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Manifestations of Myth in Antonin Dvořák's *Stabat Mater*

Pia Marie Rodriguez

A departmental senior thesis submitted to the Department of Music at Trinity University in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with departmental honors.

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Introduction

How does one empathize with the divine in a secular age? How does humanity see and understand itself through this archetypal other? As a religious studies and sacred music scholar, these questions have implicitly and actively guided my research in this thesis.

I first discovered the *Stabat Mater* text in the fall of 2014, through TMEA All-State Choir audition repertoire. The sorrowful dissonances of Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* inspired a deep love of and scholarly interest in the text. By late 2020, I knew I wanted to write my thesis on some setting of this beautiful and beloved poem. When Dr. David Heller, chair of the music department, introduced me to Antonin Dvořák's rich setting of the text, I was deeply moved by the work from its opening minutes. I had found my setting.

This prominent yet underrepresented Passion text vividly contemplates human suffering, empathy, and the divine. It forms the foundation of my research in this thesis, but its efficacy and affective capabilities are enhanced by its settings. I was captivated by Dvořák's setting and the questions it raised. *Why is an instrumental composer writing a Stabat Mater setting, and why is it so vastly different from the rest of his repertoire?* The writing is distinctly *not* like anything else among Dvořák's repertoire. It is exceptional among his works, and among other *Stabat Mater* settings, because it epitomizes *human* grief, and the catharsis of that grief through the divine.

Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* speaks to the universality of Marian suffering and its place in the secular soundscape. Through an examination of Dvořák's personal engagement with the mourning mother's suffering, I aim to show that this text and its imagery remain not only relevant, but *needed* in Dvořák's (and our) secular modernity. The following pages begin with addressing Romantic era characterization of and engagement with the sacred, before applying this lens specifically to Dvořák and his work. This thesis establishes the situational, personal, and

compositional uniqueness of the work, guided by a religious-historical framework of phenomenology and hermeneutics.

Composers' engagement with the sacred has been studied extensively in the eras most defined by their closeness to sanctity, such as the Medieval and Renaissance. By and large, few musicologists engage with sacred music through the theoretical frameworks of religious studies after these periods. This work is an amalgamation of these two fields. I hope to offer a new perspective to the understanding of sacred music and its imagery in relation to the secular age through my analysis of Dvořák's work.

Contemplation and meditation of the divine other is a reciprocal experience. In seeing the divine other, one sees a reflection of the self. The divine is, as are all living myths, the locus of understanding the world and the conditions of humanity.¹ In this, the divine functions as the epic reflection of the self and engagement with the divine becomes an act of self understanding. Even in a secular understanding, the divine and the self have maintained their influential phenomenon.

What is seen in Dvořák's engagement with the divine?

¹ Charles H. Long, *Significations* (New York: Fortress Press, 1981): 29

I. Between Sacred and Secular

Distinctions between sacred and secular vocal genres have become blurred by increasing secularization of the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries. Musical-spatial innovation in the nineteenth-century, particularly choral independence from its parent the Church, changed the conceptions and relationship between these genres. Sacred vocal genres, such as the motet and oratorio, had always drawn their primary text content, message, and historical precedent from or from associations with religious institutions.² Secular genres are those whose primary text content, message, and historical precedent are independent from religious institutions. While seemingly vague criteria, these definitions establish concrete criteria upon which secular/sacred qualities are determined.

These definitions recognize an important spatial change. Choirs still remained a necessity to church operations, but had now become a mainstay of the symphonic hall.³ There is evident precedent for this shift. Works like Haydn's *The Creation*, with its increased orchestral involvement, brought oratorio into the secular sphere for theatre performances. Beethoven's 1824 *Missa Solemnis* solidified sacred music's performance venue migration.⁴ Although the role of the choir within the church did not diminish, the contemporary significance of church performances was eclipsed by the grandiosity of secularized choral settings.

This eclipse was not only due to the vast output of "concert-hall" choral music, but also in part to the sheer volume of the concert hall's performing force. Felix Mendelssohn's 1846

² This working definition is specific to the treatment of sacred music within this thesis, accounting for the retention of the sacred as sacred and secular genres more publicly converged in the nineteenth-century.

³ D. Kern Holoman, "Vox Humana: Choral Voices in the Nineteenth-Century Symphony," in *Nineteenth-Century Choral Music*, ed. Donna M. Di Grazia (New York: Routledge, 2013), 21.

⁴ Holoman, "Masses and Requiems," in *Nineteenth-Century Choral Music*, ed. Donna M. Di Grazia (New York: Routledge, 2013), 43.

oratorio *Elijah* was premiered by “just short” of 400 musicians.⁵ These numbers were by no means the exception, as Verdi’s premiere of *Aida* in the early 1870s required “no fewer than 100 [chorus singers]”.⁶ The sensorial spectacle of the nineteenth-century choir provided a physical manifestation of the change in musical culture that would come to define choral practice in the following centuries.

The sensationalized concert-hall choir is but a microcosm of a greater change. Blurring genre conventions and transcendence of spatial boundaries created a liminal space between the sacred and secular in Romantic era vocal music. Sacred music of the Romantic era maintained, if not maximized, the affective and evocative sacred imagery while freeing itself from the constraints of institutionalization by premiering the works in a public, secular space.

Felix Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* (1846) and Johannes Brahms’s *Ein Deutsches Requiem* (1865) exemplify the character of this phenomenon. Both works set a compilation of biblical texts selected by the composers themselves. Brahms took excerpts of the German Bible to parallel the Requiem mass, selecting from the larger canon in vernacular to create a uniquely German expression of the Requiem grief while loosening the Requiem from the hold of the church office. Brahms did not complete this feat merely out of a sense of German nationalism; the prominence of annotations in his Lutheran bible suggests a strong scholarly and/or personal interest in the text.⁷ Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*, the composer’s last major work, follows this innovative approach, with text selected primarily from the Old Testament by librettists close to

⁵ Holoman, “Works with Secular and Non-Liturgical Texts,” in *Nineteenth-Century Choral Music*, ed. Donna M. Di Grazia (London: Routledge, 2013), 90.

⁶ Steven Huebner, “The Nineteenth-Century Opera Chorus,” in *Nineteenth-Century Choral Music*, ed. Donna M. Di Grazia (London: Routledge, 2013), 31.

⁷ Holoman, “Masses and Requiems,” 56.

Mendelssohn.⁸ Selections from Kings and Psalms are noticeably interspersed with content from the prophets; inclusion of the Gospel of Matthew and an excerpt from the Apocrypha suggest an unbound attitude towards religious text in the composition of sacred music.

Both works' performance in the concert hall may seem arguably subversive to their prominent religious imagery. The German *Requiem* particularly raises questions about the relationship between spatial boundaries and sacred music in this increasing liminal space. Though asserting that these works are concert works and never intended for liturgical use, American musicologist D. Kern Holoman takes time to point out that Brahms himself sought a Protestant venue for the premiere of his German Requiem, which later resounded from concert halls.⁹ Holoman's commentary wonderfully highlights the ways in which this liminal space permeates language. Liturgical use is not the only marker of relation to the sacred, and Brahms' desire for a Protestant venue suggests an ideological association with the sacred, at minimum. Personal beliefs aside, this choice emphasizes the historical precedent of church performances associated with Requiem works, complicating its relationship to both the concert hall and the sacred music traditions against which it reacted, such as the primacy of the Latin Requiem mass in compositions.

Not constrained by any formal canon or credo, the composer now asserts a modernistic ownership of the religious. Such a claim demands a qualification of the term "modernity" and its derivative terms; the conflict, conflation, and contradiction of terms is a contentious consequence of interdisciplinary research. Modernity in this thesis will be defined as such: that force of

⁸ Though it is standard for oratorio texts to be selected from among biblical verses, the libretto of *Elijah* is noticeably not a verbatim quote, but a reduction which captures the essence or character of the verses. The content is primarily taken from Kings and Psalms, assembled by Carl Klingemann, then Julius Schubring. As a close friend of Klingemann, Mendelssohn would have had a hand in the content and character of the reductions. The freedom achieved through the reductions allowed for an increasingly complex inclusion of prophets and text, a distinguishing factor from Classical or Baroque oratorio prior. For further reading see Holoman, "Works with Secular and Non-Liturgical Texts" in *Nineteenth-Century Choral Music*, ed. Di Grazia, 84-85.

⁹ Holoman, "Works with Secular and Non-Liturgical Texts," 57.

distancing from the past through innovation and discovery, humanity's reaction against archaism and a staunch rejection of its own primitivity. This is not the modernity or capital-M 'Modernism' of music, concerned with Schoenberg and set-class theory, or with Debussy or Boulez, but the modernity of history and religious studies, where our history begins *before* record and recollection. Modernism is the qualitative recognition of modernity, its lived evidence in societies and products of humanity's residence within them. "Modernistic" is the application of modernism to a particular situation as a descriptor of modernity's influence. Returning to Mendelssohn and Brahms, it would seem that modernity and sacred music may not be easily reconcilable. This liminal space, and intellectual engagement with it as such, presents a reconceptualization of sacred music and offers an interdisciplinary analysis of the relationship between sacred music and modernity. Though other Romantic sacred works remain largely true to their original texts, *Elijah* and *Ein Deutsches Requiem* showcase the extreme and undeniable proof of a trend in the nineteenth century.

The transcendence of spatial boundaries in the concert hall premieres of Romantic era sacred works takes the language and potent imagery of the sacred beyond the church walls and into the public space. Revealing sacred music beyond its solely curial understandings, this spatial challenge of religious ownership is fundamentally an act of unveiling and revelation. The texts are collected, set, and premiered by those not beholden to a prescribed credo or dogma, but to understanding these texts through the multiplicity of humanistic perspectives.¹⁰ Though it would be untrue to call this development unprecedented, sacred music could not be intertwined with the secular, including both personal and political influences, prior to the Romantic era with the same unapologetic abandon. Modernism, especially as it reached the later Romantic era, overrode the

¹⁰ Though much of the development of humanistic application to music is preceded by the High Baroque, as seen in opera and secular music, its application to sacred music did not achieve full metamorphosis until the Romantic era.

church ownership of sacred music and began to engage with the sacred on its own innovative terms, as a means of understanding the self.

Proximity of modernity to sacred music has remained largely unexplored or chalked up to secularization. This is not a diatribe against secularization. It is a contention against the chasm-like dichotomy existing between “sacred” or “secular” works. I aim to propose a lens bridging this chasm and qualify the change in sacred music of the Romantic-era without reliance on the crutch of secularization as justification. This thesis will explore myth as the reconciliation of the sacred and modernity in sacred music by examining Antonin Dvořák’s 1877 oratorio *Stabat Mater*, Opus 58, and its manifestations of myth. In this, I hope to advocate for sacred music’s, and specifically the *Stabat Mater*’s, continued significance in Dvořák’s modernity and ours.

Myth in the Romantic Era (approx. 1830 - 1900)

Analysis of myth within music is not my original work, but derivative of and indebted to Eero Tarasti’s work on musical signification. Tarasti’s *Myth and Music*, published in 1979, deals specifically with the aesthetics of myth in the music of Wagner, Sibelius, and Stravinsky. His analysis of the prominence of myth in the secular age is no accident - Tarasti’s work explicitly sets out to examine how music, having developed independent of myth, has returned to myth and obtained from its inclusion new forms of expression.¹¹ Although my proposition of modernity as catalyst for sacred music’s mythification developed prior to my exposure to Tarasti’s research, the alignment of our recognition of a return to myth supports my argument of sacred music’s functionality as mythic macrocosm.

¹¹ Eero Tarasti, *Myth and Music: A Semiotic Approach to the Aesthetics of Myth in Music, especially that of Wagner, Sibelius, and Stravinsky* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 51.

However, Tarasti excludes sacred music from his analysis, particularly oratorio, given that it does not advance a plot but merely intensifies pre-dictated events.¹² This exclusion negates the ritual reenactment of events through the liturgical years or other modes of sacred time, wherein the past and the present are in temporal overlay. Furthermore, such an approach restricts myth, to recorded, secular time and negates the connection between contemporary time and primordial time of myth. Given the qualification of myth within Tarasti's work, this critique is not to be taken as a critique of his analysis and application, but stems from his definition of myth, and therefore is a critique of Levi-Straussian articulation of myth.

Before engaging in an analysis of myth, it is first necessary to define myth, or more accurately, choose my definition of myth from among the myriad. Tarasti follows the Levi-Straussian definition of myth as an "aesthetico-philosophical phenomenon," applying anthropological studies of myth onto the Western art music tradition.¹³ Tarasti's is of course a valid analysis of myth, but its primary flaw is that it yields a reductionist analysis of myth. Decontextualizing myth from the rituals and religiosity which it created and by which it is maintained fails to allow for nuance of myth in three critical ways: assuming all myths are equal, conflating myth and fiction, and neglecting the relationship between myths and those who engage with them.¹⁴

Given its concern with sacred music and the reality that sacred music to this day maintains its sacred/ritual usage, this analysis will follow a religious-historical definition of myth. Religious historian and foremost interpreter of myth Mircea Eliade concerns his study of myth with the distinction of "living myth," wherein myth justifies and inspires religious

¹² Tarasti, *Myth and Music*, 57-58.

¹³ Tarasti, *Myth in Music*, 11.

¹⁴ Mircea Eliade, "Cosmogonic Myth and 'Sacred History'", *Religious Studies* 2, no. 2 (Apr. 1967), 171-173.

behaviors and constitutes the very ground of religious life.¹⁵ Eliade's student and recently deceased University of Chicago divinity professor Charles H. Long provides further nuance of myth in his "Prolegomenon to a Religious Hermeneutic." Myths may seem to be composed of the bizarre and paradoxical, yet reveal meanings about the human condition with respect to the world.¹⁶ The actions of mythic characters come from a different time and space than their audience, a primordial time and space shrouded in mystery.¹⁷ Myth becomes religion when it becomes the model and justifier of actions in a world outside itself, as can be evidenced by the Biblical mythos' transformation into Christianity.¹⁸

Long illuminates another important quality of myth: it is that which defines the rupture between humanity and the world.¹⁹ This rupture serves as the etiological origin of both the human condition, typically juxtaposed with the sacred and/or the world, and human autonomy. Mircea Eliade's distinction of living myth aids Long's argument that religious symbols have inherent power; should myth serve as the justification of religious life and ritual action, it is understandable that its symbols are imbued with the same importance and influence as that which they represent. It is because of this inherent power that symbols of religion, of living myth, radiate and deploy meaning, yielding complex relationships between signifier (symbol) and signified (meaning of symbol and message of myth).²⁰

This religious-historical definition of myth and the qualities detailed here present the need for this interdisciplinary scholarship, specifically scholarship between musicology and religious studies. The religious symbols and myths of the Western sacred music tradition

¹⁵ Mircea Eliade, "Cosmogonic Myth," 171.

¹⁶ Charles H. Long, *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion* (New York: Fortress Press, 1981): 29.

¹⁷ Long, *Significations*, 29.

¹⁸ Long, *Significations*, 29.

¹⁹ Long, *Significations*, 30.

²⁰ Long, *Significations*, 2.

continue to function as *living* myths, in simultaneous religious and mythic understanding during and beyond the Romantic era. The imagery of sacred music and furthermore the religious dogma it beautified are, in textbooks, presumably at odds with the Romantic era's increased urban secularization and proximity to modernity, yet descriptive analysis reveals a maximization of sacred imagery in grand oratorios, requiems, and supposedly 'secularized' sacred works.

Understanding the liminal space between sacred and secular music as *mythic* music presents a coexistence of the sacred and secular which is cognizant of descriptive behavior and treatment of the sacred within sacred music.

The rupture of myth is particularly intriguing when discussing sacred music in the Romantic era because the rupture is fundamentally concerned with the interpretation of myth to understand humanity in relation to the world. If modernity has provided a secular understanding of the world, what is the purpose of myth in modernity? Given the function of myth as providing ontological reality to the unknown, modern understanding of the external world and man's place within it prompted myth to become an interior phenomenon. Tarasti perfectly articulates this as the realization by the Romantics that "the distant and far-away might equally concern the internal dimension of man's consciousness."²¹ The prominence and power of the imagery and characters found in sacred music is especially significant in a Jungian "inside-down" approach to myth.²² Through sacred imagery as myth, these mythical characters function as archetypes of humanity. Furthermore, engagement with these sacred figures and their mythical actions through the liturgical calendar, such as Passiontide events, provide engagement with the history of the collective unconscious which these figures represent.

²¹ Tarasti, *Myth and Music*, 63.

²² Milton Scarborough, *Myth and Modernity: Postcritical Reflections* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 24-25.

Few other sacred texts illustrate this phenomenon as well as the *Stabat Mater*, supported by the continued use of its imagery into the twenty-first century.²³ The Mater Dolorosa representation in and of itself is paradoxical, a manifestation of the rupture within myth through her roles as mourning mother and divine intercessor. However, it is the connection to humanity and mortality despite her divinity which makes Mary an archetype of profound grief. The meditation on the Mater Dolorosa in the *Stabat Mater*, understood through this analysis of myth, becomes an engagement in the collective, universal experience of understanding the necessity of death while indulging in the fullness of grief.

²³ Scottish composer James MacMillan (born 1959) set the *Stabat Mater* text in 2015.

II. Poetic Architecture of the *Stabat Mater* Text

From the High Medieval era of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (1000 - 1250) arose the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*, a twenty-line poem meditating upon Mary at the Crucifixion. The text is anonymous but most often attributed to Franciscan friar Jacopone da Todi, although attribution to Pope Innocent III (r. 1198 - 1216) has been speculated.²⁴ The *Stabat Mater* poem is associated with the Stations of the Cross during Passiontide. It evidences a captivation with Marian sorrow and maternal grief as an element of the Passion.²⁵ Adoration of Marian grief eventually became the subject of both art and music, seen in various works, from Michaelangelo's iconic *Pietà* to musical settings of the *Stabat Mater* text by composers such as Giovanni Battista di Pergolesi, Joseph Haydn, and Gioachino Rossini.

The *Stabat Mater* poem was one of Medieval Christianity's first explicit literary depictions of the Mater Dolorosa archetype of Mary. Its meditative verses established the prominent juxtapositions amplified by composers in later eras. At its most fundamental and literal level, the poem juxtaposes Mary's position as sorrowful mother witnessing the death of her son and as joyful believer witnessing her salvation.²⁶

Yale scholar, historian of religion, and theologian Jaroslav Pelikan highlights the juxtaposition of the divine mother as both Mater Dolorosa, mourning mother, and Mediatrix, intercessor for humanity through which mercy is received.²⁷ The inherent superimposition of these antithetical roles onto Mary as Mater Dolorosa gives rise to poetic tension in each verse discussing the mother of God. This tension finds its resolution not through any chronological

²⁴ Robert Atwell, "The Passion in Christian Liturgy" in *Engaging the Passion: Perspectives on the Death of Jesus*, ed. Oliver Larry Yarbrough (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 106. See Appendix for the full poem in its original Latin and in English translation, corresponding to Dvořák's movements.

²⁵ Atwell, "The Passion in Christian Liturgy," 106 - 107.

²⁶ Jaroslav Pelikan *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 126.

²⁷ Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries*, 126 - 132.

plot, as the Mater Dolorosa is eternal in these juxtaposed roles, but in the explicit reflection and empathy of the believer, the first person narrator, who meditates upon her as the poem progresses. Further literary analysis reveals that the *Stabat Mater* is a text interwoven with multidimensional juxtapositions, which enables the resolution of the poetic tension through an audience surrogate and self-representation, the speaker. Evident throughout the poem is the duality of foci in the drama of the crucifixion: the speaker alternates between focus on the emotional pains of Mary at the crucifixion and the speaker's awe at her ability to endure such pain.

Within Mary herself lies a paradox of mortality and divinity, where she is simultaneously the human mother of Christ mourning her child's death and the Queen of Heaven, the immaculate virgin without original sin.²⁸ The Mater Dolorosa archetype focuses on her sorrow and mortality in the face of Christ's death. Although Mary has been elevated to divinity as a paragon of chastity and piety, the Mater Dolorosa captures the divine mother in her humanity, lamenting in her maternal sorrow despite understanding the necessity of Christ's sacrifice.²⁹ In this divine humanity, she becomes the surrogate for the believer to experience the fullness of the Crucifixion and an intercessor for the human believer through her own piety and mortality.³⁰

All these dualities, complex and intersectional as they are, are still only part of a greater dynamic within the text: the self and the other, interiority and exteriority. While dynamics of the self and the other are inherently hermeneutic, understanding the rupture of myth provides an easier assimilation of these dynamics to our framework than any lengthy Cartesian dialogue would provide.³¹ The rupture of myth in the Romantic era may function as both the rupture

²⁸ Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries*, 129-131.

²⁹ Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries*, 126.

³⁰ Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries*, 132-133.

³¹ Should the development of the relationship between art and phenomenology be of interest to the reader, see Fritz Kaufmann, "Art and Phenomenology," in *Essays in Phenomenology*, ed. Maurice Natanson (The Hague: Martinus

between humanity and the sacred *and* the rupture between man and his unconscious, depending on if one approaches the text from a religious/devotional or solely mythic perspective. Therefore, the self always functions as humanity, or man. The other, the symbol of myth, represents the sacred, through which man connects to his own unconscious self. The other in living myth through its inherent sacred power and living presence serves as an empathetic mirror by which the self is revealed.

This paradox within Mary is highlighted by the poem's linear shift from its most exterior at the beginning to its most interior in the final prayer-like lines. The *Stabat Mater* begins with an expression of exteriority, beholding the virgin mother standing beside the cross in mourning. The narrator, who begins as a passive presence, describes the torment of Mary through evocative imagery and allusion to prophecies of the Gospels. One can see the events of the Gospel of John and Simeon's prophecy from the Gospel of Luke in the first and second lines, respectively.³²

"Stabat mater dolorosa juxta crucem lacrimosa dum pendebat filius."

The mournful mother stood beside the cross, where her son hung.

"Cuius animam gementem contristatam et dolentum pertransivit gladius."

Through her weeping soul, compassionate and grieving, a sword pierced.

"O quam tristis et afflicta fuit illa benedicta Mater Unigeniti"

Oh how sad and afflicted was the blessed mother of the only-begotten son,

"Quae moerebat et dolebat et tremebat cum videbat nati poenas incliti"

Who mourned, grieving and trembling, to behold the torment inflicted upon her child

Throughout the first four lines, the speaker solely mediates upon the image of Mary and depicts her suffering from a distance. Focus on the other, the Mater Dolorosa, gives a sense of exteriority - a communication of events outside the speaker, events of the world at a distance from the self.

Nijhoff, 1996), 145-146 for further reading. Let it be noted that my approach diverges significantly from this source, but exposure to its ideas sparked this analysis of interiority and exteriority as it relates to the *Stabat Mater*.

³² Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries*, 127.

Whereas the aforementioned lines maintain a carefully distanced exteriority to establish the Mater Dolorosa as subject of the poem, the speaker builds towards the pluralistic perspective.

This liminal space, distinct from the beginning exteriority and ending interiority yet embodying elements both, will be used below to explore the juxtaposition and tension of the poem and Mater Dolorosa archetype. The speaker begins to enter into this space in the poem's fifth and sixth lines.

“Quis est homo qui non fleret Matri Christi si viderent in tanto supplicio?”

Who would not weep seeing the Mother of Christ in such pain?

“Quis non posset contristari Matrem Christi contemplari dolentem cum filio?”

Who would not feel compassing when contemplating Christ's mother suffering with her son?

The speaker of the poem engages the suffering of the divine mother, rhetorically questioning their own capacity for empathy upon beholding her pain.³³ In this exterior presentation of this question, the speaker engages the self in Mary's pain, as the question projects the speaker's engagement with Marian suffering onto a real or imagined other, who functions as a mirror of the self.³⁴

Simply, this question is asked of the self through the mediation of the other. The question prompts a re-examination of Mary's suffering by introducing her role as believer, not referring to Jesus as her son but by name in the seventh line. From here this careful distance lessens, though the speaker is still engaged in abstract, as Mary's role as mother is juxtaposed with her role as believer. Through the sequential structure of these lines, the poet builds upon the dramatic tension of Mary's pain and joy through this pluralistic perspective of the speaker.

The ninth line is a pivotal moment, where the lens of interiority and exteriority converge:

“Eia Mater, fons amoris, me sentire vim doloris tecum lugeam”

³³ Whether this question is rhetorical or posed to a true 'audience' is inconsequential - both answers provide the same logical conclusion.

³⁴ Kaufmann, "Art and Phenomenology," 145-147.

Oh Mother, fountain of love, make me feel your grief, that I may mourn with you

Here the speaker contemplates Mary as the fount of love, pleading in the first person for the ability to empathize with her sorrow. The question of the other's empathy in the fifth and sixth lines, an exterior reflection, is turned inward. This direct juxtaposition of the alternating exterior and interior by their poetic proximity in the ninth and the following lines creates an intercessory space wherein the believer engages with the crucifixion of Jesus through the mediation and hermeneutic empathy with the holy Mother.

In the poem's tenth through twelfth lines, the speaker addresses the Marian other but seeks empathy with Christ directly through the prerequisite empathy through his mother. This multidimensionality of exterior and interior perspectives returns when the speaker returns their empathy to Mary, seeking to stand beside her at her cross station.

The text's alternating empathy, for the sorrow of the mother and the crucifixion of her son, continues until the penultimate lines. At the eighteenth through twentieth lines, the *Stabat Mater* ceases to be a meditation on the sorrow but becomes a prayer for the soul of the believer. The imagery juxtaposes the physical and spiritual, praying for the protection of Mary from being set afire in hell and for paradise after the death of the body.

The situation of Mary as both intercessor for the believer and divine as the mother of God gives rise to her complicated position as not only the divine other with which the speaker engages with but the paradox of her mortality allows her to function in several mediums: a surrogate for the self, or an intercessor on behalf of the audience in engagement with the divine other of Christ, or both - all dependant on one's interpretation of the poem. The position of Mary as intercessor and empathetic mirror of the self in the experience of the crucifixion creates a triadic dynamic of self and other between the speaker, the Mater Dolorosa, and Christ.

All in all, the complex nature of the self and the other, the rupture of myth, in the *Stabat Mater* cannot be separated from dynamics of mortality and divinity, paradoxical though they may be. The centrality of the Mater Dolorosa and her simultaneity as believer and divinity in her intercession creates the plurality of dynamics between the self and the other within the text, providing a complex range of dynamics and themes through which musical settings may draw upon.

To begin exploring Antonin Dvořák's *Stabat Mater*, we must first explore Dvořák himself: both who we see him to be, and who he was at the time of the *Stabat Mater*'s composition.

III. Antonin Dvořák: A Micro-Biographical Sketch

In the modest countryside of Czechia, there is a town near Prague called Nelahozeves. This small and unassuming town, full of sleepy inns and bucolic pleasantries, is home to the equally humble Czech musician Antonin Dvořák (1841 - 1904). Born September 8, to parents František and Anna Dvořák, Antonin led a modest childhood befitting a “simple Czech composer.”³⁵ His father worked as a butcher and owned a small inn, as was typical in this area. It was at the inn helping his father where the young Antonin was exposed to his first polkas and marches, marveling at the local folk musicians hired to entertain the inn patrons.³⁶ Though merely speculative, the composer’s later compositions support the notion that his folk music beginnings provide the core of Antonin Dvořák’s self-conception of his compositional style. Characteristic of childhood wonder, the amazement of performance filtered out the reality of poverty among the musicians and his own father. This nostalgic poverty, though not to be stated as so, is largely present in the earliest biographical sketch of Antonin Dvořák with comprehensive descriptions of the composer’s childhood and early career, assembled by German musicologist Hermann Krigar. Supplemented with the letters and reminiscences collected by Otakar Šourek and Klaus Döge’s detailed Oxford Music Online article, my biographical sketch of Dvořák prior to the completion of the *Stabat Mater* will engage with the 1880 biographical sketch and give special attention to the professional and personal factors catalyst to the *Stabat Mater*.

Though Krigar goes on to present a Dvořák who could not afford to have his musical training placed forefront by highlighting his butcher apprenticeship, later scholarship concludes

³⁵ Otakar Šourek, *Letters and Reminiscences*, transl. Roberta Finlayson Samsour (New York: Da Capo Press, 1985), 6.

³⁶ Hermann Krigar, “Antonin Dvořák: A Biographical Sketch,” in *Dvořák and His World*, ed. Mivhael Beckerman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 215.

that Dvořák's certificate of butcher apprenticeship was forged, suggesting that these nineteenth-century sources may have preferred upholding a very particular, likely nationalistic ownership of the composer rather than portraying the descriptive truth.³⁷ Nonetheless, inclusion of such sources is necessary to cultivate a multifaceted, nuanced Dvořák and understand his receptions.

František Dvořák recognized his son's talent and sought to nurture his son's compositional spirit and enrolled him in violin and singing lessons from local teacher and choirmaster Joseph Toman. This would provide Dvořák's introduction to musical training.³⁸ In 1855, after the completion of his required schooling, Antonin Dvořák began to study harmony and organ with choirmaster Antonin Liehmann in Zlonitz. Liehmann was a strict teacher prone to a violent temper. He retained an older perspective on harmony, a proficient thorough-bass player who instructed his pupils in the same manner and utilizing physical punishment to encourage improvement.³⁹ However, Liehmann's church position was not accompanied by the expected scorn of secular music and this encouraged Antonin to continue writing polkas and marches. Though a necessary introduction to music theory for Dvořák, his training in this antiquated style may have been a reason for his struggle to fully grasp Romantic-era harmony and theory with the same ease as his contemporaries.

After completing his studies with Liehmann in 1856, Dvořák attended the Prague Conservatory from 1857 to 1859 in an effort to advance his knowledge of organ and harmony, but experienced difficulties. During this time, he stayed with his uncle's family in Prague until his marriage to Anna Čermáková in 1873. Given the financial strain on his relatives, Dvořák

³⁷ Klaus Döge, "Dvořák, Antonín," *Oxford Music Online* (2001). Accessed Apr, 15 2022, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.trinity.idm.oclc.org/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000051222>.

³⁸ Krigar, "Antonin Dvořák," 214.

³⁹ Šourek, *Letters*, 23.

continued to receive financial support from his parents at this time. By his own admission, Dvořák struggled at the organ school because of poor conditions, language-learning difficulties, and his treatment by other students.

At the organ school, everything smelt of mould. Even the organ. Anybody who wanted to know anything had to know German. Anyone who knew German well could be the dux of the class, but if he did not know German he could not be the dux. My knowledge of German was poor and even if I knew something, I could not get it out. My fellow-pupils looked a little ‘down their noses’ at me and laughed at me behind their backs. And later on, they still laughed at me...⁴⁰

Krigar’s assessment that this training was more beneficial for the formality of proper instruction than actual compositional practice seems correct, prior to 1877, especially as the composer found his idioms of his style rooted in Czech folk music and evocative emotional melodies rather than the theory textbooks of this period.⁴¹ It may even prompt one to speculate whether the Czechness of Dvořák’s earliest works were, in some capacity, a reaction against the German elitism found in the Prague Conservatory.⁴² Contrary to Krigar’s framing of Dvořák as a pitiful yet hardworking student, Antonin finished his studies at the Prague Organ School as the second best student in his year, 1859.⁴³

1859 saw the completion of both Dvořák’s study and his financial support from his family. From November 1857 to summer 1859, he played viola with the Cecilia Society, which programmed Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Wagner, among others.⁴⁴ This more current source suggests an earlier exposure to his Romantic contemporaries than Krigar would allow us to believe.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ From the book of recollections of Josef Michl; Šourek, *Letters and Reminiscences*, 25.

⁴¹ Šourek, *Letters*, 26.

⁴² While a worthy endeavor, answering this question is beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁴³ Döge, “Dvořák, Antonín,” *Oxford Music Online*.

⁴⁴ Döge, “Dvořák, Antonín,” *Oxford Music Online*.

⁴⁵ Krigar suggests that Bendl’s “generosity” allowing Dvořák to peruse his music library provided him the necessary introduction, a timeline which would align with Dvořák’s employment at the National Theatre orchestra. For further reading, see Krigar, “Antonin Dvořák”, 216.

From 1862 to 1871, Dvořák was employed primarily as a violist for the Bohemian National Theatre orchestra. This time, especially after Smetana became the orchestra's conductor, served as the composer's introduction to the regional idiosyncrasies of Czech and Slavic opera, which would come to inspire his later compositions.⁴⁶ In February and November 1863, Dvořák played viola in three concerts programming some of Wagner's works and conducted by the composer himself, who became a life-long inspiration to Dvořák.⁴⁷ In 1865, Dvořák also taught piano lessons to bring himself financial stability. Of importance are his clients Josefina and Anna Čermáková, the latter of whom Dvořák married in 1873.⁴⁸ At this time, he was privately composing his B-flat Major Symphony in 1864 and his E Minor Symphony in 1865, emulating the Romantic style and experimenting with his own symphonic composition.⁴⁹

In 1872, Dvořák gave his notice of leave to the Bohemian National Theatre orchestra, electing to focus on his compositional career in an effort.⁵⁰ Should Krigar's accounts be believed, nine years playing with the orchestra evidenced that Dvořák's financial situation would not improve and he sought to gain recognition as a composer. Though overly saccharine, Krigar's biographical sketch of Dvořák recognizes the hardships the composer endured during this period, composing yet remaining known solely for his performance contributions to music.

Musicologist Klaus Döge omits these financial hardships from his Oxford Music Online biography. He instead provides the meticulous compositional cartography Krigar drops in his saccharine, rose-colored crafting of his personal Dvořák. Shortly before leaving the orchestra, the Czech composer announced to a music journal with prominent readership in the musical

⁴⁶ Döge, "Dvořák, Antonín," *Oxford Music Online*

⁴⁷ Döge, "Dvořák, Antonín," *Oxford Music Online*; Michael Beckerman, "Introduction: Looking for Dvořák in December 1992," in *Dvořák and His World*, ed. Michael Beckerman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 4 - 5.

⁴⁸ Döge, "Dvořák, Antonín," *Oxford Music Online*.

⁴⁹ Döge, "Dvořák, Antonín," *Oxford Music Online*; Krigar, "Antonin Dvořák", 217.

⁵⁰ Krigar, "Antonin Dvořák", 217.

world of Prague that he was composing an opera to a Czech libretto.⁵¹ This led him to gain recital performances of his works, setting up for the success of his patriotic cantata.

Die Erben des weissen Berges (1873) was the piece that led Dvořák to finally gain large-scale recognition. The choral-orchestral cantata received an 1873 performance in Prague, directed by his friend and fellow student at the Prague Organ School Karel Bendl.⁵² The patriotic affect of the piece ensured that Dvořák's name would not fade into obscurity, and brought the composer to the attention of audiences. Krigar asserts that this change of fortune and recognition ushered in what he calls Dvořák's "real creative period", an end to both his "period of experimentation" and his most serious financial struggles.⁵³ He appears to be correct. The nature of Dvořák's music challenges notions that experimentation ever truly ended, but its language became much more fluid and chameleon-esque. Nevertheless, Krigar's work affirms that 1873 was an important moment in Dvořák's early and entire career.

Emboldened by the recent success of *Die Erben*, Dvořák submitted a portfolio of his compositions in an effort to secure a state scholarship from the Ministry of Music and Culture. His efforts paid off, as he received this award and was recognized by the government. This award, more so than a recognition of his promise as a composer, offered substantial financial relief to the previously struggling composer and his wife. The support provided by this scholarship continued for five years.

In 1874, Dvořák was appointed to the post of organist at the St. Adalbert Catholic Church, where he accompanied services and taught music. This first position as an organist solidified the beginnings of Dvořák's local success beyond *Die Erben*'s performance success. His brief tenure at St. Adalbert provides insight into his personality as he became accustomed to

⁵¹ Döge, "Dvořák, Antonín," *Oxford Music Online*.

⁵² Döge, "Dvořák, Antonín," *Oxford Music Online*.

⁵³ Krigar, "Antonin Dvořák", 217-218.

both his position and newfound place as a published composer. He was described as a serious man, consumed in his own thoughts, and highly self-critical. Chorister Josef Foerster gave us this portrait of the serious organist:

[Antonin Dvořák] paid no heed to anybody, greeted nobody, and sat down straight away at the organ... I seldom saw Dvořák's face but I recollect how, as a child, the severe expression of his countenance and the unwaveringly serious appearance of this man, always deep in his own strange thoughts, made me feel afraid.⁵⁴

The position of employment at St. Adalbert's also provides illustration to the composer's own reception of his troubles at this time. He was described as working on his opera, "King and Charcoal Burner" during his employment as an organist, where his colleagues witnessed his reaction to the initial negative reception of his opera by the Czech National Theatre. When the theatre returned the score to Dvořák, Foerster remembers the sympathy felt for the composer.

Without having any proper idea of the severe spiritual and nervous strain which is required to produce a three-act opera, quite apart from the immense physical labour, we yet felt sincere sympathy for the poor, silent organist... The critical moment found him strong and resistant to the hardest blows of fate. Though depressed by family troubles, he did not lose courage... In less than a year, I think, he submitted to the theatre a new version of "King and Charcoal-Burner". And then it was not only rehearsed but produced.⁵⁵

Beyond the romanticized Antonin Dvořák of Czechia, one finds an objective tenacity and determination about this serious and at times enigmatic figure. This Czech musician was working to ensure that he may live his dream as a composer, even if he must be put through the gamut of personal and professional defeats.

⁵⁴ Excerpt from Josef Boh. Foerster's *Recollections of the organist of St. Adalbert's*; Sourek, *Letters*, 32.

⁵⁵ Sourek, *Letters*, 34.

Dvořák resigned from his position at St. Adalbert's in 1877, shortly after the composition of his Moravian duets. His resignation was three years to the date of his appointment, and was made possible by his financial support from the state scholarship he received.

It was the scholarship review process that brought Dvořák to the attention of a committee member named Johannes Brahms. Thus Dvořák gained a prominent German supporter. In 1877, Brahms replaced a former member on the scholarship review committee and came into contact with Dvořák's work. Becoming fascinated with the work submitted by the Czech composer that year, the Moravian Duets among them, Brahms requested to see the earlier works of the composer. It was Brahms who first recognized the composer's financial hardships and took the initiative to alleviate this burden from the Czech composer.⁵⁶ Brahms alerted Herr Simrock, his publisher, to the wealth of Dvořák's previous compositional output. The publisher bought a substantial amount of Dvořák's larger and smaller works for publication, bringing both his name and music to the German world.

It is essential to understanding Antonin Dvořák and to creating an honest historiography that one notes the prominent role of class distinctions, and furthermore class immobility, in Dvořák's path to musicianship. Coming from a lower-class Czech family in a German-dominated musical society, the Dvořák family continued to aid their son in his musical pursuit in spite of barriers, but their ability to do so was hindered by their own financial struggles and insecurity. However, one must not overlook that, despite Krigar's "purest intentions", his account of Dvořák is colored by his own experience as a *German* musicologist in a rampantly nationalist music-criticism landscape.⁵⁷ Krigar's exoticization of this simple Czech composer's simpleness and Czechness stems from an implicit nationalism disguised as fascination. While important as

⁵⁶ Krigar, "Antonin Dvořák", 218.

⁵⁷ Quotation from Krigar, "Antonin Dvořák", 222.

the first. His biographical sketch frames Dvořák's poverty and struggle as quaint or tragic while evading accountability for his participation in the German nationalist culture which contributed to those conditions as they impacted Dvořák. To ignore this would be dishonest to endeavors of an accurate and equitable historiography.

While it is necessary to point out the optimistic nature of this early biographical sketch, it maintains its place of importance due to its comprehensive catalogue of Dvořák's early career activity and its acknowledgement, even if hagiographic, of the social mobility struggles encountered by the composer. The dominance of German-language programs was not the most accessible for a poor Czech musician, as evidenced by Dvořák's laughing-stock status by his peers at the Prague Conservatory. Though not recognizing it in such explicit terms, Krigar's work demonstrates that it was not only Dvořák's own tenacity and work ethic which provided him social and financial mobility - it was also the intervention of Johannes Brahms, a well-established German composer, taking Dvořák under his wing.

This micro-biographical sketch also helps us illustrate a critical recognition in our cartography of Dvořák's early career: Dvořák has not yet ventured outside Czechia. The English and American travels which define the Dvořák of current music history are still future tense at the point of 1877, the year of the *Stabat Mater*'s composition. A continuation of Dvořák's biography prompts an examination into the Czechness of Dvořák, an attempt to illuminate Dvořák's own Czechness versus the Czechness of others as of 1877.

Dvořák's first adventure beyond Bohemia occurred in 1878, when he visited Berlin. Enraptured by the four-hand piano edition of the Slavonic Dances and the Moravian duets, German music writer and composer Louis Ehlert invited the rising composer to Berlin. In line

with much of the later acclaim of Dvořák, Ehlert was delighted by the freshness and “charming” folk character of the poetic verses.⁵⁸

Dvořák’s first journey outside his native land is critical to his later reputation as a Czech nationalist composer and defining characterizations of his “Czechness.” David Beveridge’s recent work establishes “Czechness” as a key term when studying, as he so perfectly states as, what music critics “*perceived* as the spirit of Slavic songs in Dvořák’s music.”⁵⁹ Though speaking to the greater Slavicness in Dvořák’s music, Beveridge illuminates one of the most common throughlines in the appreciation of Czechness in Dvořák’s music: the Czechness ascribed to Dvořák is not his own reflection of his “simple Czech” musicianship, but associations of his international audience’s conceptions of a fantastical Czechia, a bucolic and idealized countryside in the international music sphere. This by no means diminishes Dvořák’s Czech self-description. Illuminating what Czech descriptions are imposed upon him by others, one can find Dvořák’s “Czechness” as he intended it. For current purposes of explicitly defining the elusive Czechness of *others*, the working definition is as follows: of, or related to, the imagined Czechia in Dvořák’s music by his non-Czech audience.⁶⁰

Ehlert’s “discovery” of Dvořák (quotation marks courtesy of Otakar Šourek and/or Roberta Samsour) is a humorous truth of Dvořák’s Czechness. Dvořák’s music, especially that based on and/or inspired by folk melodies, presents to the German and larger international audience what they perceive as an authentic, indigenous musical language absent from the international quality of the most influential Romantic music.

⁵⁸ Šourek, *Letters*, 46-48.

⁵⁹ David Beveridge, “Antonin Dvořák and the Concept of Czechness”, 14.

⁶⁰ Given that much has been said, and said with much greater eloquence than I could muster, on the subject of Czech nationalist “ownership” of Dvořák, the greater nuances of this will not be discussed here.

Such a perspective is largely incompatible with the descriptive realities of Dvořák's musical language after 1873. Cultivation of a more international, modernistic musical language was how Dvořák's music eventually made it beyond the ears and eyes of his countrymen. By the metric of Dvořák's success, or struggles to attain it, within Czechia, the "localized uniqueness" within Dvořák's early works, and its somewhat incongruity with the international musical character, provides a greater illustration of this phenomenon of Czechness that international audiences clung to than a paltry description of "folk music".

Receptions of Dvořák - Past and Present

Though Dvořák's name has survived history, the composer struggled significantly to secure its place. His own self-expressed Czechness intertwined into continued struggles of social mobility barriers. While the incorporation of his Czechness brought him great popularity for his Bohemian sound, seen with his Slavonic Dances and their popularity, it soon became a point of contention for his German colleagues. After the beginning of his publication with Simrock and his popularity in the German-speaking world, Dvořák faced pressure to drop his "nationalism" and embrace German libretti.⁶¹ In few places was this nationalist bent more highly pronounced than in the opera hall - one needs only look at the works of Wagner for the tendency toward nationalist subject matter to become evident. Dvořák remained a staunch traditionalist in this regard: his highly principled loyalty to Czechia and his countryman was unyielding to such a high degree that he and Simrock, his publisher, ceased working together due to political differences.⁶² *This* is Dvořák's Czechness - not the romanticized pleasantries of Czech folk melodies, but an unwavering loyalty to his origins and traditions which could not be bought.

⁶¹ John Clapham, *Antonin Dvořák: Musician and Craftsman* (London: Faber & Faber, 1966), 10.

⁶² Clapham, *Antonin Dvořák*, 11.

Critical inquiry requires scholars to uncover and identify the factors and biases surrounding current perceptions of Dvořák before presenting details upon which the reader may construct their own Dvořák. Though Dvořák's later international style may allow some to soften the edge to his Czech-ness, his unwillingness to forgo his origins is present in the reception he received in his lifetime.

Quarrels of modernism and Dvořák's place within our discussions are necessary to establish the current reception of Dvořák and the need for this work. Dvořák's proponents have too often yielded to these pressuring modernist arguments of the composer's simplicity, and have settled to judging Dvořák's works by its own, simpler merits.⁶³ As such, there is yet to be made an argument for Dvořák's complexity, or "profundity," as his contemporaries would prefer to say. Profundity, as it is expressed in their writings, is a narrow qualifier used by the Neo-Romantics to largely disqualify those they believe unworthy of their same acclaim.

⁶³ Leon Botstein, "Reversing the Critical Tradition: Innovation, Modernity, and Ideology in the Work and Career of Antonin Dvořák," in *Dvořák and His World*, 13.

IV. The Pater Dolorosa

While all these factors are critical in establishing Dvořák's professional career, it is important and crucial to this thesis and its endeavors to introduce and illuminate the personal Antonin Dvořák. Accounts of his time as a student and organist describe him as a deeply serious, self-critical man. He was pensive and deep in thought most of the time, concerned with his compositions.⁶⁴ His bristly beard and staunch mustache paired with his ever-knotted brow paint the portrait of a man not yet satisfied with his work.⁶⁵

He may have appeared to be an unapproachable teacher and great master of Czech music on the international stage, but this intimidating visage hid his gentle, loving spirit and humility with which he led his life. He embraced and self-proclaimed his identity as a simple Czech composer, enjoying life's simple joys, seen in his dream of owning "a little house in the country."⁶⁶ His motto "God, love, motherland" is reported to be the guiding principle of his life and work.⁶⁷ Many great scholars, such as Otakar Šourek, Leon Botstein, and Leos Janek, among others, have discussed "motherland" and Czechness quite thoroughly; Thus I will be concerned with establishing the former two qualities of this motto.

Dvořák's piety is of great significance and importance to this thesis. He regularly began his manuscripts with thanks to God, and was known by those close to him for his personal piety.⁶⁸ He encouraged his children to "pray fervently," frequently reiterating in letters that his children attend church.⁶⁹ It is not so difficult to imagine Dvořák as the father who insisted on grace before each meal. Like many of his fellow Czech countrymen, Dvořák was a devout

⁶⁴ Šourek, *Letters*, 32 - 34.

⁶⁵ Melvin Berger, *Guide to Choral Masterpieces: A Listener's Guide* (New York: Anchor Books, 1993), 111.

⁶⁶ Hans-Hubert Schönzeler, *Dvořák* (New York: Marion Boyers, 1984), 41.

⁶⁷ Berger, *Guide to Choral Masterpieces*, 111.

⁶⁸ Šourek, *Letters*, 112.

⁶⁹ Šourek, *Letters*, 179.

Catholic and this quality imbued his sacred works with devotion. If his childhood as a practicing Catholic did not make clear his deep familiarity with the liturgical year and feasts, his position as a church organist leaves no room for doubt.

Of perhaps greatest importance is that middle value: love. While Dvořák's strong love of country and devotional love of God are clear, I hope to illuminate another quality about the composer - his love of family. It is perhaps the immensity and vastness of that quality which demanded an equally overwhelming outpouring of grief within the *Stabat Mater*.

Dvořák has left us with many wonderful things. The character of his Czech simplicity, humility, and loyalty has been immortalized in performances of his works, the grandiosity of Romantic symphonic writing eternalized in the ink of his scores, and letters of his correspondence allow us to map out Dvořák's travels in and beyond Czechia. There is notably something missing. Written records of Dvořák's personal life, internal thoughts, and emotional recollections are near non-existent. There is enough evidence to see a wispy silhouette of the composer beyond his music, but we are just as reliant on external sources to know Dvořák as his contemporary audience. He is all at once transparent and opaque, knowable and mysterious.

Though I have no intention of attributing unspoken words to Dvořák, the lack of written evidence of his personal life requires engagement of the imagination. We may never know Antonin Dvořák as an individual, but context provided by the writings available to us provide the basis from which we may approximate Antonin, in hopes that our educated imaginings may hold an element of truth.

In 1865, Dvořák taught piano lessons to Josefina and Anna Čermáková, the daughters of a well-to-do goldsmith.⁷⁰ Soon, the young Dvořák felt the joys and pains of first love, the

⁷⁰ Schönzeler, *Dvořák*, 41.

impetus for his *Cypress* song cycle.⁷¹ This illuminates an important quality of Antonin Dvořák: he *chose* to imbue his compositions with his own feelings, joys, and struggles. His works were deeply personal and as an artist, every work of his served as an immortalization of who the composer was in that specific moment. Perhaps more important than the quality of his work was the *authenticity* - not a national, Czech authenticity, but an authenticity to communicating the truth of Antonin Dvořák. In the absence of letters on his personal self, Dvořák has left us masterpieces.

His initial feelings for Josefina were not reciprocated, but it would not be a heartbreak the young artist could not recover from. Continuing to teach the Čermáková sisters, he soon found himself enamored with Anna. They were married in November 1873. Dvořák's marriage to Anna was perhaps one of the rosiest and pleasantly simple in music history. Anna was a devoted wife and mother, Antonin was a family man who refused to work on Christmas.⁷² He loved to compose in the kitchen. Whether in spite of, or perhaps *because* of the children running around, one cannot say for certain.

From our portrait of Dvořák thus far, it is understandable that the couple would find the birth of their son, Otakar, to be their happiest moment.⁷³ Following their son were eight more children, six of whom succeeded Dvořák. Though Dvořák has left us little recollections of his bustling yet simple home atmosphere or his contemplations on fatherhood, a delightful imagining of many curious little faces huddled together in attempts to look at their father's compositions on the kitchen table brings a smile to this scholar. The close-knit, community-oriented nature of Czech small towns and communities in this time leads me to infer that Dvořák's letters on these subjects only exist to the extent that they are needed by him -

⁷¹ Dvořák's *Love Songs* are a later reworking of many songs from *Cypress*.

⁷² Schönzeler, *Dvořák*, 58.

⁷³ John Clapham, *Antonin Dvořák: Musician and Craftsman* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1966), 7.

anyone relationally close enough to Dvořák to have insight of his emotional musings would, prior to 1877, be just as *physically* close, negating the need for letters and other written memorialization of the personal Antonin Dvořák. To those whom these moments were shared with, there was no Dvořák, the great Czech composer - there was only Antonin.

Understanding the great joy that family and fatherhood brought to Dvořák drives home the great pain he felt as personal tragedy struck him repeatedly. Not once, but three times in three years, Dvořák suffered the loss of a child. I am at a loss for words to articulate how Dvořák must have felt reliving such personal devastation not once after his first loss of a child, but twice. I cannot begin to imagine the depths of his sorrow, the excruciating hollowness and heaviness of his loss. Still, I must try.

In September 1875, the couple welcomed daughter Josefa, who died two days later.⁷⁴ The composer's second child, Josefa's birth may have been a realization of Dvořák's dream of a large family. Her death, so swiftly taken from her loving parents, seems to have left the composer reeling - his newborn daughter, his *first* daughter, was a light of joy for the young parents which was quickly, unjustifiably extinguished. Dvořák's 1875 sketches of the *Stabat Mater* for piano, chorus, and solo quartet are sometimes attributed to Josefa's death, though occurring several months after the event. Though Dvořák rarely spoke on or wrote about his emotional state, interpretation of the *Stabat Mater* as a reaction to grief is embraced by audiences and scholars alike.

Further tragedy hit Dvořák and challenged his identity as a father. Within weeks from August to September 1877, the couple's one-year-old daughter Ruzena died of phosphorus poisoning and was shortly followed by her brother Otakar, who succumbed to smallpox.⁷⁵ The

⁷⁴ Schönzeler, *Dvořák*, 81.

⁷⁵ Schönzeler, *Dvořák*, 85.

pain felt by the children in the last moments and the pain of their father having to witness tragedy violently strike his young children is beyond what anyone should have to endure, let alone endure in such rapid succession.

How can one begin to understand Dvořák's grief, his experience of such a sudden, violent personal loss? Given our little records of Dvořák's mental and emotional state, it is necessary to return to the fundamental experience of mortality and connect this phenomenon to the composer in an effort to enlighten the darkened corners of our scholarship.

The human experience of death, that which defines mortality, is a phenomenon of both knowledge and experience. Bearing witness to the death of others is the primary mode through which death is experienced. Though one may experience their own proximity to death, through illness or sleep, one cannot ever experience death as a complete phenomenon when applied to the self. Naturally, this lends to a knowledge about the human condition and its relationship to death which is incomplete.⁷⁶ There are some things about death that are known for certain: it is experienced by everyone, but the expressions of that experience are myriad. Though there is little universality of the human experience of death, there is a stark truth which guides hermeneutic explorations of the experience of death.

Humanity knows that it must die, but does not know why. Though there is biological reasoning for death, there is no reconciliation with its necessity to the human condition. Necessity of death is always on the periphery of the human mind, yet death is characterized by its proximity and suddenness with respect to the human experience.⁷⁷ This inability to reconcile with the necessity of death, the very thing which makes us mortal, illuminates a critical point of mortality as the guiding force of Dvořák's *Stabat Mater*. Through the human inability to

⁷⁶ Paul Lois Landsberg, "The Experience of Death," in *Essays in Phenomenology*, ed. Maurice Natanson (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966): 199.

⁷⁷ Landsberg, "The Experience of Death," 194-195.

reconcile with death, mortality is transformed beyond the necessity of death; In this simultaneous knowledge of death as mortal destiny and inability to reconcile that with the human experience of death, mortality becomes deeply complicated and irrevocably linked to the essence of humanity.

The phenomenology of the death of the other offers profound insights into Dvořák's oratorio. Experiencing another's death as a *human* experience of death is rooted in the personalization, the unique individuality, of the other.⁷⁸ When one witnesses the death of the other, they witness the complete phenomenon of death that cannot be seen in the self. Witnessing this complete phenomenon allows one to understand their own mortality. In the death of the other, the empathy for the suffering and proximity of death allows the witness to become personally involved in the experience of death through their love of the other.⁷⁹ In this process one becomes aware of the necessity, and certainty, of death only through participation, by personal love.⁸⁰ In this one experiences mortality through personal uniqueness of death. Furthermore, mortality as the human experience of death is an empathetic act characterized by personal love and a personal community with the dead.

This is the humanity of Dvořák's *Stabat Mater*, a work finding its locus in mortality, in the very unnaturalness and suddenness of his children's death. It is a musical illumination of mortality as the inability to reconcile the knowledge of death to the human experience of death as a result of profoundly human personal love for the dead. The grand oratorio might be understood as the composer's engagement with his own inability to reconcile his children's death, turning to his faith, to Marian myth, to understand mortality.

⁷⁸ Landsberg, "The Experience of Death," 199.

⁷⁹ Landsberg, "The Experience of Death," 201.

⁸⁰ Landsberg, "The Experience of Death," 201.

Dvořák returned to his sketches of the *Stabat Mater* in 1877 after experiencing the painful deaths of Ruzena and Otakar. His horror and helplessness seeing his children's anguish in their final moments prompted him to expand his musical in memoriam to include Josefa's siblings. As his grief became heavier with the weight of three children's absences, he brought in the great force of the orchestra to amplify an exhaustive grief which could not be contained to the piano/vocal score. The full score was completed on November 13, 1877, just a few months after returning to the first version of the work.⁸¹

Dvořák's grief at the loss of his children is frequently and justifiably understood as the catalyst for his choice in selecting the *Stabat Mater* text for his 1877 cantata. Whether the composer turned to his piety or his music for comfort, the result remains the same: in setting the *Stabat Mater* text, Dvořák found evidence that he was not alone in his consuming grief at the loss of his child. In the divine mother, Antonin Dvořák found a divine mirror of mythic proportion for his grief and through her, found self understanding. Though one cannot say with full authority whether this was explicitly Dvořák's intention when composing the work, as the reserved composer left little written record of his thoughts on such a personal event, an interdisciplinary contextualization of the work suggests an alignment between the divine suffering of Mary and the human suffering of Dvořák through the unifying element of mortality. Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* is an exceptionality among the tradition of *Stabat Mater* settings and a prime example of the manifestations of myth in Romantic-era sacred music *because* of this element of personal catharsis through empathy with the divine.

⁸¹ Holoman, "Works with Secular and Non-Liturgical Texts," 91.

V. Dvořák's *Stabat Mater*

More vividly than perhaps any other setting, Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* illustrates the unity between speaker and divine other, found in the poem's conclusion, from the work's outset. The musical narrative foreshadows this unity, aligning musical manifestations of self and other in a cathartic exploration of grief, mortality, and longing for unity. It evokes a profound humanity in its manifestation of the divine.

Confined to neither the Czech countryside, nor the concert hall, nor the Church, the *Stabat Mater* speaks to a universality of Marian suffering and why this text is still relevant in the secular soundscape. The *Stabat Mater*, *Op. 58* is exceptional among both the composer's own works and in the tradition within which it resides. It is all at once symphonic and operatic, grandiose and vulnerable, Dvořákian and unrecognizable; but most importantly, it is profoundly *human*.

The myth of the Mater Dolorosa in the *Stabat Mater* becomes, in this lens, a sacred elevation of personal grief. It is of little question why so many attribute Dvořák's selection of this text to the death of his three children, Josefa, Ruzena, and Otakar⁸² between 1874 and 1877. Though some may dismiss this attribution as speculative, the phenomenological relationship between artist and art, or composer and music in this case, recognizes that the artist will even unconsciously reflect their state of mind in the art.⁸³ In simpler terms, myth as exploration of the self indicates that Dvořák's empathetic engagement with the *Stabat Mater* mythos and its archetypal macrocosm of personal grief had an unconscious connection to his paternal bereavement.

⁸² Dvořák had two sons named Otakar, one of whom survived into adulthood.

⁸³ Kaufmann, *Art and Phenomenology*, 145.

The usage of the *Stabat Mater* text, not spurred on by commission but chosen of the composer's own volition, provides strong support for the intentionality of such a grandiose setting. The orchestrated revision was completed in 1877, but the work was not published until 1881.⁸⁴ Premiered at the Prague Association of Musical Artists, on December 23, 1880, the *Stabat Mater* brought Dvořák great recognition and popularity in England, sparking his international career.⁸⁵

As we near discussions of internationality of the *Stabat Mater*, it is important to once again note the distinct lack of Czechness within the *Stabat Mater*. In the place of nostalgic Slavic melodies is a great, expansive grief. Even the lightness of the major sections lack the Czechness of Dvořák's usual, pre-1877 style. Most significantly, the *Stabat Mater* stands out brilliantly against both sacred and secular compositions of its time; in a musical landscape stained with nationalism, the *Stabat Mater* is a work of purity. "In this case, there are no political overtones", writes Holoman, "merely a grieving father finding solace in the traditional texts of his faith."⁸⁶

Our definition of myth has proposed two potential readings of the rupture of myth with respect to sacred music as myth: the rupture between humanity and the sacred and the rupture between man and himself, his unconscious self. These can of course be simultaneous, wherein the sacred is an empathetic mirror for the self to seek understanding of the rupture of myth as rupture within the self. I suggest that this overlaid interpretation presents the most accurate application of the rupture of myth to Antonin Dvořák in the composition of his *Stabat Mater*. Certainly as a devout, pious Catholic he would believe in the presence and, arguably, living myth of Mary and through mortality, his separation from her divinity.

⁸⁴ Otakar Šourek, commentary on the 1958 critical score. Antonín Dvořák, *Stabat Mater*, Op. 58 Partitura, (Prague: Státní Nakladatelství Krásné Literatury, Hudby a Umění, 1958), ix.

⁸⁵ Holoman, "Works with Secular and Non-Liturgical Texts", 94

⁸⁶ Holoman, "Works with Secular and Non-Liturgical Texts", 92.

However, Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* provides one of, if not the best, means to analyze myth in sacred music due to the alignment of composer and mythic signifier. As divine other, Mary is quite evidently a mirror for Dvořák; Here is a mortal father mourning the death of several of his children, finding solace and, even more significant, empathy with the divine mother through her pain at the loss of her beloved child.

Detailed in the literary analysis of the work, the most prominent juxtaposition and transformation within the *Stabat Mater* is that from exteriority to interiority. This dichotomy and the speaker's transcendence of it through engagement with the divine provides the driving force for the poem's progression. Complicating these dynamics are those of mortality, humanity, and divinity. These dynamics all arise from the poem's locus, grief. This grief can be juxtaposed with understanding, achieved in the unity of the self and the other. This analysis will explore how these mythic manifestations are represented in the opening three movements.

These dynamics are further complicated by the relationship between musical narrative and literary narrative. Though one may be regarded as subservient to another, this need not always be the case. Within Dvořák's *Stabat Mater*, there are many moments where the musical narrative is transforming the myth inherent to the text by its deviation. Such moments will be discussed following a structure of themes within the work. Each movement analyzed will highlight the construction of particular elements of myth in Dvořák's creation of the Mater Dolorosa.⁸⁷

Movement I. *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*

A visceral lament of a bereaved parent, the opening movement depicts a mourning parent dying themselves in the death of their child yet forced to live on. Anticipation of grief hangs in

⁸⁷ Were the author more intelligent and less stubborn, she would have saved this topic for a doctoral dissertation and analyzed each independent movement. However, that is evidently not the case and as such, only a selection of movements will be analyzed.

the empty air between repetitions of ascending F-sharps. The solemn unfolding of laments demands time to be felt, rolling out across seventy measures in resounding waves. The lacrimosa motif cries out to heaven in a lament of mortality. This is Dvořák's Mary, his making myth. This is how and with whom he mourns.

At its most basic level, the first movement of the *Stabat Mater* is a ternary, sonata-form movement combining both symphonic, operatic, and choral writing in the creation of a nearly twenty minute affective, grandiose meditation of the poem's first four lines.⁸⁸ A behemoth of a movement, over three hundred measures long and rich in textures, contrast, and development of the themes established, it becomes a phenomenal exploration of what it means to understand grief and be understood. Dvořák's opening movement is not long or overgrown without purpose: the composer is giving the grief its time, and as such there is an unhurried intensity that pervades the opening movement and extends it into such a grand command of musical time. The opening movement is the longest *precisely* because it gives Dvořák's grief time and space to be felt, both by the audience and the composer himself.

Its B minor tonality deceptively opens with emphasis on F-sharp, so that the chromatic descent to the tonic recalls the lament bass of the Baroque, emphasizing mythic signifiers of death. Though it is not an exact lament bass, it evokes the imagery of its musical predecessors to implicitly convey the mournful quality. Just as one experiences the absence of a child, of a loved one, the airy F-sharp octaves evoke both a sense of focus on the heavenly and the felt absence of death. The interweaving of orchestral textures within the symphonic introduction builds upon the motives of grief to create an expansive, ascending, and arresting communication of Dvořák's grief through his mythic precedent, the Mater Dolorosa.

⁸⁸ Karen Marie Kennedy, "Thematic and Formal Architecture in Antonin Dvořák's *Stabat Mater*" (DMA Diss., Arizona State University, 2001), 23-24.

The lacrimosa motif is one of the most important and affective musical gestures used to communicate the unrelenting immensity of Mary's, and by mythic understanding, *Dvořák's* grief.

Figure 1. Dvořák, *Stabat Mater*, mvt. 1, m. 38-41



A rising and falling scalar line is repeated, ascending in its repetitions, as though the tears it paints could reach up to heaven with the force of their grief. It is a powerful orchestration reaching to heaven, yearning to be understood in humanity and mortality. The rolling timpani and power brass bring the mournful melody to a visceral power, as though the emphatic and resounding chords could make the audience feel the visceral experience of Dvořák and Mary's loss. It abruptly falls into a diminished chord, as though the weight of grief was one too heavy to carry. The motif aurally embodies the physical manifestation of grief.

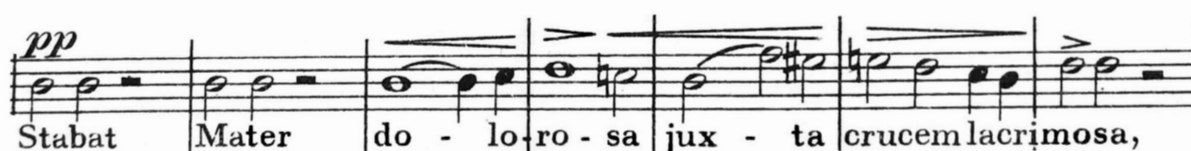
Voicing of the choir's text-painting motif in the orchestral introduction gives text, and by extension voice, to the orchestra such that they become narrators of the sacred drama. While one may argue that there is little unique about the orchestral introduction of narrative motifs in the Romantic era, and on that logic alone they would be correct, this argument misses the significance of its usage in this work. By introducing the lacrimosa motif, a motif inextricably tied to its text, the introduction of the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* movement shows that Dvořák is taking care to establish the mythic representations of Marian grief before introducing its linguistic articulation in the choir seventy-one measures from the work's opening.

Furthermore, the text's lament is Mary's, but the orchestral lament is *Dvořák's*. In this manifestation of his mythic precedent, he imbues her grief with his own and transforms the

Mater Dolorosa by his work. The orchestra, following the motif, to reinforce the themes of tension and present in the opening orchestral motives. Beyond the use of lacrimosa motif in the orchestra, this evidence of disorder in the supporting instruments indicate that the orchestral writing functions as a representation of the mythic conflict present in the *Stabat Mater* poem, the exterior view of Marian grief and its evidence of the rupture of myth.

The orchestral introduction also effectively communicates the exteriority of this opening poetic line, while permeating the work with Dvořák's own interpretation of the text. The speaker, evidenced in the vocal parts, allows the full, solemn procession of grief in the opening dolorous seventy measures before entering with chant-like simplicity. The soft, hesitant description of the Holy Mother's pain beside her son seems almost too quiet when compared to prior settings of the same poem. This entrance ensures that the listener is drawn to the voice for the text and introduction of poetic narrative rather than for musical elements. Reflecting a subtle change, Dvořák uses the simplicity of an orchestrational change to establish the self and the other, the rupture of myth within the *Stabat Mater*.

Figure 2. Dvořák, *Stabat Mater*, movement 1, m. 71-77



The chant-like reflections on the grief are passed from one choral voice to the next. It is a beautiful illusion, created to distract from the impending grief to come. The orchestral accompaniment of these lines retains the strength of grief, lurking at a soft dynamic as though simply awaiting its inevitable return. Here, Dvořák epitomizes lived grief.

The choral voices, once they have all arrived, take up lyrical iterations of the work's opening motifs as the orchestra increases in its present. In the polyphonic exploration of these opening themes builds the momentum of a great and powerful lament, the orchestra nearly drowns out the voices. One cannot tell whose words the *lacrimosa* are when the choir and orchestra resound the *lacrimosa* motif with somehow more power than before. The unity of the two, a contrast to the exterior focus of the text, aligns the laments of Dvořák and Mary. Mortal and divine lament for their child with one voice.

The choral introduction's significance lies in its simplicity and abstractness. Through the liturgical and textual traditions of sacred music, the choir and soloists become associated with the speaker, and by extension, the self. In the *Stabat Mater*, the choir's instrument-like writing suggests a greater identification with the other than the self. Given this is the textual introduction of the Mater Dolorosa as she stands beside the cross, the abstractness of the choir musically illustrates the text's narrative exteriority as the speaker observes the pain and suffering of Mary. Through the instrumental writing for the chorus and absence of soloists in the opening statements of the *Stabat Mater* text for the first section of the work, Dvořák's work conveys the self on the periphery of the poem's opening exposition, still serving more as a distant narrator than as one engaging with the events described.

Though initially following these poetic structural distinctions of exteriority and interiority in his setting of the text, Dvořák subverts this to foreshadow the engagement and ultimate unity with the divine other. This is seen in the tenor soloist voicing the opening *stabat mater dolorosa* text. The writing begins with the same lyrical adaptation as the choral parts but to a higher degree of grandiosity, transforming into more soloistic, noticeably *Italian* operatic writing. The shift to the *cuius animam gementem* text seems to be Dvořák mirroring his Italian predecessor

Rossini, taking a lighter orchestral tone from the Italian opera master's portfolio. Who would have imagined the Czech composer would become famous in England for a work incorporating the Italian operatic style? Performances of the work across nations and time reinforce the Italian operatic style through performance practice, with generous vibrato and warmth of tone.

The operatic writing in Dvořák's work, though derivative of Rossini's 1842 *Stabat Mater*, must be understood as a fundamentally different application from its predecessor. Rossini's narcissistic stubbornness and refusal to leave the art which brought him fame meant that the use of opera in his work held little intentionality for highlighting the text and the sacred imagery it provided. Antonin Dvořák's selective incorporation of operatic writing, contrasted by the symphonic writing prior, presents a clear distinction of text treatment within and across movements. A stark distinction between the works as well is the "characteristicity" of the works with respect to the composer. While Rossini remains firmly encamped in his one successful genre, Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* is unlike any of his earlier or later compositions and, to the unfamiliar ear, may not even be recognizable as the Czech composer's work. At the work's earliest sketches in 1875, Antonin Dvořák is still in the early stages of his career and has yet to fully explore the vocal genre, let alone the sacred vocal drama of oratorio. His single opera composition to date was the work of an orchestral violist, a supporting role to the grandiosity Rossini composed.⁸⁹

In the tenor soloist's operatic exposition, Dvořák presents another, more independent facet of the self. Yet the self's engagement is incomplete, evidenced by the absence of the other three soloists coinciding with the tenor. Though the quartet gets to explore the lines, they dance around each other, staggering entrances as though afraid to become entangled in each other's

⁸⁹ Sourek, *Letters*, 25.

ruminations on Mary's suffering. Different soloists and the choir engage with the text throughout the movement, following in the Italian style of the tenor and seen in the return of the choral *Stabat Mater* exposition, but the degree of the self's engagement with Mary's suffering is not mutually understood by both musical and literary narrative until the second movement.

Movement 2. *Quis Est Homo*

Turning away from the rich, dolorous sonata form and orchestral grandeur of the prior movement, Dvořák's *Quis est homo* is a ternary form movement for solo vocal quartet in E minor. From this most global level, the movement to the fourth of the prior key suggests a change in the musical narrative; Perhaps not the turmoil of tonicizing the dominant, but the tonicization of the fourth suggests a movement toward the divine, through its associations with the plagal cadence. Particularly within the *Stabat Mater* as a mythic narrative, this movement to the minor four specifically could indicate feelings of tension and irresolution within this contemplation of Mary's suffering. This reading would be supported by the literary narrative, as the text moves to a contemplation on the suffering of Mary and engagement of the self through the rhetorical questions of empathy.

Dvorak shifts toward an intimate setting in this grand sacred drama, "telescoping" from a large symphonic introduction to chamber orchestra and solo quartet in the second movement.⁹⁰ Though the symphony may be perceived as a more grandiose performing force, the dramatization of the text becomes increasingly evident in this movement through the use of operatic convention. However, this is only one means of advancing the narrative. With respect to a mythic understanding of this work, the decision to scale back the orchestral presence and the

⁹⁰ This term, while in reference to the first movement, was coined by Julia O'Toole. For further reading, see Julia O'Toole, "The Sonic Landscape of *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*", *Choral Journal* 55, no.5 (Dec. 2014): 12.

engagement of the soloists with one another hints at a shift in focus. Wherein the soloists serve as different facets of the self and the orchestra as the other, this orchestrational choice indicates that this movement is primarily concerned with the self and the self's journey to seek understanding through empathy with divine suffering. Our prior literary analysis of the *Stabat Mater* poem supports this reading of the musical narrative and superimposed literary lyrical narrative.

The melancholy sigh of the woodwinds, with the noticeable presence of the English Horn, breathes life into the works and maintains a light loneliness to the first movement's heavy imparting of grief. Its lyrical descents contrast with the heavy, forceful ascents of the *Stabat Mater*. There is an element of tiredness in its grief and reflection, as though the twenty minute exposition of grief has exhausted the orchestra and choir. The soloists bring their exhaustion and desperation with their grief to the foreground in broken iterations of the text, but piece the lines together as each contends with their grief and struggle under its weight. The increasingly operatic, melismatic writing conveys a sense of desperation and urgency not found in the prior movement. The movement wrestles with the self's increasingly desperate grievances and efforts to find self-understanding in Mary's suffering, becoming more orchestrally and dramatically involved as alignment with the other is reached.

Figure 3. Dvořák, *Stabat Mater*, mvt. 2, m. 1-5



The movement begins with the orchestra's introduction of the "quis est homo" theme that will be present in the vocal parts. While this can also be seen in the lacrimosa motif, its occurrence at the onset of this work is significant. This near-exact quotation musically foreshadows the unity between the self and the other that is to come, interweaving the conflict's resolution into the representation of the other.

The alto soloist begins alone, echoed by the orchestra. In this paradigm where the soloists function as faces of the self, Dvořák recreates the dynamic seen in our literary analysis where this rhetorical question is implicitly directed at and questions the self. He expands on this viewpoint within the musical narrative by bringing in the tenor with the sixth line, "quis non fleret" on the same "quis est homo" melody. When the tenor takes over this melody, the countermelody becomes more florid and operatic, mirroring an aria within an opera scene. This is further complicated by the entrance of the bass soloist, as the writing across all parts takes on a greater arioso quality.

The use of operatic writing as the movement's defining feature is significant within this paradigm. Firstly, Romantic era opera took on an even greater character of grandeur with the popularity of Wagnerian opera and the rise of opera giants such as Rossini, who dedicated their entire career to the grand drama. In the case of Wagnerian opera, the creation of myth through the grand drama not only became explicit but served as the driving force for the transformation of the genre.⁹¹ While one might identify this as a uniquely Wagnerian phenomenon, it is important to note that Dvořák was not only deeply familiar with Wagner's operas, from his career as an orchestral violist, but greatly admired Wagner's compositional style. Perhaps his operatic writing within the *Stabat Mater* serves as his experimentation and incorporation of that style.

⁹¹ Tarasti, *Myth and music*, 55.

Nonetheless, operatic arias served to allow the audience a glimpse into the character's innermost feelings and thoughts on the events of the opera's plot. Though many operatic arias advance the plot, this is their secondary function and this distinction is most evident in the late Romantic era opera. This operatic writing provides confirmation of the musical narrative's tonic indication of introspection.

In this mythic model, unity of the voices indicates the unity of the self, totally and wholly fixated upon the divine other. Unity of the voices repeating octaves at measure 140 provides stability and establishes focus on a singularity, which to the self is the divine, and to Dvořák is Mary. This fixation upon the other provides recognition of the self within the other, and this event allows for true empathy with the other, answering the speaker's rhetorical questions in the literary narrative. The achievement of empathy is seen in the bass solo breaking from this established order to lament the pains suffered by Jesus.

Figure 4. Dvořák, *Stabat Mater*, mvt. 2, m. 145-156

The image shows a musical score for Dvořák's *Stabat Mater*, measures 145-156. It consists of four staves. The top three staves are vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, and Tenor) with lyrics 'Pro pec-ca - tis'. The bottom staff is a bass solo with lyrics 'ca - tis su-ae gentis vi-dit Jesum in tormentis et fla - gel - lis sub-ditum.' The bass solo begins with a forte (f) dynamic and includes markings for 'dim.' (diminuendo) and 'p' (piano).

Evidenced here is the beginning of unity between the self and the divine other. Here, the soloist is lamenting that which the divine other, the Mater Dolorosa, laments: the suffering of her son. This suggests a newfound alignment between the speaker and the divine other, where her pains are visible to them. This use of the bass solo to convey alignment of the self and divine

other is not insignificant. Given that bass characters often portray fathers or paternal figures in Romantic-era opera, Dvořák's conscious or unconscious alignment of himself with the divine mirror of Mary as both mourning the death of a child can be evidenced within the music itself.

The work ends with the choir at octaves, with the return of a chant-like, simple melody only descending at its very end. This droning affect of the choir, coupled with the solemn timpani beneath them suggests a connection to a funerary march, as the timpani could be seen to signify the tolling of a bell. This use of musical imagery to create an ominous feeling introduces the audience to an upcoming element of the *Stabat Mater*: a strong juxtaposition of musical and literary narrative elements in the creation of the Romantic-era *Mater Dolorosa* mythos.

Focus is shifted back to the divine other and her grief through the orchestral coda at the end of the work. The *quis est homo* motif, interwoven throughout the movement, comes back in emphatic orchestral octaves to direct the audience's attention and the now-silent speaker back to the other. Though the text narrative has come to a close, the orchestral coda creates a sense of tension and unresolved conflict through the revival of the work's opening theme and this expansion upon it.

Within the *Quis est homo* movement, the synchronization of musical and poetic narrative is crucial to conveying this movement towards alignment. There is an evident sense of the text's themes interwoven in the very fabric of the movement: introspection, suffering, self and the other, interiority and exteriority. These themes are not only present, but manifested as repeating motives voiced throughout all performing forces. This purposeful, aurally iconographic manifestations of the text's themes and the unity of the musical and visual narratives is what allows this movement to provide the pivotal shift from exteriority to self-involving contemplation of the divine.

For this reason, the following movement is remarkably intriguing. *Quis est homo* creates a aurally vivid picture of the tension and contemplation within the self through unified musical and poetic narratives. Dvořák's third movement of the *Stabat Mater*, *Eia mater, fons amoris*, explores the unity of self and the other through seemingly juxtaposed musical and poetic narratives.

Movement 3. *Eia mater, fons amoris*

Compared to the preceding movements, the third movement has a remarkable simplicity. The interspersed moving notes maintain a strong sense of momentum interspersed throughout the reflective orchestral setting. The writing style alternates between a firmly established march and motet writing. The voices sing in moving, hushed melodies, as though in fervent prayer. The ninth line of the *Stabat Mater* poem is binary form, set in c minor.⁹² Its 4/4 setting brings attention to the punctuation in the rhythmic motif. All these simplistic elements allow for clarity of the musical narrative. Whereas the poetic narrative seeks unity with the divine other through shared sorrow, the musical narrative begins a funeral march, bringing the themes of death and suffering to the aural foreground amidst declamations of Mary as the "fount of love". In this, the musical and poetic narratives become signifiers of mortality and divinity, complicating the alignment of the self and the other.

Dvořák emphatically establishes the *Eia Mater* as a funeral march by quoting a motive from Chopin's *Funeral March in C Minor*, *Op. 72, no. 2*. It seems to be no coincidence that the work is set in the same key, with the motive opening the work in the first violin and first oboes. This motive is brought to attention by a simplistic support of quarter notes completing the tonic chord. At the choral entrance, this theme is sung by the soprano voice.

⁹² Kennedy, "Thematic and Formal Architecture", 52.

Figure 5. Dvořák, *Stabat Mater*, mvt. 3, m. 1-4



While there is a slight change, this iconic funeral march motif would be recognizable to its Romantic-era audience and would immediately evoke the atmosphere of the funeral procession. This is part of the collective myth-making of the Romantic-era: referencing musical symbols and imagery from other works to intensify a work's affect. By doing this, Dvořák not only establishes the *Eia mater* as a funeral march, borrowing Chopin's iconic motif, but connects the mythic transformation of sacred music to the transformation of musical narrative in secular music. This explicitly draws a connection between these two phenomena, suggesting that this innovative compositional practice in secular music had a strong and conscious influence on the modern ownership of sacred music.

This musical recognition of and rumination upon mortality in presentation of an orchestrated funeral march is contrasted with the longing for empathy with the divine other, placing the focus not on the suffering she feels but on her and grief as a means of achieving unity with her. In this, the literary narrative centralizes her divinity, evoking the longing of the speaker to empathize with her. Within the framework of Romantic-era myth, this presents the self seeking the other in an effort to reconcile the rupture of myth, the disunity of man and his unconscious.

The occurrence of the funeral march at the work's outset, and its motives retained in the choir centralize mortality in the reaching for divine unity. This presentation of the text's themes,

not juxtaposed within a singular narrative but across the two, creates a particularly interesting relationship with the dynamics of interiority and exteriority. As detailed in the earlier poetic analysis, the *Eia mater* text is a pivotal moment, where the speaker becomes self-referential and involved to a greater capacity than before. The speaker consciously, *actively* seeks unity with the divine other. Then why the centralization of mortality?

In the connection between Dvořák and the *Stabat Mater*, mortality is the very fabric of Dvořák's compositional search for alignment with the divine and search for self-understanding through Mary as Mater Dolorosa, divine manifestation of grief for the loss of a child. Dvořák's engagement with the myth of the Mater Dolorosa is undeniable; At the poetic setting where the speaker first involved themselves and merges the interior and exterior, Dvořák writes a funeral march. Here he approaches the divine mother, walking beside her in lament, dying with his child's death as she with hers, looking for understanding and empathy.

Conclusions

Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* is a deep, dolorous expansion on the shared grief of the divine mother for her son and the mortal father for his children. Italian and German in its operatic influences, Dvořák's standard Czechness cannot be found on its pages as the composer reaches to something, *someone*, far more universal than his homeland. His mastery over many different genre conventions in portrayal of the alignment between the divine and the self, seeking unity amidst the rupture of myth, the rupture of self caused by his grief, manifests in the deeply profound and deeply human sonorities of the *Stabat Mater*.

Through its dynamics of self and the other, its mythic manifestations, the *Stabat Mater* evidences how grief can function as a catalyst for the transformation of inherent symbolism in music. By personal relation to the pain and grief of the Mater Dolorosa, Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* transforms the divine into a mirror for the self, demonstrating both Dvořák's profound desire to be understood by another in his bereavement and his connection with the living myth of the *Stabat Mater*.

The composer's pre-existing relationship to religiosity has a great amount of bearing on this manifestation of Marian myth. In the case of Dvořák, the *Stabat Mater* is made so wholly present and real in her grief because, to Dvořák, she *is* present. Her archetypal, mythic manifestation of grief as a central aspect of the Crucifixion and Catholicism allowed her to be the vessel through which Dvořák amplified his paternal bereavement. This catharsis of grief, this meditation on mortality, resounds into our day and age through continued performances of this work. This is the significance of such an interdisciplinary study; the application of religious studies methodologies allows one to detail and affirm the relationship of belief to compositional intent. For Dvořák's *Stabat Mater*, a text setting of the composer's own volition, it would be

disingenuous to wash over the importance of the composer's personal faith in seeking connection to this text.

Beyond myth, what can this tell us about Antonin Dvořák? Biographical accounts describe the composer often in relation to his Czechness, emphasizing and perhaps overemphasizing this as his primary quality in his contribution to music history. However, the *Stabat Mater* cannot be grouped into this Czechness. Its style is noticeably international, adopting Italian operatic elements and claiming its Catholic heritage rather than Dvořák's Czech. The importance of its place in Dvořák's career indicates that this work was not a one-time experimentation in an international, sacred style but that he sought to define himself through this work.

A potential bridge between the juxtapositions of his styles in prior works and the *Stabat Mater*, Op. 28 arises when we look at Dvořák's biography. Whether they were in the Czech style of his homeland or the international Catholic style of the *Stabat Mater*, Dvořák's works were of very personal origins. His desire to experiment with different colors and aural textures to create imagery within his works, evidenced in later works like the ever-known *New World Symphony*, reflected someone who wrote compositions not from a desire for wealth or fame, but from an inner voice with a message to be heard. In the *Stabat Mater*, this message is one of profound loss. Meditating upon the Mater Dolorosa reflects his desire to be known and understood in his grief, turning to faith to find a mythic representation, in its epic proportions, of his own indescribable, penetrating grief.

The Czech nostalgic melodies in their warm colors drain out as Dvořák is hit again and again by tragedy. Light as hope and dark as a tomb, the *Stabat Mater* aurally projects Dvořák's paternal grief to his audience through Mary, pouring out in its somber sonorities as though

Dvořák is begging Mary and begging us to help him carry the immense and inescapable weight of loss. As I ruminate on and carry my piece of that grief over the course of this thesis, experiencing the fullness of both Dvořák's losses and my own, I understand how seeking Mary and manifesting myth helped him understand what it means to mourn.

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Appendix. *Stabat Mater* Text and Translation

In this appendix, the original text is provided with literal translation and performing forces. The literal translation endeavors to remain true to the content of the text. The text is listed by its corresponding movements in Dvořák's work. The performing force is listed by the lines of text for a strict illustration of text arrangements, underlined and italicized. If a line is not given a performing force within a movement, this indicates that there was no change in performing force from the line prior. Repeated performing forces will be reiterated at each movement change.

I. *Stabat Mater dolorosa*

Choir, Tenor solo

*i. Stabat mater dolorosa
juxta crucem lacrimosa
dum pendebat Filius*

The grieving mother stood
beside the cross weeping
where her son was hanging

Tenor solo

*ii. Cuius animam gementem
contristatam et dolentem
pertransivit gladius*

Through her weeping soul,
compassionate and grieving,
a sword pierced

Soprano, Alto, Tenor soli; Choir

*iii. O quam tristis et afflicta
fuit illa benedicta
Mater Unigeniti*

O how sad and afflicted
was that blessed
Mother of the Only-Begotten

Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass Solo Quartet; Choir

*iv. Quae moerebat et dolebat
et tremebat cum videbat
nati poenas incliti*

Who mourned and grieved
and trembled when looking
at the torment inflicted upon her child

II. *Quis est homo*

SATB Solo Quartet

*v. Quis est homo qui non fleret
Matri Christi si videret
in tanto supplicio?*

Who is the person who would not weep
if they saw the Mother of Christ
in such supplication?

vi. *Quis non posset contristari
Matrem Christi contemplari
dolentem cum filio?*

Who would not be able to feel compassion
contemplating Christ's Mother
suffering with her son?

vii. *Pro peccatis suae gentis
vidit Iesum in tormentis
et flagellis subditum*

For the sins of his people
she saw Jesus
in torment and subjected to the whip.

viii. *Vidit suum dulcem natum
moriendo desolatum
dum emisit spiritum*

She saw her sweet child
dying, in desolation,
while He gave up his spirit

III. Eia Mater, fons amoris

Choir

ix. *Eia mater, fons amoris,
me sentire vim doloris
fac ut tecum lugeam*

O Mother, fountain of love,
make me feel the power of your sorrow,
that with you I may grieve

IV. Fac ut ardeat cor meum

Bass solo

x. *Fac ut ardeat cor meum
in amando Christum Deum
ut sibi complaceam*

Grant that my heart may burn
with the love of Christ my Lord,
that I may greatly please him

Choir

xi. *Sancta Mater, istud agas,
crucifixi fige plagas
cordi meo valide*

Holy Mother, do this:
fix the wounds of the Crucifixion
in my heart securely

V. Tui nati vulnerati

Choir

xii. *Tui nati vulnerati
tam dignati pro me pati
poenas mecum divide*

That your wounded son,
who deigned to suffer for me,
may share his pains with me

VI. Fac me vere tecum flere

Tenor solo, Choir

xiii. *Fac me vere tecum flere*

Let me with you weep,

*crucifixo condolere
donec ego vixero*

bemoan the Crucified,
for as long as I live

*xiv. Iuxta crucem tecum stare
te libenter sociare
in planctu desidero*

Beside the cross with you to stand,
and in your weeping to share,
I desire

VII. Virgo virginum praeclara

Choir

*xv. Virgo virginum praeclara
mihi iam non sis amara
fac me tecum plangere*

Virgin of virgins most noble,
with me do not be bitter,
make me with you lament

VIII. Fac ut portem Christi mortem

Soprano and Tenor solo

*xvi. Fac ut portem Christi mortem
passionis eius sortem
et plagas recolere*

Grant that I may bear the death of Christ, the
fate of his passion, and his wounds
commemorate

*xvii. Fac me plagis vulnerari
cruce hac inebriari
ob amorem filii*

Grant that I may be wounded with his wounds,
inebriated by the cross
for the love of your son

IX. Inflammatus et accensus

Alto solo

*xviii. Inflammatus et accensus,
per te, Virgo, sim defensus
in die iudicii*

Lest I am set afire and inflamed;
by you, Virgin, may I be defended
on the day of judgment

*xix. Fac me cruce custodiri
morte Christi praemuniri
confoveri gratia*

Let me be guarded by the cross,
armed by Christ's death,
cherished by His grace

X. Quando corpus morietur

SATB Solo Quartet, Choir

*xx. Quando corpus morietur
fac ut animae donetur
paradisi gloria
Amen*

When my body dies,
grant that my soul be given the glory of
paradise
Amen