

Mario Nell is a Senior Lecturer at the Music Department of the Stellenbosch University and Head of Organ Studies and Church Music. He studies at the Universities of Port Elizabeth, Stellenbosch and Cape Town before he continued his studies at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany, and the University of Zürich, Switzerland. In 2015 he completed an integrated PhD (Music) at the University of Stellenbosch with a dissertation “The Organ Works of Petr Eben (1929-2007): A Hermeneutical Approach”.



Winfried Lüdemann is an Emeritus Professor of Musicology at Stellenbosch University and former Chair of the Department of Music. He has published widely on a diverse range of topics, including South African music and a biography of the German composer Hugo Distler (Augsburg, 2002). He has a keen interest in the organ and contemporary organ music, both as scholar and composer.

PETR EBEN'S ORGAN CYCLE JOB (1987)

MARIO NELL & WINFRIED LÜDEMANN

ABSTRACT

The Biblical book of Job has long been recognised as one of the great works of world literature, even independently of its specific significance within the Judeo-Christian tradition. It deals with the question of theodicy: Why does God allow the righteous to suffer? Apart from the obvious interest the book holds for theologians, it has also fascinated many philosophers, artists and specifically composers. The organ cycle *Job* (1987) by the Czech composer Petr Eben (1929-2007) is an example of such creative engagement in musical form. The present article explores this work and argues that it is not only an important contribution to the contemporary literature for organ, but puts forward a highly compelling theological interpretation of its subject matter. It represents Eben's continued interest in a topic that had already found expression in his earlier organ cycle *Faust* (1979/80), i.e. in “the wager between Satan and God on the fate of a human being” (Eben, 1989:iv). Eben gives the Old Testament story a decidedly Christian turn by creating a link between Job and Christ. Musically this interpretation is made manifest by the incorporation of several Christian hymn melodies, such as *Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten*, *Veni creator spiritus* and *Kristus, příklad pokory*. Instead of presenting a continuous programmatic depiction of

the story, the work divides into eight movements, each dealing with a specific theme inherent in the topic: *Destiny, Faith, Acceptance of Suffering, Longing for Death, Despair and Resignation, Mystery of Creation, Penitence and Realisation*, and *God's Reward*. The movements are all discussed and analysed individually so as to reveal their particular theological and musical substance and their significance within the work as a whole. The article hopes to show that the questions raised by the ancient book of Job continue to be relevant to this very day.

I. Introduction

The Biblical Book of Job has long been recognised as one of the great works of world literature, even independently of its specific significance within the Judeo-Christian tradition. It deals with the question of theodicy: Why does God allow the righteous to suffer? Despite the fact that Job undeservedly loses all that is important and dear to him, he remains faithful to God. In equal measure, the story underlines God's faithfulness towards Job. It is a question with which countless believers have grappled over the ages, and continue to do so:

The impressive language and the complex content, which retains its relevance till today, ensures that the Biblical book [of Job] is regarded to this very day as a milestone in world literature. Key questions about human life find expression in the book, questions about undeserved and inexplicable suffering, questions about the relation between God and man, questions about the sense and purpose of life. At the same time the book is full of tensions and contradictions; in the final instance its questions remain unanswered. But precisely herein lies the profound impact of the text; it contains the challenge to continue looking for new interpretations (Fromme, 2016:13).¹

Apart from the obvious interest it has held for theologians, the book of Job has also fascinated philosophers, artists and specifically composers. In his recent study about the reception of Job in contemporary music (and from which the above quotation is taken), Daniel Fromme (2016:5-7) traces composers who have engaged with one or other aspect of the topic back to the sixteenth century (e.g. Orlando di Lasso, 1532-1594), but then discusses the contributions of numerous twentieth-century composers, including Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958), Darius Milhaud (1892-1974), Hugo Distler (1908-1942) and Peter Maxwell Davies (1934-2016). He also lists the Czech composer Petr Eben, whose organ cycle *Job* he examines in some detail (Fromme, 2016:210-217). *Job* represents Eben's continued interest in a topic that had already found expression in the earlier organ cycle *Faust* (1979/80), i.e. "the wager between Satan and God on the fate of a human being" (Eben, 1989:iv). Following a similar trajectory, the present article extends an earlier discussion of Eben's *Faust* into

¹ Fromme draws here on the French poet and theologian Paul Claudel. If not indicated otherwise, all translations in this article are by the authors.

an equally detailed examination of the composer's organ cycle *Job* (see Nell and Lüdemann in *Vir die Musiekleier*, 2017:100-116).²

In his preface to the score of *Job*, Eben (1989:iv) provides the following background:

After the organ cycle *Faust*, I felt impelled to revert to the same theme – the wager between Satan and God on the fate of a human being – this time an Old Testament subject. Faust relied on his own human strength and failed; Job humbly accepted his misfortune and triumphed.

The Book of Job interested me for three reasons: firstly because of the social and theological revolution it represented in its time; until then, every poor, sick or unfortunate being was regarded as forsaken and punished by God. Secondly, I was deeply impressed by the dramatic depth of this Book, which gives men once and for all the key to overcome a trial of faith. Finally, I find this Book extremely topical. It answers one of the most difficult questions on life asked to this day: why do good people suffer misfortunes? The Book not only demonstrates the unimportance of personal sorrow in relation to world events, but it reveals God, who does not ask Job to approve his sufferings, but just to accept them, and, standing beside the unfortunate, He suffers and carries the pain with him, helping Job overcome it.

In the context of Eben's frequently uttered and well-documented interest in the struggle between Good and Evil in human existence, *Job* takes on special significance. In accordance with the book of Job, Eben does not view the struggle here in dualistic, Manichean terms. Good (in the person of Job, who is abundantly blessed by God) and Evil (represented by the misfortune and suffering that befalls him) are not locked in eternal battle. Nor are they presented in the form of a Faustian bargain. Instead, Job overcomes suffering by accepting it, knowing that God "suffers and carries the pain with him" (Eben, 1989:iv).

Consistent with this viewpoint, Eben then also creates a link between the story of Job and that of Christ. By employing the chorale *Kristus, příklad pokory* ("Christ, the model or example of humility") as the thematic basis for the last movement and the culmination of the entire work, he expresses the sentiment that "Christ is truly the personification of the innocent sufferer to the very end" (Eben, 1989:iv). In doing so, he brings about a Christian resolution to a story, which is situated within the theological context of the Old Testament. In this respect, Eben's view corresponds to that of numerous contemporary theologians. Wolfgang Huber is one of many whom one could quote in this context:

² Like the present article, the article on Eben's *Faust* for organ was based on Mario Nell's doctoral dissertation (2015). The dissertation includes Nell's performances of both these cycles.

The Passion of Jesus and the figure of Job are the two most important Biblical symbols for dealing with suffering. The question why God allows suffering and admits misfortune is not argued theoretically in these symbols, but accepted through the assurance that God walks at the side of the sufferer and takes on his distress. One can describe this answer as an authentic theodicy. The question of God's justification in view of suffering – i.e. the question of theodicy – is answered by God taking the suffering upon Himself and identifying Himself with the sufferer (Huber, 2008:57).

The Christian turn Eben gives to the Old Testament story is given additional substance by the quotation of other Christian melodic material elsewhere in the work. In the second movement Eben quotes the Easter hymn *Exsultet iam angelica turba caelorum* and the *Gloria in excelsis*, while the third movement includes the chorale *Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten*. The seventh movement contains the remaining quotation, the hymn *Veni, creator spiritus*. Eben's *Job* should, therefore, be seen as an attempt to transcend the questions raised earlier in *Faust*.

Instead of presenting a programmatic depiction of the story, the eight movements of the organ cycle *Job* each deals with a specific theme inherent in the topic: *Destiny, Faith, Acceptance of Suffering, Longing for Death, Despair and Resignation, Mystery of Creation, Penitence and Realisation, and God's Reward*. Cumulatively, these movements succeed in fully exploiting the dramatic depth of the book, resulting in a work that captures Job's spiritual journey almost like a series of frescoes, expressing intense human suffering, struggle, despair, endurance and, ultimately, triumph and reward for faithfulness. Because of the universality of its subject matter and the profoundness of the music, Eben's *Job* continues to fascinate performers and audiences alike, regardless of whether the work is performed in sacred or secular settings.

In her biography of Petr Eben, Kateřina Vondrovicová (2000:226) quotes a much expanded version of the composer's ideas about his work. Because of their value as a primary source, Eben's words are given here in full:

The first movement, "Destiny", begins with the Destiny-motive of Job on a harsh-sounding reed stop in the Pedal and ends – after a more turbulent middle section – with the same motive, this time, however, extended over the organ's full range. In the second movement, "Faith", Job sings in soft meekness a song of praise, intoned by the high register of the solo Flute as a quotation of the Gregorian "Exsultet". But this motive is interrupted constantly by dramatic interpolations, as if they were blows of Fate, which were striking Job's home and family. The return of the movement to its initial quiet praise expresses Job's persistence in goodness. In the third movement, "The Acceptance of Suffering", the blows of Fate strike directly at Job's person. After an outcry by the organ and a brief tumultuous section, the melody of the protestant chorale "Wer nur den lieben

Gott lässt walten” is presented, which also bestows an inner calmness on this movement. The fourth movement, “Longing for Death”, expresses the suffering which – with ever-growing vehemence – weighs on Job’s shoulders. Musically it is represented by a passacaglia, which rises to a crushing climax. The Coda fades away in an almost inaudible pianissimo, as if all hope is lost. The fifth movement, “Despair and Resignation”, consists basically of two parts. From the depths of forsakenness rise accusations, which, however, give way to a soft lament in the second part. In the sixth movement, “The Mystery of Creation”, the enigmatic chord-progressions on a Flute stop give rise to a question. The dramatic build-up in the middle of the movement wishes to symbolise the act of Creation. The movement then ends again with the open question heard at its beginning. The seventh movement, “Penitence and Realisation”, is also in two parts. The depth of the Bombarde stop and the bizarre footsteps of the pedal conjure up an atmosphere of self-immolating penitence. The intimate voice of the solo Flute, above the accompaniment by the string stops, then continues with a quotation of the Gregorian melody “Veni creator spiritus”. The light of cognizance and understanding appears, and with it also insight into the significance of suffering. Just as the fourth movement in the middle of the cycle, the eighth movement, “God’s Reward”, ends in a closed form, in this instance with chorale-variations on the hymn of the Bohemian Brethren “Kristus, příklad pokory” (‘Christ, example of humility’), which, with a progressive build-up, brings the whole cycle to a festive climax. The quotation *Vere dignum et iustum est* provides for a musical and conceptual coda (Eben as quoted in Vondrovicová, 2000:226).

In addition to these extensive “programme notes” and further concise descriptions of the various movements in the preface to the published score, Eben also provides brief quotations from the book of Job as subtitles for each of the movements. These descriptions aid the performer and the analyst to gain a clear understanding of the composer’s intentions. Eben also provides explicit and detailed suggestions regarding registration. He adds that “Job can be performed either as a solo organ work or with a narrator reading the printed Bible texts, which appear before each movement” (Eben, 1989:vi). Consequently, a performance that follows the latter suggestion gains an additional dimension of immediate meaning for the audience.³

According to the score, *Job* was dedicated to David Titterington, who premiered the work in Ripon Cathedral, Harrington on 11 August 1987 (Vondrovicová, 2000:225). The music was published by United Music Publishers, London in 1989.

³ The performance that formed part of the doctoral project upon which this article is based did indeed include such narration. The positive response from audience members reinforced the assumption that this additional level of meaning enhanced the impact of the performance.

2. Analytical observations

I. Destiny

Destiny is the only movement of the cycle that is not introduced by a Scripture reading. The brief subtitle reads: *Then Satan said to the Lord: Put forth thine hand and touch Job and all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.* The preface gives the following outline:

The movement begins *Andante* with a pedal reed announcement of the motif of Job's *Destiny*. A *più mosso* leads to a more turbulent toccata-like middle section with the same motif spread over the entire sound spectrum of the organ before it concludes the movement (Eben, 1989:iv).

The pedal announces the five-note *Destiny* motif in dark, heavy and dramatic registration (*Pr. 16'*, *Sub. 16'*, *Oct. 8'*, *Posaune 16'*). It represents the main theme of the movement and, in accordance with its foreboding and relentless character, contains the melodically dissonant intervals of a rising major second, a descending tritone, a rising augmented fifth and finally a falling augmented ninth. An underlying stepwise ascending third C-D-E is also present in this theme, and will gain structural significance later on.

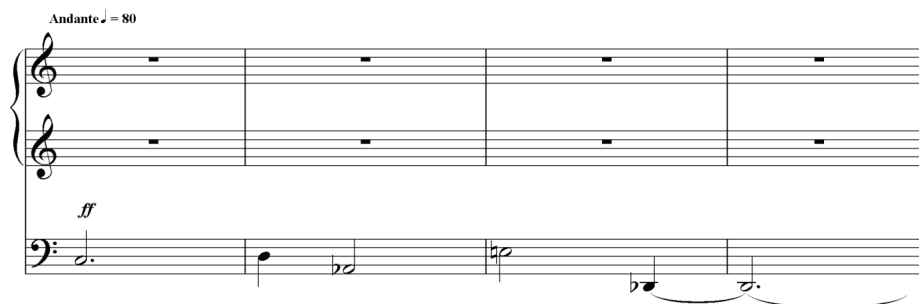


Figure 1: *Job, I Destiny*, mm. 1-4 (Pedal)

A countermotif, consisting of parallel major triads in second inversion descending in thirds, is presented on the *Trumpet 8'* in Manual I above the pedal note on D^b (mm. 5-7).



Figure 2: *Job, I Destiny*, mm. 5-7

Both these motifs are developed in the course of the first section of the movement on the basis of the stepwise ascending third pattern inherent in the *Destiny* motif: the various versions of the *Destiny* motif presented here start on C (mm. 1, 8), D (m. 16) and E (m. 19) respectively, whereafter the theme is presented for a last time starting on C# (mm. 25-29; the enharmonic equal of the last note of the main theme in its original form).

The second section, described by Eben as “toccata-like”, begins in m. 30. Above a “turbulent” accompaniment on the second manual a cantus firmus-like melody is presented on the first manual by the *Trumpet 8'*, and divided into several phrases. Closer examination reveals that this melody is not based on a pre-existent hymn or song (as the term *cantus firmus* suggests, and which would have been mentioned in the preface by the composer), but that it is thematically related to the *Destiny* motif. Its five notes could be heard as a retrograde version of this motif with some transformation of its constituent intervals, while largely maintaining the original contour (see mm. 36-39). In the meantime the pedal quotes the *Destiny* motif in a completely fragmented manner (m. 39).

Figure 3: *Job, I Destiny*, mm. 36-39



Figure 3: *Job, I Destiny*, mm. 36-39 (continues from previous page)

This material undergoes a consistent process of transformation and fragmentation, until a third section from m. 62 onwards (in Tempo I, but with an immediate *stringendo*) presents the theme in yet another variation. Its tempestuous character is underlined by dark registration, all the parts being notated in the low register of the bass clef. The thematic material on Manual I is clearly based on the pitch structure of the *Destiny* motif (D-E-B^b-F[#]-D[#] – the last note is an octave displacement of the original interval) and then extends this into the higher range of the organ. Against this, the pedal has an ostinato derived from the first three notes of this version of the *Destiny* motif, while the voice on the second manual has an ostinato based on an inversion of the stepwise movement over the compass of a major third, mentioned earlier. Again, the melodic material on the manuals is gradually transformed almost beyond recognition, with mm. 70-72 and 74-77 introducing a variation of the countermotif.

The last section of the movement (mm. 79-93) combines the *Destiny* motif with the countermotif. The triads in second inversion are reminiscent of the latter, while the highest note of each of the five triads corresponds to the *Destiny* motif, however, with wide octave displacement and extreme rhythmic transformation. The first five-note group begins on D (m. 79), the second on A (m. 80).



Figure 4: *Eben: Job, I Destiny*, mm. 79-82

This section (and the movement as a whole) is concluded with a *fortissimo* statement of the five notes of the unaccompanied *Destiny* motif in its original intervallic configuration, this time beginning on E. The countermotif is heard again above the final long pedal in the bass, in the original rhythm, but with widely displaced pitches, dispersing the material over the full range of the instrument.

There is no feeling of finality in the movement's closing bars, it is as if something needs to be completed or answered. The music creates a sense of expectation in the listener, which leads directly into the story of Job as it is then told by the narrator before the commencement of the second movement.

II. Faith

The subtitle of the movement reads: *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord*. Eben's description in the preface underlines this sentiment:

Job humbly sings praises to God, *Tempo di corale gregoriano*, in the form of a quotation from the plainsong *Exsultet* on a flute in the treble.⁴ In the ensuing *Allegro*, this is repeatedly interrupted by the resounding strokes of misfortune which descend upon Job's name and family. The Job motif recurs on a trumpet, before the movement ends with a plainsong, *Gloria in excelsis* – again in quiet persistence (Eben, 1989:iv).

The English and German versions of the title of this movement, as found in the preface to the score, do not agree. The German title *Gesinnungstreue* refers to “faithfulness” or loyalty to one's belief rather than to faith as such. Taking into account Eben's description (as quoted by Vondrovicová) of Job as singing “in soft meekness a song of praise” and his “persistence in goodness”, the English title “Faith” seems less apt than the German one.

The movement opens with the citation of the plainsong *Exsultet* in the *Flute 8'* on Manual III. In Eben's words, this represents Job's voice as he “humbly sings praises to God”.

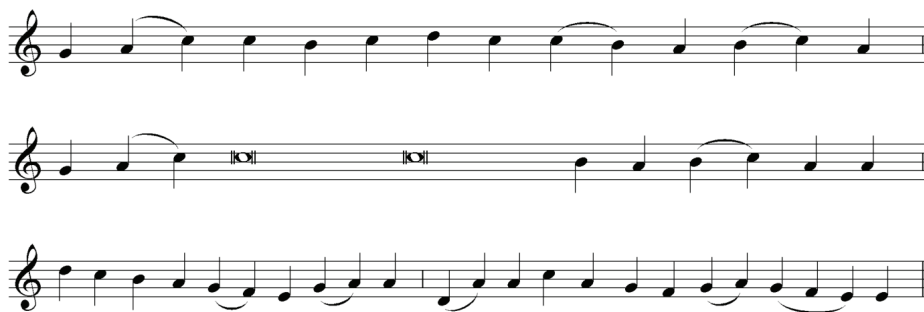


Figure 5: *Exsultet*

⁴ In the German version of this paragraph in the Preface the hymn *Exsultet* is described as being associated with Easter.

Only the first four phrases of the chant are quoted, each of them interrupted rudely and loudly by abrupt figures with a markedly rhythmic profile, representing the “resounding strokes of misfortune”.⁵ Fromme (2016:211) describes this and all the other quotations of pre-existing material throughout the work as noteworthy examples of “intertextuality”. While the quotations may provide the basis for thematic material of the movement in some cases, they also serve as “keys to the interpretation” (2016:213) of the music. Similarly, Lawrence Kramer (1990:9,10), in his particular approach to musical hermeneutics, would call them “hermeneutical windows”.⁶

The second part of the movement, *Allegro* (mm. 9–39), develops the contrasts of the introductory section even further. A seven-note motif is introduced now and is developed in various ways throughout the section, interrupted several times by fast ascending scale patterns ending in chords that employ the interval of a tritone. Eben does not refer to the origin of this material, but Michael Bauer presumes to notice a close resemblance with the first few notes of the Lutheran chorale *Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort* (Bauer 2000). What counts against Bauer’s contention, however, is the semitone between the third, fourth and fifth notes of the motif, which does not appear in the chorale melody, the minor third between the last two notes as well as the lack of thematic correspondence between the words of the chorale (adherence to God’s word) and the sentiments expressed in this movement. Besides, if Eben informs the reader meticulously about the origin of all his other quotations, why would he not have mentioned one in this case? It is more likely that this motif is associated with the strokes of misfortune. This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that the *Destiny* motif from the first movement makes several re-appearances from m. 65 onwards. Before that, the seven-note motif is presented fortissimo in its own right in various harmonic guises, textures and dynamic shades. In the second half of the section it is relegated to the role of an ostinato figure (even in imitation with itself, m. 41), which then accompanies a solo melody presenting three phrases reminiscent of the *Exsultet* chant, followed by augmented presentations of the *Destiny* motif from the first movement, and which Eben refers to as the “Job motif” in the Preface.



Figure 6: Eben: *Job*, II *Faith*, mm. 65-72

⁵ In Vondrovicová’s quotation these interruptions are said to occur here already, while the score’s preface locates them in the *Allegro* section.

⁶ For a detailed discussion and application of Kramer’s approach to musical hermeneutics, see Nell, 2015:12-30.



Figure 6: Eben: *Job*, II *Faith*, mm. 65-72 (continues from previous page)

This theme is repeated in mm. 79 and 88. A *Trumpet 8'* is added here, and the homophonic chorale texture contributes to the sense of climax that is achieved at this point.

The second plainsong quote to which Eben refers in the Preface, is presented in the last two measures of the movement. It is the *Gloria in excelsis*, which calls for a combined *Flute 8'* and *Voix céleste 8'* timbre, and which expresses the second half of the subtitle *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord*.



Figure 7: *Gloria in excelsis Deo*⁷

Thus the two plainsong quotations, both representing Job's voice, neatly frame the movement as a whole.

III. Acceptance of Suffering

The third movement, *Acceptance of Suffering*, follows after Satan's second challenge to God: "But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face". God responds: "Behold, he is in thine hand", on which Satan smites Job with boils from his feet to his head. After being taunted by his wife for this affliction, Job answers with words that are used for the subtitle of the movement: *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil also?*

The Preface describes the movement as follows:

Even when Satan directs his attacks against Job's fortune and person, Job remains true to his beliefs. After the initial outcry, the movement reflects Job's confidence,

⁷ Liber Usualis, 1961:26.

the peaceful strains of the chorale, *Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten* (“If thou but suffer God to guide thee”), familiar from its use by Bach, taking up the greater part of the movement (Eben, 1989:iv).

The outcry mentioned here introduces the movement. It is presented in chromatically descending chords, intensified by a varied repetition with *portato* articulation.



Figure 8: Eben: *Job*, III Acceptance of Suffering, mm. 1-5

As in the first two movements, strongly contrasting motivic material follows in close proximity to the first thematic idea. In this case it consists of highly dissonant chords in extremely quick succession, to be performed in an *approssimativo* (“approximate”) fashion. Four notes within this material are marked *tenuto* (A – A-flat – B – E). They are reminiscent of the *Destiny* and *Job* motifs of the first and second movements respectively.



Figure 9: Eben: *Job*, III Acceptance of Suffering, m. 6

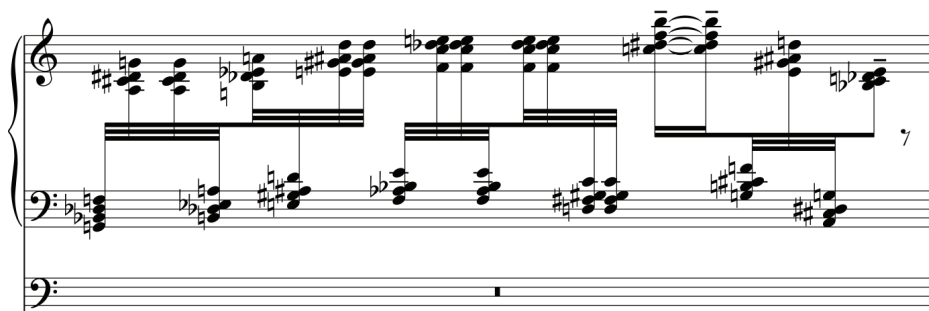


Figure 9: Eben: *Job, III Acceptance of Suffering*, m. 6 (continues from previous page)

The extremely harsh sound of this first section, of which the opening chords are repeated once more in mm. 7-10, gives way to more flowing part-writing, which determines the mood of the second section (mm. 14-56). The leading voice presents the Lutheran chorale *Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten*, as a *cantus firmus* against a contrapuntal voice of chromatic nature. The “peaceful strains” of the melody and the meaning of the text reflect “Job’s confidence” in the face of Satan’s assault on his body. That the melody is presented in A minor is already foreshadowed at the outset of the movement by the pedal on A (mm. 1-10; see Fig. 8).

Wer nur den lie - ben Gott lässt wal - ten und hof - fet auf ihn al - le - zeit,
den wird er wun - der - bar er - hal - ten in al - ler Not und Trau - rig - keit.

Wer Gott dem Al - ler - höch - sten traut, der hat auf kei - nen Sand ge - baut.

Figure 10: *Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten*

The six phrases of the chorale melody are presented with brief interruptions, while the accompaniment continues throughout like a thread holding the structure together. The pedal part answers the third and fifth phrases of the solo voice with inversions of the chorale melody, taking certain intervallic liberties.

The next section (mm. 56-104) develops fragments of the chorale melody by means of inversion and rhythmic transformation. An ostinato-like pattern in the pedal is added from m. 89 onwards. The increasingly dissonant sound of the music is escalated to the point where the partial occurrences of the chorale melody are no longer audible.

The return of the chorale melody (without a repeat of the first two phrases) from m. 109 onwards

indicates that Job retains his faith in spite of all the afflictions that are visited upon him. The chromatic accompaniment now gradually becomes slower. The original eighth note movement changes to triplet quarter notes in m. 125, and then to quarter notes in m. 132, ending on the welcomingly consonant chord of A major. It takes no stretch of the imagination to interpret this as a sign that Job has found peace within himself as he accepts his suffering, as suggested in the title of the movement.

IV. Longing for Death

The subtitle of this movement is: *Why died I not from the womb? Wherefore is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?*

To this the Preface adds the description:

The ever increasing misfortunes overtaking Job are here reflected in a Passacaglia, the overwhelming climax of which dissolves in a final pianissimo variation in which Job is crushed to the ground (Eben, 1989:iv).

The theme of the passacaglia is based on a descending chromatic scale, initially between G and C. It is not presented at the outset as a solo line in the bass part, as is frequently the case in works of this description, but as the highest voice of a series of chords to be played *pesante* with *portato* articulation. C minor is an important point of harmonic orientation here and remains so right through to the end of the movement. It takes on the significance of a tonal centre, as far as this term can be applied at all to Eben's music.

Moderato $\text{♩} = 88$

1 *mf pesante*

5 *simile*

Figure 11: Eben: *Job*, IV *Longing for Death*, mm. 1-8

This figure illustrates that the theme is also cast in a typical sarabande rhythm. It shows close resemblance to, for example, the *Sarabande* from Händel's *Suite in D minor*, HWV 437.



Figure 12: Händel: *Suite no. 4 in D minor*, HWV 437, *Sarabande*, mm. 1-4

The chromatically descending line is also reminiscent of the *lamento bass* or *passus duriusculus*, a musical figure widely used in Baroque music from Monteverdi to Bach, even though it spans a perfect fifth in this case, and not the characteristic descending fourth. Together, the *passacaglia* as compositional procedure, the rhythm of the *sarabande* and the chromatically descending voice line are employed in the manner of musical figures familiar from the Baroque affects. They can be linked to music that is associated with grief or death, perhaps even with a *Totentanz* or *danse macabre*.

In m. 17 a new theme is introduced on Manual II as a countermelody to the *passacaglia* theme, which is continued on Manual I in the LH over a sustained C in the pedal. This motive is then developed and transformed almost beyond recognition in order to create an ever increasing sound, accelerating movement and tempo (*insensibilmente poco a poco stringendo* from m. 26 onwards), and an increase in complexity, ultimately resulting in an overwhelming climax. Perhaps this bears out Eben's reference in the Preface to the "ever increasing misfortunes overtaking Job". In the ensuing figurations the *passacaglia* theme can be heard through the highest notes of subsequent figures, even in chromatic notes that belong to other tonal centres than C. Consider, for example, the chromatically descending notes between B and E in the *Allegro* section in mm. 54-61 or 62-69. Between mm. 69 and 85 a chromatic descent over the compass of an octave (B to B) can be discerned, followed by similar patterns in the subsequent measures. A return to the chromatic descent between G and C is reached in the final section of the music, where the tempo returns to the initial *Moderato* (Tempo I) again. In the last 11 measures the theme is presented in single notes, one at a time, to a point of total exhaustion on the low C in the pedal in the final two measures. Eben describes this as Job being "crushed to the ground" (1989:iv).

V. Despair and Resignation

Now shall I sleep in the dust, and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.

In addition to the above subtitle, the Preface describes the content of the fifth movement as follows:

This movement is in two parts. The restless first section reflects a despairing Job's rising reproaches against God ("Wherefore dost Thou make me Thy target?"), changing to a plaintive song of submission in the second part (Eben, 1989:iv).

This movement contains no musical quotations from any pre-existing material. Following from this, Lawrence Vinyard (2010:86) goes so far as to believe that Eben intentionally omitted musical quotations in this movement, as well as in movement 4 (especially quotations of liturgical melodies), to show that Job's faith is at its lowest point during the cycle. Be that as it may, the two parts of the movement mentioned in the Preface are indicated by the two words of the title, *Despair and Resignation*. The *Despair* theme is presented in the pedal part in m. 2. Its jagged contour has a vague resemblance to the second part of the *Destiny* motif of the first movement. It also has similarities with the contour of the single notes at the end of the preceding movement. It is presented in a greatly varied manner in the pedal throughout the first section of the movement.

The musical score for Job, V, *Despair and Resignation*, measures 1-3, is presented in 5/4 time. The score is divided into two sections by a tempo change. The first section, marked 'Tempo I (Larghetto) = 76', covers measures 1 and 2. The right hand (RH) features a cluster of notes in measure 1, marked 'pp'. The left hand (LH) has a simple melodic line in measure 3. The second section, marked 'Tempo II (Allegretto) = 100', covers measure 3. The RH features a jagged, semiquaver figure, marked 'p'. The LH continues with a simple melodic line. The score is written for piano and includes a 'p' dynamic marking in measure 3.

Figure 13: Job, V *Despair and Resignation*, mm. 1-3

The semiquaver figure from m. 3 onwards derives from the notes of this motif, with others added to create a moving texture that is as dissonant as the "cluster", which is heard in the first measure. It is followed by numerous variations in different registers, all of equal degree of dissonance. They are presented in irregularly longer or shorter versions throughout the first section of the movement, their intensification being consistent with the "restlessness" and the "rising reproaches against God" mentioned in the Preface.

Tempo II

15

II I II

17

I { *f*

Figure 14: Eben: *Job*, V *Despair and Resignation*, mm. 15-18

A contrasting melody, with the dark timbre of an added *Principal* 16' and characterised by chromatic voice leading, follows from m. 25 onwards. With each statement it rises in register, but each individual occurrence is closed off by accented *portato* chords in a very low register (mm. 25, 27 and 30).

I + Pr. 16'
poco più largamente

24

più f

II I

Figure 15: Eben: *Job*, V *Despair and Resignation*, mm. 24-25

The *Despair* section of the movement culminates in extreme dissonance with the alternating clusters starting in m. 43.

The second part of the movement, *Resignation*, starts in m. 60. The accompaniment to the theme that represents Job's "resignation" is characterised by a highly chromatic voice leading in the form of sigh motives above a pedal point, which centres around the low D throughout this section. The eight-note-long *Resignation* theme in the highest voice is repeated frequently and in varied form. The registration, including a *Tremolo*, in combination with a *legato* touch, adds effectively to the mournful expression of the music, of which the descending minor seconds and the compass of a tritone are further characteristics. In the middle of this section (m. 77-87) further development of this motivic material is placed against a more flowing version of the initial *Despair* theme. However, this is overcome in the final section of the movement by a varied repetition of the *Resignation* theme.

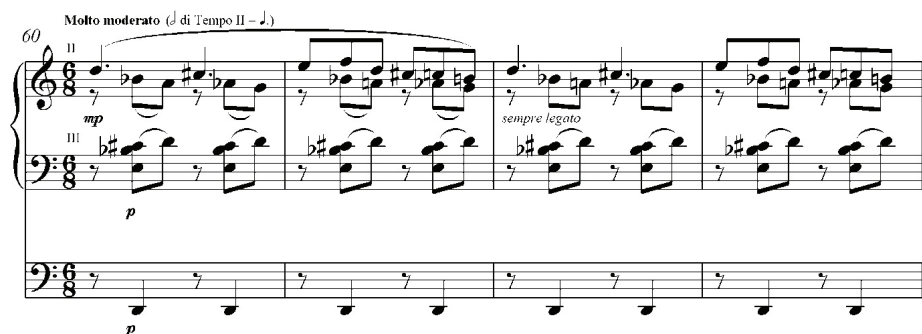


Figure 16: Eben: *Job*, V *Despair and Resignation*, mm. 60-63

The lilting 6/8 meter of the melody and the interrupted flow of the accompaniment help to link the mood of resignation to the Scripture reading, which precedes the movement, particularly to the words: "Now shall I sleep in the dust, and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be" (Eben, 1989:41). Job's resignation and loss of objection reaches its lowest point in the complete fragmentation of the music, with which the movement ends.



Figure 17: Eben: *Job*, V *Despair and Resignation*, mm. 98-105



Figure 17: Eben: *Job*, V *Despair and Resignation*, mm. 98-105 (continues from previous page)

VI. Mystery of Creation

Then the Lord answered Job: Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?

In his Preface Eben elaborates on this subtitle as follows:

The movement opens with a series of mysterious pianissimo chords, contrasted with a questioning flute phrase. There follows a vivid picture of the creation as depicted by God to Job. But, after an immense climax, the movement ends quietly with a return of the opening question (Eben, 1989:iv).

For the first time in the cycle, God reveals himself to Job. The atmospheric opening chords set the mood, as the “mystery” of creation is not only audible in the striking harmony, but also in the shimmering string registration. The descending semitone A-A^b in the highest voice is a striking melodic feature of this chord progression. The bass voice, which moves in contrary motion to this melodic line, does not mark a particular pitch as a pedal or tonal centre at this moment. The same can be said of the final measures of the movement, when this theme is repeated in its entirety. The remainder of the section (mm. 4-23) is then dominated by the solo voice on a *Flute 8'* registration, exposing the “questioning flute phrase” mentioned in the preface quotation.



Figure 18: Eben: *Job*, VI *Mystery of Creation*, mm. 1-5

When an Allegro tempo is reached in m. 24, a new theme is heard. It sounds similar to the first phrase of the chorale *Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten*, already quoted in the third movement. However, this time it is in F minor (above a pedal on G, which obsessively pervades much of this middle section) and also contains the descending semitone A-A^b. If this is more than a coincidence, then the fleeting quotation could refer to the word *walten* in the first line of the chorale. It is the only word in the chorale that can be linked to the movement's overall topic of creation. But even then, the descending major third E-C, which would have coincided with the word *walten*, is not presented unambiguously. Thereafter, the theme is developed and transformed in such a way that it loses its resemblance with the chorale.

Allegro ♩ = 112

24 $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ II · Fl. 8^a, 4^a (2)

mp

mp

– Fl. 8^a

Figure 19: Eben: *Job*, VI *Mystery of Creation*, mm. 24-27

The “picture of the creation as depicted by God to Job” becomes particularly “vivid” in the next section (from m. 47). Its rhythmic force and powerful registration (including a remarkable 16’ stop on Manual I) can be heard to represent the might of God the Creator. Although the first part of the movement is also characterised by circular motifs throughout, the chromatic circular effects and the irregular rhythm in all the voices at this point (from m. 47 on) could be associated with the whirlwind out of which God speaks, according to the Scripture reading given in the score heading this movement.

Risolutissimo ♩ = 104

47

1. *p* *f*

Figure 20: Eben: *Job*, VI *Mystery of Creation*, mm. 47-48

The evocative theme in the solo voice (Manual II), which then speaks out above this “whirlwind” from m. 49 onwards, contains the same descending semitone A-A^b yet again. It is developed to encompass descending semitones on other pitches as well. The melodic voice in the RH in the figure below can be heard to include other descending semitones as well (A-G#, C-B, G-F#):



Figure 21: Eben: *Job, VI Mystery of Creation*, mm. 53-54

The climax of this movement in m. 99 is an exact repetition of the opening measures, only this time with an *fff* registration for the first two chords before falling back again into the *misterioso* opening registration from the third chord onwards. In the Preface this is described as a “return of the opening question”.

Figure 22: Eben: *Job, VI Mystery of Creation*, mm. 99-103

VII. Penitence and Realisation

Job’s response to the Lord’s powerful appearance in movement 6 is encapsulated well by the subtitle: *I have uttered that which I understood not; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes*. It is expanded in the Preface by the description:

This movement is also in two parts: the first, a *Song of Penitence*, again echoes all Job's doubts; only in the second, slow and quiet section, Job's understanding shines through in the plainsong *Veni Creator Spiritus*, on the strings in dialogue with ardent flute arabesques (Eben, 1989:iv).

It is clear from the preceding Scripture reading that Job realises that he had no right to stand up against the power and wisdom of the Lord and that he regrets doing so. The theme which expresses this sentiment at the beginning of the movement, referred to as the *Song of Penitence*, is characterised by a falling and rising tritone between the first notes of the melody. This six-note-long *Penitence* theme provides the thematic material for the entire first section of the movement (mm. 1-71). It is presented throughout on Manual II and therefore remains recognisable, even when it is developed and transformed in numerous ways with passing notes, intensifying chromaticism, diminution and augmentation.



Figure 23: Eben: *Job*, VII *Penitence and Realisation*, mm. 1-5

The *Penitence* theme is interrupted repeatedly in dramatic ways by means of various contrasting or accompaniment figures to express Job's "doubts" mentioned in the Preface. The first such effect appears in m. 4 with a three-note *staccato* motif in the pedal part, a motif that is later transposed and inverted. The second motivic effect to appear is in m. 15 with its circular movement in the highest voice.



Figure 24: Eben: *Job*, VII *Penitence and Realisation*, mm. 15-16

Another prominent motif appears in m. 43 as a kind of ostinato accompaniment in the right hand against the *Penitence* theme in the left hand. It consists of two descending chromatic motif, linked together by a falling tritone, which simultaneously associates this idea with the *Penitence* theme for which it serves as counterpoint.

Figure 25: Eben: *Job*, VII *Penitence and Realisation*, m. 43

The “questioning flute phrase” in the sixth movement also appears from m. 47. This could perhaps be understood to represent Job’s final question, but this time referring to himself: “Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge?” This time the phrase is answered by the same accompaniment motif, which reflects Job’s acceptance and acknowledgement of God’s power and reign over him.

The faster *toccata*-like sections (mm. 39-42, 51-52, 55-60, 63-65 and 67-69) in this movement are reminiscent of similar *toccata*-like sections in the third movement. The highest notes of these chordal figures also outline melodic structures that were previously heard in the opening chromatic harmonies of the third movement *Acceptance of Suffering*. The section ends in m. 70 with the same motif first heard in m. 15.

The second section of the movement, characterised as Job’s *Realisation*, is based entirely on the hymn *Veni, Creator Spiritus*. Its particular timbre results from being presented in parallel fourths. Initially the pedal doubles the melody in the lower octave, but then goes on to move independently. The various phrases of the hymn, presented here in the Mixolydian mode on B, are allocated to Manual III with its string registration. The significance of quoting this particular hymn can perhaps be found simply

in its first few words: *Veni, Creator Spiritus* (Come, Creator Spirit). God the Creator, as revealed in the previous movement, is acknowledged by Job, but is also invited into his heart as Holy Spirit, who may help him to “realise” and understand God’s ways.



Figure 26: *Veni Creator Spiritus*⁸



Figure 27: *Eben: Job, VII Penitence and Realisation, mm. 70-73*

The “ardent flute arabesques” on the *Flute 8’* on Manual II are played in dialogue with the Gregorian hymn. These arabesques complement Job’s final “realisation” and understanding with some of the most lyrical and euphonious sounds of the entire work. The *Flute 8’* registration has become characteristic throughout the work as a representation of Job’s voice. Together, the hymn and the arabesques end the movement in a consonant resolution on a B major chord.

⁸ Gotteslob: 240

VIII. God's Reward

And the Lord turned the captivity of Job and blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.

The Christian interpretation given to the turn of events indicated in the above subtitle (already discussed at the beginning of this article) is detailed as follows in the Preface:

The finale is a set of chorale-like variations on a melody by the Bohemian brothers, *Kristus, příklad pokory* ("Christ, the model of humility") for Christ is truly the personification of the innocent sufferer to the very end (Eben, 1989:iv).

The concluding movement of the cycle represents God's blessing to Job in the form of a set of chorale-like variations. Eben now uses a chorale melody of Bohemian monastical origin as primary thematic material for his music, *Kristus, příklad pokory* (Christ, example of Humility, our merciful Lord⁹).

The variations on this chorale in the Phrygian mode evidence Eben's compositional mastery and imagination to good effect. It is noteworthy that the entire chorale melody is not always employed during each variation and that a selection of phrases is at times used instead. The variations follow each other in an order of increasing intensity in respect of dynamic levels, complexity of rhythm and harmony, as well as of registration.

After an introductory section based on the motivic material from the first phrase of the chorale in the original tonal ambit of E (mm. 1-15), the entire chorale is presented in harmonised form from m. 16 onwards. It is now transposed to the tonal centre of G.

16 *poco più mosso* ♩ = 104

I

mf marc.

mf

Figure 28: Eben: *Job*, VIII God's Reward, mm. 16-19

⁹ Translation quoted from the score of *Job*, p. 70.



Figure 28: Eben: *Job*, VIII *God's Reward*, mm. 16-19 (continues from previous page)

To discuss the individual variations at length and the compositional techniques employed for each, would go beyond the scope of the present article, save for saying that as a whole they serve as a fitting culmination to the cycle. However, it is necessary to point out a rather unusual procedure for a set of variations present here: a new theme based on a chant melody is introduced into the texture just before the final variation (mm. 110-121), accompanied by a change to *fff* and a *Maestoso* tempo. It is then repeated as a counterpoint in the pedal to the final statement of the chorale (present in the highest notes of a set of figurations from m. 122 to the end). The chant in question is *Vere dignum et iustum est*. Its full text can be translated as: “It is indeed fitting and right, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give thanks to Thee, Lord, Holy Father, almighty and eternal God, Who together with Thine only-begotten Son and the Holy Ghost art one God”.¹⁰ As in the case of the chorale, only certain phrases of the chant given here are quoted in the movement:

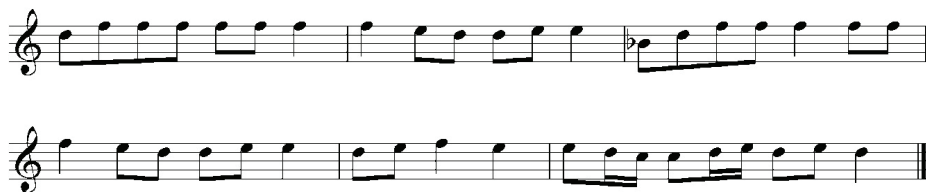


Figure 29: *Vere dignum et iustum est*

In the overview of the work provided by Kateřina Vondrovicová (as given above), Eben describes this quotation as a “musical and contentwise [sic] coda”. In agreement with these words, the choice and quote of the chant should be seen as a comment on or an enhancement of the meaning of the chorale. The link between Job and Christ now reaches its ultimate fulfilment.

¹⁰ *Traditio* 2015.

Conclusion

The eight movements of Petr Eben's organ cycle *Job* present a compelling musical and theological interpretation of the subject matter at hand. They do so in a style that is as individual as it is effective and moving. The work expresses Eben's fascination with the question of the fate of human beings caught up in forces of good against evil, over which they have no control. Questions of such obvious relevance beyond the scope of theological introspection cannot but grant this work a safe and regular place in concert programmes and further analytical studies in our time.

REFERENCE LIST

- Bauer, M. 2000. A voice from the whirlwind, in *A tribute to Petr Eben to mark his 70th birthday year*. Edited by Graham Melville-Mason. Burnham-on-Crouch: Dvořák Society.
- Christian Classics Ethereal Library. 2015. [Online] [www.ccel.org/study/Psalm 19:43](http://www.ccel.org/study/Psalm%2019%3A43). (Accessed 13 August 2018).
- Eben, Petr. 1989. *Job for organ*. London: United Music Publishers.
- Gotteslob. 1998. *Katholisches Gebet- und Gesangbuch*. Augsburg: Sankt Ulrich Verlag.
- Huber, Wolfgang. 2008. *Der christliche Glaube. Eine evangelische Orientierung*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus.
- Hymnary. 2007. [Online] www.hymnary.org/text/erhalt_uns_herr_bei_deinem_wort_und_steu?sort=text-authors. (Accessed 18 August 2018).
- Kramer, Lawrence. 1990. *Music as cultural practice, 1800-1900*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.
- Liber Usualis*. 1961. Tournai, Belgium: Desclée & Co.
- Nell, Mario. 2015. *The organ works of Petr Eben (1929-2007): A hermeneutical approach*. Unpublished PhD dissertation. Stellenbosch University.
- Nell, Mario & Winfried Lüdemann. 2017. Petr Eben's organ cycle *Faust* (1979/80). *Vir die Musiekleier* 37 (44), 100-126.
- Traditio. 2015. [Online] www.traditio.com/office/masstext.htm. (Accessed 16 August 2018).
- Vinyard, Lawrence Marvin. 2010. *Job for organ: Programmatic implications drawn from Petr Eben's musical language*. Unpublished DMus Dissertation. University of Arizona.