section (238, bottom).

Josef Tal's Amnon and Tamar is one of only two completely atonal works discussed in this book (the other was Tal's Saul at Endor in Chapter 7). I do not comment on 'dissonant moments' because in the context of this music, it would make no sense. There is never a tonal centre and no recognizable melody. There are musical patterns, even Leitmotifs, and unusual instrumentation. The small orchestra includes xylophone, vibraphone, triangle, Chinese block, tam-tams, tambourines and several other exotic percussion instruments. All of this creates a highly unusual texture and mood, probably somewhat similar to that of Testi's work.

A brief musical prelude introduces several themes that will be heard later, most notably the repetitive off-the-beat ascending and descending triplets heard in piano and strings, that become the theme of Amnon's obsession (7, bottom).

Scene One. Amnon is sitting motionless on a couch, looking sad, with Jonadab at his side. Jonadab asks Amnon why he is so pale and why he does not eat. Amnon sings, 'dreamily' (10, bottom):

I stood on the roof as the sun was going down, when I saw Tamar, Absalom's sister. She lifted her arms, loosened her hair, let her garment fall and stepped into the bath. Since then I feel such longing as if I could die. My body is feeble and my limbs are like stone. I have no strength left.

Tal is clearly conflating the story with David's spotting of Bathsheba. On Amnon's first mention of Tamar's name, the 'obsessive' theme begins (11, m. 25). This theme will recur throughout the opera. It is a series of repetitive ascending and descending groups of notes that seem to rock back and forth. The groups prominently include augmented and diminished fifths intervals, commonly considered a 'haunted' or 'devilish' sound (Fig. 44).

These few measures are sung over a wide range, starting on f#, then 'her hair' an octave higher on f#', and sliding on a *portamento* down to g—a very languorous sound (11, 3rd staff). A few measures later, Amnon describes Tamar's garment falling as she entered the bath. This phrase is sung very softly and much lower in the voice—down to B (11, m. 30). Then a measure later, when he sings of his feelings since then, Amnon sings very loud and high notes, up to f#' again (11, last measure). This conveys his agitation.



Figure 44. Tal: Amnon.

In contrasted, much calmer music, Jonadab agrees that Amnon is sick and offers to ask David to send Tamar to his bedside, to prepare food for him so that he will recover (13, top; based on 13.5). The scene ends with Amnon murmuring to himself *quasi lontano* ('as if from afar'): 'she let her garment fall' (14, m. 55), suggesting the obsessive nature of his feelings.

Scene Two. There is no break between the scenes. A slave leads Tamar into Amnon's room, carrying baking utensils. Short 16th-note groups broken by frequent rests musically suggest hesitation (14, m. 60), and in fact Tamar is told (in the score) to approach Amnon 'hesitatingly'. She asks Amnon if he is sick, in music filled with large intervals: an augmented octave followed by a seventh (15, m. 65), which reflect her uncertainty. In contrast to her line, Amnon sings an arching and legato phrase followed by a group of short sighing notes. He tells Tamar he is sick with longing and asks her if she can heal him, ending on a sustained f#' on the word 'heal'. These measures include solo moments for cello and viola. These, the most lyrical instruments in the small orchestra, underline the lyricism of Amnon's music (15, m. 69-71).

Tamar tells him he should call his beloved so that she will cure him, reaching f#'' to be sustained and sung ff(16, top). The accompaniment under her is frenzied, possibly to suggest her underlying fear.

Amnon responds that his beloved is near, and on this last word, the orchestra is silent (16, last measure). This creates an intense moment of suspension They sing their next lines simultaneously, as if they are not really hearing one another; Tamar is to sing 'desperately', as she reaches



Figure 45. Tal: Tamar and Amnon.

and sustains g''(17, m. 86). Musically conveying her agitation, in the next measure she sings b flat, an octave plus a sixth lower (17, m. 87). It is no longer a dialogue (Fig. 45).

Both singers are told to sing 'with increasing expression', but they are excited in different ways. Tamar continues to repeat that Amnon should call his beloved, and on more sustained musical lines, Amnon begins to sing 'Sister, my sister' (18). Several agitated measures of xylophone, piano and percussion follow, probably representing Tamar's inner turmoil and leading to Tamar's singing in a much lower range than before:

Your sister, she is a virgin, Amnon, do her no harm, lest people will say, Amnon is a desecrator/rapist (*Schänder*).

The word *Schänder* means rapist, though the verb form can also mean 'desecrate'. This strong word would probably have been shocking in a libretto of the 1950s and this may have been the librettist's intent. The accompaniment under these sung lines is very low and regular, a kind of dissonant heartbeat (19, bottom). Tamar's final words are sung on large and unusual vocal leaps such as a descending and ascending augmented octave,

f'-f#" (19, m. 105). A measure of sustained silence follows. Then Tamar prepares the dish to uneasy music with a restless rhythm, which includes the 'obsession' theme heard earlier (20, 3rd staff). When Tamar approaches Amnon with the food, Amnon pushes her hand away and tells her to loosen her hair, in the same exact musical phrase he had sung when describing her doing this earlier: he descends on a portamento from f#'-g.

Tamar 'takes a flower out of her hair and drops it slowly upon Amnon' (21, top). On a first reading, this would seem to suggest the beginnings of a seduction scene (I certainly read it that way). But in light of what follows, this action is more likely a stalling tactic, a diversion. The music in this spot is very soft and in a high register, and its repetitive sound suggests fear more than seduction

To the calmly repetitive 'obsession' accompaniment, Amnon tells Tamar to 'let her garment/robe (*Gewand*) fall' (21, m. 124). In response, she takes off her chain/necklace (*Kette*) and drops it on Amnon. It would be up to the director to show this action as either seductive behaviour, or as an attempt to play along with Amnon, possibly to keep him at bay. Amnon's response is to be sung 'passionately', as he orders her to take her bath (22, 2nd staff). Tamar 'moves as if to step into the bath'.

There is no more dialogue, and no action is described. Instead, a section of frenzied music follows, beginning and ending with the 'obsession' theme (22, m. 128; 25, m. 156-57). This short orchestral interlude portrays many moods: there are rapid loud passages for piano and trumpets (22, starting at m. 131); soft timpani rolls over a low *tremolo* (23, m. 134); soft viola and cor anglais passages that suggest Amnon did not immediately overpower Tamar (23, m. 137-145); and finally, very rapid figures played loudly in the highest register by piccolos (24, m. 152-53), almost an orchestral scream. The closing measures of the interlude feature the 'obsession' theme played by the full orchestra in a very high range (25, 2nd-3rd staves). Scene Three follows immediately, leaving the action to the audience's imagination.

Scene Three. The scene opens with a high, frenzied chord cluster tremolo in the orchestra (25, m. 158). Amnon orders a slave to 'Push (treibe) this [woman] out of here! And shut the door fast after her!' The word 'woman' is left out, just as in the Hebrew text, where 'this' stands in for 'this woman', reducing Tamar to a thing. These lines are sung unaccompanied, with the final words underlined by strong rhythmic timpani beats that sound like a slamming door (25, last measure).

The door, however, has not slammed shut because Tamar is still on the stage, standing 'as if turned into stone' (*versteinert*; 26, top). The timpani may have represented her thumping heart. The cello and viola play soft descending slurs, a distinct musical imitation of weeping and one of the least dissonant moments in the opera (26, top). After Amnon tells Tamar

'Get out of here, you make me sick' (*Du ekelst mich*, 26, m. 165), the music immediately shifts from *sffz* to *pp* (26, m. 169).

'Tamar slips to the ground, and puts earth on her head, as if she were dreaming. She wakes up, notices her multi-coloured coat (*bunten Rock*), and tears it' (notes in the score). When she notices the coat, the music is an echo of the earlier 'obsession' theme heard during the 'seduction' (26, m. 172). Tamar lets out a yell over a very high fff figure in the orchestra, equivalent to an instrumental scream (27, m. 174). Then in total silence, she puts her hands on her head as a sign of her dishonour/defilement/rape (*Geschände*, 27). While the room darkens, light falls on another room, revealing the feast.

Scene Four: The opera moves in fast-forward mode to two years later, omitting the scene between Tamar and Absalom and any mention of David. Over a rollicking drinking chorus (27-31), Absalom calls out 'Where is Amnon?' (31, m. 208). In very dramatic, melismatic music, he sings of Amnon raping his sister, calling him his 'rapist brother' (Schandenbruder). These vocal passages resemble a moan (34, top). In the next measure, Absalom echoes a similar passage sung earlier by the basses of the drinking chorus, singing along with them (34, m. 219-220) (Fig. 46).



Figure 46. Tal: Absalom.

Amnon is drinking wildly, and Absalom is heard ordering two shepherds to kill him when he is drunk (36, m. 237). The only accompaniment to this order is a low *tremolo* in the orchestra, followed by a short rest (36, m. 240). The killing is not shown, but is represented by a lengthy *tremolo* chord cluster in strings and percussion (37, top). Very excited music then accompanies frightened shepherds rushing across the stage. The final line, spoken by Absalom in a deep voice, is 'Done' (*Getan*) followed by an eerie high chord that dies slowly.

The music and libretto of this short chamber opera amplify the traits of the main characters without contradicting the original text. The libretto fills in the narrative gaps by portraying Tamar as frightened and also as pretending to go along with Amnon. She does not speak as many words as her biblical counterpart, but the music suggests more of her inner state.

There is a subtle suggestion that she has feelings for Amnon, or at least a relationship, but the music seems to suggest fear more than affection. The casting of Amnon as a tenor is ironic, since this is usually the voice of a romantic lead. A bass-baritone Absalom has more gravitas than his biblical counterpart would seem to possess, as well as reversing the older-younger brother voice types expected. The tenor would normally be cast as the younger, and the bass as the older. Tamar cast as a mezzo suggests she is older than traditionally considered, and she is certainly portrayed in a very sympathetic light. The warmth of the mezzo timbre increases that effect. The work dramatizes the action and makes the characters vividly real.

1 SAMUEL 15–19, 1 KINGS 1–2

Nineteenth-Century Works

Reissiger's chorus of lament over Absalom (No. 20) opens with David, who is followed by two women listed as Sulamith and Deborah, with no explanation of their presence. Solo cellos introduce David's melody. The time is 12/8, a very broad and typical funeral-march rhythm, and the key is D major (142). David sings a long, arching melody, almost a duet with the cellos, which double and echo his voice. The text is 'Absalom, my son, would I had died in your place' (19.1) (Fig. 47).

The two women who follow David's solo sing original, not biblical text. They plead with God 'not to crush a father's breaking heart' and say to God that only he knows the pain of death. The homophonic duet is filled with descending phrases sung together (143, m. 11-15), a distinctly Mendelssohnian sound (Reissiger's contemporary Felix Mendelssohn, 1809–47). They stop when David sings a reprise of his earlier melody, and then he continues to sing as the two women sing over him for two measures (145, m. 24-25). A choral setting of Psalm 23 follows (146, m. 32).

Nr. 20. Terzettino con Coro



Figure 47. Reissiger: Lament.

A short aria (No. 22) contains David's final words to Solomon (1 Kgs 2.1-4), eliminating (as most librettos do) David's instructions to Solomon regarding his enemies. This is a simple, lyrical melody with a slightly more agitated section in the middle. Syncopated rhythms convey the urgency of following in God's ways (175, m. 52-57), but then the opening melody is reprised and the aria ends on a soft and gentle note.

A quartet is followed by the closing chorus. The women that are included—Sulamith and Deborah—have appeared throughout the oratorio. They have no relationship to the books of Samuel, but obviously had symbolic meaning for the composer and possibly for the church of his time. The inclusion of Sulamith could be connected to the link between the appearance of this name in Song of Songs and the tradition attributing that book to Solomon.

In **Macfarren**'s oratorio (this score can be accessed at an online archive: http://www.archive.org/details/kingdavidoratori00macf), the People of Jerusalem (No. 16) relate that Absalom is preparing his rebellion, and then they describe his beauty (2 Sam. 15.1 and 14.25). The first part is in strongly marked dotted rhythms, a martial and very assertive sound. The second part, praising his beauty, is more *legato* and expressive. Different parts of the chorus echo one another, repeating 'Absalom' in sighing phrases (starting on 150, Reh. B). When they reprise the opening section, they sing it softly instead of loudly, and the accompaniment now includes flutes playing high *staccato* passages, giving a lighter sound to the music (151, Reh. C).

A new, lyrical melody is introduced on the text 'From the sole of his foot' (153, Reh. D), during which strings play similar *pizzicato* passages as were just heard in the flutes. At the end of this section, the chorus repeats Absalom's name several times in unison (154, Reh. E), before reprising the opening, more martial tune, this time sung *ff* (155, Reh. F). In the conclusion, the chorus repeats 'Hail, hail' (157, 2nd staff). In the final measures, they also repeat the earlier sighing phrases 'Absalom' but this time with a triumphant sound (158, bottom).

Absalom now sings a recitative and song (No. 18) based on 2 Sam. 15.4-6. In the recitative, he expresses his wish to be a judge in the land. The song that follows is set to text from Job (29.14-17, 25) which describes the ideal judge. This expands on the ideas only briefly expressed by Absalom in Samuel, and lends depth and dimension to his character not found in the biblical account. It may also be an attempt to explain the fascination Absalom had over the people.

The recitative part is sung completely *a cappella*, with highly melodic phrases in the orchestra played between the sung measures. The last three measures of sung recitative rise successively in pitch, with the words 'kiss ye' sung on a descending seventh, *g'-a* (160, 4th staff, m. 2). This musically indicates Absalom's increasing enthusiasm.

This is the only aria relegated to Absalom that I have found in any oratorio or opera. Textually and musically, the aria creates a very positive impression, contrary to the biblical description of Absalom, which is ambiguous but not positive. The aria is in a lilting 3/4 beat, the accompaniment a series of off-the beat chords in brass and winds. Over this syncopation, Absalom sings steady notes on the beat, a musical depiction of confidence. On the text 'I

will be eyes to the blind', strings enter and the accompaniment becomes more flowing (161, Reh. A). The vocal part lies high, largely above middle C(c').

Significant words are sung on sustained high notes: for example, in 'my judgment shall be as a robe', the last word is sung on *a-flat'* (161, m. 4); in 'feet will I be to the lame', the first word is sung on *g'* sustained for 5 beats (161, 3rd-4th staves); and the climactic word 'father' is repeated twice, the second time on *a flat'* (162, m. 3).

The mood changes starting at 'I will break the jaws of the wicked' and becomes more assertive, with a *marcato* vocal line and strong chords alternating with long dramatic trills in the orchestra (162, bottom; 163, top). The next section returns to a contrasting lyrical sound, with the text 'I will choose out your way' sung on a rising series of slurs (164, 4th staff, m. 3, and 5th staff, m. 1), reaching *a flat'* on 'comforteth' twice (165, 2nd staff, m. 1; 4th staff, m. 2).

A chorus, again the People of Jerusalem (No. 19), relates that Absalom is preparing chariots and horses (15.1). Horns and trumpets predominate, representing the military aspect of the rebellion. Drums are heard throughout the final measures, plus oboes and bassoons that descend an octave on a slur, possibly a comical sound, though it is impossible to know the composer's intention with this unusual marking (169, 3rd staff, m. 3).

The next chorus (No. 20) represents the 'spies of Absalom', who announce that the sounding of the trumpets will signal that Absalom now reigns (15.10). In the biblical narrative, this is what Absalom tells the spies to say. The remainder of the chorus recounts the subsequent events (15.11-13). The music starts slowly and softly, with sinuous chromatic passages ascending and descending in the orchestra (170). The chorus sings very softly, and the different sections echo one another, as if confirming what they have been told. A critic who attended the performance commented on the effectiveness of 'the rustling of the muted strings and the whispered utterances of the people' (*Atheneum*, November 24, 1883). There is no musical shift when the chorus begins narrating events, so it would seem that they have represented the narrator from the beginning.

The first musical change comes at the text 'The hearts of the men of Israel are after him', which is sung to a flowing melody (175, 2nd staff) in sharp contrast to the preceding section. In the concluding section, the chorus reprises the opening 'Give ear' and dies out almost on a whisper with the same sinuous chromatic descent in the orchestra, leading to a closing *tremolo* (179-80).

Another musical homily on the events just narrated follows (No. 21). A contralto sings the text of Isa. 5.20-23, 'Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil'. This is clearly a commentary on Absalom. Macfarren employs an unusual dissonance on every repetition of 'Woe': *a-flat-c-d*, an augmented fourth with an intrusive C. It is a suspension leading to A-flat

major, which indeed appears in the next measure. But the reappearance of this suspension each time 'Woe' is heard is an effective musical device to colour the word.

The next chorus, the 'faithful of David' (No. 22) sings 2 Sam. 15.14, proclaiming that they must flee to escape Absalom. Though the tempo marking is *allegro* (fast), the time is 12/8, normally a very broad tempo. Trumpet calls are heard in the first measure, and subsequently when Absalom's name is mentioned (191, Reh. A; 192, Reh. B). There is a sense of urgency and forward momentum in the music.

There is a narration of 2 Sam. 17.22, 24 (No. 23). The opening verses continue in the same rhythm and mood as the previous chorus. A short orchestral postlude follows, marked *Tempo di marcia* (March tempo), played very softly and in 4/4 time. It probably represents Absalom's forces approaching from the distance. A 'chorus of the faithful' (No. 24) sings 2 Sam. 18.3, dissuading David from joining them in battle. The chorus is in 3/4 time with a dotted rhythm, and in the first section the voices follow each other in a kind of *fugato*, which lends a sense of urgency. It also suggests each group separately approaching David, so that when the voices eventually come together, they are clearly united in their wish to protect David.

In the biblical text, David asks the troops to deal gently with Absalom. Macfarren enlarges on this idea with the use of texts about fathers and sons. David sings settings of selected verses, many of them slightly altered to make a coherent text and also to project the desired message (No. 25). Texts used in the recitative are 2 Same. 18.4-5, Isa. 63.8-11 and Deut. 32.10-11. Some verses are altered from third-person to first-person, for example in Isa. 63.8-9, and elsewhere.

As throughout this oratorio, the recitative is unaccompanied. But the vocal line on the word 'Deal' ('deal gently for my sake') is a very emotional and pleading phrase (212, 2nd staff, m. 3). The second part of the recitative, starting at 'But he rebelled', becomes more agitated, the tempo marked *allegro* (213, 4th staff, m. 4) and the orchestral phrases between David's recitative are marked by loud 16th- or 8th-note groups of chords, (213, bottom, 214, 1st-2nd staves). The tempo slows to *andante* as David remembers 'the days of old' to more *legato* chord groups (214, 4th-5th staves, 215). This calmer section leads up to the aria itself, which is accompanied by harp throughout with other instruments added later. The tempo is *larghetto* (fairly slow and broad) and the key F minor, which has a very particular timbre with its four flats. Macfarren's gift for melody shines through in this lovely aria, which is a setting of Psalm 89.48, 37, 31, 33 with modifications.

The aria opens on the word 'Lord' sung on c' and sustained for the full measure, with a *crescendo-diminuendo* mark over this and the following measure. This indicates a rising and falling of the volume in the voice, a very effective device to depict emotion (216, top). The strings play steady

groups of 8th-notes in constantly modulating keys, in the opening measures. There are occasional suspensions, for example a C-major chord against an A-flat-g chord (diminished octave) which resolves into F minor. All these musical devices project uncertainty and turmoil.

The accompaniment becomes more agitated in the next section, starting on 'Thou hast abhorred and forsaken' which is sung to the same rhythm and tempo in the voice, but every measure opens with a diminished triad *tremolo* chord in the strings (216, Reh. A and on). The voice rises in each phrase as David repeats the words, so that 'abhorred' reaches *a flat*, then *b flat*, *c'*, and *d'*. As the pitch rises, the *tremolo* continues for more beats, and the strings are joined by winds. Macfarren also flirts with dissonance here, with the *tremolo* playing a G-minor chord while in the bass a dissonant E is heard in pounding 8th-notes (216, bottom). The E in the bass continues while the chord changes to an E7 chord (but with the middle G# notated as A-flat; 217, top). This E7 becomes a deceptive cadence, as it leads into an unexpected C-minor tonality in the next measure (instead of A minor; 217, 2nd staff).

The first part of the opening section is reprised (217, 3rd staff, m. 2), leading to a third section (217, Reh. B, last measure). This part is slightly more agitated, noticeable in the wider range of the voice. The lowest pitch reached is *B flat*, and many measures span over an octave. In the last measure of this section, the 8th-note accompaniment suddenly shifts to groups of arpeggiated triplets in the harp, leading to a final highly lyrical section (218, bottom, 219-20). This expansive melody is a fervent anthem in which David begs God for his lovingkindness (in Ps. 89.33, the psalmist sings of God's mercies and states in this verse that God will not take away his lovingkindness).

The key shifts to F major and the accompaniment is rolling arpeggiated triplets. The vocal line spans large intervals throughout, to project a prayerful and pleading quality. For example, in the first measure the voice goes from c-f-d', and the next measure it reaches e' (219, top). Macfarren also flirts with dissonance on the repetition of these phrases, when the strings play an E flat as part of an F7 chord, while David sustains d', and while David holds the next note, e', the orchestra has already resolved into B-flat major (219, 3rd staff). This combination of suspension and dissonance is typical of that era's music but nonetheless is very effective at pulling heart-strings. In the last part of the aria the voice continues its large vocal spans, reaching a climactic e' on the final repeat of 'lovingkindness' (220, 2nd staff, m. 2). This is quite high for a baritone, and though the entire aria lies high for this voice, this note would effectively transmit the passion of his plea.

A soprano-contralto duet follows (No. 26), a setting of Psalm 103.13-14, 11, 'Like as a father pitieth his children'. It is obviously inserted here to continue the theme of David's love for Absalom and his pleas to God. Since

it does not advance the narrative in any way, I will comment only briefly on the music.

The melody of the duet taken by itself would be considered a standard pious anthem of the era. But Macfarren has set a viola soloist to play an *obbligato* over the voices, which would be very effective and moving. The contralto voice has a similar timbre to that of a viola, and Brahms also paired these two sounds in several of his songs. This might have inspired Macfarren to write this duet. The duet is in D-flat major, with five flats, which also has a very particular timbre. The voices sing a wide range, the soprano reaching high B-flat (b'') twice (223, 4th staff, m. 2; 227, 2nd staff, m. 2). There is a middle section in the contrasting key of D major but not clearly in any tonality. The last part of this section is marked by large intervals between the two singers. In the first and final sections, their voices usually sing a third or sixth apart, standard intervals in duets. In this middle part, they sing a 10th apart (an octave plus a second) in several measures (226, top), an unusual and effective sound.

David is seated between the two gates, awaiting news of the battle and of Absalom (No. 17). This is a scene between David and the women's chorus (it is not clear why only women would be present). The opening text, however, is Psalm 7.6, 'Arise, O Lord, in Thine anger', asking God for his judgment. The women respond 'Let thy mercy lighten upon him' from the Te Deum. After this, the remainder of the scene is based on 2 Sam. 18.24-32 but with variations.

The opening is loud, with long chords in brass and winds punctuated by repeated heavy chords in the bass. In David's opening measures he addresses God strongly and confidently. His final phrase, 'Awake for me to the judgment' starts on an ascending octave leap, *e-e'*, a resounding call to God (229, m. 2-3). The accompaniment suddenly changes to quieter groups of *legato* 8th notes, and a few violins play an *obbligato* which rises and then descends—a 'heavenly' sound.

When David enters, followed immediately by the chorus, the strings play broken 8th-note chords (229, Reh. A to end of page). The chorus echoes David's pleading words, as they sing both alternately and together. David sings the final phrase, 'as my trust is in thee' by himself, rising slowly to e' held for four beats. The chorus repeats the rising figure, though the sopranos go up to g'' for the final phrase (231). At the conclusion of that phrase, the strumming 8th notes abruptly stop, leading to short, repetitive two-note phrases, C-B-C-B, a suspenseful sound that leads into a new section (231, bottom).

The accompaniment in this section is groups of *staccato* 16th-notes starting off the beat, followed by descending slurs, creating a sense of both anticipation and longing (232, top). The 16th-note groups become more agitated as David continues to urge the women to lift their eyes and look out

for a messenger. The accompaniment changes to steady 16th-notes as the chorus announces an approaching runner (233, top). The steady 16th-notes, a 'running' sound, continue as the second runner is spotted, and David says that they will both bring tidings (234, 3rd staff).

Then the pattern changes, with two measures that open on a descending sixth slur, a pleading sound, with an augmented triad in the accompaniment (D#-G-B) instead of the expected E minor. This creates an unsettled feeling (234, bottom). Then the opening excited and hesitant accompaniment of the off-the-beat 16th-note groups resumes (235, Reh. D). Over this accompaniment, David sings 'Speak' three times. As the chorus asks 'What of the battle?' echoing each other, the bass in the orchestra descends ominously and chromatically on each beat (235, bottom). The first messengers respond 'All is well' on several tonic chords, indicating momentary resolution. They sing 'Blessed is the Lord' (18.28, where a single messenger is speaking) as a hymn, over long sustained chords (236, Reh. E).

When they stop singing, a slightly dissonant chord is heard in trombones (G-D-E) and David sings over this 'Is the young man Absalom safe?' (18.29) on a descending diminished triad (two minor thirds). Several A-major chords are played in the trombones, then the original chord is sustained as David repeats his line, starting a third higher and ending unexpectedly on a major sixth leap to c#' (237, 1st-2nd staves). The same A-major chords are played again, leading into a melodic account of the battle (18.29). A few measures of violin *obbligato* lead to a solo line for David, begging God for mercy (not in the biblical text) as if he already knows what happened. The chorus joins him in prayer (238, 2nd staff-239, Reh. G).

The prayer is abruptly cut off by loud insistent trumpet calls (239, bottom) which introduce the second group of messengers (again, only one messenger in the biblical text). In loud, exclamatory passages punctuated by an insistent dotted rhythm, they announce that the Lord has avenged those that rose up against David (18.31). This chorus is abruptly cut off by the same trombone chord as in the previous section, one pitch higher (A-E-F#), and David also sings the identical phrases one pitch higher (241, top).

This time David's phrase is not followed by reassuring lyrical passages, but rather by a strong and loud announcement of the victory and, obliquely as in the biblical version, Absalom's death. These phrases are sung in unison, with the orchestra also playing only unison chords. The unison singing lends the music a quality of spoken proclamation, and the lack of any tonality for a few measures leaves the audience hanging. The chorus's last two words, '[as that young] man is' are sung on a loud F#, followed by a rest, and then an E, sung *a cappella* and *pp*. Two short *pp* chords are heard after this, resolving into E minor as the final chorus note had suggested.

In its brevity and simplicity, David's elegy for Absalom (18.33; No. 28) is one of the most affecting of numerous settings of this text. The

accompaniment is mainly harp. The time is an unusual and very broad 6/4, not the standard funeral-march rhythm (which is 4/4 with dotted rhythms). In most measures, David sings long sustained lines over insistent and modulating chords. In the first measure of the song, the voice sustains e' over a dissonant chord—a C#-minor chord with an intrusive A (C#-E-G#-A), a wail of grief. The second half of the measure is tonal again. In the next measure, as David holds a b for the full measure, a B-minor chord with a dissonant intrusive A is heard, similar to the start of the previous measure, moving to an E7 chord.

The phrase 'Would God I had died for thee' is repeated three times: the first two times, the notes are sung on one pitch while the orchestra modulates under the voice. The third time, the phrase starts a third higher than the previous repeat, on f#', and descends a 10th in steps, down to d (242, bottom). This long descent vividly portrays despair and hopelessness.

The opening section is now reprised, but though the sung melody starts out the same, it is soon modified. The chords under the first held note are different: instead of the E-G#-A cluster, the chord is E major with an intrusive C# in the bass, and the second half of the measure goes to F# minor rather than D major in the first instance (243, top). From here, the vocal part changes completely.

David sings 'Absalom, O Absalom' several times, always as a descending half-or whole-step slur on a dotted rhythm, with chords alternating between suspensions and tonics. For the conclusion, he holds the first syllable of 'Absalom' on *a* for a full measure while the chords modulate continually under him. Then single harp arpeggios are played between the sung notes, and the voice ends on *A* under an A7 chord, unresolved. That chord is followed by an E7 chord—still hanging. Then a series of harp arpeggios finally end softly on A major.

The people's first-hand account replaces the narrator's third-person account of David's mourning (19.3-4, 6: No. 29). Later in the scene, the chorus stands in for Joab. The accompaniment in the opening part is a form of the 'oompah' so favoured by Verdi, with short 8th notes alternately in the bass and in chords, in a steady 4/4 time. Over this, the chorus sings descending slurs, either broken minor chords or half-and whole steps, describing the king's weeping (244). David repeats the opening measures of his lament, which has a different feeling with the steady 8th notes under it (245, Reh. A).

As the chorus sings 'the victory is turned into mourning', David continues to interject 'O Absalom, my son'. This is a wonderful example of music's ability to represent different speakers expressing themselves at the same time, through different music. If the people and David were speaking simultaneously, only cacophony would result. Here, instead, the listener can imagine David in his palace above the people, crying out and wailing while they murmur how the victory has been dampened by his mourning.

A sharply dissonant moment occurs when David sings his first recapitulation of the verse 'Would God I had died for thee'. The chorus has just sung a G# major chord, and David enters on d#', part of this chord; but instead of a chord under him, violins play a loud tremolo E, sharply dissonant against David's sung d# (247, m. 3). This very brief moment, if audible, would sound almost like an orchestral scream. A few measures filled with anticipatory dotted rhythms follow, leading to a chorus singing of coming into the city by stealth (19.3, but here in the first person). The line 'steal away' is sung to a chromatically descending passage, a vivid musical depiction of stealth (248, bottom). David sings 'Would God', this time on a g# with a tremolo A clashing with his note (249, Reh. C).

The chorus now sings 'thou hast shamed the faces of all thy servants...' in steadily stronger and louder music, but after they sing of how they have saved his life, David re-enters singing 'My son, my son', apparently paying no heed to the people (252, Reh D). In the biblical narrative, Joab finally prevails on David to sit in the gate where the people could see him. In this oratorio, David does not seem to hear the voices around him, for even as they continue singing, he repeatedly cries out to his son in a highly effective counterpoint.

This 'dialogue' continues almost to the end. The phrase 'Would God I had died for thee' is repeated two more times, the first of which takes David to one of his lowest notes, descending from a starting note of f#' (as in the aria) down to B (253, m. 3-4). Only when he repeats 'Absalom, my son' again does the chorus finally stop. David sings the phrase two more times leading to the conclusion, accompanied by steady repeated 8th notes with a descending figure in the bass and over several suspensions (D-F#-C#). He holds 'son' for seven beats on d', over several ascending C#7 chords. David's final note is f#, followed by two soft and short F#-minor chords (253, bottom).

Another different text is inserted here (No. 30), a setting of Hebrews (12.5-6, 11) for soprano. The message is to not despise God's punishments and rebukes because they are signs of God's love. This is clearly meant to encourage David in his sorrow. It is a fairly lengthy, highly melodious and Mendelssohnian anthem (254-263), but it does not advance or contribute to the plot or characters.

The 'twelve tribes' plead with David to return, based on slightly modified verses from 2 Samuel 19 (9, 11, 14; No. 31). The orchestra opens with several dramatic measures of rising figures and falling chords, marked ff in the very slow tempo of adagio. This combination would have a very stately sound. The chorus enters and sings 'Arise' a cappella in A minor. The second note is held for a full measure, followed by a full measure rest (264, 2nd staff). This transmits the sense that they are waiting for a response. The orchestra then repeats the opening pattern in a higher key, and the chorus also sings the same pattern, this time to 'come forth' and in

C major—a more hopeful key (265, top). In the next part, different sections of the chorus sing the line 'The king delivered all Israel out of the hands of the Philistines' first individually, following one another, and then as a full chorus (266, starting at Reh. A).

A softer, more flowing and pleading section starts at 'the heart of all Judah is bowed' (269, Reh. C). The loud and dramatic music of the opening returns in the final section (270, Reh. D), to 'Return then, thou and all thy servants'. In a particularly dramatic moment, the sopranos and tenors sing 'return then' on descending octaves (g''-g') while the lower voices sustain a g (272, top). The chorus concludes on a resounding G major chord after several measures of orchestral *tremolos* and rapidly ascending scales (273).

David now sings select verses from Psalm 51 (No. 32), which he supposedly composed 'after he had gone in to Bathsheba' although that incident is never recounted in this oratorio (and hence that verse is omitted). As in other solo anthems in this oratorio, Macfarren displays his great gift for melody. The theme is introduced first in the cellos in E-flat major (274, 2nd staff, m. 2-4), followed by an introductory section. Then the theme is repeated in the relative key of C minor, played by unaccompanied cellos. David's solo follows immediately in the same key, the vocal part echoing the cellos (275, Reh. A). The mellifluous cello sound establishes a poignant mood. The tune is marked by fairly wide or unusual intervals: the opening phrase goes up from *g-e-flat'*; the next phrase descends from *c'-d*; and the next has an unexpected interval of a diminished fifth, from *b-f'*. The passage finally returns to the home key of C minor (275, 3rd-5th staves).

The second part is more anthem-like, accompanied by strumming 16th-note arpeggios in the harp, with winds imitating each of David's phrases (276, Reh. B). In the third part, the accompaniment shifts to four groups of 16th-note triplets with the notation 'trombones sustain harmony', an interesting effect. David's line is more sustained and expansive here, appropriately to verses that praise God. It opens with 'my tongue shall sing of Thy righteousness' (277, Reh. C). The last phrase, 'My mouth shall shew Thy praise' is sung on several rising pitches ending in a sustained *d'*. This note is held as the orchestra stops, then moves to *e flat'*, sustained as the orchestra repeats the theme (279, 4th staff, last measure). This relatively high note for a baritone would be a very effective ending.

The closing chorus (No. 33) is based entirely on New Testament texts: verses from Luke 15 and 19, with the doxology from the Christian liturgy ('Glory be to the Father, to the Son, etc'., also known as the 'Gloria Patri') concluding the oratorio. Macfarren was not subtle in connecting the story of David to that of Jesus—in fact, the connection is more blatant than in any other oratorio presented in this book.

The organ opens the chorus, appropriately, before other instruments join (280, top). This is the longest number, and longest chorus, in the entire

oratorio (280-305). The concluding doxology is a fugue, accompanied by brass, strings, and organ in imitation of Bach. This section alone is 15 pages long. Since the text has no relationship at all to the story, I am not discussing musical details of this complex and difficult piece of choral writing. Macfarren pulled out all the stops, and this chorus was written either to satisfy his public or out of deep religious conviction, or both. Whatever the motivation, for the biblical scholar (particularly a Jewish one), it is a great disappointment if not even offensive to find this conclusion in a work ostensibly about King David.

In spite of this unsatisfying conclusion, Macfarren depicts scenes not found in any other works, such as the Widow of Tekoa and an expansion of Absalom's scene. Both these characters are given interesting and vivid music that adds dimensions to their sketchy portraits in the biblical narrative. David also sings harrowingly sad keening music at the death of Absalom. For these wonderful musical moments, Macfarren can be forgiven his strong evangelical message.

Twentieth-Century Works

In **Honegger**'s oratorio, after the Bathsheba episode is told, the narrator relates how 'punishment strikes the house of the adulterers', as brother violates sister and is killed by brother. Only the second brother Absalom is named, as 'the favored son' who rebels against his king. David escapes to the desert, where he sings the well-known Psalm 121 'I will lift my eyes to the hills', slightly altered [21]. This is one of only two psalms utilized in the oratorio not ascribed to David in the Bible (the other is Ps. 57). Since this is a tenor solo, it may represent David himself. It is one of the most tonal and tuneful of all the solos in this oratorio, reflecting the calm and religious mood of the text. The second part is in a pastoral-sounding 6/4 time. Brass and winds are interwoven effectively with the voice, and the final chord is a bright and unexpected tonal A major (146).

The narrator relates the next part of the story: the flight of Absalom's army, Joab's killing of Absalom in the forest of Ephraim, and the people's rejoicing. Following this is 'The Song of Ephraim' [22], a soprano solo with female chorus, punctuated by complex rhythms such as in the opening measures, when some instruments play a cut 4/4 time while others play in 6/4 (147). Tambourine and harp give it a modal and almost liturgical sound. The text is written to sound biblical but is unconnected to the story, except for the subtle reference to Absalom's grotesque death as he is caught in the boughs of a tree:

O forest of Ephraim, where the ravens circle, They have gathered the fruit that hung on the boughs.

The female chorus echoes the soloist's phrases an octave lower on 'Ah' after each stanza, with slight variations in rhythm and melody. The final

phrases are to be sung 'with closed mouth', i.e. humming, to create an unusual sound. Humming an *a-flat''* (150) would be a very difficult if not impossible feat for chorus (on the Naxos recording, they sing 'Ah' rather than hum).

The narrator relates that the king mourns his son in front of the victorious army. Honegger, interestingly, did not include a mourning aria for David. A March of the Hebrews follows [23], opening with several fanfares echoed by the different brass and wind instruments (151-52). While the march is still playing, the narrator relates that David stops the army with a gesture and says to them:

My warriors of Israel, from this day on you are my flesh and bone. The king thanks you. You have re-established peace in Israel.

This leads to the march itself, which is punctuated by a regular 4/4 martial beat, and a predominance of trumpets and other brass, woodwinds, and drums (153-56). There is a marked contrast between this march and the earlier, more buffoonish march of the Philistine army. When the march concludes, the narrator announces that David, victor over all his enemies, thanks God with all his heart. Another choral psalm follows [24], 'I shall love you, God, tenderly' (paraphrased verses from Ps. 18). In this tonal and melodic chorus, the voices follow each other before coming together, braided with lyrical melodic descants in flutes and clarinets. In several places, contraltos and basses are instructed to hum, which would create an almost instrumental sound (157-61). (On the Naxos recording, they sing 'Ah' instead.)

David's census, which brought the wrath of God on Jerusalem (2 Sam. 24.1-16), is related by the narrator. This is probably the only place where David is painted less favourably in the libretto than in the biblical account, where God *instructed* David to 'number Israel and Judah' (24.1; in 1 Chron. 21.1, Satan incites David to conduct the census). In the libretto, David wants to number his people out of pride, 'that he may know his strength'. A chorus reflecting terror and fear follows [25], greatly contrasted to the previous choruses of praise and love. The tempo is *agitato* and the orchestral music is marked by jagged, broken and dissonant phrases. These echo the sense of disquiet in the chorus, whose phrases are highly chromatic and sound almost shouted (166-67). This is the third unison chorus in the oratorio, and all three mark new beginnings.

The final two scenes are the crowning of Solomon (1 Kgs 1.39) and the death of David (1 Kgs 2.10). The crowning of Solomon [26] is related by the narrator with a sombre orchestral background. Morax adds to 'the son of Bathsheba, Solomon' the words 'the dearest of his sons', nowhere to be found in the biblical text. The music is marked *maestoso* ('majestic') and opens with low tones in the brass section followed by a plangent melody in

trumpets. Near the end of this short section, the narrator relates that before all Israel and God, Nathan proclaims Solomon God's anointed and king, and the people cry out 'Long live King Solomon!'

The death of David is recounted in a soprano solo and chorus [27], in the same slow tempo as the preceding section. The narrator relates David's words of gratitude to God, over the orchestra which features celesta, harp, and a flute solo. The inclusion of organ lends a very hymn-like effect to this concluding chorus, and the orchestral texture frequently creates a celestial sound. This sets the mood for the angel, a soprano solo whose opening measures are sung in the style of a proclamation, accompanied only by brass and celesta (174, Reh. A):

God tells you: A day shall come when a flower shall blossom from your stem, green once more. And its perfume shall fill all the peoples here below with the breath of life. Alleluia!

This is a poetic paraphrase of a verse from Isaiah (11.1):

But a shoot shall grow out of the stump of Jesse, A twig shall sprout from his stock.

Verses from Isaiah are often used in Christian interpretations to link David to Jesus. After the introductory solo measures, the time changes from 3/4 to 4/4 and the female chorus repeats the solo melody just heard but in a more lyrical and sustained style. Strings join in, and the male chorus punctuates the end of each phrase with rapid Hallelujahs sung on *staccato* 16th notes which evoke Gregorian chant. (175, Reh. B). The flowing line of the female chorus sounds even more lyrical in contrast to the dry sound of these interjections.

This chorus modulates unexpectedly into the final Hallelujah chorus, which repeats the same melody heard at the end of Part 2 [16]. Here it is sung first by the soprano soloist (177, Reh. A), joined by female chorus (178, Reh. D), with the tenors joining much later (182, m. 3 after Reh. D). The basses enter before the tenors (180), but they sing the hymnal melody heard in the first part of the chorus from this entrance to the final bar. This differentiates them from the rest of the chorus and because of the liturgical sound of their singing, strongly suggests they are the priests. The fugue subject and the *cantus firmus* (a melody to which one or more contrapuntal parts are added) heard with it are based on the Lutheran chorale 'Wachet auf' (Smither 2000: 661) (Fig. 48).

The soprano soloist re-enters near the end of the chorus (183, last measure), singing the same one-bar phrase four times. The final repetition continues to a second measure, in which the part reaches a b'', sustained over the full chorus and orchestra for almost three beats, then concluding on a'' along with the sopranos of the chorus. The oratorio closes with heraldic trumpet calls.



Figure 48. Honegger: Alleluia.

This is a triumphant ending in spite of the inclusion of David's death, which is only represented in two other works (Milhaud and Laderman). His death is followed here by messianic texts and the proclamation of Solomon as king. Honegger's is the best-known work treated in this book. Though the limitations of the oratorio form do not permit him to add dimensions to the characters or to imagine new scenarios, his music consistently and powerfully creates a mood and flavour through exotic instrumentation and modal harmonies. The listener can imagine the setting in spite of the lack of staging.

In **Milhaud**'s opera, Scene 3 (not in the English libretto or the recording) takes place during Absalom's rebellion, and is based on 2 Sam. 15.13-16, 30, though the order of the events is altered. It opens with David, his eight wives, their servants and children, barefoot and veiled, walking in a line

among the olive trees. David enters, also veiled and barefoot, crying in front of his wives (15.30). The opening music has the sound of a slow march. The women's chorus sings:

Like the grief of a mother, on the road away from Zion, Silent and barefoot, eyes burning with tears, And veiled like us, our king is faint.

They continue in this vein, begging God not to abandon David in his trials, not to remain deaf to their pleas, to give them a ray of hope (239-40). Benaya appears and leads David to the altar to pray. In an emotional outburst, David begs God not to take out his wrath on his family (241, Reh. 50). The women's chorus, in a rare unison passage suggesting unity of purpose, prays to God that the rebels will soon be defeated (242, Reh. 55). Benaya tells David that his ten favourite concubines were left behind in Jerusalem to guard the palace (15.16), and reminds David that Absalom had too many partisans who could have turned against him, and that they had run the risk of being surrounded (243, Reh. 70). Zadok the priest appears and tells David he has brought the Ark, but David tells him to return with it to Jerusalem (15.24-29).

A messenger arrives and tells David that Absalom has sent emissaries to the twelve tribes to announce that when the sound of the trumpet is heard, he will be proclaimed king of Hebron (15.10). Another messenger comes to tell David that Ahitophel, David's counselor, is leading Absalom's revolt (15.31). In the biblical account, David begs God to 'frustrate Ahitophel's counsel'. In the opera, he adds the phrase 'Absalom is only at the mercy of his impatient youth, and I pray for the father as much as for the son to frustrate his counsel' (246, Reh. 115). The biblical scene with Shimei is enacted next (16.5-13). Milhaud uses particularly harsh dissonances following Shimei's curse, which he yells out (248, m. 3 before Reh. 140). David's words to calm his followers are sung to softer, but still dissonant, music (248-49).

Loud trumpets are heard coming from Jerusalem, and a heraldic chorus sings 'Hosannah! Long live Absalom! Long live the king!' (249, Reh. 150). Their music is in a bright tonal C major, but the orchestra plays low rumbling chromatic passages below them, suggesting danger and dissymmetry (249, Reh. 150). The low ominous rumbling continues as David and Benaya talk about what is happening, and then the orchestra explodes into loud and frenzied measures (251, top). David sings that this is Yhwh showing his anger and brandishing his bow and arrows (251, m. 1 before Reh. 165). Jerusalem is lit by a huge and rosy light in the distance, which Benaya comments is a sign of Absalom's triumph (252, Reh. 175). Then offstage soprano voices representing the ten concubines are heard pleading with Yhwh for pity (252, last measure).

Benaya, in a quick patter rhythm, describes the scene: Absalom is on the terrace of the palace with sword in hand, his servants preparing the nuptial tent while they drag the supplicating concubines, in torn garments, before Absalom (253-54). This is based on 2 Sam. 16.22, but it is a highly dramatized version of the single biblical verse that describes this event. (It is not clear how Benaya is seeing this scene as it unfolds, unless he has binocular vision.) He goes on to say that Absalom is about to exercise his rights as a victor, and David says he does not want to look.

David sings on quarter notes, their deliberate steadiness contrasting with Benaya's nervous 16th-note passages. Then in halting, breathless phrases, David begs Benaya not to look any more (254-55, m. 2 before Reh. 190). Benaya sings 'Abomination!' on four 8th-notes on g#', then drops a diminished octave to a, a very dramatic outburst. David repeats the same word on c#' but on 16th-notes. The music suddenly becomes softer and slower, as David softly repeats Nathan's words to himself: 'David, what you did in secret, one day will be done to you in the sight of heaven and all the people' (paraphrase of 2 Sam. 12. 12). This phrase is sung on a repeated c# and then on f. The F is also played by tubas, to accentuate the text. The chords under this note are A# major and then G minor, both creating dissonances with the F.

An F-major chord is held for the remaining measures, while David asks: 'Is this the final blow? Or the terms of repentance? Only God knows' (255, bottom). The final word is sustained on c, while the F-major chord is still heard in the orchestra, but in the first inversion and against a C7 chord also in the first inversion. The dominant chord and its resolution are played simultaneously, though neither on its dominant tone. This is a completely unresolved conclusion, and the note David sings would fit in either the dominant chord or its resolution. This is an example of a clever musical device that speaks volumes from the written page even if these chords could not be heard clearly when played together.

The chorus, in a lengthy spoken passage (Scene 4: Interlude; not on the recording), recounts David's brilliant strategy of using a spy to discover Absalom's plans (15.33-37, where he engages Hushai). They recount Ahitophel's suicide (17.23), and end by saying that Absalom and his army are now surrounded in the forest of Ephraim (18.6-7). The music is quick and light, in a strong 2/4 rhythm. In the final line, the brass plays a repeated unison A flat and then abruptly ends on B flat. No tonality is indicated in this unison passage, but it ends on a strong yet unsettled note (259, last measure).

In Scene 4, David is waiting to hear the outcome of the battle against Absalom and the rebels. The sentinel announces that he sees two soldiers rushing toward the camp. The music is quick and light, creating a sense of anticipation while suggesting the runners' speed (260, top). They tell David of their victory, but the first messenger avoids telling him of Absalom's death (18.28-30). The second messenger reports not only his death, but in

response to David's question 'How did he die?' (263, m. 3), also relates how he died (summarizing 2 Sam. 18.9-15). On his final phrase, describing Joab putting three arrows through Absalom's heart, the orchestra plays a rapid chromatic descending passage, starting in a high range and dropping quickly, a vivid musical depiction of sudden violent death (264, top). Neither the question nor the response is in the biblical text.

David cries out and moans in grief. He first shouts out 'Enough!' and then moans a long phrase on 'Ah', starting on e' and descending chromatically (264, m. 1 before Reh. 135). Then he sings 'Absalom, Absalom!' on half-step intervals, and continuing this chromatic descent from c', sings mournfully about Absalom's long and heavy hair (referring back to 14.26). Then he repeats his initial three-note phrase, but this time an octave lower, singing 'My child, how beautiful you were' (264, Reh. 145). The stage instructions in the score have him sitting with his head bowed, eyes on the ground, oblivious to everything around him. He then repeats the opening moan, followed by several similar measures. Some measures are slurs sung on 'Ah' (264, bottom), others are large ascending leaps on 'Absalom, my child' (264, Reh. 160, from e-e flat' followed by d-c'). The orchestra plays a series of strongly accented slurs, echoing David's voice (264, m. 2 after Reh. 150, and Reh. 160). Slurs are a characteristic musical expression of grief.

In the biblical version, David goes up to his chamber to mourn, but in the opera he never leaves the scene. Joab intervenes, and tells him it is a day of triumph, not mourning (summarizing 19.2-8). David raises his head and tells Joab he was supposed to spare Absalom, but Joab says no one can be spared when the country is in danger. David realizes Joab doesn't understand, but he thinks the soldiers are 'more human' and he speaks to them from his heart. He rises to address them, 'tense in his grief'. This David displays much more feeling and humanity than his biblical counterpart:

Soldiers, I am a father and a king! A father, betrayed and deeply hurt by his son, who still is my son in spite of all, of my flesh and blood! You have children, so allow a father one night to shed tears that will relieve his sorrow. But your king does not want his grief to cast a shadow on your triumph. Go! Get ready for a great celebration tomorrow.

The tempo slows for this section, which opens with a G-minor chord in the third inversion and with a dissonant E flat in the bass (266, Reh. 200). The home key seems to be G minor but there are frequently intrusive dissonant notes. When David asks the soldiers to allow him to grieve, the key is momentarily G major (267, Reh. 215). Descending slurs are heard in the orchestra in almost every measure and David's music is lyrical. This short solo emerges out of much less tonal music (like several other moments in the opera) as an island of pathos and calm. David's music is louder and higher at the end, when he announces the next day's festivities (268, top). A

clash of cymbals introduces the final measure, and a heavily accented unison B flat reinforces the B-flat minor chord heard in the previous measure.

[L.A. stage directions: the soldiers exit, showing no emotion as they salute David. His back is to the audience, and his shoulders are visibly shaking with his sobbing.]

In Act V, Scene 1 Interval, the remainder of 2 Samuel is briefly summarized, not enacted. A chorus sings:

David pardoned the killers of Absalom, but he still needed the ferocious Joab, who virtually drowned in the blood of the remaining insurgents. Solomon was brought up by Nathan who recognized him as the Beloved of God, and he grew in wisdom. David looked on his defiled harem with horror, and saw the evening of his long life approaching. He no longer left his room, where he shivered.

The music is slow and lyrical. Different voices, singing in unison, alternate in telling the story. The volume builds slightly only in the closing measures, and the final chord is G major which abruptly shifts to G minor (272, final measure). The effect is that of a ray of sun suddenly covered by a cloud, vividly portraying David's shivering. During this chorus, some of David's servants enter slowly carrying David's throne-chair, which they place in the centre of the stage. A few soldiers and guards holding torches amplify the sense of loneliness in the room. David, now an old bent man held up by two slaves, slowly enters, along with a group of women servants.

David is half-seated on his bed, leaning on an elbow. The tempo of the music is brisk, opening with a short modal-like theme played on flute and harp, representing the melody Abishag is playing on her lyre (273, top). This is a broad interpretation of the biblical text, where Abishag was the 'king's attendant and waited on him'. It is probably not historically accurate that a woman could have been a lyre player to a king, but this midrashic invention is not overtly contradicted by the text, and lends more interest to Abishag as a character. Women are occasionally represented in the Bible playing musical instruments: to mention only two examples, Miriam (Exod. 15.20) and Jephthah's daughter (Judg. 11.34) both play the timbrel.

A note in the score describes Abishag as 'very young, dark, both very lively and very sweet' (269). Her vocal line lies very high, almost entirely 'above the staff' and frequently ranging up to a'' or b''. David calls out her name softly and gently several times, and she brings him a glass of wine. He asks if it was she who prepared this aromatic wine, and she says it was. Her answer is accompanied by the flute-harp melody heard at the opening (273, m. 2 before Reh. 40). David continues:

Abishag, you lean on me and like a flower, it is enough for me to inhale you to bring a bit of warmth to my frozen heart.

As if to musically illustrate how David gains strength from Abishag's presence, he sustains his highest pitch, an *e flat*", for two beats at the end of the phrase (274, m. 4 after Reh. 45). When Abishag asks what else she can do to make him happy, she is again accompanied by 'her' musical theme (274, m. 4 after Reh. 50). He asks her to give him his harp, and to sing with him. The text they sing is a paraphrase of Ps. 103.15 (Fig. 49):

Man is like the grass of the fields, Blooming in the morning Dry and stained by evening.

David sings the first phrase, Abishag repeats it, and David continues as she is still completing her line, a kind of *fugato* duet. This duet contains some of the most tonal music in the opera. It opens in D major played in strings and harp in a lilting 3/4 accompaniment. The opening melody is a familiar chorale tune, altered and tweaked by unexpected rhythmical shifts and interesting chord progressions under the voices (275, m. 2 before Reh. 70). A striking feature is the vast difference in range between the voices: in one measure, David is holding an *f* while Abishag sings a *b flat*" two and a half octaves higher (276, m. 1 before Reh. 80). This occurs several times and is a musical way of emotionally separating the two singers, as well as stressing the large age difference.



Figure 49. Milhaud: Abishag.

As Abishag is still repeating the second verse, David breaks off and addresses God (275, last measure):

My God! I was young, and I have aged. Today I am 70 years old.

Abishag repeats this last sentence in the third person, indicating that even as she was singing the second verse of the Psalm, she was also listening to David's every word. Though the effect of hearing David's personal words repeated is oddly parrot-like, it also suggests Abishag's extreme attentiveness to David. The chorale theme is woven in repeatedly as they sing more Psalm verses, with Abishag following and repeating David's words one measure after he sings them (276, m. 1 before Reh. 85):

My God, you have never abandoned me. I will complete my voyage, may your word remain my light right up to the end of my path.

The effect of the repetition is very different from the opening part of the duet, where three measures separated their lines. The voices sing together more in this final section, almost harmonizing in some spots, or moving in parallel phrases. The final repetition of the opening chorale melody is sung by David in the original D major and repeated by Abishag two octaves higher in the next measure (276, m. 2 before Reh. 85). At the conclusion, Abishag sings an ascending scale up to a'', while David's voice moves in the opposite direction, ending on d. They hold this open fifth for four beats while the orchestra softly ascends through several D-major chords that include a dissonant C#—heard as a suspension—to finally end on a high D-major chord, the 'home key' of the duet and its chorale theme (277, m. 95).

This duet is a kind of musical oasis, portraying a David at peace. The fact that his voice descends while Abishag's ascends at the conclusion underlines the difference in their ages and outlook to the future. One looks ahead, one behind. One is at the start of life, the other at the end.

Bathsheba enters now, and Abishag goes to sit discretely in the back of the room, where she remains through the scene 'with her eyes on her embroidery'. When David sees Bathsheba, he puts his harp down and tells her he was waiting for her. She asks him if it is too late, and he answers that it is never too late if one trusts in Yhwh. They seem to be talking about something the audience is not yet aware of.

The music has changed abruptly from the relatively tonic duet just sung (277, 2nd staff). The opening exchange between David and Bathsheba is partly spoken, partly recitative. The accompaniment is chromatic and dissonant, filled with jagged and changing rhythms (277, 2nd-3rd staves). It calms slightly for Bathsheba's next words, when she relates the rumours circulating about Adonijah, the eldest of David's three remaining sons, how he has procured a chariot and horsemen and has Abiathar and Joab with him (1 Kgs 1.19). As if the sad example of Absalom had not sunk in, he is

now trying to succeed David himself. On the first mention of 'Adonijah, the eldest', her voice leaps from g'' down to g', then up a sixth from a' to f'', musically indicating the heightened emotion behind these words (278, m. 1 before Reh. 105). When she speaks of the chariot and soldiers, the brass plays off-the-beat and heavily accented dissonant chords under her voice (278, Reh. 105). She expresses her concerns (paraphrasing and summarizing 1 Kgs 1.15-21):

Bathsheba: David, what will become of me, and of Solomon, our dear son,

if this Adonijah attains the throne?

David: Who has told you he will attain the throne?

The music becomes more lyrical when Bathsheba mentions Solomon, as the strings play legato passages under her. Whether she is expressing real emotion or merely trying to be persuasive, the music does not tell us. But the end of Bathsheba's phrase drops to c#, and David enters on the same note, musically suggesting a close connection between them (279, Reh. 115).

In the biblical version, Nathan tells Bathsheba about Adonijah's insurrection and even tells her what to say. She is supposed to mention Solomon first, but in this libretto she chooses what to say without Nathan's prompting, making her more autonomous, and she mentions Solomon only after telling David about Adonijah's rebellion. There is no mention of an earlier vow David may have made that Solomon would succeed him (1 Kgs 1.17). The addition of 'our dear son' humanizes both Bathsheba and David and recalls their earlier 'reminiscence' duet.

Another interesting touch is to have her say 'this Adonijah', which has a touch of scorn. These words are underlined by dissonant chords (279, m. 1 before Reh. 115), but when Bathsheba contemplates her fate if Adonijah attains the throne, the orchestra plays suspended, 'sad' chords under a repeated series of slurred ascending and descending phrases (279, Reh. 115). These questioning and slightly ominous phrases continue under David's words. When he sings 'he will attain', the voice rises an octave from d# to d#, suggesting a flash of excitement in David (279, m. 2 after Reh. 115).

Nathan enters, and Bathsheba exits. Nathan asks David if he remembers telling Nathan he would build a house for Yhwh. The phrase 'I will build a house for Yhwh' is sung on one repeated pitch while the horns play an accented open fifth and *pizzicato* notes are heard in violas, doubled in bassoons (279, bottom). These musical devices underline and highlight Nathan's words. David remembers Yhwh's response, which he heard through Nathan's mouth:

It is for you first of all, for your people and my people, that I will build an eternal house! And when your days are done, I will raise after you a son, your issue but worthy of me. And it is he, then, who will build my house of stone.

The musical line immediately becomes more lyrical, featuring brief tonal moments. For example, the first measure on the bottom staff on p. 280 opens with an A-flat-minor chord—though with a dissonant intrusive B flat—and a clear C-minor chord is heard two measures later. When David repeats God's words about Solomon being 'worthy of me', he reaches one of his lowest notes, *B flat* (280, m. 2 after Reh. 135), subtly suggesting an imitation of God's voice.

The next section is not on the recording. The music changes abruptly as the voices of Adonijah's supporters are heard in the distance, shouting 'Long live King Adonijah!' Nathan sings over the shouts (281):

From inside your palace, you hear! Crazed by ambition to have himself acclaimed, Adonijah is offering a feast to his brothers and his followers.

Horns and brass predominate in the orchestra, playing many ninths and other still more dissonant chords to jagged rhythms, and growing in volume (281, Reh. 145). This is a vivid musical depiction of chaos and rebellion. As Nathan concludes his speech, Bathsheba, Solomon and Benaya are seen standing guard up above. David stands up, and the music immediately quiets as he sings:

The time has come! Before this night is over, the ingrates will be silent, they will be seeking refuge in the sanctuary.

The measure in which this last word is sung changes abruptly from 4/4 to 3/4 time, and the brass plays several heavily accented dissonant chords like those just heard during Nathan's words. As David concludes, Bathsheba enters holding the young Solomon's hand and David announces that Solomon is to be king. As in other moments of high emotion for David, his range in these measures is very wide. He addresses Bathsheba with a descending octave leap, e' to e (282, m. 2 before Reh. 160; this is where the recording picks up) and in the next measure when he announces Solomon as the next king, his voice reaches f#' before dropping down to f# and ending the phrase on c# (282, Reh. 160). This sounds like a shouted proclamation.

In a total shift, Bathsheba, Solomon, Benaya and Nathan sing two madrigal-like measures, accompanied by only a single sustained chord that dies out after two beats (282, m. 2 after Reh. 160). Bathsheba and Solomon sing in unison with Benaya singing a fifth under them. The predominance of open fourths and fifths gives this brief passage a modal sound, appropriate to the text: 'May our Lord King David live forever!' Several measures in the unstable time signature of 7/8 are a transition to David's blessing of Solomon, which shifts to a steady 3/4 rhythm and a lyrical vocal part (283, top). The words of David's blessing are a very simplified, 'cleansed' and shortened version of 1 Kings 2 (283, top and Reh. 170):

Solomon, I bless you! May God watch over you as he has watched over me! Respect his commandments, and do not forget that if Yhwh saves the just, he punishes the wicked—each to his just reward.

Tonal moments occur at key textual phrases: for example, the phrase 'if Yhwh saves the just' opens on a D-minor chord, and 'he punishes the wicked' opens in D-flat major, though in both instances the tonal moment only lasts for a single beat before moving into progressions of parallel thirds (283, Reh. 175). Omitted completely are David's veiled instructions to Solomon to 'take care' of his enemies (1 Kgs 2.5-6, 8-9). This is just another example of the libretto's whitewashing of David's image.

David then tells Benaya to saddle the royal mule and have Solomon mount it and be taken to be crowned. After Solomon leaves with Benaya and Nathan, David's strength falters. The next scene is completely invented—in the biblical version, David's final words were his instructions to Solomon, after which he died and was buried, with no one's responses recorded (1 Kgs 2.10).

In the opera, Bathsheba and Abishag rush to David and lower him into his seat. In lyrical, emotional music, David expresses gratitude that God has let him live to see his son Solomon succeed him (285, top). The women start crying, and several swooping high violin passages are heard leading to a measure with two strong beats marked in the timpani and harp, playing a B-flat and then a C-major chord (285, bottom). This two-chord *ostinato* is repeated every few measures throughout the aria, a foreboding sound. The swooping high passages played by violins are later played by oboes and flutes. In lyrical but darker music, David reassures them (285, last measure):

I shall have reigned over Israel 40 years. For my God and my people, I have fought, suffered, sung. Soon I shall sleep forever with my fathers.

The phrase 'I have sung' ends on *e'* sustained for 5 beats, musically illustrating the beauty of David's voice and the importance of singing in his life (286, m. 1 before Reh. 230). The final word 'fathers' is sustained for six beats on *a*, punctuated by the two *ostinato* chords heard throughout, here played *ppp* (286, m. 1 before Reh. 240). David's last note is *d*, with a D-major chord in the third inversion in the orchestra. The chord is repeated until reaching its tonic base, but the two *ostinato* chords are repeated one last time, until the dissonance dies out and leaves only the D-major chord.

David sinks forward and clearly has died. The soldiers standing guard slowly lower their torches and as the lights dim, only Bathsheba and Abishag remain.

In Scene 2: Interval (not on the recording), women mourners mingle with the chorus of Israelites to mourn David. Children's voices, coming from the distance and surrounding the entire area of the auditorium, echo the singing of the chorus. To represent sighing sounds, they all sing 'Ah'. Processions fill the stage, and everyone is holding silver palm branches. The children sing a simple little two-measure tune, almost a folk tune that is tonal when taken by itself, but not with the non-harmonic and modal intervals played under it. The tune is also played by different instruments to underline the children's chorus, each time it appears—oboes and clarinets the first two times (287, m. 1 before Reh. 10 and 288, m. 1 before Reh. 15), then later by piccolos, trumpets, or flutes. The children's chorus sings this tune seven times, interrupting the more complex choral parts, until the entire chorus joins them on the eighth and last repetition. The idea of seven repetitions recalls a variety of Jewish liturgical practices. As they all end on a unison G, the orchestra plays a loud C (291, last measure). This leads directly into the next chorus.

Though this children's chorus sings no words, it seems to represent optimism, especially when joined by the full chorus also singing their 'hymn'. It is as though everyone can now join in the affirmation that at first only the children made.

A huge procession enters, with Solomon at its head (Scene 2). This scene is also invented. In solemn and steady 4/4 music, Nathan and Zadok, the head priest, admonish Solomon to think always of his father David, who wanted to be with him right until his final breath (293-94). Solomon takes the Torah and prays to God for wisdom, admitting that he is still only a child. The part is taken by an alto, though Milhaud may have intended it for a boy soprano, suggesting Solomon is still an adolescent.

The gifts Solomon asks for are not a long life, or riches, or the death of his enemies, but only to govern the people God has chosen, to build God's temple, and to rule in wisdom and peace. Musical indicators of Solomon's youth are his voice and the limited range he sings, mostly within a fifth. The use of polytonality is particularly effective here in painting a character uncertain of his place in the world. Solomon's vocal line on its own sounds like G major, C major or A minor, but the accompaniment at times plays two or three of these keys simultaneously. The seeming simplicity of Solomon's little tune is undermined by this harmonic instability (294, bottom-296, top). To solemn music, Nathan and Zadok anoint Solomon. Sudden loud cymbals and loud brass sounds introduce the chorus which hails King Solomon (298, bottom).

The first half of this chorus is not on the recording. In *fugato* form, the chorus of modern Israelis sings 'Glory to King David', to his genius as poet and warrior, to his harp and his sling and his sword (300, bottom to 303, top). The music is very fast and frequently punctuated by trumpets. Then

1. For example, seven blessings are traditionally sung at a Jewish wedding, and the phrase 'The Lord is God' is sung seven times at the conclusion of Yom Kippur services.

the chorus of ancient Israelites sings a different chorus, a very broad fugue in the same fast tempo. The sopranos introduce the theme (303, bottom), opening dramatically and loudly on g''. After eight measures, the basses sing the same theme. Eight measures later, the tenors sing the theme, starting on g' like the sopranos, and lastly the altos join in, starting on the basses' note. They sing (303, bottom to 307, bottom):

Glory to King David, founder of Jerusalem, Capital of the united kingdom, David's capital, Religious home for all of humanity.

Modern Israelis now appear on stage—farmers and field workers—holding olive branches. They fill the heights of the stage towers, and sing choruses of praise to King David. This chorus is also a fugue, in a deliberate and martial-sounding 4/4 rhythm (308, top). It differs from the previous fugue because the parts join in after only a half or one measure, rather than the eight-measure break in the previous chorus. The music is not a clearly audible fugue because the voices are singing in different keys, a device which creates a cacophonous and joyous sound. As the chorus grows louder and more dramatic at the end of the section, a sudden broadening to 4/4 time is very dramatic (312, bottom).

On the stage, a wall behind the chorus is raised to reveal the golden columns of the temple. Children are standing on several platforms holding golden olive branches. Processions of other children enter downstage, also holding these branches. The entire ensemble—modern and ancient Israelites, and children—sings of Israel, now free and safe again. The children's chorus repeats the full chorus's words (312-end), but they sing these words to the short hymn tune they had sung earlier in the scene. Two soloists sing this tune a fifth higher (313, last measure). The children repeat their melody two more times, and in the final measures, the men's voices sing it together with the children. This theme is suggestive of G major, but while all the other voices are singing it in these closing measures, the sopranos sustain a fff C-major interval for three full measures on the word Peace. In the final measure of the opera, all voices come together for this tonality. There could not be a more optimistic or upbeat ending, textually or musically:

No longer captive or exiled, all Israel is safe, everyone under his vine and fig tree.

Jerusalem offers to the whole world the divine and supreme message of justice and of peace.

This opera was written soon after Israel's independence, when the whole world felt joy and relief that there was a Jewish homeland, especially for those Jews who had escaped the Holocaust. That sense of common purpose is gone now, but the opera is a wonderful testament to the mood of its day.

This opera includes more scenes of David's later story than any other musical work I have found. Milhaud and his librettist humanize the characters as no other work does, even a cipher such as Abishag. The less palatable sides of David are left in the shadows in this portrayal, yet he emerges as a three-dimensional character with more passion and emotion than his biblical counterpart.

Conclusion

In the few works discussed here that retell David's later story, Tamar's story is briefly told in Honegger's oratorio and Milhaud's opera, where it is also acted out in pantomime. Tal's chamber opera presents the narrative in full, effectively portraying Amnon's obsessiveness, Tamar's fear and vulnerability, and Absalom's calculated murder of his brother. The story of the widow of Tekoa who convinces David to allow Absalom to return to Jerusalem is included in only one work, Macfarren's oratorio. The lengthy duet portrays the persuasive quality of the woman's text and David's various reactions through vivid music.

David's grief for Absalom is set to some of the most moving music within every work that includes it. Of the four composers discussed here, only Honegger chose to leave it out. Macfarren and Milhaud wrote deeply moving solos for David, which include additional text and in parts of which David sings over the chorus, seemingly oblivious to the crowd's reactions.

The character Abishag is included only in the Milhaud opera, where she is portrayed as a singer who calms David—much as David was brought to Saul at the beginning of his story. The later Bathsheba also has a role in the Milhaud, where she is portrayed as even more independent and strong-willed than in the biblical text. Milhaud even included music for the concubines, and a description of Absalom's act of desecration against them. This must have been shocking to the audience of his day, most of whom probably were not familiar with this narrative.

David's death and Solomon's ascension to the throne are portrayed in Honegger and Milhaud. Honegger includes messianic texts in his triumphant and upbeat ending. Milhaud's ending is also very triumphant. He has presented modern Israel as a parallel to the Israel of David's era throughout the opera. When his opera was performed, the triumphant birth of a new state was uppermost in his audience's mind. This would have intensified the response to the gloriously triumphant conclusion of the opera.

Conclusion

The curtain has come down, the lights are dimmed. Fragments of melodies continue to float through the listeners' minds. 'Music takes up where speech leaves off', in the words of composer Camille Saint-Saëns. Though describing music with words is a challenge, my lengthy descriptions of music, coupled with the discussions of libretto texts, will surely have helped the reader understand and appreciate these powerful and imaginative musical works. I encourage readers to seek out available recordings of the works discussed in this book, to add another dimension to their understanding.

Music is more than a collection of notes on a page of music. In a seemingly magical transformation, groups of notes assembled in a particular way become an art form with the power to stir the imagination, move the soul, and evoke images of another world. The powerful medium of music gives voices to the biblical characters in the books of Samuel. These voices suggest their conflicting emotions—their love, lust, or lunacy; their fear, hope, joy, or grief; and a myriad of other feelings. The biblical writer did not attribute these emotions to the characters he created. But he left spaces between the lines and in the margins large enough to allow later readers to fill in the gaps. Librettos and music not only fill the empty spaces on the pages—they fill the pages themselves with colours and sounds. These musical works create three-dimensional figures, people barely glimpsed between the lines of the biblical text but imagined in different ways by readers in every generation. David, Saul, Samuel, Jonathan, Michal, Bathsheba, the necromancer of Endor: all are brought imaginatively and vividly to life. Familiarity with these renditions will allow us to go back and read the biblical narrative through new and vividly coloured lenses.

Appendix 1

CHARTING THE MUSICAL SETTINGS

The chart on pp. 372-73 illustrates, at a glance, which parts of the books of Samuel were of greatest interest to composers and librettists. These preferences should be understood in the light of several factors:

- Title of the work: David, Saul, or other
- Era of composition
- Genre: opera or oratorio
- Composer's agenda.

Title

Of six nineteenth-century oratorios and one eighteenth-century opera, four bear the title *Saul* or *King Saul* (Handel, Hiller, Parry, Buzzi), two are called *David* or *King David* (Reissiger, Macfarren), and one is entitled *The Kings of Israel* (Nuhn). Of the twentieth-century works, two oratorios have David in the title (Honegger, Brown) and one is *Saul* (Gabriel). Of the operas, those whose librettos span more than a single episode are Nielsen's *Saul and David*, Milhaud's *David*, and Testi's *Saul*. Three works treat only a single episode—Laderman's *And David Wept* only includes the David-Bathsheba story, while Tal wrote two one-act operas treating Saul at Endor and Amnon and Tamar.

The title of a work suggests its focus, so the fact that some scenes are represented more often than others is partially related to the title and focus of the work. Among full works, Saul appears in seven titles, David in six—a fairly even division.

Era

Familiarity with biblical stories was more commonplace in the nineteenth and early twentieth century than in more recent times. Alterations in chronology and omissions of crucial plot elements are common to many librettos, and can probably be attributed to the librettist's assumption of audience familiarity with biblical stories.

		SAUL	TI.			SAUL	SAUL and DAVID				DAVID
		1 Sam 8–15	-15	1 Sam 16 1 Sam 17	I Sam 17	I Sam	1 Sam	1 Sam 28	1 Sam 31 +	2 Sam	2 Sam 13-19 + 1
						18-22	24-26		2 Sam 1–6	11-12	Kings 1-2
		(Chap. 3)	3)	(Chap. 4) (Chap. 4)	(Chap. 4)	(Chap. 5)	(Chap. 6)	(Chap. 7)	(Chap. 8)	(Chap. 9)	(Chap. 10)
	<i>Chaps.</i> 8–9	Chaps. 10 11	Chaps. Chaps. 10- Chaps. 13, 8-9 11 15								
18th Century Handel					×	×		×	×		
19th Century		(;	;			;	(;
Reissiger		0			×	×			×	0	×
Hiller Nuhn			×	××	× o	×	×	××	××		
Macfarren									×	0	×
Parry	×	×	×		×	×	×	×	×		
Buzzi *						×	×		×		
20th Century											
Gabriel			×	×	0	×		×	×		
Honegger				×	×	×	×	×	×	0	×
Brown				×	×	×	0		×		
Nielsen *			×	×	×	×	×	×	×		
Milhand *				×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Tal #1 *								×			
Tal #2 *											×
Laderman *										×	
Testi *				×	0	×	×	×	×		

Key: X The opera or oratorio covers this part of the story O This part is covered, but only briefly

Key to Column Headings

1 Samuel 8–15	Saul's youth, before David (Chapter 3)
1 Samuel 8–9 1 Samuel 10–11 1 Samuel 13,15	Introduction to Saul First and second accounts of his anointing Samuel–Saul encounters (two incidents of God's rejection of Saul)
1 Samuel 16–17	Saul's and David's stories overlap, Part I (Chapter 4)
1 Samuel 16 1 Samuel 17	Saul possessed by evil spirit; David anointed by Samuel, goes to Saul's court, sings for Saul David and Goliath
1 Samuel 18–22	Saul's and David's stories overlap, Part II (Chapter 5)
1 Samuel 18–19	Saul is jealous, attempts to kill David; David bonds with Jonathan; David wins Michal and escapes with her help
1 Samuel 21	David with the priests at Nob
1 Samuel 24–26	Saul's and David's stories overlap: Part III (Chapter 6)
1 Samuel 24, 26 1 Samuel 25	David, a fugitive, spares Saul's life twice Samuel dies; David meets Abigail
1 Samuel 28	Saul visits the Necromancer of Endor (Chapter 7)
1 Samuel 31 + 2 Samuel 1–6	Deaths of Saul and Jonathan, and David's rise to power (Chapter 8)
1 Samuel 31 2 Samuel 1–6	Saul and Jonathan die on the battlefield David mourns Saul and Jonathan, is anointed King of Judah, proclaimed king of all Israel, brings Ark to Jerusalem
2 Samuel 11–12	David and Bathsheba (Chapter 9)
2 Samuel 13–19 + 1 Kings 1–2	David's later story: Tamar, Absalom, and the death of David (Chapter 10)
2 Samuel 13 2 Samuel 14–19 1 Kings 1–2	Amnon rapes Tamar Absalom rebels, is exiled, returns; he dies in battle, David mourns David is ministered to by Abishag; David dies

Genre

Operas tend to include both the more dramatic and more intimate episodes in the story, while oratorio is more chorus-oriented, so oratorios include more crowd scenes. I discuss nine oratorios and seven operas, though three operas treat only single episodes.

Composer's Agenda

This is more obvious in some works than others. As a general rule, the most common agenda is to elevate David, to reaffirm his importance as the great king and unifier of Israel. Saul is more often demonized than elevated, though in some cases he is portrayed sympathetically. The goal of depicting a crazed or even evil Saul is to prove that God made the right choice by rejecting Saul in favour of David.

Some Christian composers go beyond simply elevating David, and also underline his importance in Christian tradition as an ancestor of Christ. This is done more subtly in some works than others.

Love, Lust, and Lunacy in the Musical Retellings

1 Samuel 8-9

The only composer who includes scenes of Saul's youth, in the earliest Samuel chapters represented, is Parry in his oratorio *King Saul*. Reissiger, though his work is entitled *David: Oratorium*, does include a brief scene of Saul's anointing.

1 Samuel 10–15

The Samuel–Saul encounters have dramatic potential, but are only found in two nineteenth and two twentieth-century works. Parry gives Saul's 'evil spirit' a voice, which first appears during the encounter with Samuel—earlier than in the biblical text. Nielsen's 1902 opera *Saul and David* expands the scene and creates a powerful emotional conflict between the two men. Samuel's treatment of Saul is suggested as a cause of Saul's madness. This is the earliest treatment of lunacy in these works.

1 Samuel 16

The depiction of Saul's madness—the 'evil spirit'-- is irresistible to most composers. It is clear from the chart that the few composers who omitted chapter 16 wrote works whose narrative begins later in the story (such as Macfarren or Buzzi). Saul's madness is a key to understanding the biblical story, and music vividly dramatizes his lunacy. The biblical description is too ambiguous to build either sympathy or antipathy for Saul, but music overcomes that ambiguity in powerful ways.

1 Samuel 17

The David–Goliath scene is among the few that is never omitted, unless the chronology of a libretto begins later. Handel chose to open his oratorio with this dramatic scene. Two composers refer to it only in passing (Nuhn, Gabriel), but most include and expand it. Many saw it as an irresistible opportunity to write 'giant' music, and some even modelled their music loosely on Wagner's musical portrayal of the giants in his Ring cycle. The more terrifying the musical image of Goliath, the more heroic the voice of David is made to sound. Such vivid contrast is only possible in music, not in text alone. Their encounter was also seen as another opportunity to glorify David.

1 Samuel 18-22

These scenes, depicting Saul's jealous attempts to kill David, David's bonding with Jonathan and Michal, and his escape, are amply represented in music. The themes of lunacy and love predominate. Many works include Jonathan–David duets; even more include lengthy David–Michal duets to suggest a strong love interest. Trios involving all three characters are also common. Almost all librettos include the pivotal text about David killing his ten thousands (18.7), commonly considered the trigger for Saul's insane jealousy. The incident at Nob, where David takes refuge and Saul subsequently orders all the priests killed, is included in very few works. It was presumably considered too disturbing.

1 Samuel 24-26

The two incidents in which David does not exploit an opportunity to kill Saul are invariably conflated into one, when included at all. The scene is included more often in opera than oratorio, because of its more intimate nature. Musically it presents an opportunity to evoke great pathos and some sympathy for Saul. His paranoia is tested by David's apparent love and devotion, and music is a perfect medium to suggest this kind of emotional conflict. The themes of lunacy and love are intertwined in the fraught relationship between David and Saul. Lust is added to the potent mix in the most recent work included here, Testi's opera.

1 Samuel 25

This chapter opens with the death of Samuel, which is rarely even mentioned in passing. The exception is Nielsen's opera, which includes a grand scene between Samuel and Saul just before Samuel's death. Confusing much of the biblical chronology, the scene also depicts a far angrier Saul than seen in other works. Chapter 25 is mostly the story of Abigail, included uniquely in the Milhaud opera. There, a love scene suggests feelings between David and Abigail that are barely suggested in the biblical text. It is another example

of the predominance of the love theme even in relationships that are far sketchier and more ambiguous in the biblical narrative.

1 Samuel 28

Saul's visit to the necromancer of Endor is another scene rarely omitted from oratorio or opera. Most composers saw it as a chance to create otherworldly music, though in some cases, the necromancer is endowed with the humanity visible in the original biblical text but forgotten by many later interpreters.

1 Samuel 31, 2 Samuel 1

The chart clearly shows that every single work (except the one-act operas) includes these scenes. This is partly because of the overlap between Saul's and David's stories: it is the end of one, and the start of David's life independent of Saul. Saul's death is portrayed in various ways, but in most cases it is related after the event. Only Buzzi and Testi include an actual death scene. What particularly interested me was how many composers, of different eras, included the famous line 'surpassing the love of women.' It was completely excluded in two nineteenth-century oratorios that included the scene (Reissiger and Nuhn), as well as from Parry's work which does not include Jonathan at all, and Buzzi's opera, in which only Michal mourns Saul's death. In the twentieth-century works, both oratorios and operas, this verse is always included though sometimes re-phrased. Only Gabriel omits it, because in his anomalous libretto, Jonathan survives and actually announces Saul's death.

As can be seen on the chart, most musical works end with the death of Saul. Of those that include subsequent chapters, Honegger's and Milhaud's works include lengthy scenes of David entering Jerusalem with the ark. With Saul out of the picture, the lunacy theme is replaced by portrayals of love and lust

2 Samuel 11-12

The story of David and Bathsheba has noticeably scant representation in musical works. The incident is only mentioned in passing in two nineteenth-century oratorios (Reissiger and Macfarren) and one twentieth-century oratorio (Honegger). Milhaud treats it extensively, and Laderman's entire one-act opera is a flashback retelling of their story. The most obvious theme of this story is lust, not even love, since David summons Bathsheba without having even met her. This is probably why so few works include it. Yet in Milhaud's portrayal, lust is not suggested; and in Laderman's, the lust is more Bathsheba's than David's.

2 Samuel 13

Amnon's rape of Tamar has even less representation in music. The story is narrated briefly in Honegger and Milhaud; it is fully acted out only in Tal's

one-act opera. It is unquestionably a story about lust, whether lust for power or for sex, and no later interpreter has dared to frame it otherwise.

2 Samuel 14-19

The story of David's encounter with the Widow of Tekoa is treated by only one composer, Macfarren, in a full scene. The story of Absalom's rebellion and death is narrated in Honegger and acted out in Milhaud. David's lament over his son is heartbreakingly set to music by all composers who included that scene: Reissiger, Macfarren, Honegger and Milhaud. It is one more example of the love theme, in this case David's love for his son. It might be argued that it is the only convincing portrayal of the biblical David loving anyone.

1 Kings 1-2

Abishag's ministering to David is portrayed only in Milhaud's opera. David's address to Solomon is included by Reissiger while Honegger is the only composer to include the census, as well as the crowning of Solomon at the end. Milhaud's opera expands David's death scene, creating pathos and humanizing David. The opera ends with Solomon's coronation.

Appendix 2

Annotated Music Bibliography

This is a listing, with some commentary, of musical settings not included in this book

The amount of commentary provided is related to the degree of access I had to the scores. Those titles completely lacking commentary were located either through a data base search of www.copac.ac.uk or in the card catalog at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. In a few cases, scores were not located in time to be included in this book. This bibliography is not definitive

1. Operas and Oratorios

Assmayr, Ignatz (1790–1862),

1841–42 *Saul und David* and *Sauls Tod*. An intriguing aspect of these two early works is Michal's prominence. She sings several arias, plus duets with Jonathan and David.

Barlow, David (1927-1975)

David and Bathsheba, a one-act church opera based on the biblical story. Libretto by Ursula Vaughan Williams.

Bordier, Jules

Scène biblique. Text by Paul Milliet. The music of this opera is highly romantic, and David is cast as a baritone. There are striking choruses which include David, and a long orchestral interlude entitled 'Dance before the Ark' that includes Basque tambourines.

Broad, J. Astor

David and Saul, dramatic cantata. Libretto by the composer. Broad wrote in the Foreword that the work is 'adapted to Choral Societies, church Festivals, musical conventions and the Home Circle'. Saul has a scene with his Queen, and she sings about his turmoil. The music is like 'salon music' and a weak Handel imitation. King and Queen sing a duet 'Onward onward', a call to battle. The only interest in this work is the addition of Saul's Queen (also found in Testi's 1991 opera). The Queen is a high soprano. David and Jonathan sing a duet; Jonathan sings a solo 'Abide with me', while David sings 'My heart shall ever fondly turn to thee, beloved of my heart'. Michal enters at the conclusion of their love duet. But she is not identified, and could be anyone. She sings a bright and short C-major anthem 'Joy to the victors now'.

Charpentier, Marc Antoine (1643–1704)

Mors Saülis et Jonathae. H. 403. Oratorio. Paris: Costallat, 1978; first performed in 1688.

Cortese, Luigi

1949

David. Text by Ferdinando Cattaneo based on 1 Kings, Psalms, and Song of Songs (according to the Preface in the score; there is also text from 1 Samuel). David is a tenor in this atonal work. In the first part, David sings psalms while the chorus intones his name. In Part 2, a soprano sings a lengthy modal solo on 'Ah', then relates David's exploits. Between other wordless passages, she sings Song of Songs texts. In Part 3, Samuel (baritone) sings to David, 'the chosen one', followed by chorus, and concluding with a prayer asking God to bless David.

Darnton, Charles

1904

David and Jonathan. Words by P. W. Darnton. The music is firmly rooted in the nineteenth century. This is a numbered oratorio, in which chorus predominates. There is not much biblical text, and the narrator is often taken by a female voice. Goliath sings in his scene, and there is a notable Jonathan–David duet with a religious tone, in which Jonathan is a bass and David a tenor, a complete reversal of expectations and against type. After a lengthy elegy, the coronation of David ends the oratorio.

Goldman, Edward M.

1967 David, A Sacred Opera. Independent Music Pub.

Hall, Joseph Lincoln

1922 Absalom. Dramatic Cantata.

Hol, Richard (1825–1904)

1880

David. Opus 81, based on a dramatic poem by W.J. Hofdyk (Dutch). David is a tenor, Jonathan a baritone, Saul and Samuel both bass-baritones, the necromancer a soprano. Goliath sings dramatic music in his scenes, with large vocal leaps. David responds to him in contrasting sweet music in a major key. Michal sings a long victory solo with the chorus. Saul sings a lengthy dramatic aria after 'Saul has killed his thousands'. There is a lengthy Jonathan–David 'love' duet, which Michal joins near the end, singing 'Let the sister join the brother in thanking you'. This is followed by a trio in which the three express love for each other. Saul later sings a long 'mad scene', followed by a contrasting lyrical aria for David, accompanied by harp. Saul comments that a 'demon' is singing through David. Michal and David sing a love duet, then she and Jonathan tell David to flee.

The scene at Endor opens with low, mysterious music, sung initially by eight voices including boys. This would have a spooky effect. Though the witch is a soprano, not the usual contralto, her music is not in a high range. It is filled with tritones and reaches a climactic a''. When she calls up Samuel, chromatic and rapid runs are heard. The long scene with Samuel is highly dramatic.

The lament at Gilboa is sung by an unnamed woman and a messenger. This is followed by David's solo, in which the phrase 'my brother Jonathan' is repeated several times, on descending slurs. In the conclusion, all praise David, while he praises Michal's love and faithfulness and the concluding chorus praises God. David and Michal sing Halleluja over the chorus, as a solo descant.

Many elements in this work are fairly standard in musical settings of the narrative, as has been discussed throughout this book. The opera would merit further analysis.

Horsley, Charles Edward

1850

David In his preface, the composer says that this oratorio is 'an attempt to illustrate, by means of music, certain portions of the life of David rather than as an intention of forming a continuous plot'. The action depicted includes the rejection of Saul, Samuel's anointing of David, a David–Goliath scene and duet, David's coronation, and the bringing of the ark. Women are completely excluded. 'How are the mighty fallen' appears near the very beginning of the oratorio, an odd choice. David sings psalms throughout, as is common to most oratorios. The work apparently lasted over three and a half hours (Smither 2000, 251 n. 15).

Jamouneau, Arthur James

1904 King Saul, a Sacred Cantata. Words by A. Cecil. Leeds: Blackburn & Company.

Klein, Bernhard (1793–1832)

David. Oratorium. Opus 34. Leipzig, Friedrich Hofmeister; no date. Text by C. Körner. Unusual features in this work include a large part for Absalom, a tenor; the casting of David as a bass; and Nathan—who has a big part—as an alto (presumably a trouser role, taken by a woman in male costume). There are two women in the oratorio, named Sulamit and Tirza, so they are unconnected to the biblical story. Unusually for an oratorio, there are more solos than choruses. The focus of the libretto is on the Absalom—David conflict, and on the importance of repentance.

Menken, Alan

1997

King David. A musical with book and lyrics by Tim Rice. A concert version (partially staged) played a limited run on Broadway in 1997, where it received lukewarm reviews. The creators intended it as a modern oratorio, not as a Broadway show. Only excerpts have been recorded (internet Broadway database: http://www.ibdb.com/production.php?id=4728)

Neukomm, Sigismond

1835

David, Oratorio. Words by the Rev. John Webb. Boston: The Handel and Haydn Society. David is a tenor in this very melodious work, which also introduces a new character: David's sister. She appears only in the opening scene, where she bids a lengthy farewell to David before he goes off to the battlefield. The next scene is in the camp, where Goliath sings an aria and then a duet with David, featuring many Handelian runs. Michal thanks God for David's victory.

Part 2 opens with Saul ranting and craving sleep. Jonathan brings David to sing for him, but Saul shouts 'Die, traitor, die!' The events that lead to this outburst are not depicted. Michal, David and Jonathan sing a trio. Saul sings of his regret that he went to 'hags and wizards' and then relates Samuel's words as heard through such a woman, over extensive *tremolos*. He sings a lively *fugato* duet with Jonathan, followed by an orchestral 'Battle Symphony' interlude.

The well-known elegy follows, inspired music filled with slurs and chromatic descents and in a funeral-march rhythm. The High Priest anoints David as the people hail him in a C-major 'Coronation Anthem'. David praises God, then the chorus sings 'From thy loins shall spring a glorious Lord, an everlasting King, Man to redeem', a patently Christian message linking David to Jesus (this was found in another work, Macfarren's). A celestial chorus accompanied by organ only, with a high descant soprano solo reaching high C (c''') several times, is followed by the grand conclusion in the form of a choral fugue.

Many elements in this early oratorio are found in later works. The inclusion of David's sister is an unusual feature, though not crucial to the libretto. The omission of the scenes leading up to Saul's jealousy of David and at Endor, is unusual. Neukomm focuses much more on the chorus and on a religious message than on dramatic moments in the story.

Strickland, Lily (1884–1958)

The Song of David. A dramatic cantata for general use. New York: Chappell & Co. This short work includes text from Samuel and Psalms. Soloists are not generally named and the story is only sketched out. Strickland was a prolific composer who published 395 works for popular use, church and children's performances. She was widely popular, unusually for a woman composer of the early twentieth century.

Wilson, Sheila

1938

'Bathsheba! A Dramatic New Musical Tale of Love, Murder and Regret', edited by Christopher Hussey. London: Golden Apple. This work consists of 'eight original and varied songs, with optional solos, instrumentals and part-singing. It comes with a play, or can be sung simply as a song cycle for choirs'. The most interesting notation in this description is 'Suitable for children aged 8 to 14 years'. The parts of this story suitable for children were at the composer's discretion.

2. Song Settings

Albright, William

'Song to David'. Words: poem by Christopher Smart.

Cooke, James Francis

1918 'King Solomon and King David'.

Diamond, David

1947 'David Weeps for Absalom'.

Duggan, Joseph

1863

c. 1880 'Absalom, or King David's Limbs Were Weary'. Words by N.P Willis. Howells, Herbert (1892–1983)

1923 'King David'. Words by Walter de la Mare. London: Winthrop Rogers.

Moussorgsky, Modest

'Tsar [King] Saul: Song of Saul before Battle'. Text: Lord Byron's *King Saul* from his collection *Hebrew Melodies*. Moussorgsky later rewrote and orchestrated the song. The original version can be heard in a wonderful rendition on a Hyperion CD, 'English Poets, Russian romances' with Russian bass-baritone Vassily Savenko and pianist Alexander Blok. Byron's text is an imagined address by Saul to his son on the battlefield. The song sounds like a sketch of Moussorgsky's famous opera *Boris*

Godunov which was completed five years later, in 1868. American Jewish composer Lazar Saminsky arranged this Moussorgsky song (*King Saul*, 1929) as an anthem for tenor or alto, mixed chorus, piano or organ, trumpet and side drum.

Proctor, Charles

1945 'King David' for voice and piano (Lengnick).

Race, Steve

1968 'Song of King David' for SATB and organ.

Rolle, Johann

1773 David und Jonathan, eine musikalische Elegie. Leipzig: Breitkopf und Sohn This is a lengthy duet for two tenors. David sings some of the text

Sohn. This is a lengthy duet for two tenors. David sings some of the text of the biblical lament, for example 'Weep, daughters of Israel' (2 Sam. 1.24). Jonathan responds to David 'From where I am now, in a peaceful place... I cry no more, I am happy now'. David's response includes the famous verse 'your love surpassed the love of women' (2 Sam. 1.26). Jonathan sings of their undying friendship, and says he is waiting for David.

Rorem, Ned

1946 'Absalom', text by Paul Goodman.

Swift, Frank

1884 'King David's Lament'.

3. Works on the Witch of Endor

Bella, Rudolf

Saul bei der Hexe, an 8-part chorus.

Purcell, Henry

Saul and the Witch of Endor. The title page calls this 'A much admired cantata...as sung in the Covent Garden Oratorios'. It is part of the larger work Harmonia sacra. The opening chorus sings of 'forsaken Saul' who comes to Endor in disguise. The chorus is filled with forlorn sounding chromatic intervals. Saul's opening recitative lines are florid, depicting his excitement. Their dialogue follows the biblical text closely. When the witch recognizes Saul, she sings rapid descending 16th-note passages. This florid singing continues as she describes what she sees. Samuel's bass-baritone line spans a large range, suggesting a figure of authority. At the conclusion of his announcement of Saul's and his son's coming deaths, a short chorus sings farewell to Saul. The music is very slow and filled with mournful suspensions and chromatic intervals.

This short work is significant in not attempting any 'other-worldly' musical effects for the scene, as was done in almost all later works including Handel one century after Purcell wrote this cantata. The overall feeling is one of pathos.

The full work as realized by Benjamin Britten is beautifully performed on a Hyperion CD, 'Britten: Purcell Realizations'.

Reutter, Hermann (1900-1985)

1948 Saul, op. 33. Mainz: B. Scholtt's Söhne. Based on a one-act play by Alexander Lernet-Holenia (1897–1976), a prolific Austrian playwright.

Saul is a baritone, the Witch a soprano. All the other parts are spoken over music. This is Reutter's first opera, and the complex music is rarely tonal.

This unique work transposes the Saul at Endor episode to a modern setting. The household is kneeling for prayer before the evening meal. The Witch sighs and timidly looks around. The 'Bauer' or 'farmer', her husband, worries that she is showing signs of 'her illness' again. Like a 'visionary', she seems to hear a rider approaching in the wind. Her husband tries to calm her, as the music grows increasingly more excited.

Saul enters and insists there is a witch in the house, which the husband denies. In very high and agitated music, Saul asks the woman if she can prophesy. She finally says yes, forlorn and despondent (verzweifelt). She tells him that others have come to her, and that she sees what they cannot, probably the dead. Feeling pressured (gezwungen), she finally sings 'let the king burn me if I must tell the truth', indicating that she has not yet recognized Saul.

Saul and his men tell her to bring up Samuel, but she says there are many with that name and she does not know who it is. A scene follows with no music, as the woman explains that she must go into a deep sleep. Saul tells his men to stop talking, as mysterious music is heard. Saul comments that this sounds like David's song, and in a soliloquy he sings: 'Where is David now? He played like that for me. When I was sad, my heart was so moved, how wonderfully my heart would melt (schmilzt)'. After more ecstatic singing about David, Saul sings about God and God's absence. His singing grows more passionate, and the pitch continually rises, reaching g flat'.

When the woman awakens, she recognizes Saul, calling out his name on a high a flat (a flat"). Then she sees Samuel and describes him. This is the only place that includes a few words from the biblical text. After her vision, she offers Saul food. The opera ends on very eerie music, as Saul agrees to eat.

This work is unusual in several ways: the woman at Endor is not alone and is not even clearly a necromancer, but rather a farmer's wife with special powers. There is one artistic rendition that presented the story this way: Rembrandt's print of the scene bears an uncanny resemblance to this play.

Because the woman is presented as a commoner, she does not recognize Samuel's name. Another unusual element is Saul's musing on David, which is not included in the scene at Endor in any other work I have studied. The woman's shocked recognition of Saul reflected in a high note is found in several other works. Her offer of food is only included in two other works I have studied. Ending this short opera with eating brings it full circle, since it opened as the family was about to sit down to a meal. The play on which the opera is based humanizes both the woman and Saul more than many other retellings.

Appendix 3

LITERARY AFTERLIVES

D.H. Lawrence and André Gide both used David to explore their own notions about different kinds of love. A recent novel about David, Allan Massie's *King David* (1995), depicts David as a very active and bi-sexual man. Others have depicted David in a very negative way, starting with Faulkner, who based his cold, ruthless character Thomas Sutpen in *Absalom*, *Absalom* on David. Other writers focus on Michal or Bathsheba and show their loneliness and isolation that result from David's indifference.

Stefan Heym's intriguing *The King David Report* poses as a first-person account of the scribe hired to record an 'acceptable version' of the story of David's reign during the time of Solomon. Under this guise, Heym suggests many shocking ideas: that David shared Saul's bed from the first night he entered Saul's service (this is told to Ethan the scribe by an aged Michal; Heym, 35). Ethan is not permitted to record this in the official version. Michal later says to Ethan with astonishment: 'King Solomon will decide how you see the man who was twice my husband, the lover of my brother Jonathan and the whore of my father King Saul?' (Heym, 66). The notion that Saul was homosexual was also proposed by Gide, though in his play Saul does not have relations with David. Heym also gives Tamar an afterlife. King Solomon tells Ethan that she has gone insane and been placed in a temple far from Jerusalem by her family, where the priests feed and wash her (Heym, 179).

Modern writers who write about David in love tend to focus on Michal. One example is Aharon Ashman in his play *Mikhal bat Shaul*, written and performed in 1941 by the Habima theatre in Tel Aviv (Itzhaki 2002–2003: 116). This is an interesting parallel to librettos and musical works, almost all of which expand on David and Michal's relationship. Michal is portrayed as a passionate lover who resents David's religious motivation in D.H. Lawrence's play *David*. She is a tragic heroine in Morris Raphael Cohen's 1938 play *King Saul's Daughter*, similarly to Van Doren's poem 'Michal', which focuses on the sad moment of Michal's enforced separation from her husband Paltiel (Jeffrey [ed.] 1992: 505).

David and Bathsheba are not much represented in modern poetry. Even though their story contains powerful emotional and moral themes such as desire, betrayal, murder, regret, and guilt, David is far more often represented as the singer of Psalms, lamenting for Absalom, beloved of Jonathan. Bathsheba plays an important role, by association, in Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*. That book's heroine, Bathsheba Everdene, grows into a wise woman through suffering and misfortune. There are also references to the story of David and Bathsheba in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (La Bossière in Jeffrey [ed.] 1992: 77-78).

Abigail, who is found in only one musical work I discussed (Milhaud), is portrayed in a Mark Van Doren poem as cunning, shrewd and beautiful (Jeffrey [ed.] 1992: 6).

Abishag is linked by some commentators to the Shulammite loved by Solomon in the Song of Songs (1.5; 6.13) through the association of Shunem, her home village, with Shulem (Baumgarten in Jeffrey [ed.] 1992: 6). This may explain why there is a solo for a Shulammite in one musical work. Abishag's paradoxical situation, as a virgin/wife, and widow, has intrigued numerous twentieth-century writers. She is included in only one musical work I have found (Milhaud's opera *David*), vet she inspired numerous poems in Yiddish, German, French, Hebrew, and English (Jeffrey [ed.] 1992: 7). These poems create vivid portraits of both Abishag and David, similarly to what librettos and music for all the characters. There is a fine discussion of the poetry in Murray Baumgarten's chapter on Abishag in David Hirsch and Nehama Aschkenasy's Biblical Patterns in Modern Literature (Brown Judaic Studies, 77; 1984: 127-43). Several of the finest poems can be found in David Curzon's anthology Modern Poems on the Bible (1994), 209-14. There is also an excellent and thorough discussion of Abishag in literature in Leslie Cushing Stahlberg's 'From Biblical Blanket to Post-Biblical Blank Slate: The Lives and Times of Abishag the Shunammite', in From the Margins 1: Women of the Hebrew Bible and their Afterlives (ed. Peter Hawkins and Lesleigh Cushing-Stahlberg; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009).

GLOSSARY OF MUSICAL TERMS

Notes on the *musical notation system* used in this book:

To indicate the range in which a particular note is found, I utilize the 'Helmholz pitch notation' system to distinguish octaves. There are different systems, but this is one of the most common ones used in Europe. The Helmholz scale starts on a C. The so-called 'middle C' is the note that lies just about in the middle of a standard piano keyboard. In the Helmholz system it is notated as c', continuing up the octave with d'-e'-f', etc. Notes that lie one octave above middle C are notated c''-d''-e''-f'', etc., and higher than that, starting with the so-called 'high C', as c'''-d''', etc. The octave lying just below middle C is notated c-d-e-f, etc. The notes that lie two octaves below middle C are notated with capital letters, i.e. C-D-E, etc.

A cappella: choral or vocal music without instrumental accompaniment.

Aria: an extended lyrical vocal solo. An arioso is a very short aria.

Arpeggio/arpeggiated: broken chord, where the notes of the chord are played one after the other, in the manner of a harp (from Italian *arpa*).

Atonal: music with no tonal centre or key signature. Certain composers, starting in the twentieth century, completely gave up the musical idea of 'expectation.' Their scales lack a root or home key, so the music is adrift and conveys a lack of grounding (Levitan 2006: 114).

Augmented chord: an interval wider by a half-step than a perfect interval (i.e., a third, fourth, fifth, etc.).

Bitonality: A bi-tonal passage is one in which two keys are heard simultaneously; for example, in a duet each character is singing in a different key, creating a somewhat dissonant sound.

Cavatina: an aria without a second section or a *da capo* (recapitulation of first section).

Chromaticism: progressing in semi-tones (half-steps) (from Greek *chroma*, color).

Consonance: harmony; notes harmonious with each other that need no resolution.

Counterpoint: the art of polyphonic, as opposed to homophonic composition: adding one or more melodies to one given melody according to a set of rules (from Latin punctus contra punctum, point against point). When counterpoint is applied to a composition, it is contrapuntal.

Dissonance: pitches played together that cause a discord and require resolution. Recent research has determined that the brain stem and dorsal cochlear nucleus—among the most primitive of structures—can distinguish between consonance and dissonance. Therefore, this distinction is very basic, and the listener does not need to be a musician to make it.

Fugato: a passage that imitates a fugue but is not worked out strictly as a real fugue.

Fugue: a highly developed form of contrapuntal imitation, in which a theme is heard first in one part and then taken up successively by all participating parts (from Latin *fuga*, flight, describing the chasing of the theme throughout the parts).

Glissando: a continuous slide through several pitches. In sung music, the same as *portamento*.

Harmony: the combination of tones and chords that produces music.

Homophonic: music in which one voice leads and the accompaniment is simple and chordal (lit. alike in sound or pitch).

Inversion: the notes of a chord do not follow their standard order, creating a sense of lack of resolution. The lowest note of an inverted chord is not the root of the chord.

Key: the series of tones that form a scale. The key is named after its key-note; i.e. the C major scale begins on a C. The *key signature* is the notation that indicates the key of a musical selection.

Legato: to be played in a smooth, connected way, without a break between notes (from Italian, bound or tied).

Leitmotif: a theme associated with an event or character, especially in opera, that is repeated throughout the work. Similar to the reminiscence motif but more developed.

Marcato: marked, accented, heavily emphasized.

Melisma: in vocal music, when one syllable is sung to six or more notes.

Mode/modality: a particular arrangement of notes and patterns of intervals.

Orientalizing: in music or art, an exotic way of depicting culture or people of the Middle East. Particularly popular in the late nineteenth century.

Ostinato: a short, incessantly repeated musical pattern.

Pitch: the position of a tone in a musical scale.

Pizzicato: plucking the strings of a stringed instrument with the finger.

Polyphonic: essentially the same as *contrapuntal*.

Polytonality: the simultaneous use of two or more tonalities or keys superimposed upon each other but remaining distinct.

Recitative: a style of declamatory singing in which lines are half spoken and half sung.

Relative key (major/minor): two keys that share a common key signature: for example, C major and A minor both have no sharps or flats.

Rhythm: the relationship between the length of one note and another; a crucial part of what makes music.

Slur: two or more notes are played on one bow-stroke, in strings, or sung on one syllable, in vocal music. The slur mark indicates the phrase should be *legato*, or smooth. A *seufzer* (from the German for 'sigh') is a descending slur.

Staccato: detached, jerky; the opposite of legato. Tones are abruptly disconnected.

Tessitura: the range in which most notes of a piece occur. If most are high notes, it is said to 'lie' high, indicating a high *tessitura*.

Tremolo: the regular, rapid repetition of a single note, or a rapid alteration between two notes. It often represents a moment of suspense.

Triad: a three-note chord, consisting of the root plus its third and fifth.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MUSICAL WORKS (CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)

Handel, Georg Friedrich

1738 *Saul.* Libretto: Charles Jennens [numerous publications].

Reissiger, Carl

1852 David: Oratorium in Zwei Teilen (Oratorio in Two Parts). Words from the Bible. Offenbach, Germany. Edition mf, c.1998.

Buzzi, Antonio

1852 Saul: tragedia lirica in quattro atti di Camillo Giuliani. Firenze, Milano: Ricordi.

Hiller, Ferdinand

1858 Saul. Libretto: Moritz Hartmann (1821–1872). Leipzig: Fr. Kistner.

Nuhn, Friedrich

1867 *Die Könige in Israel (The Kings of Israel*). Libretto by the composer. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel.

Macfarren, Sir George

1883 King David. Text from the Bible. London: Stanley Lucas, Weber & Co.

Parry, C. Hubert H.

1894 *King Saul.* Libretto: Biblical text and the composer. London and New York: Novello, Ewer & Co.

Gabriel, Charles Hutchinson

1901 Saul, King of Israel: A Dramatic Cantata for Choirs and Choral Societies.
Libretto by Willis B. Perkins. Fillmore Brothers.

Nielsen, Carl

1902 Saul og David. Libretto: Einar Christiansen. Copenhagen: W. Hansen, 1931 (Danish/German).

Honegger, Arthur

1924–25 *Le Roi David.* Libretto: Bible and René Morax. Lausanne: Foetisch Frères.

Milhaud, Darius

1954 David. Libretto: Armand Lunel. Tel Aviv: Israeli Music Publications.

Tal, Josef

1957 Saul at Endor: Libretto in English, German, and Hebrew (biblical text).
Tel Aviv: Israeli Music Publications.

1959 *Amnon and Tamar*: Opera in One Act. Libretto: Recha Freier. Wiesbaden: Impero-Verlag.

Brown, Christopher

1970 David, A Cantata, opus 21. Text from the Old Testament and from 'A Song to David' by Christopher Smart. London: J. & W. Chester. Laderman, Ezra

1971 *And David Wept*, a sacred music drama. Librettist: Joe Darion. New York: Oxford University Press.

Testi, Flavio

1991 Saül. Opera based on the play by André Gide. Milano: Casa Musicale

Sonzogno di Piero Ostali, 1993.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Culture, Entertainment and the Bible (JSOT Supplement Series, 309;

Aichele, George (ed.)

2000

	Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press).			
Alter, Robert	,			
1981	The Art of Biblical Narrative (New York: Basic Books).			
1992	The World of Biblical Literature (New York: Basic Books).			
1999	The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel(New			
	York: W.W. Norton).			
Amit, Yairah				
2001	Reading Biblical Narratives. Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible			
	(Minneapolis: Fortress Press).			
Aschkenasy,				
1998	Woman at the Window: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape (Detroit:			
	Wayne State University Press).			
1995	Eve's Journey: Feminine Images in Hebraic Literary Tradition (Detroit:			
	Wayne State University Press).			
Bach, Alice				
1997	Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative (Cambridge:			
	Cambridge University Press).			
1994	'The Pleasure of her Text', in Brenner (ed.) 1994: 106-29.			
Bach, Alice (e				
1990	The Pleasure of her Text: Feminist Reading of Biblical and Historical			
	Texts (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International).			
Bailey, Randall				
1990	David in Love and War: The Pursuit of Power in 2 Samuel 10–12			
D 70 . 01	(Sheffield: JSOT Press).			
Bar-Efrat, Shimon				
1997	Narrative Art in the Bible (JSOT Supplement Series, 70; Sheffield:			
D 1 m; 4	Sheffield Academic Press).			
	y, and David Gunn			
1997	Reading Bibles, Writing Bodies (London: Routledge).			
Bellis, Alice				
2007	Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes (2nd edn, Louisville, KY: Westminster			
Danlin Addit	John Knox Press).			
Berlin, Adele				
1994	Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative (Winona Lake, IN:			

'Tamar and the "Coat of Many Colors", in Brenner (ed.) 2000: 65-83.

Eisenbrauns).

Bledstein, Adrien Janis

2000

Bodi. Daniel

2006 The Michal Affair: From Zimri-Lim to the Rabbis (Hebrew Bible Monographs, 3: Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press).

Bodner, Keith

2008 David Observed: A King in the Eyes of his Court (Hebrew Bible Monographs, 5; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press).

Borgman, Paul

2008 David, Saul, and God: Rediscovering an Ancient Story (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Brenner, Athalya, and Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes

1996 On Gendering Texts (Biblical Interpretation Series, 1; Leiden: Brill).

Brenner, Athalya (ed.)

1994 A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press).

2000 Samuel and Kings: A Feminist Companion to the Bible, Second Series (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press).

Camp, Claudia

1992 '1 and 2 Kings', in *The Women's Bible Commentary* (ed. Carol Newsom and Sharon Ringe; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press), 96-109.

Church, D.M.

1969 'Structure and Dramatic Technique in Gide's *Saul* and *Le roi candaule*', *PMLA* 84: 1639-43 (http://www.jstor.org/pss/1261511).

Clines, David, and Tamara C. Eskenazi (eds.)

1991 Telling Queen Michal's Story: An Experiment in Comparative Interpretation (JSOT Supplement Series, 119; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press).

Clines, David, ed.

1995 Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, II (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press).

Clum, John M.

n.d. 'Modern Drama' in glbtq: online encyclopaedia of glbtq culture (http://www.glbtq.com/literature/modern_drama,2.html).

Collaer, Paul

1982 Darius Milhaud (Geneva and Paris: Editions Slatkine).

Davies, Andrew

2007 'Oratorio as Exegesis: The Use of the Book of Isaiah in Handel's *Messiah*', in *Retellings: The Bible in Literature, Music, Art and Film* (ed. J. Cheryl Exum; Leiden: Brill).

Dennis, Trevor

1994 Sarah Laughed: Women's Voices in the Old Testament (Nashville: Abingdon Press).

Donnet-Guez, Brigitte

2002–2003 'L'ambiguïté du personage de Bethsabée à travers la littérature rabbinique' in *Yod: Revue des études hébraïques et juives modernes et contemporaines* 8: 65-84.

Downey, Katherine Brown

2004 Perverse Midrash: Oscar Wilde, André Gide, and Censorship of Biblical Drama (New York/London: Continuum).

Exum, Cheryl

1993 Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International).

1996 Plotted, Shot, and Painted; Cultural Representations of Biblical Women (JSOT Supplement Series, 215; Gender Culture, Theory, 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press).

1996 *Tragedy and Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Exum, Cheryl (ed.)

2007 Retellings: The Bible in Literature, Music, Art and Film. (Leiden: Brill).

Fewell, Danna, and David M. Gunn

1991 Gender, Power, and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story (Nashville: Abingdon Press).

Firth, David

2008 'David and Uriah', paper delivered at a meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study.

Fokkelman, J.P.

1981 Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel. I. King David (II Samuel 9–20 & I Kings 1–2) (Assen: Van Gorcum).

Friedman, Daniel

2002 To Kill and Take Possession. Law, Morality, and Society in Biblical Stories (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers).

Frymer-Kensky, Tikva

1992 *In the Wake of the Goddesses* (New York: Fawcett Columbine).

2002 Reading the Women of the Bible (New York: Schocken Books).

Gerbrandt, Carl

2006 Sacred Music Drama: The Producer's Guide Second Edition. (Bloomington, IN: author-house).

Gide, André

1942 *Théâtre* (Paris: Librarie Gallimard).

Ginzberg, Louis

1968 The Legends of the Jews (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society).

Grynberg, Maïa

2002–2003 'La figure de Bethsabée dans la peinture européenne, un prétexte au nu', Yod: Revue des études hébraïques et juives modernes et contemporaines, 127-48.

Halbreich, Harry

1995 Arthur Honegger (Geneva: Slatkine).

Hall, J.H.

1914 Biography of Gospel Song and Hymn Writers (New York: Fleming H. Revell).

Halpern, Baruch

2001 David's Secret Demons. Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company).

Halpern, Baruch, and Jon Levenson

1980 'The Political Import of David's Marriages', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99: 513-16.

Hertzberg, H.W.

1964 *I and II Samuel: A Commentary* (Old Testament Library; London: SCM Press).

Heym, Stefan

1984 *The King David Report* (London: Abacus; first published in the UK by Hodder & Stoughton, 1973).

Hirsch, David, and Nehama Aschkenasy (eds.)

1984 Biblical Patterns in Modern Literature (Brown Judaic Studies, 77; Chico, CA: Scholars Press)

Horner, Thomas

1978 *Jonathan Loved David* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press).

Itzhaki, Masha

2002–2003 'Les traces du récit biblique dans la poésie contemporaines—Etude intertextuelle', *Yod: Revue des études hébraïques et juives modernes et contemporaines*, 113-27.

Jeffrey, David Lyle (ed.)

1992 A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).

Jennings, Theodore W., Jr

2005 Jacob's Wound: Homoerotic Narrative in the Literature of Ancient Israel (New York: Continuum).

Kaddari, Menahem Zevi

2006 A Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press).

Kirsch, Jonathan

2000 King David: The Real Life of the Man Who Ruled Israel (New York: Ballantine Books).

Klein, Lillian

2000a 'Michal, the Barren Wife', in Brenner (ed.) 2000: 37-47.

2000b 'Bathsheba Revealed', in Brenner (ed.) 2000: 47-65.

Landowski, Marcel

1978 *Honegger* (Paris: Seuil).

Lemaire, André

2002–2003 'David, Bathsabé et la maison de David—Une approche historique', *Yod:* Revue des études hébraïques et juives modernes et contemporaines, 51-54.

Leneman, Helen

2000 'Portrayals of Power in the Stories of Delilah and Bathsheba: Seduction in Song', in *Culture, Entertainment and the Bible* (ed. George Aichele; JSOT Supplement Series, 309; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press), 139-56

2007 The Performed Bible: The Story of Ruth in Opera and Oratorio (The Bible in the Modern World, 11; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press).

Levinson, Deirdre

1994 'The Psychopathology of King Saul', in *Out of the Garden: Women Writers on the Bible* (ed. Christina Büchmann and Celina Spiegel; New York: Fawcett Columbine).

Levitin, Daniel J.

2007 This Is your Brain on Music:. The Science of a Human Obsession (New York: Penguin Group).

Loewenberg, Alfred

1955 Annals of Opera: 1597–1941 (Geneva: Societas bibliographica).

McKay, Heather A.

1998 'She Said to Him, He Said to Her: Power Talk in the Bible, or Foucault Listens at the Keyhole'. *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 28/2: 45-51.

2008 'Study in Seduction: David and Abigail in Psychological Perspective'. Paper presented at SBL International Meeting, Rome, July 2009.

McKenzie, Steven L.

2000 King David: A Biography (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Milhaud, Darius

1982 Notes sur la musique: essais et chroniques (Paris: Harmoniques Flammarion).

1987 *Ma vie heureuse* (Paris: Pierre Belfond).

Nikkels, Paul N.

Sounds of War: Historical, Chronological, and Literary Implications of Military Vocabulary in Exodus 15, Judges 5 and 1 Samuel 17. PhD diss., University of Sheffield.

Nissinen, Martti

1998 *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press).

Nutkowicz, Hélène

2002–2003 'Propos autour de la mort du premier enfant de David et Bethsabée.
2 Samuel 11. 2-12, 24', Yod: Revue des études hébraïques et juives modernes et contemporaines, 31-40.

O'Kane, Martin

1998 'The Biblical King David and his Artistic and Literary Afterlives', Biblical Interpretation 6, 311-47.

Philips, Tarja

2006 Menstruation and Child Birth in the Bible: Fertility and Impurity (Studies in Biblical Literature, 88; New York: Peter Lang), 25-28.

Reinhartz, Adele

1994 'Anonymous Women and the Collapse of the Monarchy: A Study in Narrative Technique', in Brenner (ed.) 1994: 43-68.

Robert, Philippe de

2002–2003 'L'art du conteur en 2 Samuel 11 et 12', *Yod: Revue des études hébraïques et juives modernes et contemporaines* 8, 55-63.

Rosenberg, Joel

1987 '1 and 2 Samuel', in Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (eds.), *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press).

Rosenblatt, Jason P. and Joseph C. Sitterson, Jr. (Eds.)

1991 Not in Heaven. Coherence and Complexity in Biblical Narrative (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

Roy, Jean

1968 Darius Milhaud, l'homme et son oeuvre (Paris: Editions Seghers).

Sacks, Oliver

2007 *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain* (London: Picador).

Sadie, Stanley (ed.)

1980 The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (20 vols.; London: MacMillan; Washington, DC: Grove's Dictionaries of Music).

1992 The New Grove Dictionary of Opera (4 vols.; New York/London: Mac-Millan)

2001 The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (29 vols.; New York: Grove, 2nd edn).

Sasson, Jack

2002

'Absalom's Daughter. An Essay in Vestige Historiography', in The Land That I Will Show You. Essays on the History and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East in Honor of J. Maxwell Miller (ed. J. Andrew Dearman and M. Patrick Graham; JSOT Supplement Series, 343; London: Sheffield Academic Press), 179-96.

Schroer, Silvia, and Thomas Staubli

2000

'Saul, David and Jonathan—the Story of a Triangle? A Contribution to the Issue of Homosexuality in the First Testament', in Brenner (ed.) 2000: 22-36.

Shargent, Karla G.

1994

'Living on the Edge: The Liminality of Daughters in Genesis to 2 Samuel', in Brenner (ed.) 1994: 26-43.

Shaw, G.B.

1981

Shaw's Music: The Complete Musical Criticism in Three Volumes (ed. Dan Laurence; New York: Dodd, Mead), 2: 998-99.

Smith. Carol

1997

'Challenged by the Text: Interpreting Two Stories of Incest in the Hebrew Bible', in A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press).

Smither, Howard E.

2000

A History of the Oratorio. IV. The Oratorio in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press).

Spratt, Geoffrey K.

1987

The Music of Arthur Honegger (Cork: Cork University Press).

Stansell, Gary

1996

'Honor and Shame in the David Narratives', in Honor and Shame in the World of the Bible (ed. Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin; Semeia, 68; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature).

Sternberg, Meir 1987

The Poetics of Biblical Narrative (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press).

Stone, Ken, ed.

2000

Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press; and Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press).

Thompson, John

Reading the Bible with the Dead (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans). 2004

Trible, Phyllis

1984

Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives (Philadelphia: Fortress Press).

Valler, Shulamit

1994

'King David and "his" Women: Biblical Stories and Talmudic Discussions', in Brenner (ed.) 1994: 129-43.

Whiston, William (trans.)

1987

The Works of Josephus, Complete and Unabridged (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers).

Index

Abigail ix, 1, 8-11, 35, 37, 41, 79, 151-	247, 284, 287, 288, 335, 346,		
154, 170-173, 175, 178	348, 349, 355		
Abishag ix, 9, 35, 37, 39, 322, 323, 325,			
333, 334, 361-363, 366, 369	Emotion 1-4, 7, 12, 19, 37, 38, 43, 47,		
	48, 50, 60, 65, 75, 95, 99, 104-		
Alto 5, 27, 29, 41, 127, 165, 176, 193,	106, 119, 132, 146, 152, 154,		
249, 250, 258, 367, 368	156, 159, 160, 162, 166, 167,		
	171, 173, 200, 204, 218, 219,		
Baritone 5, 18, 20-22, 24, 25, 27, 32,	227, 229, 232, 235, 248, 254,		
35, 38, 40-47, 55, 59, 73, 74, 85,	259-261, 284, 287-290, 293, 295,		
91, 92, 98, 108, 132, 134, 159,	297, 300, 304, 312, 313, 317,		
165, 171, 181, 227, 248, 250,	318, 326, 329, 336, 347, 358,		
251, 252, 253, 259, 283, 295,	361, 362, 364-366, 369, 370		
303, 308, 336, 343, 348, 353	Enharmonic 140, 190, 191, 193, 241,		
Bass 5, 18, 20, 21, 26, 27, 32, 34, 35,	255, 294, 307, 314		
38, 41, 42, 44, 45, 47, 108, 115,	Evil spirit 6, 24, 26, 56-58, 63-67, 71,		
118, 122, 137, 164, 173, 181,	73, 74, 76, 78, 85, 101-103, 109,		
183, 188, 191, 200, 201, 204,	118, 121, 158, 174, 181, 188-		
212, 229, 233, 235, 245-249,	190, 236		
251, 255, 258, 264, 281, 286,			
288, 294, 295, 308, 314, 315,	Gabriel, Charles Hutchinson 5, 16, 27,		
336, 338, 342, 343, 348-352,	28, 49, 58-60, 63, 68, 89, 127-		
355, 356, 360, 368	130, 150, 193, 195, 214, 241,		
Brown, Christopher 17, 31, 32, 73, 74,	242, 271		
89, 91, 100, 132, 135, 164, 174,	Gap 1, 5, 6, 8, 10, 15, 28, 58, 61, 77,		
247, 252, 271	80, 83, 103, 105, 122, 130, 167,		
Buzzi, Antonio 5, 17, 26, 49, 116, 124,	192, 218, 260, 267, 273, 276,		
150, 160, 174, 238, 271	278, 298, 304, 343, 370		
	Gide, André 29, 46-49, 80, 81, 100,		
Chromatic 17, 50, 89, 112, 131, 138,	103, 104, 118, 144, 145, 147,		
141, 156, 172, 183, 189, 192-	149, 210-213, 268, 269, 271		
194, 203-205, 207, 226, 243,	Goliath 6, 49, 64-67, 77, 80, 82-84,		
246, 249, 266, 268, 286, 288,	87-100, 105, 107, 110, 114, 117,		
292, 293, 297, 299, 304, 305,	125, 126, 135, 140, 141, 162		
308, 311, 316, 346, 350, 352,	Grief 12, 20-23, 32, 68, 69, 112, 131,		
355, 358, 360, 363	150, 155, 160, 218, 223, 225,		
Contralto 5, 20, 21, 24, 26, 27, 32, 35,	226, 232, 240, 244, 248, 249,		
41, 46, 56, 57, 63, 72, 176, 180,	253, 254, 260, 269, 280-282,		
186, 191, 194, 198, 230, 243,	288, 330, 335, 351, 358, 360,		
	369, 370		

```
Handel, Georg Friedrich 5, 16-19, 25,
       49, 82, 83, 100, 107-110, 150,
       176, 180, 181, 186, 222, 223,
       232, 250, 270
Harmony 7, 10, 20, 30, 31, 35, 36, 40,
       56, 70, 72, 76, 92, 95, 100, 102,
       108, 110, 111, 113, 117, 118,
       124, 126, 133, 134, 142, 147,
       158, 166, 167, 170, 173, 204,
       223, 241, 247, 259, 261, 283,
       291, 307, 309, 311, 314, 336,
       353, 357, 363, 367
Hiller, Ferdinand 17, 20, 21, 53, 66,
       84, 100, 114, 116, 117, 122, 123,
       154, 156, 174, 180, 182, 212,
       214, 224, 270, 271
Homoeroticism 47, 48, 76, 104, 117,
       129, 222, 256
Homophonic 40, 50, 112, 129, 132,
       143, 225, 232, 237, 253, 287,
       291, 316, 317, 336, 343
Honegger, Arthur 16, 17, 29-31, 35, 47,
       72, 74, 89, 130-132, 164, 174,
       196, 214, 243, 245, 247, 264,
       271, 287, 288, 318, 334, 354,
       355, 357, 369
Laderman, Ezra 5, 18, 43-45, 281, 289,
       295, 314, 318, 357
Lament, 4, 24, 88, 104, 156, 176, 205,
       215-217, 224-226, 229, 231, 232,
       236, 240, 243, 244, 247-250,
       256, 259, 269, 271, 272, 289-
       291, 295, 311, 312, 334, 343, 351
Leitmotif 1, 25, 33, 38, 80, 99, 156, 174,
       198, 205, 207, 297, 305, 306, 338
Macfarren, George 5, 16, 17, 22-25,
       238, 282-284, 287, 334, 335,
       337, 345-349, 353, 354, 369
Madness 6, 8, 14, 15, 19, 21, 22, 26,
       33, 34, 47, 49, 52, 58, 62, 63, 65,
       67, 73, 76, 79, 99, 102, 103, 108,
       112, 123, 127, 128, 141, 144,
       149, 156, 181, 193, 203, 205,
       236, 239, 241, 309
Mendelssohn, Felix 20, 23, 25, 68, 122,
       155, 284, 287, 336, 343, 352
```

Mezzo-soprano 5, 26, 31, 32, 35, 42-46,

```
72, 73, 91, 92, 132, 134, 248-
       250, 252, 253, 295, 297, 343
Milhaud, Darius ix, 5, 18, 29, 35-41, 76,
       80, 97, 98, 100, 139, 141, 142,
       154, 170, 173-175, 178, 201,
       204, 214, 256, 259, 267, 268,
       271, 281, 288, 289, 293-295,
       318, 334, 337, 357, 358, 367, 369
Modulation 56, 67, 83, 87, 88, 112, 114,
       118, 121, 143, 149, 155, 173,
       187, 189, 192, 200, 204, 229,
       233, 235, 249, 251, 255, 262,
       283, 300, 315, 336, 348, 351, 356
Necromancer 5, 6, 19, 21, 35, 40, 46,
       48, 49, 126, 147, 148, 176-214,
       230, 237, 253, 370
Nielsen, Carl ix, 17, 32-34, 60, 63, 74,
       93, 100, 135, 150, 165, 174, 175,
       197, 200, 201, 214, 253, 256, 271
Nuhn, Friedrich 16, 17, 21, 67, 86, 185-
       188, 214, 226, 230, 270, 271
Orientalism 30, 37, 50, 72, 73, 159,
       244, 249, 297, 299, 300, 306
Parry, C.H.H. 17, 24-26, 54, 55, 58, 59,
       63, 86-88, 100, 117, 121, 123,
       156, 158, 160, 174, 188, 192,
       193, 233, 235-238, 270, 271
Polytonality 36, 38, 40, 291, 367
Psalms 7, 23, 30, 31, 33, 49, 53, 68, 72,
       73, 75, 79, 84, 91-93, 119, 122,
       130, 131, 134, 135, 141, 147,
       165, 229, 238, 242, 245, 247,
       281, 282, 288, 294, 343, 347-
       349, 353-355, 363
Recitative 48, 53, 59, 67, 68, 71, 73, 74,
       82, 84-86, 108, 109, 114, 121,
       123, 129, 132, 134, 143, 156,
       157, 160, 171, 180, 182, 185,
       186, 189, 191, 192, 223, 224,
       226, 238-240, 242, 248, 251,
       257, 258, 263, 281-285, 288,
       313, 335, 336, 345, 347, 363
Reissiger, Carl 17, 19, 20, 49, 53, 83,
       112, 150, 223, 271, 281, 282,
```

334, 343

Index 399

- Repentance 24, 61, 62, 69, 71, 167, 168, 174, 273, 282, 287, 288, 311, 318, 359
- Soprano 5, 18, 20-24, 26, 29, 31-35, 39, 40, 45, 49, 72, 73, 82, 94, 116, 124, 127, 128, 130, 132, 139, 164, 165, 167, 169, 232, 238, 243, 245-249, 251, 253, 256, 258, 293, 295, 336, 338, 348, 349, 352-354, 356, 358, 367, 368 Sorceress 31, 46, 201-204, 210-214
- Tal, Josef 18, 21, 41-43, 180, 205, 210, 212, 214, 330, 334, 338, 369

 Tenor 5, 18-22, 24, 26, 27, 29, 32, 34, 35, 40-43, 45, 46, 48, 68, 74, 86, 94, 120, 128, 130, 131, 139, 143, 164, 176, 180, 181, 230, 245-249, 251, 256, 258, 295, 343, 353, 354, 356, 368

Testi, Flavio 5, 18, 46-49, 80, 99, 100, 103, 118, 144, 147, 157, 173, 174, 210, 214, 268, 269, 271, 338

- Tonic 79, 99, 143, 147, 149, 172, 204, 246, 252, 297, 300-302, 304, 312, 315, 316, 318, 350, 351, 363, 366
- Verdi, Giuseppe 34, 62, 63, 124, 160, 162, 178, 199-201, 211, 238, 242, 255, 351

 Voice type 5, 41, 47, 343
- Wagner, Richard 20, 25, 32-34, 137, 139, 156, 186, 190, 198-201, 255, 292
- Witch 18-21, 24, 26, 27, 32, 34, 35, 49, 176, 178, 180-186, 188, 190-195, 197, 205, 210, 214, 230, 233-237