2017

Movement I from *Lamentationes*

Timothy W. McDunn

*Illinois Wesleyan University*, tmcdunn@iwu.edu

---

**Recommended Citation**

McDunn, Timothy W. (2016) "Movement I from *Lamentationes*," *CrissCross*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 1 , Article 8.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/crisscross/vol4/iss1/8

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by The Ames Library, the Andrew W. Mellon Center for Curricular and Faculty Development, the Office of the Provost and the Office of the President. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digital Commons @ IWU by the editors of CrissCross at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.
Mvt. I from Lamentationes
Timothy W. McDunn
I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. David Vayo, Dr. Nancy Sultan, and Dr. Amanda Coles for their tutorship in music composition and philology respectively. I would not have been able to write this piece without the understanding of music and literature that I've gained from studying with them. A special thanks also to Dr. Vayo for reviewing my drafts.
On setting the text

This piece is a setting of the first poem in the book of 'êkâh from the Hebrew Bible (the book of Lamentations in the Christian Old Testament). Setting the text in its original language has had two primary advantages: (1) it preserved euphony and other poetic subtleties and (2) it left the poetry's original cultural context intact. Both of these advantages can be illustrated by the opening lines of the poem:

'êkâh yâšebah bâdâd hâ 'îr rabâti ‘âm
hâyetah ke‘âlmânâh rabâqi bâgôwyîm
sârâti bâmêdinôt hâyetâh lâmâs:

"Alas, how lonely sits the city [once] full of people / How like a widow she has become [once] great among (heathen) nations / The ruler among provinces has become a tributary."

As my transliteration shows, these lines are very euphonic in the original language. Aside from its aesthetic appeal, the use of euphony also carries particular meaning that would be lost in translation: the lines are almost entirely comprised of the vowel sounds ê and â, which call to mind the first word of the verse, êkâh, "alas," a word of lament. This association gives the Hebrew poetry a sound that the original culture would have perceived as inherently disconsolate. The meter used also helps to create this effect. The so-called "lament meter" consists of two phrases known as cola; the first colon is generally longer than the second to give each line an asymmetric, staggering feel. Due to its frequent usage in funeral dirges, lament meter would have carried a distinct pathos. In this way both euphony and rhythm hold important meaning that would be lost in an English translation.

These and many other features that I discovered through both primary-source analysis and secondary scholarship play a major role in the way I set the text. The way vowel sounds for entire sections are derived from individual words inspires the method I use to design harmonic progressions; employing a variety of techniques, I derive every chord in one way or another from the first five chords of the piece. This, along with the uneven phrasing I use (imitating lament meter), works to create a musical parallel to the sound of the spoken text. My intention is to emphasize the rhetorical force of the euphony and rhythm.

Another cultural element that pervades the poem (also apparent from the opening lines) is the extended metaphor that compares the city of Jerusalem to a widow. Based on the way it is used in other contexts, it is clear that the Hebrew word âlmânâh carries connotations of helplessness and weakness that are not preserved by the English rendering, "widow." In modern, English-speaking society women are more independent than they were in early sixth-century Hebrew society, with the consequence that the English word "widow" doesn't conjure the same image of desperation that is associated with the word âlmânâh in Biblical Hebrew. Using the Hebrew text thus preserves the meaning of the metaphor. In my composition, I translate the pervasive widow metaphor into a harmonic motif that conveys the same pathos in the form of music. My musical "widow motif" is found at the first appearance of the word âlmânâh and recurs throughout the piece in order to underscore the theme of helplessness.
I use harmonic rhetoric to imitate several other features of the text. One of them is the so-called "tragic reversal," a device illustrated by the lines cited above, where a reversal of fortune is expressed through the contrast between the first colon and the second colon of a given line. I imitate this device by using contrasting harmonies for the two parts of the line. For example, in the first line I use dark minor chords to set the first colon and a bright, unrelated major chord to set the second colon.

Finally, I imitate the essential structural device of the poem as well: the Hebrew acrostic. By beginning each three-line verse with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet, the poet methodically addresses every facet of grief "A through Z," as it were. I imitate this structural device by moving through every possible key area in a controlled order throughout the piece.

Through all of these rhetorical techniques, my intention has been to create a musical work that imitates the pathos, logos, and ethos of the Hebrew poetry. The end result is a composition that, I hope, brings back to life a text written in a language that has been dead for millennia. The work seeks to translate the poetry of 'êkâh directly from Classical Hebrew into a modern idiom of Western music, accessible to contemporary audiences.

Bibliography


Hebrew Pronunciation

Scholars do not know with any precision how Biblical Hebrew would have been pronounced. The following guide is only an approximation, and reasonable liberties may be taken for the sake of intonation or euphony.

Vowels

A vowel without a diacritical mark is **short**:
- a as in *mat*
- e as in *pet*
- i as in *pin*
- u as in *shut*

A vowel with either of the two diacritical marks is **long**:
- ā as in *father*
- ē as in *they*
- ī as in *machine*
- ō as in *phone*

- ê is the same as ē but held a bit longer
- ī is the same as ī but held a bit longer
- ō is the same as ō but held a bit longer
- ŭ as in *rude*

Vowels written in superscript are known as "half syllables." They make the same sounds as other vowels, but they are held for half as long.

Examples: a e o
Consonants

A consonant without a diacritical mark is soft. A consonant with a diacritical mark is hard.

- **b** pronounced "v" as in *vent*
  - ᄜ as in *boy*
- **d** pronounced as a vocal "th" as in *the*
  - ᄝ as in *dog*
- **g** a slight throaty sound
  - ᄘ as in *good*
- **h** as in *hat*
  - ᄞ a similar sound but further back in the throat
- **k** similar to ᄞ but a "k" sound in the back of the throat
  - ᄝ as in *kick*
  - ᄞ pronounced "q" as in *bouquet*
- **l** as in *like*
- **m** as in *man*
- **n** as in *new*
- **p** pronounced "ph" as in *philosophy*
  - ᄞ as in *pan*
- **r** a rolled "r"
- **ṣ** as in *sorry*
  - ᄞ pronounced "sh" as in *she*
  - ᄛ pronounced "ts" as in *pets*
- **t** pronounced "th" as in *thanks*
  - ᄞ as in *ten*
- **w** as in *waiter*
- **y** as in *yes*
- **z** as in *zoo*

- ‘ a rough breathing, pronounced as a harsh guttural sound from the back of the throat
- * as soft breathing, pronounced as a brief silence between vowels
On intonation

This piece is meant to be sung with pure tuning (as opposed to equal temperament). Generally speaking, each interval should tend to be as “simple” as possible; it should be a composite of the smallest possible number of pure fifths and pure major thirds. For example, one should assume by default that an ascending major second is made up of two ascending fifths rather than two descending fifths plus an ascending major third. Exceptions to this general rule of thumb occur when a larger passage becomes much simpler overall by making an individual interval more complex.

I have used accidentals with as much precision as possible to express this functional method of intonation; however, short of adopting a new notation system, there is no practical way to indicate the tuning fully in the score. Performers are invited to study the attached MIDI sound file for reference while making informed, intuitive decisions as an ensemble.
SDG
Lamentationes

Timothy W. McDunn

Adagio **ppp** con direzione ma non cresc.

SOPRANO

[Music notation]

ALTO

[Music notation]

Bass Drum

[Music notation]

**ppp** un suono vivo ma senza cresc.

5

[SOPRANO]

[SOPRANO]

[A Alto]

[A Alto]

[B D Bass Drum]

[B D Bass Drum]
ס.

ראטי בָּמֶּדֶּנֶּד הָיְּטָהָּ לָמַּס: מַבָּּקָּוָּכָּה בָּּכָּה

א.

ראטי בָּמֶּדֶּנֶּד הָיְּטָהָּ לָמַּס: מַבָּּקָּוָּכָּה בָּּכָּה

ת.ט

לְלַי-לָה וּדוּזְּמֶּדֶּזָּזְּבָּּשׁ עַל לֶהָּוָּאָהָּ ֑֗נִּלֶּהָּ מַמֶּנֶּהָּ מֵמַּיְּלָּכָּל ʼוּהָוָּא

ב.ד

לְלַי-לָה וּדוּזְּמֶּדֶּזָּזְּבָּּשׁ עַל לֶהָּוָּאָהָּ ֑֗נִּלֶּהָּ מַמֶּנֶּהָּ מֵמַּיְּלָּכָּל ʼוּהָוָּא

ת.ט

ʼוּהָוָּא
S.

hā-le-kū še-bi lip nê šär: m____ wā-yē-še’ mi-

A.

hā-le-kū še- bi lip nê šär: m____ wā-yē-še’ mi-

T.

lip nê šär: m____

to triangle beater

B. D.

n____ pp

https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/crisscross/vol4/iss1/8
batisyan m kol hada-rāhh hā-yū sā-rey-hā keʾā-yā-līm

batisyan m kol hada-rāhh hā-yū sā-rey-hā keʾā-yā-līm

batisyan m kol hada-rāhh hā-yū sā-rey-hā keʾā-yā-līm

hada-rāhh
McDunn: Movement I from Lamentations
A.

T.

B.

T. t. to tam-tam beater

B. D.
mah-mudéy-hā 'ašer hā-yū mî-mê ke-dem bi-mê pôl 'a-mâhh bê-yad-

...p...

mp dim.
McDunn: Movement I from Lamentationes
CrissCross, Vol. 4 [2016], Iss. 1, Art. 8

https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/crisscross/vol4/iss1/8
McDunn: Movement I from Lamentationes

Published by Digital Commons @ IWU, 2016
קִי רָעָתָה גֹּיִם בַּע’ מִקְדָּשָׁה לֹּו יַבּוּ’ּ

רָעָתָה גֹּיִם בַּע’ מִקְדָּשָׁה ‘א-שֶׁר שְׁוְיִתָה

קִי רָעָתָה גֹּיִם בַּע’ מִקְדָּשָׁה ‘א-שֶׁר שְׁוְיִיתָּה לֹּו יַבּוּ’

קִי רָעָתָה גֹּיִם בַּע’ מִקְדָּשָׁה ‘א-שֶׁר שְׁוְיִיתָּה لֹּו יַבּוּ’
178

\[ \text{ba-kkā-hāl lāk ā kol ‘a-māhh ne-‘i-nā-ḥīm} \]

\[ \text{p cresc. poco a poco} \]

\[ \text{kol ‘a-māhh mā-bāk-kāhāl lāk ā kol ‘a-māhh ne-‘i-nā-ḥīm} \]

\[ \text{p cresc. poco a poco} \]

\[ \text{ba-kkā-hāl lāk ā kol ‘a-māhh ne-‘i-nā-ḥīm} \]

\[ \text{p cresc. poco a poco} \]
McDunn: Movement I from Lamentationes
lay τςι-βανι ʿα-hower ṉτα-να-νι ʾῳ-μē-μαḥ ʾo-ʾiyyoṃ ʾdā-ʾwāḥ:

ʿa-hower ʾῳ-μē-μαḥ ʾo-ʾiyyoṃ ʾdā-ʾwāḥ:

lay τςι-βανι ʿα-hower ṉτα-να-νι ʾῳ-μē-μαḥ ʾo-ʾiyyoṃ ʾdā-ʾwāḥ:

lay τςι-βανι ʿα-hower ṉτα-να-νι ʾ,epi-μē-μαḥ ʾo-ʾiyyoṃ ʾdā-ʾwāḥ:

lay τςι-βανi ʿα-hower ṉτα-να-νi ʾ,epi-μē-μaḥ ʾo-ʾiyyoṃ ʾdā-ʾwāḥ:
lû ‘al ša-wwâ’-rî hi-ke-šîl ki-ḥî
nê-tâ-na-nî ū-do-nây bî-

lû ‘al ša-wwâ’-rî hi-ke-šîl ki-ḥî
nê-tâ-na-nî ū-do-nây bî-

lû ‘al ša-wwâ’-rî hi-ke-šîl ki-ḥî
nê-tâ-na-nî ū-do-nây bî-

lû ‘al ša-wwâ’-rî hi-ke-šîl ki-ḥî
nê-tâ-na-nî ū-do-nây bî-

accel.  ————-

p cresc.  ————

p cresc.  ————

p cresc.  ————

p cresc.  ————

p cresc.  ————

p cresc.  ————

p cresc.  ————

p cresc.  ————

p cresc.  ————

p cresc.  ————

p cresc.  ————

p cresc.  ————

p cresc.  ————

p cresc.  ————

p cresc.  ————

p cresc.  ————

mp ————

pp ————

https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/crisscross/vol4/iss1/8
ד' ל' ו- קלם: סיילאה קול 'א-בִיראי \*ו-דנָי_ בֶכֶּכי-רֶז

dê lo’ ū- kal kûm: si-llâh kol ’a- bî- ray ’u-donây_ be-ki-rê

Published by Digital Commons @ IWU, 2016
rak 'a-di-nāy li-bē-tū-lat bat yē-hū-dāh: 'al 'ē-lleh 'a-nī bō-kī-yāh 'ē-

rak 'a-di-nāy li-bē-tū-lat bat yē-hū-dāh: 'al 'ē-lleh 'a-nī bō-kī-yāh 'ē-

rak 'a-di-nāy li-bē-tū-lat bat yē-hū-dāh: 'al 'ē-lleh

rak 'a-di-nāy li-bē-tū-lat bat yē-hū-dāh: 'al 'ē-lleh

rak 'a-di-nāy li-bē-tū-lat bat yē-hū-dāh: 'al 'ē-lleh

rak 'a-di-nāy li-bē-tū-lat bat yē-hū-dāh: 'al 'ē-lleh

rak 'a-di-nāy li-bē-tū-lat bat yē-hū-dāh: 'al 'ē-lleh

rak 'a-di-nāy li-bē-tū-lat bat yē-hū-dāh: 'al 'ē-lleh

with triangle beater to tam-tam beater

Published by Digital Commons @ IWU, 2016
ni ‘è-nil yorë-däh mmayim m__ ki rā-hāk mi mene-mē-nan-
i ‘è-nil yorë-däh mmayim m__ ki rā-hāk mi mene-mē-nan-
i ‘è-nil yorë-däh mmayim m__ ki rā-hāk mi mene-mē-nan-
i ‘è-nil yorë-däh mmayim m__ ki rā-hāk mi mene-mē-nan-
i ‘è-nil yorë-däh mmayim m__ ki rā-hāk mi mene-mē-nan-
i ‘è-nil yorë-däh mmayim m__ ki rā-hāk mi mene-mē-nan-
i ‘è-nil yorë-däh mmayim m__ ki rā-hāk mi mene-mē-nan-
i ‘è-nil yorë-däh mmayim m__ ki rā-hāk mi mene-mē-nan-

https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/crisscross/vol4/iss1/8
bar 'ô-yêb: pê-re-sâh si-ôn bê-yâ-dey-hâ 'ên me-na-hêm lâhh si-

bar 'ô-yêb: pê-re-sâh si-ôn bê-yâ-dey-hâ 'ên me-na-hêm lâhh

bar 'ô-yêb: pê-re-sâh si-ôn bê-yâ-dey-hâ 'ên me-na-hêm lâhh

bar 'ô-yêb: pê-re-sâh si-ôn bê-yâ-dey-hâ 'ên me-na-hêm lâhh

bar 'ô-yêb: pê-re-sâh si-ôn bê-yâ-dey-hâ 'ên me-na-hêm lâhh si-

bar 'ô-yêb: pê-re-sâh si-ôn bê-yâ-dey-hâ 'ên me-na-hêm lâhh

bar 'ô-yêb: pê-re-sâh si-ôn bê-yâ-dey-hâ 'ên me-na-hêm lâhh

bar 'ô-yêb: pê-re-sâh si-ôn bê-yâ-dey-hâ 'ên me-na-hêm lâhh

bar 'ô-yêb: pê-re-sâh si-ôn bê-yâ-dey-hâ 'ên me-na-hêm lâhh
McDunn: Movement I from Lamentationes

wwäh ye-hā-wāḥ le-ya’-kob se-bi-bāyn sā- rāyn
hā-ye- tāh ye- rū-sā-

S.

A.

T.

B.

wwäh ye-hā-wāḥ le-ya’-kob se-bi-bāyn sā- rāyn
hā-ye- tāh ye- rū-sā-

Ye-hā-wāḥ le-ya’-kob se-bi-bāyn sā- rāyn
hā-ye- tāh ye- rū-sā-

wwäh ye-hā-wāḥ le-ya’-kob se-bi-bāyn sā- rāyn
hā-ye- tāh ye- rū-sā-

Published by Digital Commons @ IWU, 2016
McDunn: Movement I from Lamentationes

Published by Digital Commons @ IWU, 2016

55
McDunn: Movement I from Lamentationes

S. 2 + 3  
ppp cresc.  
kél lā-mō wē-yā - šī-bū 'et na-pē-šām: m__ re-'ēh yē-h-wāh kī šar  
ppp cresc.  
kél lā-mō wē-yā - šī-bū 'et na-pē-šām: m__ re-'ēh yē-h-wāh kī šar  
ppp cresc.  
kél lā-mō wē-yā - šī-bū 'et na-pē-šām: m__ re-'ēh yē-h-wāh kī šar  

A.  
ppp  

T. t.  

309  
ppp  

li mē-ay hē-mar-mā-ru ne-hē-pak li-bī bē-kīr-bī kī mā-rō mā-ri-tū mi-  
p dim.  
li mē-ay hē-mar-mā-ru ne-hē-pak li-bī bē-kīr-bī kī mā-rō mā-ri-tū mi-  
p dim.  
li mē-ay hē-mar-mā-ru ne-hē-pak li-bī bē-kīr-bī kī mā-rō mā-ri-tū mi-  
p dim.  
li mē-ay hē-mar-mā-ru ne-hē-pak li-bī bē-kīr-bī kī mā-rō mā-ri-tū mi-
 Moines mosso

हुश सिक-लाह हे-रेब बा-बा-यित का-म्मावे-त: m____ m____

हुश सिक-लाह हे-रेब बा-बा-यित का-म्मावे-त: m____

सिक-लाह हे-रेब बा-बा-यित
McDunn: Movement I from Lamentations

Published by Digital Commons @ IWU, 2016