

ROELOF TEMMINGH'S KANTORIUM¹

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ABSTRACT

Roelof Temmingh's *Kantorium* (2004) is one of three works for which the composer received the Helgaard Steyn award. Even though this oratorio-like work can be regarded as one of the most significant contributions by any composer to the repertoire of sacred music in South Africa, the work's first and thus far only performance was given in Speyer, Germany, in the year of its completion. Its German libretto and the large forces required for its performance (four vocal soloists, choir and full orchestra) may account for the fact that it has not yet been given a hearing in South Africa, thus depriving South African audiences of the opportunity of getting to know the work. With one exception - an article by Martina and Nicol

¹ This article is based on chapter 10 of my recent dissertation *Windows on South African art music in the European tradition* (2020).



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Viljoen - the work has thus far also escaped scholarly attention. The present article tries to rectify this neglect by providing a detailed history of the work's genesis as well as a careful analysis of its musical and textual features and its theological intent. It concludes with a few pertinent questions that Temmingh's *magnum opus* raises in the context of sacred music in South Africa.

OPSOMMING

Roelof Temmingh se *Kantorium* (2004) is een van die drie werke waarvoor die komponis die Helgaard Steyn-toekenning ontvang het. Hoewel hierdie oratoriumagtige werk as een van die belangrikste toevoegings deur enige komponis tot die repertorium van gewyde musiek in Suid-Afrika gereken kan word, het die eerste en tot dusver enigste uitvoering daarvan in Speyer, Duitsland plaasgevind in die jaar waarin die komposisie voltooi is. Die werk se Duitse libretto sowel as die omvangryke besetting (vier vokale soliste, koor en volle orkes) is moontlik die rede waarom dit nog nie in Suid-Afrika uitgevoer is nie en daarom plaaslike gehore nog nie die geleentheid gehad het om dit te leer ken nie. Met die uitsondering van 'n artikel deur Martina en Nicol Viljoen het die werk tot dusver ook nog geen wetenskaplike aandag getrek nie. Die huidige artikel is 'n poging om hierdie leemte te vul. Dit verskaf 'n gedetailleerde ontstaansgeskiedenis sowel as 'n sorgvuldige analise van die werk se musiek en teks en sy teologiese boodskap. Ter afsluiting word melding gemaak van enkele indringende vrae wat deur Temmingh se *magnum opus* aan die orde gestel word.

INTRODUCTION

A brief biography and an evaluation of Roelof Temmingh (1946–2012) as composer serves to introduce the more extensive discussion of *Kantorium*.²

Roelof Temmingh was born in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. He grew up in a musical family: his father as well as his two brothers also followed musical careers. In 1958 the family emigrated to South Africa and finally settled in Bellville. The Temminghs belong to a remarkable group of Dutch-born musicians who came to South Africa after World War II and enriched South African musical life in immeasurable ways. Despite early signs of exceptional musical talent the young Temmingh set out to study theology at the University of Cape Town in 1965. However, he gradually came to realise that his true calling was in music and he changed over to this field of study. He was awarded the degree MMus (Composition) in 1970. His most important teachers were Gideon Fagan (composition) and Gunther Pulvermacher (musicology). After short periods as lecturer at the universities of Port Elizabeth and South Africa, he was appointed to a lectureship at Stellenbosch University in 1973. In 1992 he became an Associate Professor.

In a society where views of what it means to be an artist are becoming increasingly superficial, the contribution of Roelof Temmingh to South African music over the course of forty years stands out as a singular achievement on a solitary pinnacle. Temmingh first drew wide attention in 1972 when he won the SAMRO Competition for young composers. In the same year he attended the summer school in Darmstadt, which at that time represented the centre of the international avant-garde. Because of the provocative nature of his early compositions Temmingh became known as an *enfant terrible* amongst South African composers. However, his prolific productivity and the remarkable ease with which he composed in all styles of the twentieth century, together with his highly-skilled craftsmanship and the profundity of his musical inspiration soon won him recognition as one of the leading composers of his generation. He received several accolades. Besides the SAMRO composition prize, he was

² This biography is a translation of an Afrikaans obituary I wrote for *Die Burger*, 11 May 2012. The translation is quoted from chapter 10 of my dissertation *Windows on South African art music in the European tradition* (Lüdemann, 2020:240–241). Where no specific sources are given to substantiate a particular point made in this article, the information provided is based on first-hand knowledge on the part of the author, who was a colleague and friend of the composer.

awarded the Helgaard Steyn Prize three times (for his *Drie Sonnette* in 1988, for the cantata *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein* in 2001 and for *Kantorium* in 2006). In 1988 he won the Total Prize for *Autumn* and in 2000 he received a medal of honour from the *Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns*.

Temmingh retired in 2004, after a career of 31 years at Stellenbosch University. He remained highly productive ever since and a number of important works were composed during this time.

Although his early output reflected all twentieth-century styles and genres, Temmingh's initial reputation rested mainly on his avant-garde compositions. The influence of György Ligeti is noticeable in much of this music. By contrast, his more conventional works exhibit the influence of Béla Bartók and Dmitri Shostakovich. Since 1987 Temmingh composed almost exclusively in this latter, more accessible style, a style in which he finally found his true voice. Works from this period of artistic maturity now largely overshadow his earlier compositions. Independent of fashionable trends and true only to his own artistic conscience Temmingh created a style that is marked by the rediscovery of tonality, inspired melodic imagination, a refined sense of harmony and exceptional skill in writing for the orchestra. Electronic and other avant-garde compositional procedures were discarded as obsolete. Temmingh's contribution to the solo concerto and the repertoire of vocal music in South Africa was particularly prolific. Together with the librettist Michael Williams he also contributed to the establishment of a South African opera tradition with three outstanding additions to the genre: *Enoch, Prophet of God* (1995), *Sacred Bones* (1997) and *Buchuland* (1998). In his more recent sacred compositions Temmingh achieved a level of expression that is of truly universal validity. This is true especially of his large-scale *Kantorium* (2004), premiered to much acclaim in Germany, in which he presents an imposing and comprehensive interpretation of the foundations of the Christian faith.

With a list of more than 140 compositions to his credit, Roelof Temmingh is rightly regarded as one of the foremost and most productive composers in South Africa today. In Stellenbosch alone approximately 150 performances of his music took place in the course of his career. Regular performances in other parts of the country and overseas, radio broadcasts, numerous highly prestigious commissions from within the country and from abroad, as well as several research publications about his work have ensured that his name has become known widely in the music world. Entries in the world's two foremost music encyclopaedias (*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and

Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart) testify to the high regard in which he is held. Roelof Temmingh has left us with an oeuvre of enduring value, which is certain to retain its significance also in the future.

As mentioned here, the significance of Roelof Temmingh's contribution to South African music can hardly be overestimated. Besides its quantitative extent and qualitative value it is the wide diversity of genres that stands out as one of the defining characteristics of his oeuvre. His concertos, orchestral music, operas, chamber music, art songs and choral music each represent major contributions to their field. This can also be said of his sacred music, instrumental as well as vocal. Despite the fact that Temmingh occupied a position as church organist for more than thirty years (NG Kerk Stellenbosch-Wes), most of his sacred music was composed for the concert hall and not for the church or the liturgy. This is especially true of his sacred choral music, several works of which were written for the Stellenbosch University Choir (during the periods when it was conducted by Acáma Fick, Sonja van der Walt and André van der Merwe), the Konservatorium Dameskoor of Stellenbosch (founded and conducted by Acáma Fick), the Stellenbosch Libertas Choir (founded and conducted by Johan de Villiers), the Stellenbosch Camerata (founded and conducted by Acáma Fick) and Schola Cantorum (conducted by Rudolf de Beer). Examples are the fragment *Hooglied* (1978), *Himne* (1989), *Sanctus* (1999), *Nisi Dominus* (2001), *O Crux* (2004), *Three Motets* (2007) and *Te Deum* (2011). The two large-scale works for choir and orchestra, which Temmingh was commissioned to write on German texts (the chorale cantata *Wenn wir in höchsten sein*, 2001, and the oratorio-like *Kantorium*, 2004) and which were both premiered in Speyer, Germany, are of particular significance, because Temmingh was awarded the Helgaard Steyn Prize for both of them (in 2002 and 2006 respectively). It is the latter of these two works that is the subject of this article.

Literature on Roelof Temmingh (1946-2012) is scarce and rather scattered. A comprehensive study of his life and work has not yet been conducted, nor has his oeuvre as a whole been subjected to a systematic and penetrating evaluation. What little research has been published has merely touched on isolated aspects of Temmingh's vast output. Besides my own contributions to the topic (see bibliography) the most important studies have been produced by Veronika Franke: a tribute and list of works (2011), an overview of some of his orchestral music (2012) and a comprehensive discussion of the three Latin motets (2019). Gerrit Scheepers has also added significantly to research on Temmingh with his doctoral thesis on questions of performance of selected choral works (2019). Kirsten Pienaar has now embarked

upon a comprehensive study of the composer's three operas (forthcoming). Finally, there is an extensive article on *Kantorium* by Martina and Nicol Viljoen, written soon after Temmingh attended the awarding of the Helgaard Steyn Prize in Bloemfontein in 2006.³ Additional biographical information on the composer can be found in my own contributions (most specifically in 1987, 2012 and 2017).

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

As mentioned above, Temmingh's monumental *Kantorium* has been the subject of an article by Martina and Nicol Viljoen, in which they raise the question of the work's "contextuality", as well as "concomitant theoretical/philosophical considerations" in respect of musicological discourse in post-apartheid South Africa and elsewhere (Viljoen & Viljoen, 2009:51). The article does not contain much information about the work's genesis and first (and thus far only) performance, nor does it provide more than a few selective analytical observations about its "organicist conception" or "organic unity" and about its musical treatment of the text (2009:52). Without wishing to detract from the value of Viljoen and Viljoen's article, my aim is to discuss Temmingh's composition on a more basic level, to document its genesis and discuss its character as a musical work of art. Such source-based research provides the foundation upon which the kind of discussion to be found in Viljoen and Viljoen has to be based. A highly acclaimed work like *Kantorium*, which the composer regarded as his *magnum opus*, certainly deserves to be examined from such diverse perspectives.

The latter two of the three works for which Temmingh was awarded the above-mentioned Helgaard Steyn Prize owe their origin to a circumstance of extraordinary significance: the composer's fortuitous acquaintance with the German choral conductor Jochen Steuerwald. *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein* and *Kantorium* were both commissioned by Steuerwald, conductor of the Evangelische Jugendkantorei der Pfalz, based in Speyer, Germany. Both commissions came from the Evangelical Church of the Pfalz (English: Palatinate), the latter one in view of the centenary celebrations to commemorate the inauguration in 1904 of the "Gedächtniskirche" in Speyer.⁴ This date also coincided with the 475th anniversary of the so-called

³ Temmingh was awarded the Helgaard Steyn Prize for the first time for *Drie Sonnettes* (1988).

⁴ This and all other information about the circumstances surrounding the first performance of *Kantorium* is taken from the programme booklet of the premiere as well as other pertinent documentation (a press release and a brochure) supplied to me by Jochen Steuerwald, for which I am most grateful. I also thank Steuerwald for providing me with additional personal information by means of email correspondence on 19 and 20 March 2019. That the work was commissioned by the Lutheran or Evangelical Church

“Protestation” in Speyer in the year 1529, an event of great significance in the context of the Reformation in Germany and which subsequently led to the use of the term Protestant for supporters of the Reformation.

Temmingh came to Steuerwald's attention through a review of the composer's motet *In lumine tuo* (1995, published by Möseler Verlag) in the journal *Musik und Kirche*. Steuerwald ordered the music and performed it with his choir. They took such a liking to the motet and its compositional style that Steuerwald commissioned Temmingh to compose a chorale cantata for a concert that was to be held in the “Schlosskirche” (castle church) in Bad Dürkheim on 24 February 2002. The composer was invited to be present at the work's premiere. The programme also included chorale cantatas by Bach, Mendelssohn and Reger, all performed by the Evangelische Jugendkantorei der Pfalz. Temmingh's cantata received a glowing review by Lothar Messmer (2001), writing in the local newspaper *Die Rheinpfalz*. According to him Temmingh had “found a musical language rich in dissonance, which goes under the skin because it avoids all kinds of trendy modern gimmicks and instead succeeds in presenting an admirably clear interpretation of the given text and melody in a modern style.”⁵

When the occasion came to prepare a programme for the above-mentioned centenary concert in 2004, and following on the success of the cantata, Steuerwald requested Temmingh to compose the main work for that event. Steuerwald's view of the importance of music in the church is expressed in a press release he wrote six months prior to the proposed concert. He wrote that a church that lives in the Reformation spirit of constant renewal should also apply this principle to its music. Of course, he had Temmingh's new work in mind when he wrote this. The premiere took place on 3 September 2004 in the Gedächtniskirche. The four soloists were Vera Steuerwald (soprano), Simone Pepping-Sattelberger (alto), Johannes Kaleschke (tenor) and Ekkehard Abele (bass). The orchestra “Kammerphilharmonie Mannheim” and the Evangelische Jugendkantorei der Pfalz were conducted by Jochen Steuerwald. The only other work on the programme was the motet *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied* by J.S. Bach, which was inserted in between the two parts of *Kantorium*. The

in Germany, as stated in the composer's foreword and in Viljoen and Viljoen (2009:51), is therefore incorrect.

⁵ “... Temmingh, der eine aufregende dissonanzenreiche musikalische Sprache findet, die unter die Haut geht, weil sie jegliche radikale Neutönerei meidet, stattdessen gezielt Text- und Melodieverständnis mit modernen Mitteln erstaunlich klar ausleuchtet” (Messmer, 2001). (Unless stated otherwise, all translations in this article are by the author.)

performance was recorded by the Südwestrundfunk radio station.

The composer did not regard the originally proposed libretto by Ulrich Andreas Wien as suitable and he set about compiling his own text from passages he selected from diverse books of Martin Luther's German translation of the Bible. Two brief quotations from Luther's treatise *Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen* ("On the Freedom of a Christian"), selected by Klaus Bümlein (a member of the governing council of the Palatinate church), were inserted in response to a special request from the commissioning committee in Speyer. The probable purpose of these insertions was to create a link to the historic events of 1529. The compilation includes passages from the books of Genesis, the Psalms, Isaiah, Lamentations, the Gospels, the letters of Paul and the book of Revelation. While a detailed discussion of the literary aspects of the text would go beyond the scope of the present article, suffice it to say that the selection exhibits Temmingh's knowledge of Scripture and grasp of theology, reflecting his early interest in this discipline as well as his life-long service as a church organist. The music also shows his excellent understanding of the sonic and rhythmic characteristics of the German language.

To name the work "Kantorium" was a decision the composer took at a very late stage in the composition process. It indicates that he regarded the work as something between a cantata and an oratorio. His initial intention was to call the work "Triptik" (English: Triptych), because he had planned to cast the text into three scenes. In the press release sent out by Steuerwald six months before the first performance (see above) the work is still introduced with this title and with these three divisions. The first part was to have been about the Creation, the Fall, the sinfulness of man and God's grace; the second about the life and work of Jesus Christ until Easter, while the third part was to have been about the life and death of humans in the countenance of God.⁶ In the end, Temmingh decided on a two-part division, with a focus on the Old and New Testaments respectively, thus giving the work a simpler formal structure.

Shortly after its premiere the work was reviewed by Gerd Kowa in *Musik und Kirche*, the leading journal for protestant sacred music in Germany. He reports on its "extremely warm-hearted", "almost enthusiastic" reception by the listeners. Countering the opinion of some avant-garde supporters in the audience that *Kantorium* is too traditional in its style, he describes the "gigantic" work as "disarmingly honest" and argues that to hold it against a composer if he makes use of sounds reminiscent of earlier music says nothing about its "quality" and represents a "Beckmesserian"

⁶ Free translation of words from the press release.

attitude (Kowa, 2004:422-423).

At the time when Temmingh composed *Kantorium* he experienced serious health problems. He told me more than once that he did not know how he managed to complete the work and that afterwards he could not remember some of the sections he had composed. That explains his statement to Viljoen and Viljoen (2020:51) that the composition process went “intuitively”. But it has to be added that composing “intuitively” describes the way in which Temmingh worked anyway. It does not minimise the remarkable craftsmanship and integrity that characterises all his music. He also told me that the compilation of the text took almost as much time and effort as setting it to music. The complexity of the compilation - putting together verses from an extraordinarily wide range of sources in Scripture - indicates that a great deal of thought did actually go into the work. To provide only one example: The words in Section 6⁷ (“Ich elender Mensch! Wer wird mich erlösen von diesem todverfallenen Leibe? Siehe, ich bin als Sünder geboren, und meine Mutter hat mich in Sünden empfangen.”⁸) appear to be seamless in their flow and meaning, but they are compiled from two completely different sources, namely Romans 7 verse 24 and Psalm 51 verse 7.

Even if *Kantorium* was composed “intuitively”, a work of this maturity in style and expression does not simply fall into a composer’s lap. One would expect it to incorporate sediments of prior compositional and personal experience, even if only subconsciously. I shall try to trace some of these.

The most obvious precedent for *Kantorium* would be the chorale cantata *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein*, because it posed similar challenges in respect of topic, occasion, language, scoring and performance circumstances, including the availability of an excellent choir and soloists as well as a professional orchestra.

The highly expressive music of the cantata is paralleled in *Kantorium*. Viljoen and Viljoen also remark on this evocative nature of the work when they describe the composer’s “musical realisation of his text [as] unusually pictorial” (2009:61). In this respect the music shows similarities to the way in which Baroque composers went

⁷ In the score the various sections are not numbered, but they are indicated by double bar lines. The numbering used here is taken from the concert programme booklet.

⁸ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. (English Standard Version; all English translations provided here are taken from this Bible version.)

about setting texts to music, making abundant use of musical figures and tone painting. Temmingh's admiration for and familiarity with the music of Bach could be seen as the inspiration for this particular aspect of the work. What Viljoen and Viljoen (2020:61) describe as the "remarkably subjective" character of the "musical rhetoric" could perhaps be explained equally well as an autobiographical strand in the work, arising from the difficult personal circumstances in which he found himself at the time.

Another precursor of great significance can be found in the organ work *Monofonie*, the first organ composition on Temmingh's rather short list of works for this instrument (see Lüdemann 2017:71-75 for a detailed discussion of this piece). *Monofonie* seems to have belonged to a trilogy of pieces that were composed for various instruments in an avant-garde style during 1971 and 1972. The autograph is written in unconventional graphic notation. *Monofonie* is the second work of the group, *Ortofonie* being the first and *Polifonie* concluding the cycle, which seems to have been named *Trifonie*.⁹ The idea of a trilogy may still have resonated with Temmingh more than thirty years later when he was planning to name his masterwork "Triptik". More significant is that *Monofonie* foreshadows on a small scale the thematic outlines of *Kantorium*, beginning with the creation and the fall of man and continuing with the utter despair of humans in a state of abandonment by God, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection and ending with a prayer for God's presence and grace.

Of more recent importance is that *Kantorium* incorporates the experience Temmingh gained as a composer of three operas written in short succession between 1995 and 1998. Not only did he learn in this way how to master the challenges posed by composing in a large form such as opera, he also learnt how to deploy his musical forces sparingly. He told me that one lesson he had learnt from composing opera was to base the musical texture on a simple two-part structure that carries the music forward: a bass-line and a leading voice. Everything else is then added onto this. It is a technique that is utilised abundantly in *Kantorium* as well. Above all, Temmingh's views on what he calls his turn away from complexity towards a simpler and more listener-friendly compositional style were put into practice in a consistent manner in his operas. The programme booklets compiled for two of these operas contain "notes from the composer" in which he sets out these sentiments in detail. They represent some of the rare occasions where the composer actually communicated his ideas in writing. He wrote the first of these notes for the programme booklet of the opera

⁹ The autograph is not quite unambiguous about the matter of the title and the final form of the work (see Lüdemann, 2017:71 for more discussion).

Enoch, Prophet of God (1995):¹⁰

Complexity is one of the most distinguishing traits of the music composed during the last forty years. It is because of this characteristic that many listeners describe contemporary music as incomprehensible or impenetrable.

My work of the last ten or so years mirrors the opposite: a striving towards simplicity. In ENOCH this striving led to a rediscovery of a tonal centre or perhaps even old-fashioned tonic as the sometimes transient, more often continual and always determining central point of the melodic, harmonic, rhythmic and other musical events.

The simplicity of ENOCH will hopefully enable opera-goers to fathom and appreciate the music (whatever that may mean) because the average listener should be able to associate the music with something of his own musical frame of reference. If this is indeed the case, I will be very happy. It is high time that new music should be experienced not as “strange” or “dissonant” but as “beautiful”.

My search for “beauty” and the resultant simplicity is not the consequence of musico-sociological considerations. It wasn't a case of thinking: How should I write in order to be appreciated? Or: what will the audience like to hear? No, this is not music that was “written to order”, it developed of its own accord, instinctively, impulsively, naturally. It took shape inexplicably. Perhaps it existed all along. Someone merely had to commit it to paper (Temmingh, 1995: no page number).

In the following extracts from his notes for *Buchuland* (1998) these views are consolidated.¹¹ Temmingh points to the “exciting rediscovery of the inevitable use of semi- or quasi-tonal material in the build-up of comprehensible musical tension ...” and mentions that the “‘nostalgia for melody and feeling’, the striving towards ‘new Tonality’, ‘new Simplicity’ or whatever such longings may be called, already dwelt in me (and in other composers of my generation) since the ‘80s’”. He confesses that composing three operas in this style had been “the best possible medicine to finally

¹⁰ A copy of this document was made available to me by Lynne Grant from the Amazwi South African Museum of Literature in Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown), where it is housed in the Michael Williams collection. Approval for my use of material from this collection was obtained from Michael Williams, the librettist and director of Temmingh's three operas. I am extremely grateful to Grant and Williams.

¹¹ The source of this quotation was supplied to me under similar circumstances as those set out in the previous footnote.

cure the last upsurges of avant-garde attacks from previous decades". Turning to the setting of words to music, as demanded by opera (or, in the present context, by an oratorio-like work), he adds:

Until somewhere in 1993 (I think it was winter) my students, colleagues, friends and I often discussed one of the specific aspects of the dilemma composers are confronted with at the end of the twentieth century: since the Second World War (if not since the '20s), Western music has entered realms which makes it virtually impossible to set "ordinary words" to music. Ordinary texts do not agree with atonal music - especially not the strange anti-everything music of the '50s to '80s. [...]

The music of *Buchland* therefore, to a certain extent, joins the centuries old mainstream of Western (i.e. world) music. The most important difference is that it is music without the traditional leading notes and dominants because the major and minor modes have to a great extent been replaced by an octatonic mode of consecutive half and whole tones. The combination of the three modes that is thus created consists of twelve inherent, moveable tone centres, which makes the play with New Tonality a game for which rules are not easily formulated. It has nothing to do with serial compulsion or the hierarchy of tonal functions. The EAR is the only arbitrator.¹² The possibilities are endless. The act of composition is free of any adherence to prescribed rules. It glides around in music's most inspiring domain: the great carefree world between the old, distant boundaries of tonality and atonality (Temmingh, 1998:24).

From a theological perspective the Scripture passages selected for the work provide an all-encompassing view of Christian doctrine straddling both the Old and New Testaments. Part I, based mainly on the Old Testament, begins with the creation and the subsequent fall of man, preceded by the expulsion of Satan and his angels from heaven, it describes God's intolerance of sin and the transitoriness of human existence and then ends with the prophecy of redemption. Part II, compiled mainly from passages in the New Testament, begins with the Gospel of John's interpretation of the creation through Christ (John 1:1), then characterises Christ by means of some of his key utterances (e.g. "Ich bin der gute Hirte"¹³ in section 17, and the

¹² "Arbiter" would have been a better translation.

¹³ I am the good shepherd (John 10:11).

beatitudes¹⁴ in section 21, both of them framed by calls for his crucifixion – a stroke of genius on the part of the composer), followed by references to Christ's death and resurrection and ends with the ultimate salvation of believers who die in the Lord, as described in the book of Revelation (e.g. Revelation 14:13). Taken as a whole, these passages present Reformation theology (possibly more Calvinist than Lutheran?¹⁵) in an orthodox, perhaps even rather austere interpretation. It is an interpretation that many a contemporary believer – not to mention non-believers – would tend to find somewhat old-fashioned.¹⁶ But the profundity and expressive richness of the music succeeds in elevating the work onto what can only be described as a universal level. The power of the work's message, based as it is on an all-encompassing view of the Christian doctrine of salvation, spanning the Old and New Testaments, corresponds in a remarkable way to the power of the similarly broad theology of Handel's *Messiah*. For lack of space this notion cannot be pursued in more detail here; it merits an investigation of its own.

The 32 sections or divisions of the text exhibit a number of formal characteristics, which the composer utilises to create a coherent musical form, thus preventing the work from breaking up into individual textual and musical “pictures” or “scenes”. (There are one or two instances where the composition may indeed be close to this danger.) Besides the broad division into two parts, which divides the text into an Old and a New Testament perspective, several subdivisions on a lower formal hierarchy are created. Most obvious amongst these is the grouping together of a statement and concomitant response. This procedure, for example, is followed right at the beginning of the work when the statement that God created heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1) elicits the response of words from Psalm 104 “Herr, wie sind deine Werke so groß und viel! Du hast sie alle weise geordnet, und die Erde is voll deiner Güter.”¹⁷ Musically it is realised by giving the statement to one of the soloists and the response to the choir. This kind of grouping occurs frequently throughout the work.

¹⁴ Matthew 5.

¹⁵ A thorough theological analysis of the libretto has to be left to a more qualified scholar.

¹⁶ In light of this it is difficult to follow Viljoen and Viljoen's emphasis on suffering and redemption as the key elements of the work, as expressed in the title of their article (2009:50). This is expanded upon later when they write: “the work will be surmised as a highly personal artistic expression that engages powerfully with the human condition of suffering” (2009:57).

¹⁷ O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures (Psalm 104:24; English Standard Version).

At a hierarchically higher level the various passages are each grouped around a particular topic, as follows:

Part I Old Testament

- Creation (sections 1-4)
- The Fall (section 5)
- Consequences of the Fall (sections 6-8)
- The prophecy of Christ's coming (sections 9-10)
- Conclusion (section 11).

These subdivisions are each formed into musically coherent sections.

Part II is slightly longer:

Part II New Testament

- Christ as the word of God, who came into the world (sections 12-15)
- Christ as the way, the truth and the life, the light of the world and the good shepherd, his critique of the religious establishment (scribes and Pharisees),¹⁸ and calls for his crucifixion (sections 15-20)
- Beatitudes, insertion of text by Luther and repeated call for Christ's crucifixion (section 21-22)
- Christ's death (sections 23-25)
- The Resurrection (sections 27-28)
- Eschatology (29-32)

These subdivisions are each set to music in one or other coherent form.

From a musical point of view, the broadest formal division follows the libretto by structuring the work into two parts. Even though Part II is the slightly longer of the two, there are several musical correspondences between them that make for a degree

¹⁸ A parallel could possibly be drawn here with Temmingh's own extremely critical stance toward the religious establishment in his environment.

of symmetry in the musical form. The similar beginning of each of the two parts represents such a correspondence. Though there are no direct thematic similarities, apart from characteristically ascending and descending semitone movement, these beginnings are scored similarly for tenor solo with sparse and partly drawn-out orchestral accompaniment, followed by a chorale or song-like section for choir. Both parts of the work also end on an extended C (major) tonal centre.

Another correspondence can be found in the form of an orchestral "Interludium" in each of the two parts. These interludes are not named as such in the score, but in the concert programme booklet the first interlude has the heading "Die Schöpfung" (The Creation; section 2), while the interlude in Part II is designated "Tod und Auferstehung" (Death and Resurrection; section 26).

Thematic correspondences between parts I and II are limited. The only direct thematic correspondence occurs between the fugato-like sections "Uns ist ein Kind geboren"¹⁹ (section 10) and "Der Herr ist wahrhaftig auferstanden"²⁰ (section 28). The interesting aspect of these fugato-like sections is that the various entries of the theme do not continue with some kind of counterpoint, but are simply repeated once or twice, so that a static contrapuntal structure is achieved. Not only are the respective themes in the two sections almost identical, the two expositions are also similar in their structure to the extent that the second version is actually a reworking of the first. This creates a significant theological link between the birth of Christ, as prophesied in the Old Testament, and the report of his resurrection in the New Testament as the ultimate fulfilment of that prophecy.

¹⁹ For to us a child is born (Isaiah 9:6).

²⁰ The Lord has risen indeed (Luke 24:34).

A thematic link can also be found between the beginning of Part II, "Am Anfang war das Wort"²¹ (section 12) and the beginning of the final subdivision of Part II, "Ich bin der Anfang und das Ende"²² (section 29), where the words of the latter section are made to fit the music of the first. The theological link created between these two texts by the composer is of much significance.

More problematic is the apparent correspondence between the thematic material of the interlude depicting the creation ("Die Schöpfung", section 2) and that of the words "Lass ihn kreuzigen"²³. Viljoen and Viljoen argue in favour of a deliberate theological link:

It is important to note that the main thematic material of "Die Schöpfung" serves as a precursor to that of "Lass ihn kreuzigen" [...] – as if to emphasise, already at its very creation and central to the kingdom of God and its coming, Christ's suffering on the cross (2009:58).

It is a question of theological perspective whether one follows this line of reasoning or whether one regards the crucifixion as a response not to creation but to the fall of man, and then questions this thematic link. The matter is complicated further by the fact that the theme of the fugato depicting the resurrection in the second interlude (section 26) can also be linked broadly to the intervallic structure and melodic contour of the creation and crucifixion themes. (Viljoen and Viljoen do not take this theme into consideration.) To be consistent one would then have to construct a theological link between creation, crucifixion and resurrection. Alternatively, one could hear this link between the two interludes to be primarily of musical interest. I shall leave the matter there.

If one is familiar with Temmingh's music one will notice that for the final chorus "Selig sind die Toten, die in dem Herrn sterben von nun an"²⁴ (section 32, bars 686-749) he quoted the passacaglia theme from his earlier *Cello Concerto* (1992; see bars 195-282). As I discussed in another article (Lüdemann, 2017:89-91, 95), passacaglia was a procedure for which the composer had a great predilection and which he employed frequently with much skill and imagination. Temmingh was very proud of

²¹ In the beginning was the Word (John 1:1).

²² I am the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:3).

²³ Let him be crucified (Matthew 27:23).

²⁴ Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on (Revelation 14:13).

this particular theme, he regarded it as one of his most inspired musical inventions. Besides, he was not averse to giving good material another hearing, similar quotations occur quite frequently in his music, this particular theme making another appearance in *Herinneringe* (see Lüdemann, 2017:91). Whether passacaglia is the correct term for this section of the work, given that the theme is a two-voice construction, not solely a ground bass, like in Buxtehude or Bach, is not all that important, because Temmingh actually thought of it in that way (see quotation in Lüdemann, 2017:86). So I will stick to the term. Temmingh's passacaglia themes frequently boast a conventional 8 bar + 8 bar phrase structure. The example on the right illustrates this structure well.

Four points deserve to be made in this regard. The first is that by (re-)using this very striking theme at the end of the work the composer prevents the music from ending on a less inspired level than that which he achieves in setting to music the beatitudes (see discussion below). Next to the beatitudes, it represents the other climax in Part II of the work. (In a sense it is similar to the problem which Handel had to solve after composing the majestic "Hallelujah chorus" for the middle of his *Messiah*. Though less popular than the Hallelujah, the finale, especially the extensive fugue on "Amen", is no less an impressive achievement and succeeds in ending the work on a level that does not fall below that of the Hallelujah.) This fact, secondly, explains why making new words fit into the pre-existing music feels somewhat forced in one or two instances. Thirdly, the passacaglia theme is not simply copied from the concerto, it is adapted in such a way that it is presented at a different pitch each time it is repeated. The orchestral introduction begins on the tonal centre of C (in bar 686); when the voices enter (in bar 702) the music moves to the centre on E, the third entry is on G (bar 718) and the final, triumphant entry returns to C, albeit an octave higher than the initial entry (bar 734). From the perspective of tonality, they outline the tonal centre of C in a striking way. (In the *Cello Concerto* the four presentations of the theme remain untransposed.) The fourth point to make is that one of the very few disappointing moments in the work occurs at the end of the passacaglia, when the very brief but densely scored "Amen" is added rather abruptly after the final statement of the passacaglia theme, without a sufficiently sensitive transition.

702

Bsn. 1,2

Hn. 1,2

S Ch/Solo
Se - - lig, Se - - lig se - lig sing die Io - - ten,

A Ch/Solo
Se - - lig, Se - - lig se - lig sing die Io - - ten,

T Ch/Solo
Se - - lig, Se - - lig se - lig sing die To - - ten,

B Ch/Solo
Se - - lig, Se - - lig se - lig sing die Io - - ten,

Vln. I
Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.
Cb.

710

Bsn. 1,2

Hn. 1,2

S Ch/Solo
die in dem Herrn ster - ben von nun an, ster - - ben von nun an.

A Ch/Solo
die in dem Herrn ster - ben von nun an, ster - - ben von nun an.

T Ch/Solo
die in dem Herrn ster - ben von nun an, ster - - ben von nun an.

B Ch/Solo
die in dem Herrn ster - ben von nun an, ster - - ben von nun an.

Vln. I
Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.
Cb.

Example 2: Roelof Temmingh Kantorium, Part II, bars 702-717.
Permission to use this example was obtained from Liezl-Maret Jacobs.

Example 3: Roelof Temmingh Cello Concerto, bars 195-215.

Permission to use this example was obtained from Liezl-Maret Jacobs.

In my opinion the impact of *Kantorium* does not lie primarily in its structural intricacies but in the compelling way in which the various text passages are set to music to create evocative “scenes”. Two examples will have to suffice.

The first Interludium (“Die Schöpfung”) is a purely orchestral representation of the creation. But instead of resorting to tone painting, as many a composer would do, Temmingh shifts the task of representation onto an extremely imaginative musical structure: a fugue-like exposition presents a theme in six different versions over a reiterating ground bass (bars 28-119), representing the six days of creation, followed by nine bars on a sustained G minor triad, which represents the seventh day on which God rested from all his labour. Example 3 below shows the theme as it is introduced on its own in the lower instruments of the orchestra (bars 28-36/37). In bars 43 to 52 the violas and horns present a varied version of this theme, imitating the first entry at the fourth.

Subsequent varied versions of the theme enter on pitches that do not conform to the expectations one has of a traditional fugue exposition, namely on D sharp (b. 57), B (b. 70), F sharp (b. 82) and A sharp (b. 95). What appears to be a countertheme in the double basses and cellos against the second entry of the theme in bars 43 to 52 turns out to be a ground bass that is repeated on the same pitch against each of the subsequent entries of the theme (i.e. it is not transposed together with each new theme, as one would expect of a conventional countertheme). The same applies to the additional contrapuntal voices, which are added against later entries of the theme, for example, the counterpoint in the violas and first horn from bar 57 and the further contrapuntal voice in the first trumpet from bar 70: these are not transposed along with the main theme, but retain their structural relation to the ground bass.

"Die Schöpfung"

♩ = 101

28
Hrn. 1
Bsn. - Vla.
Vc. - Cb.
pp

35
Fl. 1, 2
Ob. 1, 2
Cl. 1, 2
Tpt.
Tbn.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Hrn. 1
Bsn. - Vla.
Vc. - Cb.
ff

43
Hrn. 1
Bsn. - Vla.
Vc. - Cb.
mp

49
Fl. 1, 2
Ob. 1, 2
Cl. 1, 2
Bsn. 1, 2
Tpt.
Tbn.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Hrn. 1
Bsn. - Vla.
Vc. - Cb.
ff

Example 4: Roelof Temmingh *Kantorium, Part I*, bars 28-55.
 Permission to use this example was obtained from Liezl-Maret Jacobs.

Fl. 1, 2
 Obs. 1, 2
 Cl. 1, 2
 Bsn. 1, 2
 Hrn. 1, 2
 Tpt. 1, 2
 Vla.
 Vcl.
 Cb.



Fl. 1, 2
 Obs. 1, 2
 Cl. 1, 2
 Bsn. 1, 2
 Hrn. 1, 2
 Tpt. 1, 2
 Tbn. 1, 2
 Vln. I
 Vln. II
 Vla.
 Vcl.
 Cb.

Example 5: Roelof Temmingh *Kantorium, Part I*, bars 56-79.
 Permission to use this example was obtained from Liezl-Maret Jacobs.

*Example 5 (cont.): Roelof Temmingh Kantorium, Part I, bars 56-79.
Permission to use this example was obtained from Liezl-Maret Jacobs.*

Another interesting feature is the brief motive that is inserted between the various entries of the theme. In bar 39 it is a single F sharp (to be played fortissimo) spread over the entire range of the orchestra, followed by a sustained dissonant chord in the higher woodwinds (to be played piano). When it appears again in bar 54, a B is added to precede the F sharp, turning it into a two-note motive. In subsequent appearances (bars 67, 80, 92) an additional note is added each time before and/or after the F sharp, until it is made up of six notes at its last appearance in bar 105 (with the F sharp as the only pitch present in each of the occurrences). The key to understanding this cumulative extension of the motive can be found in Genesis 1, where the respective days of creation are literally numbered right to the end of the sixth day. This is one of the rare cases of number symbolism in Temmingh's music.

*Example 6: Roelof Temmingh Kantorium, Part I,
reduction of bars 39, 54, 67, 80, 92-93, 105-106.
Permission to use this example was obtained from Liezl-Maret Jacobs.*

How does one interpret this elaborate musical structure? On the one hand it is similar to a passacaglia, with a ground bass being repeated several times against ever-varying and newly-invented voices, on the other it has the characteristics of a fugue exposition, where a clearly recognisable theme is presented six times. But the fact that the theme is constantly varied and imitates the previous entry at seemingly random intervals against an untransposed bass line makes this a rather atypical fugue exposition. What this suggests is, in my opinion, a representation of creation by means of an elaborate musical analogy (instead of a painting in tones). The constantly changing character of the theme and its unpredictable entry notes would then be analogous to the inconceivable diversity of God's creation in the course of six days, while - and here I may be overstretching my interpretation - the fact that the variations can be traced back to an initial theme could be seen as analogous to an evolutionary process. The gradual addition of contrapuntal voices, cumulatively thickening the texture of the music, would be analogous to the world getting fuller and fuller with all kinds of plants, animals and humans, culminating in an orchestral tutti towards the end of the sixth presentation of the theme. Furthermore, the ground bass would then represent the continuous creative force of God as the common denominator present in all the diversity of nature.²⁵ The subsequent chorus, based on verses from Psalm 104, is a most appropriate continuation of what can only be described as a magnificent musical representation of Genesis 1: "Herr, wie sind deine Werke so groß und viel! Du hast sie alle weise geordnet, und die Erde ist voll deiner Güter."²⁶

The setting to music of the beatitudes was already described as representing one of the climaxes of the work as a whole (section 21).²⁷ The beatitudes from Christ's Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-11) are presented in conjunction with a passage from Luther's treatise "On the Freedom of a Christian" in an ingenious formal structure. The passage from Luther, sung in unison by the four soloists, is framed on both sides

²⁵ Viljoen and Viljoen suggest another interpretation: "The metaphor suggested in this instance is that of the centuries-old image of God as 'clock-maker'" (2009:58). The lack of a strictly "mechanical" or predictable structure in this section (like in a conventional fugue) would, in my opinion, be an argument against this metaphor.

²⁶ O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all: the earth is full of your creatures (Psalm 104:24).

²⁷ It may be of interest to the reader that the recording of this section from *Kantorium* was selected to be played just before the commencement of the memorial service for Temmingh in the Moederkerk, Stellenbosch on 12 May 2012, a week after he had passed away. To me it was a moment of great poignancy.

by four each of the eight beatitudes. The latter, in turn, are presented as a dialogue between the bass soloist on the one hand (for example: “Selig sind, die da geistlich arm sind ...”²⁸) and a duet between the solo soprano and alto on the other (“... denn ihrer ist das Himmelreich”²⁹). To maintain musical consistency while accommodating differing words the eight pairs of phrases are thematic variations of one another. Besides, they are presented on successively different pitches so as to bring about a rise and fall of the musical tension curve. For example: the pitches on which the first four bass phrases enter are B (b. 271), C (b. 278), D flat (b. 286), B (b. 294) respectively. The four phrase pairs after the Luther citation are a varied repetition of this structure, except that the final, much altered bass entry is on A (b. 336).

Example 7: Roelof Temmingh Kantorium, Part II, bars 271-277.

Permission to use this example was obtained from Liezl-Maret Jacobs.

In addition to the apposite way in which the composer captures the melodic inflection of these celebrated words, it is the striking harmonic profile that provides the phrase pairs with their profound expressive impact. This is achieved by placing unrelated

²⁸ Blessed are the poor in spirit, ... (Matthew 5:3).

²⁹ ... for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3).

tonal chords in direct proximity to one another, while being attentive to convincing voice leading. It is a harmonic language that the composer had made his own ever since his rediscovery of tonality (see the biographical paragraphs above as well as his opera programme notes)³⁰ and is used to frequent and good effect in *Kantorium*.³¹ In this particular example the notes B-B-B flat-A-C-C-G-A-B-F sharp-F natural in the bass voice are set to various inversions of the triads (or chords without a major or minor third) G sharp minor (b. 2711)-B minor (b. 2714)-G minor (b. 2721)-F augmented (b. 2724)-C major (b. 2726)-G sharp major (b. 2731)-G minor enharmonic (b. 2735)-D major (b. 2736)-E minor (b. 2741)-D major (b. 2744)-D minor (b. 2751). The parallel voice leading in this chord progression contributes decisively to the particular effect of the passage. The answering phrase in the soprano and alto duet responds to this statement with a consistent series of parallel major thirds. The subtle orchestration serves to double the voice leading.

CONCLUSION

It is difficult to comment definitively on the position of Roelof Temmingh's *Kantorium* within the canon of South African art music. On the one hand it belongs to the rare category of works that have been recognised for their artistic value by the adjudicators of the Helgaard Steyn Prize, the most prestigious award available to a South African composer. On the other hand, the work's very limited dissemination has prevented its wider reception thus far: it is in a foreign language, its score has not been published, it has only been performed once - in a foreign country - and no recording of the music is available in the public domain. As a consequence, *Kantorium* is likely to remain a largely unknown and inaccessible work for the foreseeable future, a work that was composed for circumstances elsewhere, speaks to a foreign audience and therefore does not really concern us.

However, for those very reasons *Kantorium* represents an indictment of the state of musical culture in South Africa. Not only is it a sad fact that the work has not yet received a local performance and an opportunity for local exposure; it is also an indictment of the state of musical awareness especially in the religious establishment

³⁰ His *Sonata for Violin and Piano* and *Himne* are particularly pertinent examples.

³¹ For example: the extraordinary impact of the first section of the work, where the bass soloist sings the words "Am Anfang schuf Gott Himmel und Erde" (In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth; Genesis 1:1), rests largely on this harmonic technique.

that a work of this kind could not have been commissioned in South Africa.³² If what is stated by Viljoen and Viljoen is correct, *Kantorium* is also an indictment of the state of the local musical/musicological discourse. They deem it important to point out that the decision of the Helgaard Steyn panel of adjudicators to honour the work represented an unlikely outcome:

It is therefore all the more remarkable that, as an example of what might be regarded within the present musicological milieu as transcendent – and thus (presumably) “politically incorrect” – art, the panel of adjudicators unanimously agreed to award Temmingh the Helgaard Steyn prize (Viljoen & Viljoen, 2009:52).

If it is correct that the award was made despite the work’s classification as “(presumably) ‘politically incorrect’ [...] art”, then it means that criteria are creeping into value judgements of South African music that are not only inappropriate, but also irrelevant to a work like this, and which takes courage to ignore. The value of *Kantorium* does not stand or fall by criteria such as political correctness or incorrectness. Applying such criteria would turn the clock back to the intellectual climate of a previous era in South Africa or to circumstances like the Düsseldorf exhibition of degenerate music in Nazi Germany. Nor is it possible to understand why it should be disadvantageous for a work to be regarded as “transcendent” within the “present musicological milieu” in South Africa, and, even worse, why transcendent music should be regarded as “politically incorrect”. If that is so, then the fault does not lie with the work but with the “musicological milieu”.

Hopefully, the present article, together with the one by Viljoen and Viljoen, will have the effect of opening up the discussion on one of the most profound works to have been written by a South African composer.



³² One is perhaps reminded here of Christ’s condemnation of the religious establishment of his time (section 19). This may have been the reason why Temmingh incorporated this passage from Matthew 23 into his work in the first place. Those who knew the composer well will remember his critical stance against the religious (and intellectual) establishment of his own time.

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