

Sign of the Cross in St. Matthew Passion

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- [0 : 0 0] Our color is purple, and what better thing to do than to focus on a passion chorale that we know we're going to sing, right Terry?
- Right. Yes, because we do it every year. How many times is that chorale used in the same dancing fashion? Five. Oh, you spilled the beans, I'm going to talk about that.
- Very good. I did my homework. Okay. So, in this presentation here, I will be addressing a similar question or problem that Dr. Dan Westberg posed during his Learners' Exchange talk back in 2009.
- So there's a lot of history here that may intrigue you to spend a lot of time streaming on our website. Okay.
- But I'm going to do it from a very different point of view, of course. The question is that St. Matthew Passion made no reference to the Resurrection, which is somewhat of an overstatement.
- [1 : 0 6] Not too much of an overstatement, somewhat. It has no promise of the Atonement. And the final movement just dwells in the scene of sorrow and disappointment. So you can see what that disconnect with in comparison to what Bach thinks about salvation here.
- Now, because we are going to the deep end, the very deep end, I'm going to spend a lot of time talking about theory. Okay. And we're going to talk about something called Shankarian Analysis.
- It is a methodology, simply put, and perhaps oversimplified, of summarizing music. Summarizing music.
- And showing which part is being more salient than other, and how they are related. Method developed by a late 19th century, 20th century Austrian theorist by the name of Heinrich Shanker.
- Hans Shankarian Analysis. And note that date. Remember what happened to Austria and Germany during that time. Between those dates. Especially his mature years.
- [2 : 2 1] And it's so fitting we were in 2018. Remember that. 2018. Right. Okay.
- So, before we get... The best way that I can illustrate it is to use an example. And the best way to get into the example is to sing the example.
- Yes. And we got the Tippiies and Terry here. And... That's all your show, Jason. That's all my show, man. But I'm not going to have trouble here. Okay.
- Can you hear it? Joy, joy, joy. Da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da. Joy. Two. Three. Joy. Joyful, joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, God of love.
- As humble, like fire before thee, O bring to the sun's above.
- [3 : 2 9] Melt the clouds of sin and sadness. Thrive the dark of south away.
- Give her the dark of immortal gladness. Build the slave the light away.
- Okay. Okay. Okay. So, to summarize music, the best thing, best first step to summarize it is, let's take out the repeated notes.

That's what you get. Right? Et cetera, et cetera.

Right? Take out the fancy rhythm. Take out all your repeated notes. That's what you get. Now, when you were singing, you noticed that I was sort of playing. I was sort of distracted as well, so I played a few wrong notes.

[4 : 27] But when, I was sort of playing along, but I didn't play all the notes. You ever notice that? So, what did I play? I played the important notes. There are notes that are more important than the others. Right?

And those who actually did some music, I know there are a lot of you here, or a handful of you. I'm looking at them. You're going to take out your passing tone. Or, right?

The middle note there is a decoration. We're going to take away your decoration note. Right? Because those are less important than your main chord notes. Right?

So, we're going to take away my decoration note. That's what I get. Okay? And, which is essentially, Et cetera.

Okay? You're going to see how that fits in there. Okay? Now, of course, theory being theory being theory, which is being abstract. I can put a hierarchy on this supposedly already summarized form.

[5 : 33] Right? Because you notice this note, it always comes back on these things. These upper and the lower notes always seems like decorating that middle note there.

So, it's more important. More important. Right? Something like that.

So, that is why, we'll come back to this later. In the notation, there are notes without stem and notes without stem. Now, this is not how you read music. This is an analytical notation.

Okay? It's not how you read music. Okay? So, your stem notes are more important than your unstemmed notes. Okay? Okay? Okay? So, following here.

So, if we take the unstemmed notes away, we're going to end up with what is in the third line right here. Now, don't be scared of this little bar here. It means that those two are related.

[6 : 32] And don't be scared about the, what we call a curvy line on top. It just says that they are related. And, so we take out your decoration note. We end up with this.

And then, and then. So, in there, you can go into, in your mind, go.

See how that fits in there? So, see what summarizing. Now, we can summarize even another level more abstract by eliminating this little bit. All this stuff here.

So, what we got is the second line up there. And you can hear that. Right?

See how that fits in there. Now, theory being theory being theory. Huh? Huh? Huh? Huh? I think your summary is still a bit long. Yes. Theory being theory being theory being theory being abstract.

[8 : 00] Right? We can still reduce it one more level. Right here. So, what are we going to remove? Remove all that in the, in, in the bottle, in the middle right here.

And your whole thing sounds like three blind mice. So, all music summarized to three blind mice.

That's a spill. That's a spin. Being that I'm going to spill right here. Okay? So, you can see how that fits in. I'm not going to sing it again because it's in your head already. Right? But you can see how the entire M just fits into that little three blind mice.

Okay? We call that the background. We call this the middle ground. And we call this the foreground. Okay? Alright. Now, this is a way of summarizing music.

But it's very uneconomical to write all that out. So, you come up with a set of notation to put it all together in one thing. And we got this. Hollow note with stem.

[9 : 06] Usually, there's a huge bar there with numbers 3, 2, 1, the third scale degree down. Mi, re, do, three blind mice. That is your background. That is your most important. Your pillar notes in any piece of music.

Obviously, any piece of music. Almost. It's called an orally. Second most important notes are solid notes with stem. Third being solid notes without stem.

And the least important are these little tiny ones. Alright? So, you can actually follow along here and here. And you can probably hear which one is being more important than others.

Okay? Alright. Are we good here? Nod your head.

Okay? Okay? Now, I'm going to say some quotes from Shanker's own writing and remember his dates. Okay? The orally, i.e. this three blind mice thing, bears in itself the seeds of all forces that shape tonal life.

[10 : 16] End quote. Open quote. The orally is the possession of the German genius alone. Remember his dates. Okay? Diminution.

Diminution being the decoration of. So, from here, the process from going from here, decorating to what we recognize down here. That's a process called diminution or composing out or elaboration.

Diminution relates to the orally as flesh in the bloom of life relates to man's skeleton. Now, let me translate here. Reading it from the context of the 21st century into the Austrian-Fiannese intellectual culture at the turn of the 20th century, what is Shanker really saying here?

All Western common practice of the German tradition are essentially elaboration or diminution composing out of a common high-level structure bearing the three blind mice descent called the orally.

So, everything is three blind mice in the background if it is conforming to common practice German music, according to Shanker, that is. Now, we didn't really merely scratch the surface here because there's a ton to talk about, but the ability to come up with these graphs is not what I'm interested in to talk about.

[11 : 41] But what I need you to understand here is that in order for music, according to Shanker, to be a cohesive whole, it must have a common high-level structure.

It must have these three blind mice in order for it to be a cohesive whole. And that, you know how to understand the notation presented here.

Important, less important, less important, less important. Okay? And yes, all German common practice music follows this pattern. Why? Shanker made a graph like this of Beethoven's Third Symphony, First Movement, and it also is three blind mice.

So, you can spend all your time listening to the Third Symphony, and also Joyful Joyful, you can realize in the back of your mind it's the same thing. Okay? All right. So, I'll stop at this time for some questions.

Yes? Yes. When Buck was doing this, this one's last one, but I'm going to say, anyway, did he start with three blind mice and then embroider it? No. No.

[12 : 46] No. So, was he aware that we were using three blind mice? Likely no. Then, what is the point of that at times? It's almost like thinking about breathing. If you ask a research biologist, it's going to tell you when you're breathing, you'll be thinking you've got all these hormonal signal going on, which muscle to contract, which muscle to relax.

But you don't think about it, right? No. It doesn't mean it's not true. That's an analogy. Okay? So, he was doing it unconsciously.

That would be the argument. Yes. When you said this is generic to all the German music of the period? Common practice, yes. Okay. And the three blind mice is that, you took us through this beautifully, but then you get to three blind mice, that can be applicable to all the other composers' operational things.

That's amazing. It's the skeleton of everything. Yeah. Yes. That's the point. That's the point. And Schenker being an Austrian that's on the losing side of the war, he's going to say, that is something that the German genius has.

In service of what is he arguing that for? Like, why is he trying to make that point? What's the larger point? The larger point is, German was in trouble, and German people lost faith of their own, and tried to refigilate the belief of the German people.

[14 : 25] And that's why I say notice states, right? Yeah. Yeah. Well, can you say that the date period, you look at the end of the 1935, though, and they weren't losing then? No, of course they were losing.

They lost the first war. The first war is a war, but they had to have to lose them. You did. But the first war is a war, devastating to them than the second war. Sorry. Actually, the first war is really what punched them down. Yes.

So, almost all of this is going over my head, but I would ask, so I don't really understand it, but is it just a theory that is embraced by a few, or is it very, very likely to be true?

It's a theory that is now common to, just common in the theoretical world.

Now, is it true? Again, it's, we don't know. We just, I mean, in science, we can, that's why I majored in arts. Well, in science, we can prove breathing, right?

[15 : 29] We can prove breathing. But in arts, how can you prove that? You can. Yeah. So, so this, what's happening here, if I'm seeing it correctly, how people escape into something, escape into hobbies, in this case, it's music.

Am I reading the situation correctly? Escape, or expressing thoughts through music, escaping into music, is what, will you cut?

Not necessarily. Not really, no. Yeah. I think I should stop for now, because there's going to be some more time after, I'm going to race, race, race to the clock to get into Bach. I mean, this is just a very good framework we're going to, we're dealing with, and I know I've opened up which can of worm here.

Yeah. The guy's culture is affecting his thinking, what's going on is affecting the artist, how he thinks, so that's, okay, yeah, okay. Okay, let's move on to St. Matthew.

Now, in a large oratorical work, St. Matthew Passion being one of them, Bach's idea of how the, the chorale is Bach's idea of how the congregation should respond to the Passion narrative, i.e. Bach putting words into the mouth and mind of, of, of you guys, congregation, of his congregation.

[16 : 42] Okay. German music historian, Philip Spita, commented, greater number of chorales are set in a severe style, and accentuates the congregational feeling in all its modesty and force.

Albert Schweitzer wrote, the feeling of the Christian spectator are expressed in the chorale verses. So, chorale has a function, and the function is, what you should think, it's Bach telling you what you should think.

Make sure your mind don't drift, probably. Services were long back then, and yes, five times. Terry spilled the beans there. Yes, it appeared five times, and they're at the important points of, twice the amount of olive, one before, one in trial before pilot, one during scourging, and one immediately following Jesus' death.

And, the purpose of it, of course, is to guide the congregation's thought, through the work, accumulating to the central event, of the passion, which is the sacrifice on the cross.

Now, each of these chorale appearances, it appeared five times, they are slightly different, they have slightly different harmonizations. Now, what does that mean?

[18 : 00] You guys actually know this, you guys actually been exposed to, reharmonization of a chorus, of a hymn tune, all the time. Right, David? What are you talking about? Of course, whenever the, the, the, the desk can't sing, or the last, last verse of your hymn, Terry plays something different.

That's a reharmonization. Most of the time. Most of the time. Most of the time. All right. Bach reharmonized this passion chorale.

And we can listen to it, and see if you can, know what the reharmonization sounds like. I appreciate you do. Cool.

So, there's one way of harmonizing, and here's the second way.

I hear the harmony being different.

[19 : 31] But Bach elaborated the tune a bit too. Don't worry about that. And guess what?

Each of these separate elaborations gives a different graph. And guess what we're going to do? So the cultural buttress influences the artist, expressed it through music, and also there's a certain amount of numbers that's involved in this too.

Yeah. I'm learning all this jazz. Okay. So, let's march through. First time it came up. It is right after they sang a hymn, they went to Mount of Olives, and Jesus said, You're going to fall away from me this night because of me and...

But, you know, I'll strike the shepherd and the flock will be scattered kind of thing. So, it's Jesus foretelling that, you know, you guys are going to fall away from me. This is how, what Bach thinks you're going to, um, how you should be thinking of this narrative.

And, here is the graph. Wow. Go. Oh boy. You know what? Don't worry about that... Hey, where's my pointe? Bottom line here, we haven't gone over this.

[20 : 57] This is your foreground. Remember foreground? And here is the music. Here's your important note. Big stem, letter 3. So, there's your 3. And you expect a blind mice in the next slide, right?

Okay? So, important notes. These are the more important notes. Important notes, these are the little guys that are not important these. Yes?

Maybe I'm blind. I can't see a pointer. I can't see them. You can't? No. No, no, it's not. Here? Can we see it? No, we can see it. Yeah, I can see it. Yeah, it's a little faint because...

Oh, there it is. Yeah. Sorry. Oh, no. Sorry, it's a weak laser. I still found a more powerful laser, right? Jason, use your finger. Huh? Oh, yes. It's a pretty good pointer.

Walk over to the screen. Okay. I'm going to trip over. What's that in front of it? I'm going to trip over here. Sorry, we can't dim the lights or all the lights in this part of the building go on.

[21 : 55] Yeah. So, music here, foreground here. Most important note, 3. And you expect blind mice in later, in the next slide.

Here are the more important notes. Here are the most important notes. All these things are not important. They are just declarations. Good. And so, let's listen to it and see if you can follow along here.

Let's see if I sort the graph. There are 3. That's 3. 3. That's 3.

Seeing the pointer? Three.

Three. Two.

[23 : 05] Three. Two. And one in the alto actually. Okay? Here? See? You can follow along, right?

It's not that hard, right? Okay, what I want you to get here is one, it's in the key of E, so it is your happy key that is centered on the note E.

Come on. Okay? And also it has a clear three blind mice line. That's all I need you to get here, okay?

Second time it came up, right immediately after Peter said, I'm not going to leave you, master, and Jesus said, no dude. Three times the rooster sounds and you will say no to me three times.

And the only thing different from the previous appearance is that Bach transposed the entire thing down the semitone. So I went from here to E flat.

[24 : 10] And here, actually here, one step drop. Not going to listen to it yet because I'm going to come back to it. Okay? But that's all we're going to spend right here, okay? Not that hard.

Little bit more interesting right here is the third appearance is when Jesus, it's when Jesus said to trial before Pilate. This time it's in the key of D.

So you're tracing a semitone descent. That's all. And if you listen to it, you can hear it. I'm going to play the beginning of each. And the second time.

And the third appearance. I'm going to play the beginning of each. And the third appearance. Got it? It's pretty easy, right? Now, things get even more interesting.

Here's the graph. Now, on this graph is very similar to what we had at first. But, there is a very slight change.

[25 : 23] I'm going to skip. We're going to listen to this, but I'm seeing time is against me here. I'm going to skip listening to this. But there is a slight change in the middle ground.

A slight change somewhere that causes a very interesting switch Bach is giving us. So, we're going to...

I originally planned to listen to this. But I'm going to skip it. The change happens here. Okay? So when it goes... But instead, I'm just going to focus.

Okay? So... The change between one and two to three is the shift of the important note from here to here.

So... The tune goes... Da da da da da da da da da... It should... It was... Da da da da da da da da... To... Da da da da da da da...

[26 : 24] See? There's a switch. And the switch is because... The decoration note, which is a note that doesn't belong, the non-chord tone, went from here to here.

Bach added a dissonance, i.e. make this one sound like there's a crunch. Now, we're going to listen to it. If you can catch it the first time, you have a very good ear. But I'm going to play it a second time in slow motion.

So... That's this one. And then... You hear that third note? Yeah. First this...

Okay? It's a little tiny change there. Flat note. Yeah. In the tenor. Hm? It wasn't one of the record. It wasn't? Yeah, behind the seat. Sorry.

But that is still the point. Sorry. I probably made a typo... Make a meaty typo, but... So, with all the music and music notes, this is very detail-oriented.

[27 : 33] You have to get very... Yes. ...accustomed to all of this. Yes. The idea is... Bach made this very subtle change in the middle ground.

But that's... It's because... Bach is trying to foreshadow how he's going to treat the piece later. I.e. this dissonance will become more apparent as we move along.

Just take it right for it. And if you think about the narrative at this time... Of this point. Trial before Pilate. Before... The religious establishment sent Jesus to Pilate.

They couldn't kill him. They can punish him. They can flog him. They call him names. They can say a lot of things to him. But they can't kill him. But...

Once he's handed over to Pilate, guess what? Pilate is the only person with judicial authority to order a crucifixion. Alright? Yes.

[28 : 32] So this is the point in which the narrative turns. And Bach turns the corral along with the narratives. Along with the narrative. So foreshadowing what's going to happen.

This... Um... Switch there. It's going to make it more... It's going to be more apparent as we move along.

Alright? So I'm flying through time. We have to number four. Now... This is when it gets interesting.

It gets interesting and it comes right after the scourging. Now... Just curious. By a show of hands. Who here have done any form of music theory before?

What's music theory mean? Then you don't know. One. Two. Yes, I know Dave. You don't...

[29 : 28] Okay. So... Basically... I've got two choices right here. So I'm going to dive in. You either hold your notes and come along and see how much you can get. And from Dave's case, it's how many...

Um... Meaty... Meaty... Meaty typo I'm going to make. This is going to be on the exam. No. No. Or two. You can hold your notes and...

Um... And um... Come back when... Until we come back to the surface. And we'll have a summary slide in the end that will... Um... That will encapsulate everything here. Okay? Would there be a price?

Huh? Would there be a price for the link? No. No. No. You... You'll get my compliment as good. You are very... You have a very good pair of ears.

Okay? So... This is the only appearance with two strobes. I.e. The thing being sung twice. Now... If you do one and now... Okay. So... Where's my keyboard?

[30 : 24] It... The piece... The harmony is sort of like this. Ah... Sorry. I'll do it again. Uh... Um...

D minor. F major. Your... Initial impression. I mean... This tune can be harmonized using the active version.

The active version. Or the sad version. Okay? Use the... Use the minor part of it.

Your first impression. First impression being important. Those of you who have done any... Who have been in an interview for a job. First impression is important. Why?

And first impression gives you D minor. So you're gonna think as though you're in D minor. But... If you do your analysis in D minor. You're gonna realize... You will have...

[31 : 31] Three... You will have blindness. It's not in the graph. But you have blind... But you have no mice. So what does Bach do?

Bach say... You know what? Fool ya. You actually have to hear it in F major. In order to get... A three... A three... A blind...

Right here... And a mice. So that's why he... Wants this... To be in two strokes. He wants this... He wants this congregation to hear it once...

I think it's D minor. No, it's not quite working out. It's F major. Okay? And they've... When you say music theory... What's basically... What's that... In a very basic way... What's that involved?

The analysis of music. Oh. Okay. It's like you're a literary critic. Oh, wow, wow, wow. Okay? So... Do we have time to actually listen to this? I think we do. Okay? So...

Preserve some of those elements here. I know that Chorau exists, that was probably written before common practice is established. So Bach was trying to preserve some of that.

And that's why, if you're trying to impose a set of theory that assumes common practice, German tradition, it's not going to work.

Of course it didn't work. Okay, it didn't fit into our paradigm. Now, why? Why is Bach doing this? Well, the answer why, the answer is what is the effect of it?

The effect of it is, it leaves the music open, unresolved, almost like hanging on a cliff. I think you picked that up when you were listening to it, right? It doesn't sound as conclusive as what we had before.

[40 : 12] Right? I think we can all hear that. And probably the reason why, one of the reasons why is because we might be programmed already by now to listen for something that have that three blind mice.

And we don't, we're deprived of mice. We just feel incomplete. And don't go, don't keep going, don't go home and look for mice, please. Okay?

But, it's, yes. Yes. So, it's really to give the congregation a feeling of unresolved, just like how the disciples would have felt at the time. Alright?

So, it's really, and the rest of the passion just dwells in this moment. Now, here's the summary slide that everyone is looking for. Now, I'll very quickly run over and tie everything together because I still have a section after this.

And I'm beating time here. Okay. First time came up, major key, strong closer, strong free blind mice. And you work through the second and third, you're going to get progressively a semi-step lower.

[41 : 14] Now, every time you see the sending semi-step of this, at this time, it always means dark side. Always means dark fader. Okay? And the third time, there is a slight change in that middle ground, slight change in the important note.

And that, actually, would become more apparent as the narrative goes, just to parallel the change in the narrative in which, you know what?

Jesus is heading towards the cross at the time that's been handed over to Pilate. No. Fourth appearance, you've got the setup for, you can possibly hear the key incorrectly.

And we've gone through what that is. It's a duality between what seems to be and what will be, right? The contrast to just the position of the two.

And the last time here, everything consummate is dark. We don't quite know what key we're in. And that middle ground change has become the most pronounced.

[42 : 25] And we have no three blind mice. Everything being unresolved here. Now, back to our theological problem here. I'm going to reiterate.

It's because if we're going to look at this piece, St. Matthew Passion, as Geroslav Pelikan said, not really any reference of resurrection.

And so the whole challenge, the whole question here is really how to reconcile the Lutheran belief of, or by extension Protestant, how we focus, how we emphasize on the empty cross, on resurrection being the core of our, the important thing that gives us salvation, versus what we have right here that seemingly no reference of resurrection.

Christ dwells in the death of Christ forever. Well, to approach this problem, Dan Westberg looked at this in a more textual way. It's good.

I'm just going to answer it in another way. And I'm going to bring back Christmas Oratorio. Remember, I alluded to it earlier. Now, if we go to Christmas Oratorio. I'm steaming through this here.

[43 : 46] I've got five minutes. Christmas Oratorio. And in this joyous Christmas piece, guess what we find? We actually find this old sacred head now wounded in there twice.

Now, what is it doing there? What is a passion corral doing in a Christmas piece? That's a question. Yes.

It appeared twice. One, near the very beginning. It's actually the very first corral under Christmas. And it's set very actually identical, almost identical, to where Bach left off in St. Matthew.

Same kind of problem. No three blind mice. Don't know what key you're in. And it just sounds like it's hanging in the middle of nowhere at the end.

Now, I do have a recording embedded here. I'm not going to play it. I'm not going to play it. I'm not going to play it. And the final movement is a fanfare. Okay?

[44 : 52] Final movement is a fanfare. Second time it appeared, it's in the final movement of the Christmas Oratorio. And it is a fanfare. Now, the Christmas Oratorio premiered in 1734.

Seven years after St. Matthew. Now, it's very hard to say how much St. Matthew has, influence St. Matthew has on the Christmas piece.

But I think there are some loose connections. And the old sacred tune is a loose, is one of those connections. And there are a few more little pieces there, here and there. But don't try to glue those two together.

But there are some connections there. Okay? It is as though Bach was intentionally reintroducing the Passion Chorale in a way that it left off.

In the way that Bach left it at the end of St. Matthew. And then what he, and then so the purpose is to introduce an element of death back to Christmas.

[45 : 58] Or even have the listener, have the congregation recall the state of confusion. Right beginning of Christmas. Then, resolve then that transforms it into a triumph from fanfare.

So, unlike the St. Matthew's Passion Bach brought about resolution by transforming this chorale tune into a triumph from fanfare.

Hence the chorale, hence the chorale, evolved from being something conforming to something that's unresolved, then picks up in Christmas, and then being transformed into fanfare.

Why does it do it? Why does it do it? Well, in a way, the absence of the hope of salvation towards the end of St. Matthew's Passion, I think, could be intentional.

As the salvation narrative picks up in the Christmas oratorio, and then reaches to a consummation at the fanfare finale to fulfill the anticipated glory of the resurrection.

[47 : 14] So, St. Matthew's Passion opens with a tomb doll, a French-style funeral music. And the motif of death intensifies through the passion without resolution, only to be brought back in Bach's Christmas masterpiece.

So, just as the death of Christ was ordained at birth, his resurrection is also ordained at his birth. And the glue that holds it together compositionally is how Bach utilizes this passion chorale over the two pieces.

How Bach morphs the background of it, and that morphing is visible through our Shinkirian tool. And how it got picked up, how we know that it got picked up, because of the Shinkirian tool, and then how it got resolved to the fanfare.

It's all held together by the setting of the passion chorale piece. Now, I couldn't prove categorically that Bach picked up a narrative and go, here you go.

There's no way anyone can prove that. Or someone can prove it if they study enough manuscript. Or someone can suggest that. But I haven't. Analytically, there's some sense there.

[48 : 36] But had he done it, he would have tied together the three Christological mysteries of the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection together.

In just one stroke. Through the old sacred hand down with the chorale. And we'll play the last movement. It's just here all the swingers off. Here we go.

Here we go. Who'sER INMULE in Knife Hear that tune?

Completely different feel to it. Thank you.

Thank you.

[51 : 08] CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

CHOIR SINGS Thank you.