

## AT MASS WITH SIR JAMES: MACMILLAN'S SYMPHONY NO. 4 AND LITURGICAL TIME

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**Abstract:** Sir James MacMillan's *Symphony No. 4* is claimed by the composer as an abstract work, but a clear programme is discernible through the use of references to the Roman Catholic Mass. MacMillan uses Gregorian chant, quotations from Robert Carver's *Missa Dum sacrum mysterium* (c. 1523) and his own *St Luke Passion* (2015) to create a liturgical form for the symphony. These allusions and their presentation in the symphony can be fruitfully understood in relation to Catholic theologies of time and the Eucharist. When allusions to sonata form are also taken into consideration, the result is a complex interaction between different experiences of time in the symphony's span.

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### Introduction

In the 'Composer's Note' for the score of his *Symphony No. 4*, Sir James MacMillan repeats a claim made in the programme notes for the work's premiere at the BBC Proms on Monday 3 August 2015: 'My first three symphonies employed programmatic elements ... but Symphony no. 4 ... is essentially abstract'. Instead of a programme, the work is interested in 'the interplay of different types of material, following upon a fascination with music as ritual that has stretched from Monteverdi ... to Boulez and Birtwistle'.

There are four distinct archetypes in the symphony, which can be viewed as rituals of movement, exhortations, petition and joy. These ideas are juxtaposed in quick succession from the outset, over the first five minutes or so. As the work progresses they are individually developed in an organic way, they are commingled, and they become opposed and argumentative.<sup>1</sup>

However, MacMillan's *Symphony No. 4* is in fact anything but abstract, finding its roots – and a clear programmatic outline – in the Roman Catholic Mass. As this article will demonstrate, the symphony's formal procedures and the way in which it articulates and then explores the archetypes outlined by the composer above are at every stage tied to the form and music of the Roman liturgy. In addition to the 'ritual archetypes' of his note, MacMillan also includes a homage to the Scottish Renaissance composer Robert Carver (c. 1487–after 1566), using quotations throughout the symphony from the Carver's *Missa Dum sacrum mysterium*, an intricate work of florid

<sup>1</sup> James MacMillan, *Symphony No. 4* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 2015), p. iv.

late Gothic polyphony, which MacMillan sang as a student, and which emerges in his own work 'literally in the distance . . . played delicately by the back desks of the violas, cellos and double basses'.<sup>2</sup> Combined with the use of the Carver mass there are citation of Gregorian chant and an allusion to one of MacMillan's own works; together these give his *Symphony No. 4* some claim to being in fact the most – not the least – programmatic of all his symphonies. It is a work not only interested in ritual, but also in memory, in time, and in a specific Catholic theology of the Eucharist.

The use of Gregorian chant and the Roman liturgy as sources of compositional inspiration and material are hallmarks of MacMillan's style. *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel* (1992) is only the most well-known of his compositions to be based on chant: aside from the use of chant as a basis for liturgical choral works (in, for example, *The Strathclyde Motets*, 2005–), other major works include *Visitatio Sepulchri* (1992–93), which makes use of the 'Te Deum'; *Seven Last Words from the Cross* (1993) invokes Gregorian psalmody; the orchestral triptych *Triduum* (comprising cor anglais and cello concertos and the First Symphony 'Vigil') is based on the form and chant of the Roman Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday liturgies (1997–98). The influence of Gregorian chant is felt even where its literal quotation is absent, with many of MacMillan's melodies possessing a modal inflection – examples not based directly on chant can be found in the present Fourth Symphony, for example.<sup>3</sup> In all the works mentioned, and others, Gregorian chant acts as a source of inspiration, a motivic and thematic quarry, and only occasionally a structural principle. In the case of the *Symphony No. 4*, however, chant functions as a strong framework for formal modelling on the Roman Catholic Mass so precise that it may seem slavish – perhaps a reason for MacMillan's avoidance of a programmatic content in his notes.

In fact, MacMillan's symphony operates formally on multiple levels, and the allusions to the Mass chants are only on one of these levels. In this article I begin with MacMillan's own characterisation of his material as 'ritual archetypes', introducing the chants as they coincide with these archetypes, before following the chant allusions through the whole symphony. Another level of formal working is found in sonata form. The powerful intertextual interaction and combination of these levels as a whole contribute to a remarkable musical presentation of aspects of a Catholic theology of time and memory in the liturgy, which will be outlined in the latter part of the article.

### Establishing the Archetypes

MacMillan's 'ritual archetypes' are not difficult to discern. Their musical characterisation is stark, at least 'in the first five minutes'. The symphony opens with two bars of tuned percussion and celeste, underscored by a regularly pulsed timpani pedal on E and less regular oscillating C#–A# in the double basses. These two 'walking' ostinato patterns continue beneath what go on to be the main melodic sources for the symphony: at bar 6 a muted fanfare derived from the opening bars in the celeste with a characteristic 'Scotch-snap' rhythm, and at bar 14 the first quoted Gregorian melody in the horn and cor anglais.

<sup>2</sup> MacMillan, *Symphony No. 4*, p. iv.

<sup>3</sup> See Figures 2–4 in the symphony (presented in exact retrograde between Figures 34 and 36), for a heterophonic texture based on a modally inflected melody that suggests Gregorian chant without actually quoting it.

This Gregorian melody is the opening two phrases of the Introit 'Os iusti' from the Common chants for Doctors of the Church,<sup>4</sup> the Introit being the chant to which the priests and servers process to the altar in the Mass; this is clearly the final phase of MacMillan's 'movement archetype'.

Immediately after the end of 'Os iusti' at Figure 1 the opening tuned percussion figure returns a fifth lower and with it appears chattering heterophony in four voices, clarinets and solo violas using the Collect tone of the Mass (GT800). This prayer tone, with its insistent and piercing recitation style, fits the 'exhortation' archetype of MacMillan's (non-)programme. It is shortly followed by a third repetition of the opening percussion figure (another fifth lower) which gives way to the third archetype at Figure 2. This takes the form of a typically dense and polyphonic divisi string passage, comprising several pairs of canons and quasi-canons, each in part a heterophonic elaboration of a melody outlined most clearly in the first violin (bars 43–50), and interspersed with rapid scales, trills, glissandi and thrashing broken chords.<sup>5</sup> Each part is marked 'pleading', and this, together with the improvisatory, keening style of the lines, aligns the section directly with the 'petition' archetype.<sup>6</sup>

Once this passage ends, at Figure 4, the tempo increases dramatically with the introduction of another chant quotation, this time from the Gloria of the well-known *Missa de angelis* (GT738). The bright timbre (xylophone, piano, pizzicato upper strings, upper woodwind and brass), loud dynamic and shifting time signatures (as well as the content of the quoted chant) mark this as the 'joy' archetype. Until Figure 5, the music is concerned only with repeated joyful intonation of the chant (*Gloria in excelsis Deo*), but at that point a sudden violent tutti announces the first quotation from Carver's *Missa Dum sacrum mysterium*, between bar 102 and bar 156. Here MacMillan directly transcribes the opening of Carver's Gloria into the lower strings, from 'Et in terra pax' until the phrase 'Deus Pater omnipotens'.<sup>7</sup> Overlaid on this quotation are improvisatory ruminations from other parts of the orchestra, including (front desk) solo strings, which make use of elaborated material from 'Os iusti' and the music for the 'petition' archetype. A final solemn intonation of the Gloria from the horns brings the first phase of the symphony to an end by Figure 8.

Up to this point, MacMillan's symphony has delivered more or less what the composer promised. By 6'40" the four archetypes –

<sup>4</sup> All chant references are to the *Graduale Triplex* (n.p.: Solesmes Abbey, 1979), abbreviated henceforward to GT with the page number following. 'Os iusti' is found at GT494. The selection of this chant was not for any profound reason; in private correspondence with the author, the composer indicated that once he knew the date of the premiere of the symphony, he looked up the Introit for that day's Mass. There being no particular celebration on 3 August 3, MacMillan settled on that for 4 August, St John Vianney, whose Introit is 'Os iusti'.

<sup>5</sup> This texture has prototypes elsewhere in MacMillan: see *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, movements ii, iii, and vi in particular.

<sup>6</sup> In light of the other quotations and its position, one would expect this passage to quote a Kyrie eleison melody, but I have been unable to identify any such quotation. The repetition of the violin melody (augmented the third and fourth times) is formally suggestive of a Kyrie eleison, but being fourfold (rather than six or nine) and exactly repeated gives one pause in venturing exact identification of this passage with that part of the Mass. It is more an association of function ('petition') and character ('pleading'), as well as its position in the symphony which is suggestive.

<sup>7</sup> Ending the quotation from Carver's Gloria here shows sensitivity to the form of the Gloria text. 'Deus Pater omnipotens' is the final line in the Gloria concerned with praise of God the Father. The following line, left out by MacMillan, redirects the focus to God the Son: 'Domine fili unigenite, etc.'.

movement, exhortation, petition, joy – have been established.<sup>8</sup> The first Carver quotation follows immediately and completes the roster of materials MacMillan directs us to in his note. However, the exposition of these archetypes brings into play the suggestion of another formal process: a ‘tintinnabulation’ followed shortly by an Introit gives way to prayer and petition, and then the *Gloria in excelsis*. This cluster of quotations and significations is highly suggestive, following the pattern of the Introductory Rite of the Catholic Mass. From this point, the listener may begin to follow the work with dual focus: listening for MacMillan’s ‘commingling, opposition and argumentation’ of the now established archetypes, whilst also following the narrative of the liturgy established by the chant (and Carver) quotations.

### Liturgical Form

Figure 8 brings back the opening ‘tintinnabulation’ (now a major third lower than at bar 1), again in conjunction with the Collect tone as at Figure 1. The flutes and clarinets develop this tone in four-part canon over 12 bars, before at Figure 9 a new chant quotation emerges in the brass. It is at this point that the liturgical ordering of the symphony’s events begins to become very clear. The new quotation involves repeated pitches with occasional descending semitones and perfect fifths: the tone for the first of three readings from Scripture used at Mass (drawn from the Old Testament, New Testament Epistles, and Gospels respectively); the tone for the second reading follows at Figure 12. From bar 242 the Gospel Acclamation (‘Alleluia’) is introduced, and then the tone for the third, Gospel, reading at Figure 17. Table 1 is a summary of all the chant quotations throughout the rest of the symphony.

From this table it is clear that MacMillan follows the order of the Mass very closely, with representative chants from each of its rites in their proper order: the Introductory Rite, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist and the Communion Rite. Plenty of chants are omitted, but enough are included – and prominently – to leave the listener in no doubt regarding their journey through the Mass with the composer.

However, it is not only the chant quotations that support this hearing of the symphony. MacMillan supplements and extends his chant quotations with four further excerpts from the Carver Mass: at bar 318 (Figure 18), bar 350 (Figure 20), bar 456 (Figure 26) and bar 489 (Figure 28). The first and second of these supply the lack of chant quotations of a chant Credo, being excerpts from different parts of the Credo of Carver’s Mass.<sup>9</sup> The third and fourth both come from the Sanctus of the Carver, but different parts of the polyphonic setting: the first is an excerpt from the beginning of the Sanctus to ‘Dominus Deus’, and the second is drawn from the first ‘Osanna in excelsis’. These two excerpts from Carver’s Sanctus extend the chant intonation begun at Figure 25 in a manner similar to the first Carver excerpt from the Gloria (at bar 102) described above.

<sup>8</sup> The time reference is to the premiere recording of the symphony: track 4, *MacMillan Violin Concerto. Symphony No. 4*, Vadim Repin, Donald Runnicles, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra; ONYX 4157, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> From ‘Deum de Deo’ to ‘descendit de caelis’ in the first excerpt, and from ‘et expecto’ to ‘amen’ in the second. The excerpt at Figure 20 is the only quotation from the Carver not to be presented in the back desk of the strings, but rather is found in the brass, muted.

Table 1:  
First appearances of Gregorian chants in James MacMillan's *Symphony No. 4*

Part of the Mass	Mass Chant	GT reference	Bar number	Figure
Introductory Rite	Introit 'Os iusti'	494	14	
	Collect tone	800	28	1
	Gloria <i>de angelis</i>	738–40	82	4
Liturgy of the Word	1st Reading tone	803	174	9
	Epistle tone	804	226	12
	Alleluia	195*	242	
	Gospel tone	805	292	17
Liturgy of the Eucharist	Preface tone**	n/a	418	24
	Sanctus <i>simplex</i>	767***	433	25
Communion Rite	Pater noster	812	556	33

\* Although this threefold Alleluia is given as a Communion chant, it is widely used as a simple Alleluia before the Gospel throughout the world.

\*\* Not in GT. See *Roman Missal* 1970, 914–916.

\*\*\* Again, although this chant is given for use on the days of Advent and Lent and for the Mass for the Dead, it has also been adopted as the ordinary simple Sanctus in the Roman Missal.

Another way in which the liturgical form for the symphony is unfolded is through an excerpt from one of MacMillan's own works. After the second quotation from Carver's Sanctus, the cellos at bar 499 (Figure 29) launch into an extended melody taken directly from MacMillan's *St Luke Passion* (2014). The passage quoted is the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, sung by MacMillan's Christ between bars 106 and 147 of the *Passion*, and harmonized by the strings identically in the symphony as the oratorio. MacMillan's quotation of the words of institution occurs in his symphony at precisely the point at which they would occur in the Mass, between the Sanctus and the *Pater noster*. This highly expressive quotation differs from the quotations from chant and the Carver in that it is taken not from a liturgical but a (semi-)dramatic work, and a work by MacMillan himself, making it both highly personal and more obscure. Its significance for the symphony will be discussed below. For now, it should be noted that with the additions of the Carver quotations and this excerpt from the *St Luke Passion*, the symphony's liturgical programme is complete, as Table 2 shows.

### Sonata Form

Despite this evident, even explicit liturgical programme, the symphony remains a symphony, and not merely an instrumental Mass setting. While it is true that the liturgical framework becomes more and more apparent as the symphony goes on, MacMillan is also interested in more abstract symphonic processes. Not only does he develop the opening melodies and 'archetypes' constantly, in accord with his overt intention of exploring the interplay of different ritual types, but he also brings a sonata form reference to the symphony. This becomes most apparent with the return of all the primary material (between the opening and Figure 1) after Figure 22. This transposed return

Table 2:  
Complete set of liturgical references in MacMillan's *Symphony No. 4*

Part of the Mass	Mass Chant	Carver quotation	Others
Introductory Rite	Introit 'Os iusti'		
	Collect tone		
	Gloria <i>de angelis</i>		
		Gloria	
Liturgy of the Word	1st Reading tone		
	Epistle tone		
	Alleluia		
	Gospel tone		
		Credo	
Liturgy of the Eucharist	Preface tone		
	Sanctus <i>simplex</i>		
		Sanctus	
			<i>St Luke Passion: words of institution</i>
Communion Rite	Pater noster		

has slight differences from the opening of the symphony, but in substance and extent it is identical.

With such a substantial gesture towards recapitulation in place it is possible to hear the symphony in terms of a sonata-like rotation of the three opening 'themes' – tintinnabulation (bars 1–2), fanfare (bars 6–13) and Introit (bars 15–27). Particularly important are the opening bars of bell-like percussion, which when they return are always transposed but identical in every other respect, thus acting as markers of structural change. Table 3 summarises the sonata form of the symphony, with particular reference to the opening material and to the Carver quotations, which themselves have a close relationship with the sonata form, playing the part of a closing area in each section.

The rotation of the opening material seems to end after bar 499 (Figure 29), which marks the close of the final Carver quotation and the beginning of the quotation from the *St Luke Passion* (in lieu of the expected return of the 'tintinnabulation'). The next return of any previous material is at Figure 34, where the 'petition' passage between Figure 2 and Figure 4 – left out of the recapitulatory rotation – is presented in exact retrograde. A violent passage of repeated chords leads to a *ffff* climax which is swiftly followed by final appearances of the 'fanfare' and Introit melodies, now with their phrases intercutting one another (strings and brass presenting a triumphant final version of 'Os iusti' broken up by woodwind and percussion presentations of the Fanfare, equally triumphant in tone). The very end of the symphony derives from the opening 'tintinnabulation' in more ways than one: as well as a cacophony of freely-played tuned percussion between bars 747 and 754, the strings outline a chordal sonority derived directly from the opening bar of the celeste. Thus, from Figure 34 (b. 565),

Table 3:  
Sonata outline of James MacMillan's *Symphony No. 4*

	Tintinnabulation	Fanfare	Introit 'Os iusti'	Carver Mass
<b>Exposition</b> (Opening–Figure 8)	bb. 1–2	bb. 6–13	bb. 14–27	
	bb. 28–29			
	bb. 35–36			bb. 102–156
<b>Development</b> (Figure 8–Figure 22)	bb. 163–164	bb. 206–217		
		bb. 248–258		bb. 319–346
				bb. 350–384
<b>Recapitulation</b> (Figure 22–Figure 30)	bb. 388–389	bb. 394–401	bb. 402–415	bb. 455–498
<b>Coda</b> (Figure 34–end)	bb. 747–755	bb. 665–685	bb. 650–721	N/A

there is a progression through material from the exposition in loose reverse order, ending with a final chord the same as the opening chord of the symphony (Example 1).

This 'reverse rotation' functions as a Coda to the sonata form outlined in Table 3.

There is, however, a hiatus in this sonata form which needs addressing. Between the end of the recapitulation (the final Carver quotation ending at bar 498) and the return of the 'petition' material (at bar 565) there is a space where no rotational material from the exposition is found, the section not being bound by a tintinnabulation and Carver excerpt. These 67 bars stand outside the frame of the sonata form, and comprise the quotation from the *St Luke Passion* and the chant 'Pater noster'. However, before addressing this hiatus, it is worth examining how the two structures of the symphony described so far interact. How does MacMillan bring the form of the Catholic Mass and a symphonic sonata form together? And why choose to attempt such a hybrid form?

### Symphony vs. Liturgy?

Table 4 sets out the relationship between the two parallel structures of the *Symphony No. 4*: Mass and sonata. It can be seen from this relationship that MacMillan has modelled his sonata form on the liturgical divisions of the Mass: the exposition corresponds with the Opening Rites (Introit, Kyrie, Gloria, Collect); the development with the Liturgy of the Word (1st reading, epistle, Alleluia, Gospel, Credo); the recapitulation and coda with the Liturgies of the Eucharist and Communion (Preface, Sanctus, words of institution, *Pater noster*).

This overlaying of sonata and Mass liturgy seems straightforward from the table, but the form of the symphony is more complex. For one thing, there is an interplay throughout between the liturgy's linear time – each chant introduced in its proper place, most without subsequent repetition – and the rotational sonata form, outlined above, involving the return (practically exact in some cases) of musical ideas introduced in the first 80 bars of the symphony. Also present is the return and development of chant and other material throughout: once presented, fragments and phrases of the 'ritual archetypes' return to be 'organically developed' in all parts of the symphony as described

Example 1:  
Reversed rotation in Coda of James  
MacMillan's *Symphony No. 4*

Tintinnabulation (1–2)	Fanfare (6–13)	Introit (14–27)	Petition (44–81)
Petition (exact retrograde: 565–602)	Introit (first phrase: 650–663)	Fanfare (first phrase: 665–669)	Tintinnabulation (747–755)

Table 4:  
'Liturgical' and sonata form in James MacMillan's *Symphony No. 4*

Part of the Mass	Mass	Sonata
<b>Introductory Rite</b>	Tintinnabulation Introit 'Os iusti' Collect tone Gloria <i>de angelis</i> Carver <i>Gloria</i>	Exposition (bb. 1–162)
<b>Liturgy of the Word</b>	1st Reading tone Epistle tone Alleluia Gospel tone Carver <i>Credo</i>	Development (bb. 163–388)
<b>Liturgy of the Eucharist</b>	Preface tone Sanctus <i>simplex</i> Carver <i>Sanctus</i>	Recapitulation (bb. 389–498)
	Words of institution Pater noster	?
<b>Communion Rite</b>		Coda (bb. 565–755)

by MacMillan in his introduction. For example, the opening phrase of the introit 'Os iusti' returns frequently, not including its complete – nonliturgical – re-presentation at the beginning of the recapitulation or final appearance in the Coda.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the intonation of the Gloria from the *Missa de angelis*, which also embodies one of MacMillan's archetypes, returns to be developed at various points after its first appearance.<sup>11</sup>

The return and development of 'Os iusti' and the incipit of the Gloria *de angelis* is not unexpected in light of MacMillan's description of the formal process of his symphony, by which each established ritual archetype is to be 'organically developed' as the piece progresses. But these literal, varied or developed returns – particularly of chant material – problematise the hearing of the symphony in relation to the unfolding time of the Mass, particularly in instances where fragments of previously heard material are overlaid on new quotations: at Figure 20, for example, the Gloria *de angelis* incipit is re-introduced as counterpoint to a quotation from Carver's *Credo*. These are 'non-liturgical' repetitions. MacMillan thus creates a tension between hearing the chant quotations as staging posts in a journey through the Mass, and their use as material for symphonic development through repetition. When the Carver excerpts and the passage from the *St Luke Passion* are included, the demand for a hermeneutic response to this formal tension increases.

### The Textures of Time

The presentation of the Carver excerpts in particular is calculated to raise questions. Played ('*senza vib, stile antico*') as straight

<sup>10</sup> See bar 57ff. (vc 1); bar 110ff. (vc solo); bar 194ff. (fl. 1, ob. 1, vln 1, vln 2); bar 258ff. (tpt 1).

<sup>11</sup> After its first appearance at bar 82, see 157ff (brass) and bar 350ff. (fl. and vln).

transcriptions by solo instruments in the back desks of the lower strings, the excerpts are 'literally in the distance', as MacMillan puts it. In the first Carver excerpt, between bar 102 and bar 156, MacMillan also writes – literally in the foreground – developed fragments of the 'fanfare' and 'Os iusti' in a solo viola and solo cello, with violent outbursts from the full violin sections. Also present are eerie interjections from steel drums, piano and harp, and motivic fragments, single pitches and chords in the woodwind and brass. These additions serve to further distance the Carver, and to create a (literal) dissonance between music of the present and music of the past: the Renaissance polyphony manages to sound not altogether 'here and now', but rather emerges half-submerged beneath the mutterings and distractions of the present moment, themselves partially formed of snatches of remembered melodies from earlier in the symphony.

It is significant that the quotation of the words of institution from MacMillan's own *St Luke Passion* follows directly from the final quotation from Carver's Mass, for it too is concerned with time and memory, past and present (including Christ's words 'Do this in remembrance of me'). Using his own setting of Christ's words at the Last Supper allows MacMillan to dive into the paradoxes that lie at the heart of the Roman Catholic theology of the Eucharist. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it:

The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the making present and the sacramental offering of his unique sacrifice, in the liturgy of the Church which is his Body. In all the Eucharistic Prayers we find after the words of institution a prayer called the *anamnesis* or memorial. In the sense of Sacred Scripture the *memorial* is not merely the recollection of past events ... [but] in the liturgical celebration of these events, they become in a certain way present and real. ... When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ's Passover, and it is made present ... [The Eucharist] ... *re-presents* (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross; ... the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*.<sup>12</sup>

This idea was developed further by Pope St John Paul II in his final encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*:

[In the gift of the Eucharist] Jesus Christ entrusted to his Church the perennial *making present* of the paschal mystery. With it he brought about a mysterious 'oneness in time' between that Triduum and the passage of the centuries.<sup>13</sup>

This 'oneness in time' described by the Pope as a gloss on the theology presented in the *Catechism* might be described as a collapsing of all individual instances of the celebration of Mass into the single sacrifice of Christ, offered first of all at the Last Supper. Thus every Mass makes present, as it were, the events of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, and every Mass is present in every other Mass from the Upper Room to the end of time. As John Paul II's successor wrote while he was still Cardinal Josef Ratzinger: '*the celebration of the Eucharist is not just a meeting of heaven and earth; rather it is also a*

<sup>12</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), article 1409. Italics in the original. That MacMillan is interested in and alive to Eucharistic theology is evident in his use of the term 'transubstantiation' to describe aspects of his composition. See for example the discussion of this term in James MacMillan and Richard McGregor, 'James MacMillan: A Conversation and commentary', *The Musical Times* 151 (2010), 69–100, at 75–7.

<sup>13</sup> Pope St John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (2003), no. 5. Available at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/special\\_features/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_20030417\\_ecclesia\\_eucharistia\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/special_features/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_ecclesia_eucharistia_en.html) (accessed 2 July 2018). See also the entirety of Chapter One, §11–20. Emphasis mine.

*meeting of the Church then and now and a meeting of the Church here and there*.<sup>14</sup>

MacMillan's quotation of Christ's words of institution in his setting from the *St Luke Passion* embodies this theology of the Mass: rather than making use of a liturgical setting of the words of institution, MacMillan transports the listener back to his setting of the Passion narrative, presenting the words not in a formal, stylized manner, but in the ecstatic, dramatic speech of the character Christ. At the same time, staging the quotation as a hiatus in the sonata form serves to isolate it from the formal processes of repetition and development that motivate much of the symphony, just as the avoidance of chant quotation sets it apart from the liturgical trajectory of the parallel liturgical form. Together these strategies confer an 'out of time' character on the passage. Identity of pitch content in both melody and surrounding harmony underscores the identity of the musical event *here and now* with the original moment in the oratorio, as by analogy the liturgical moment represented is also identifiable literally with the original moment of institution in Christ's life on earth.

In the context of this theology of Eucharistic time, MacMillan's treatment of the Carver Mass takes on further significance, adding another timeframe to those of the original institution of the Eucharist (represented by the *Passion*) and its present liturgical performance (marked by the chant way-markers lain down throughout the real-time of the symphony). The Carver excerpts, and their spatial and textural presentation, become echoes of another celebration of Mass – not this one – which break, *stile antico*, as muted voices from the pre-Reformation Scottish sixteenth century. MacMillan himself describes the Carver as 'emerg[ing] from across the centuries' in his liner note to the premiere recording of the symphony.<sup>15</sup>

Other details of the symphony support this reading. The agitated heterophonic textures when the Collect, Lection and Epistle tones are introduced (Figures 8, 9, 12) cannot be heard at any one Mass, which would always present a single voice; rather, they resound as different instantiations of the same ritual intonation occurring almost simultaneously in different voices, suggestive of the same prayer or reading being performed in different churches across the world in the almost-identical present.

But if these aspects of MacMillan's symphony contribute to a musical representation of the Eucharist's relation to the 'then and now' and the 'here and there', there also remains the formal tension between the liturgical narrative of the symphony and its use of symphonic, sonata principles of return and development. Can this tension be understood or resolved in relation to concepts of time and memory?

### At Mass with Sir James

Two plainsong texts lie behind this symphony. The first is the Sarum plainsong on which Carver based his Mass:

Dum sacrum mysterium cerneret Johannes, archangelus Michael tuba cecinit,  
ignosce domine deus noster qui aperis librum et solvis signacula eius. Alleluia.

<sup>14</sup> Josef Ratzinger, 'The Eucharist – Heart of the Church', in *Collected Works*, vol. XI: *Theology of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), pp. 249–98, at 268. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>15</sup> MacMillan, *Symphony No. 4*, p. iv.

(While John explores the divine mystery, Archangel Michael sounds the trumpet. O forgiving Lord, our God, who lays open the book and reveals his signs. Alleluia.)

The second is the Introit introduced at bar 14:

*Os iusti meditabitur sapientiam: et lingua eius loquetur iudicium.*

(The mouth of the just meditates on wisdom; and his tongue speaks what is just.)

These texts have in common the image of a man ruminating on the things of God: 'cernere' in *Dum sacrum* has connotations of seeing, discerning, examining, deciding, and 'meditor' can mean to meditate, consider, ponder, and reflect. These terms both describe well the processes of the symphony's 'commingling, opposition and argumentation' of materials as well as the associated sonata form described above, with its apposition, superimposition, recollection and development of material. Moreover, the problematic interplay of objective forward movement in time (marked by the chants of the Mass) with subjective, repetitive memory of past events (whether the Carver Mass excerpts that MacMillan fondly remembered singing as a student, or the repetitions of previous material from within the symphony) suggests nothing so much as the very process of 'meditation' or 'examination' recounted in the two chant texts. In this way, the parallel structures of liturgy and sonata are reconciled: the symphony operates both as an objective passage through a hypothetical Catholic Mass on 3 August 2016 and also as a subjective meditation during that Mass by a participant: perhaps a fictive MacMillan himself.<sup>16</sup> The sonata form is the vehicle by which the linear objective time of the Mass is counterpointed subjectively.<sup>17</sup> In hearing this symphony, we are 'at Mass with Sir James'.

MacMillan's claim to have created an 'essentially abstract' symphony appears somewhat disingenuous. The *Symphony No. 4* is indeed a richly complex meditation on ritual, time, and memory, but it is also one which is firmly embedded in the framework of the Catholic Mass. As such, it can be understood as strongly programmatic, and also deeply personal, standing as a high point in MacMillan's ongoing engagement with Catholic music and liturgy, and the symphonic heritage.

<sup>16</sup> David Jones' epic poem *The Anathemata* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952) is a similar complex meditation on the experience of being at a Catholic Mass, with liturgical actions and texts triggering long, digressive explorations of time, history, geography, and so forth.

<sup>17</sup> This counterpoint suggests a supplement to the 'psychological' readings of sonata form that emerged in and after Beethoven's 'Eroica' two hundred years ago. See for example Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).