

The Bible in Music: A Dictionary of Songs, Works, and More

Siobhán Dowling Long and John F.A. Sawyer. *The Bible in Music: A Dictionary of Songs, Works, and More*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. 339 pp. \$95.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 9780810884519. Ebook. ISBN: 9780810884526.

The main part of *The Bible in Music* is a dictionary in English with entries arranged alphabetically by title or first line of musical settings of biblical texts or those inspired by the Bible. The entries include ancient and modern, Christian and Jewish, classical (e.g., oratorios and operas), and non-classical (e.g., musicals, hymns, spirituals, pop, and rock) texts. There is an emphasis on popular culture, as indicated by the numerous entries on hymns, spirituals, musicals, film music, and contemporary rock. There is also an emphasis on works by women composers such as Camilla de Rossi and Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, and on contemporary songwriters and performers such as Sinead O'Connor and Debbie Friedman. In some cases the titles are given in the original language, such as Latin (*Ave Maria*), German (*Ein fest' Burg*), French (*Quatuor pour la fin de temps*), Hebrew (*Hinne ma tov*), and more, but English translations and cross-references are provided. Oratorios, hymns, ballets, popular songs, and a few collections, such as of hymnbooks, albums, and musicals, are included.

Each entry contains information about the original context of the composition, such as date, composer, and more, and, if relevant, the music's place in literature, film, politics, liturgy, and the like. Often the works cited are well known, but others are interesting on account of their interpretation of biblical themes. There are several accompanying sections, including a list of acronyms and abbreviations, a list of books of the Bible, a chronology beginning at the start of the Common Era to 2013, a glossary of technical terms, a bibliography, a list of authors, composers, and musicians in the book, and indices of biblical names and subjects and biblical references. Both the list of books of the Bible and the biblical reference index include the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha.

The authors say in the introduction that there have been numerous publications on the Bible in literature, art, film, and other fields, but nothing comparable on *the Bible in music* in the last decade or two. Many people interact with biblical themes in secular settings, with some of the music originally intended for Christian or Jewish worship services. This is one way the Bible interacts with contemporary culture, and there are numerous references to biblical imagery in ballets, operas, folk songs, and rock music. For example, many have heard Brahms's *German Requiem* (Isa. 66:13) or "Burn Baby, Burn" from the Residents (Judg. 11:31-40). Others have heard Kuhnau's six *Bible Story Sonatas* for keyboard from 1700, Handel's *Zadok the Priest* (1 Kings 38-40), or *The Margate Exodus*.

While there have been few publications on the Bible in music, there have been a few that contain references to particular biblical stories: *The Performed Bible: The Story of Ruth in Opera and Oratorio* (Helen Leneman, 2007); *Love, Lust, and Lunacy: The Stories of Saul and David in Music* (Helen Leneman, 2010); *The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity* (J.F.A. Sawyer, 1996); and *The Sacrifice of Isaac: The Reception of a Biblical Story in Music* (Siobhán Dowling Long, 2013). There are reference works that give some attention to the Bible in music: *A Concise Dictionary of the Bible and its Reception* (J.F.A. Sawyer, 2009); the *Blackwell Companion to the Bible and Culture* (ed. J.F.A. Sawyer, 2006); the *Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible* (eds. Lieb et al., 2011); and the 30-volume *Encyclopaedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (eds. Allison et al., 2010-). There are series of biblical commentaries, the *Blackwell Bible Commentary* (www.bbbibcomm.info), which includes Susan Gillingham's Psalm commentary, and the Eerdmans *Illuminations series* (<https://illuminationscommentary.wordpress.com>), including C.L. Seow's Job commentary. All of these contain musical information alongside art, literature, film, drama, politics, and theology. *The Bible in Music: A Dictionary of Songs, Works, and More* contains only musical references, to many different traditions and styles. Some of the entries are for every reference to music in the textbook *The Bible and Its Influence* by Cullen Schippe and Chuck Stetson (2005). Intended

audiences for the book, in addition to readers of the textbook, include biblical scholars and those with an interest in the Bible, such as choirs, musicians, musicologists, lecturers, and teachers and students of music and religious education.

Several searches of entries will suffice to illustrate the book's structure and scope. Under "Gospel" are found references to "The Gospel According to Luke," a 1980 song by American county music artists Skip Ewing and Don Sampson, and the *Gospel Preludes*, organ pieces by William Bolcom. Titles of the pieces are listed, but not all of them are included. After the two Gospel entries is the *Graduale, Romanum* of 1974 of the Roman rite. Searching for "Psalm," one finds many entries. These include "Psalm 25:15" of Bobby McFerrin (2013); "Psalm 126," a choral work by Philip Glass (1998); "Psalm 150" settings by Benjamin Britten (1962) and César Franck (1883); *Psalm Settings* by Charles Ives (1888-1924); "Psalm XC" by Charles Ives; *Psalmen Davids samt etlichen Moteten und Concerten* (Psalms of David with Several Motets and Concertos) by Heinrich Schütz; *Psalmfest* by John Rutter (1993); *Psalmi Davidis Poenitentiales* (The Penitential Psalms of David) by Orlando de Lassus (1563); *Psalms for I* by Rastafarian Prince Far I (1975); *Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs* by Isaac Watts (1851); "Psalmus Hungaricus" by Zoltán Kodály (1923); and "Psaume ILVII" by Florent Schmitt (1904).

Found are pieces on the Lenten Seven Last Words, including *The Seven Last Words from the Cross* by James MacMillan; *The Seven Last Words of our Redeemer on the Cross* by Joseph Haydn (1783); and *Seven Last Words of our Saviour on the Cross* by Heinrich Schütz (1645) (but not the popular Dubois setting). "Nativity" has only one setting, *The Nativity According to St. Luke*, a musical drama by Randall Thompson. Under "New" are "The New 23rd Psalm" by Ralph Carmichael (1969) and *A New Version of the Psalms of David* by Nicholas Brady and Nahum Tate (1696). Further along is the entry *Nine Psalm Tunes for Archbishop Parker's Psalter* by Thomas Tallis (1567). "Nearer My God to Thee" by Sarah Flower Adams is on the same page as the "New 23rd Psalm" and the Thompson piece cited above (166), as well as "Nazareth," a Christmas song by Gounod, and "*Nigra Sum*" from the Middle Ages, with settings mentioned by Praetorius, Palestrina, Victoria, Vivaldi, Monteverdi, and Pablo Casals. The page for Archbishop Parker's Psalter also contains "Nimrod" by Edward Elgar and *El Niño*, an oratorio by John Adams (2000).

Writing a comprehensive source is difficult, and not all music known to each reader can be included in a single-volume dictionary — the dictionary portion of the book is 274 pages. Indeed, the authors admit that the book is limited to those works they judge as influential or exegetically interesting. The entries are short, but they can engage the reader to further study a particular piece or composer. The authors are from Europe: Long is from Ireland and Sawyer is from Scotland, now living on the English coast. But they do include information that is useful to readers in North America.

The authors achieve their ends of presenting a volume that contains much about the Bible in music. The entries are engaging, and this reviewer learned interesting facts from reading them. It should be remembered, though, that this is not the end of research, but only a beginning, and even Internet searching can provide more information. But for a quick handy reference, or to generate ideas for a topic, the book gives a good first look. I would purchase the book for these reasons, for the small entries that include facts put into an easily readable style, facts that are not so readily accessed in this format elsewhere.

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