

The Bible in Music: Old Testament

1. **Psalm 23.** "Reconstruction" of musical(?) notation in Biblical texts, by Suzanne Haik Vantoura. (*La musique de la bible révélée*. Harmonia Mundi CD 190989, 1976.)
 2. **Psalm 114: In exitu Israel/B'tset Yisrael.** Medieval Gregorian and Ashkenazi chants, showing similarity of melodic pattern but differences in performance practice between Roman Catholic and Jewish traditions of singing. (*The Sacred Bridge*. Boston Camerata, directed by Joel Cohen. Erato CD 2292-44513, 1990.) 7th cent. Latin/chant notation written down when writing music, some musical aspects could get lost
 3. **Psalm 114: Quand Israel hors d'Egypte sortit.** Metrical translation by Clement Marot (1496?-1544), musical setting by Claude Goudimel (1520-1572) from the Geneva Psalter, begun in 1532 to provide music for the reformed church in France. (*Psalms of the Reformation*. Ensemble Claude Goudimel, directed by Christine Morel. Naxos Early Music CD 8.553025, 1994.)
 4. **O Praise the Lord of Heaven.** A setting of Psalm 148 (c. 1794) for voices alone by early American composer William Billings (1746-1800). (*A Land of Pure Delight*. His Majestie's Clerkes, directed by Paul Hillier. Harmonia Mundi CD 907048, 1992.)
 - 5-6. **The Creation.** Recitative and chorus from Genesis 1:1-6. German text by Gottfried van Swieten, based on John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The oratorio was written in 1797-8 by Austrian composer Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809). (*Haydn: Die Schöpfung*. Berlin Philharmonic, directed by Herbert von Karajan. Deutsche Grammophon Galleria CD 435-077.)
- Raphael:* In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void. And darkness was upon the face of the deep.
- Chorus:* And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was Light.
7. **And God Created Great Whales.** Orchestral work from 1970 by Armenian-born American composer Alan Hovhaness (b. 1911) based on Genesis 1. The music includes tape-recorded songs by the humpbacked whale. (*Alan Hovhaness: Mysterious Mountain*. Seattle Symphony, directed by Gerard Schwarz. Delos CD DE 3157, 1994.) time before man created
 8. **Sleep, Adam, Sleep.** Sacred song (1683) by English composer Henry Purcell (1659?-1695), set in rhymed couplets that freely embroider on Genesis 2. (*Sweeter than Roses: Purcell Songs*. Drew Minter, countertenor. Harmonia Mundi CD 907035, 1992.)
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| <p>Sleep, Adam, sleep, and take thy rest,
 Let no sad thought possess thy breast,
 But when thou wak'st, look up and see
 What thy creator hath done for thee.
 A creature from thy side is ta'en,
 Who 'til thou wak'st she wants a name.</p> | <p>Flesh of thy flesh, bone of thy bone,
 A mate most fit for thee alone.
 Wake, Adam, wake, to embrace thy bride
 Who is newly risen from thy side,
 But in the midst of thy delights beware,
 Lest her enticements prove thy snare.</p> |
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9. **Adam in the Garden Pickin' up Leaves.** Georgia Sea Island "shout" performed by Willis Proctor and friends, recorded in 1959 on Saint Simon's Island, GA. (*Southern Journey*, vol. 12: *Georgia Sea Islands*, vol. 12, Rounder CD 1712, 1998.) was in his 80s when this was recorded

- 10-11. **The Flood.** Two excerpts from a "dance drama" written for CBS Television in 1962, by Russian-born American composer Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971). Based on Genesis 6-7, this excerpt depicts the construction of the ark and the cataloguing of the animals. The text is from the medieval York and Chester cycles of mystery plays. (*Stravinsky: The Flood*. London Sinfonietta, directed by Oliver Knussen. Deutsche Grammophon CD 447068, 1995.)

Noah: The Lord bade that I should bring
Of beasts and fowls that sing
Of every kind a pair.

Caller: Here are lions, leopards in,
Horses, mares, oxen, swine,
Goats, calves, sheep and kine.
Camels, asses, men may find,
Buck, doe, hart and hind,
Beasts of all manner and kind.
Take here cats and dogs, too,
Otter, fox, fulmart, also,
Hares, hopping gaily, can go.
And here are bears, wolves set,
Apes, owls, marmoset,
Weasels, squirrels and ferret.
Still more beasts are in this house:
Here cats make it full carouse--
Here a rat, there a mouse.
Here are fowls large and small...
Herons, cranes thin and tall,
Swans, peackocks, together all.
Here are cocks, kites, crows,
Rooks, ravens, many rows,
Ducks, curlews, and Heaven knows.
Here are doves, digs, drakes,
Redshanks running through the lakes,
And each fowl that a song makes.

12. **Job.** Oratorio (1997) by English composer Peter Maxwell Davies (b. 1934) based on Stephen Mitchell's modern translation (Job 38). The excerpt is from the final scene, when the voice of the Unnamable answers Job out of the whirlwind. (*Peter Maxwell Davies: Job*. CBC Vancouver Orchestra, directed by the composer. Collins Classics CD 15162, 1997.)

Who is this whose ignorant words
 smear my design with darkness?
Stand up now like a man;
 I will question you; please, instruct me.

Do you dare to deny my judgement?
 Am I wrong because you are right?
Where were you when I planned the earth?
 Tell me, if you are so wise.

- 13-16. Jephtha.** Oratorio (1752) based on Jephtha's rash vow that if God allows his army to win the battle, he will sacrifice the first living thing to greet him on returning home (Judges 11), by German composer George Frederick Handel (1685-1759). This choral excerpt ruminates on the difficulty of understanding the ways of God. The concluding "maxim" is not from the Bible, but from Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* (1734). (*Handel: Jephtha*. English Baroque Soloists, directed by John Eliot Gardiner. Philips Classics CD, 1989.)

How dark, O Lord, are thy decrees!
All hid from mortal sight!
All our joys to sorrow turning,
And our triumphs into mourning,
As the night succeeds the day.
No certain bliss, no solid peace,
We mortals know on earth below.
Yet on this maxim still obey, whatever is, is right!

- 17. Belshazzar's Feast.** Oratorio (1931) by English composer William Walton (1902-1983), based on Daniel 5. The excerpt is a description of Belshazzar's great pagan celebration, complete with drunken revels and worship of strange idols. (*Walton: Belshazzar's Feast*. London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra, directed by Andre Previn. EMI CD 764723, 1986).

Thus in Babylon the mighty city
Belshazzar the King made a great feast,
Made a feast to a thousand of his lords,
And drank wine before the thousand.
Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine,
Commanded us to bring the gold and silver vessels
That his princes, his wives, and his concubines
Might rejoice and drink therein.
After they had praised their strange gods,
The idols and the devils,
False gods who can neither see nor hear,
Called they for the timbrel and the pleasant harp
To extol the glory of the King.
Then they pledged the King before the people.
Crying, Thou, O king, art King of Kings;
O King, live for ever...

- 18. Elijah.** Oratorio (1846) based on I Kings 18, by Austrian composer Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), grandson of famous Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn. The text for this excerpt (actually from Psalm 121) reemphasizes Elijah's faith that the God of Israel is ever-watchful, unlike the pagan god Baal, who could not be raised to action even by the most violent efforts of his priests. (*Mendelssohn: Elijah*. Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, directed by Paul Daniel. London CD 455688, 1997.)

He, watching over Israel, slumbers not nor sleeps.
Shouldst thou, walking in grief, anguish, He will quicken thee.

