

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

‘ANYTHING BUT CONVENTIONAL’:
FAITH AND FOLK IDIOMS IN DVOŘÁK’S *BIBLICAL SONGS*

By

Erin Lee King

A thesis
submitted to the New Zealand School of Music
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Music
in Musicology

New Zealand School of Music

2007

Abstract

In the nineteenth century considerable ambiguities arose regarding sacred and secular categories in music. Although such ambiguities have often been discussed in relation to the mass, this study uses the genre of the lied – in particular, Dvořák's *Biblical Songs* – as a means of examining the interaction between these categories. The problems inherent in the idea of 'sacred lieder' are discussed, including case studies of Schubert's 'Die Allmacht' and Wolf's 'Nun wandre, Maria' from the *Spanisches Liederbuch*. The *Biblical Songs* are located within Dvořák's biography, to show the great extent to which they were a reflection of his personal situation. In-depth analysis of the music and texts of the songs, both individually and as a cycle, reveals that they are representative of a point of interaction between secular lieder for concert performance, and devotional lieder for a domestic context. A comparison with Brahms and his *Four Serious Songs* reveals two very different responses to biblical texts: whereas Brahms's solution places emphasis on secular love, Dvořák's songs show a progression from doubt and confusion about God through to faith and rejoicing. Furthermore, whereas the *Four Serious Songs* demonstrate a highly individualistic solution to the pessimism expressed earlier in the cycle, Dvořák's use of folk idioms at key locations in the *Biblical Songs* places emphasis on communality and tradition. However, the cycle also reveals a more complex expression of faith than is often assumed of Dvořák.

Acknowledgements

A huge number of people have impacted the writing of this thesis. The first thank-you must go to my supervisor, Dr. Inge van Rij. Her incredible enthusiasm for the lied genre, and her many insightful comments on both the prose and content of my work have pushed this thesis far beyond what I could have hoped to achieve on my own. Dr. Chris Marshall of the Victoria University Religious Studies department has offered welcome guidance on biblical matters. Dr. Greer Garden and Dr. Richard Hardie have also provided me with advice and encouragement throughout the research process. I am also grateful to Victoria University for providing me with a Victoria Masters Scholarship, without which I would have been unable to undertake this course of study.

Studying a Czech composer in a tiny country like New Zealand has, at times, been extremely difficult. I am therefore grateful to Lucy Lang of the Victoria University Library for her help in procuring the complete works edition of the *Biblical Songs* from as far afield as the National Library of the Czech Republic! Many thanks must also go to reference librarian James Duncan, who helped to speed up library processes for my benefit on a number of occasions. Sue Hirst was also extremely helpful in resolving my dilemmas with EndNote.

I am also grateful to Graeme Whimp, fellow Masters student and former member of the PGSA executive. He has acted as my advocate on a number of occasions. I would also like to thank my language teachers at the Goethe-Institut in Wellington, Judith Geare and Margareta Spittel, for their enthusiastic and entertaining approach to improving my German.

Writing this thesis has, of course, been hugely challenging at times. I am therefore indebted to friends and family who provided me with companionship during the many months when I worked away as the sole occupant of Somerset House. In particular I would like to acknowledge the friendship of the Newton family, with whom I lived for most of the duration of my enrolment. I have also greatly appreciated the support of my own family. A special thank-you should go to my Grandmother – her generous financial assistance helped me through my undergraduate years. Thanks also to all at *Substance*, and to the many friends who have offered words of wisdom and encouragement to me over the course of my studies.

Finally, my husband, James King, has been unfailing in his support throughout this process. The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without him.

Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	ii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	iii
Introduction	2
Part One: Context	
1. The Problem of ‘Sacred Lieder’	9
2. Background to the <i>Biblical Songs</i>	42
Part Two: The Songs	
3. Song by Song Analysis	67
4. The <i>Biblical Songs</i> as a ‘Song Cycle’	122
5. The <i>Biblical Songs</i> and the <i>Four Serious Songs</i>	137
Conclusion	147
Bibliography	150