

AN AMERICAN TRADITION

**The Sacred and Secular Music
of
Richard Wayne Dirksen**

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I. Introduction

The worldwide Anglican Communion is a collection of National Churches with historical roots in the Church of England and in union with the Archbishop of Canterbury. Anglicanism is often defined by a number of characteristics that compose a type of “Anglican ethos” or fundamental character.¹ One of the most notable characteristics is the rich musical tradition. In his history of the development of this ethos, the Anglican cleric Frederick Quinn stated that “music remained one of the major contributors to creating a distinctly Anglican ethos” into the twentieth century.² This is not a tradition of music that evolved in a linear way, but as Quinn says, “more like tracing the strands of a tapestry.”³ The Church of England experienced a great revival of sacred music from the mid nineteenth century forward. Choral establishments were bolstered, musical standards raised, and new compositions enriched Anglican liturgies with beauty, especially in the great Cathedrals and Collegiate Chapels and Churches. Composers such as Stanford, Vaughan-Williams, Britten, and Howells wrote music that has endured in Anglicanism and beyond.

During this same period in the United States, the Protestant Episcopal Church which is the American branch of the Anglican Communion, also experienced a building and development of programs at many churches including St. Thomas and St. John the Divine in New York City, Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, and the National Cathedral in Washington DC. These Anglican musical establishments were firmly rooted in the musical patrimony they inherited from the Church of England. However, they were no mere slavish copies of British choral

¹ Frederick Quinn, *To be a Pilgrim: The Anglican Ethos in History* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), 3. Hereafter called “Quinn TBP.”

² *Ibid.*, 251

³ *Ibid.*, 2.

establishments. Rooted in a tradition, they developed organically on these shores and produced a musical and liturgical heritage of their own – an American Tradition.

In Washington DC at the National Cathedral, built during the 20th century, the musical program was marked with incredible stability from the late 1930's to 1991 through the dynamic leadership of Paul Callaway and Richard Wayne Dirksen. These were crucial years for the development of the cathedral in building the physical fabric of the church building as well as developing the liturgical and wider programmatic aspects of the cathedral. Callaway and Dirksen gave their entire professional musical lives to enrich and develop what would become one of the leading programs in sacred music in the United States.

Purpose of this Work

Dirksen's entire musical life and compositional output is contextualized by the National Cathedral. During this time, he composed over 300 works both sacred and secular. In this treatise, I will argue that Dirksen, in his various positions at the National Cathedral, worked as a composer and performer within the wide gamut of styles in the American classical music world of his time while remaining firmly rooted in the tradition of Christian and Anglican sacred music throughout the centuries: a synchronic and diachronic reality. Much like the tapestry of Anglican ethos, the life and works of Dirksen are extensions of many musical threads woven together from the great works of Western Christianity and the contemporaneous works of American music in the 20th century. This treatise will try to and examine these individual threads as well as give an overview of the full tapestry of Dirksen.

I will place Dirksen in this musical and historical context in three ways. First, I will examine the connections between Dirksen's music and the physical construction of the Cathedral. Dirksen lived all of his professional life and composed the majority of his works during the

building of the National Cathedral. This is an historically informed structure designed in the gothic style of sacred architecture yet built during and incorporating ideas from the 20th century. The building itself has both synchronic and diachronic elements. Dirksen's music was often composed directly in response to the dedication of some new part of the cathedral. As the building evolved, so did the music program, and Dirksen claimed that the cathedral itself was the greatest influence on the music program. Second, I will show through his biography with specific examples how Dirksen and his compositions were affected by various musical influences. These included established musicians from the past such as Bach, Haydn, and Schubert. They also included contemporaneous composers such as Hindemith and Stravinsky, and American composers such as Sowerby, Rorem, Menotti, Hoiby, Bernstein, and Brubeck. The greatest musical influence on Dirksen was Paul Callaway who encouraged the development of sacred music by many contemporary American composers. Callaway also showed a great willingness to perform Dirksen's works at the National Cathedral. Dirksen's musical influences also represented a wide variety of genres from chant, polyphony, and chorales to jazz and musical theatre. Third, I will place Dirksen's music in the context of the 20th-century Episcopal Church in which he worked. Dirksen spent most of his professional life in the Episcopal Church producing music for its liturgies and concerts of sacred and secular music in its buildings. Many of Dirksen's compositions were a direct response to needs for these specific concerts and liturgies. This ecclesial context was a reformed liturgical tradition which was Protestant with Catholic elements, including the liturgical revisions of the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* and *The Hymnal 1982*.

Dirksen and a Philosophy of Cathedral Music

Dirksen's prime response to the music at the cathedral was almost always a practical one. Treatises on liturgical theory or even liturgical aesthetics did not interest him. He was a man of action and sought to provide great music rather than opine on it. However, towards the end of his life in remarks to the National Cathedral Association as well as in an interview with musicologist Steven Hendricks, he did offer some insight into his own philosophy of sacred music in general, and of music at the cathedral in particular.

Dirksen pointed out the Anglican Tradition of Men and Boys as something important to preserve.⁴ He claimed that the American Anglican tradition of sacred music was really established by T. Tertius Noble and Paul Callaway.⁵ Dirksen went on to state that this tradition was strong and should not change even if there were things such as liturgical reform. He called this a "language of immersion" and said that being immersed in the liturgy, the scripture, and the music from the tradition was of immense value. He saw the tangible fruit of this immersion when the choirboys would write him letters 25 years later thanking him for the experience of worship in this immersion of the tradition.⁶

With regard to the cathedral in particular, he said that the building had the ability to, "instill a mystical quietude with searching intimacy" as well as "the power to overwhelm and shake with emotion." In other words, the cathedral building per se had the power to instill a type of religious feeling within a person. Dirksen believed that the building was itself "perhaps the greatest influence over the cathedral music" and that as it grew, so did the music program.⁷

Calling the remarkable cathedral building "frozen music" he opined that this music frozen in

⁴ Unpublished remarks made for the National Cathedral Association, 28 September 2000. This marked the 93rd anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone. Cathedral Archives.

⁵ Hendricks 62. Noble was Callaway's teacher. Hendricks incorrectly lists Noble as being the music director of St. John the Divine in New York City. In fact, Noble was director at St. Thomas on Fifth Avenue.

⁶ Hendricks 63.

⁷ Unpublished remarks made for the National Cathedral Association, 28 September 2000.

stone demanded remarkable living music as well. As the building grew, so did the choir, so did the organ, and new instruments such as the carillon and ten bell peal were added. The music of the cathedral was not meant just for the liturgies either. It "flowed out of the transepts into summer concerts" as well as the many other cultural events in the cathedral. The music also washed over countless Americans coming to their nation's capital both to celebrate and to protest. He also opined as to the happy later inclusion of girls in the cathedral choir.⁸ He ended his musings by saying that music and cathedrals could never be "frozen" because the "love of God and song are too much in the human heart to be static."⁹ The music of the cathedral, and sacred music in general should never be a sort of museum piece, but because they resonate with the deepest human emotions, and because they are connected to the ground of all being, namely God, they will always be "living."

Dirksen noted that the worship of the cathedral was indeed "traditional" and people who worshiped there were immersed in this tradition. However, Dirksen also balanced that reality by saying "new and formidable forms of music were always admitted to the cathedral."¹⁰ Yang's research shows that between 1910 and 1996, there were over 147 works premiered at the cathedral, and that almost half were composed by Dirksen himself.¹¹ Hendricks reinforces this when he affirms that the vision of the Organist and Choirmasters of the cathedral has been to "make the cathedral a place that maintains the best of the Anglican musical tradition while inviting new and challenging musical enterprises to become part of the Cathedral's canon."¹² This immersion in tradition as well as a desire to respond to the tradition with fresh compositions

⁸ A choir of "men and girls" was founded in 1997, 98 years after the foundation of the choir of men and boys.

⁹ Remarks made for the National Cathedral Association, 28 September 2000. Cathedral Archives.

¹⁰ Hendricks 63.

¹¹ Yang 209-220. Also Hendricks 63.

¹² Hendricks 75.

were the hermeneutics of continuity in action during the tenure of Richard Wayne Dirksen at the National Cathedral and the primary focus of this treatise.

Chapter II. 1921-1942 - Initial Formation: Freeport and Peabody

Family Origins and First Musical Influences

Richard Wayne Dirksen was born on February 8, 1921 in Freeport, IL. He was the son of Richard Watson (known both as "Dick" and "Dugan")¹³ Dirksen and Maude Logemann Dirksen. Wayne Dirksen's earliest musical influences came from his parents, school teachers, and church choir director in his rural Illinois hometown. Both sides of his family came from the Freeport area. According the local newspaper, R. Watson and Maude Dirksen did not move into the town of Freeport until 1929 and before this in their marriage they lived many other places.¹⁴ Dirksen's sons were unaware of this movement and believed that the family had always lived in Freeport and that Dirksen was born in Freeport.¹⁵

Dirksen's father was an organ builder and founder of the Freeport Organ Company. This organ company was located in the shop behind the Dirksen home at 225 West Cleveland Street. The Dirksen family was a family of craftsmen of German descent. R. Watson's father, Richard Dietrich Dirksen, had helped build the Second Presbyterian Church of Freeport.¹⁶ They are descendants of the noted silversmith Gerriet Dirksen and believed to be distant cousins of the late Senator Everett Dirksen from Illinois.¹⁷

R Watson Dirksen developed the family skills of craftsman into those of an organ builder. In 1957 he built a portative organ for the cathedral in his shop. Later on, he worked for the Reuter Organ Company and with them he designed and fabricated the casework for another

¹³ His family members referred to him as Dugan, his peer group called him "Dick."

¹⁴ *Ocala Star-Banner* (Ocala, IL), 22 December 1969.

¹⁵ Richard Shaw Dirksen, (hereafter RSD), email exchange 4 June 2015.

¹⁶ *Freeport Journal-Standard* (Freeport, IL), 23 December 1969.

¹⁷ Geoffrey Dirksen (hereafter GD), interview by author, 9 November 2015, phone interview, Oakland, CA.

portable organ for the cathedral in the 1970's which is still in use today. It was from his father that Dirksen was first introduced to the organ and claims in his early life that, "there were always pipe organs about."¹⁸ By the time he was sixteen years old, Dirksen was good enough at the organ to play dedication recitals on the small organs his father built or rebuilt.¹⁹ There was also a three rank pipe organ located in their home in Freeport. His father had a microphone hookup between the home and a radio station in Chicago. Dirksen would from time to time play on the family organ the introduction to radio programs from this station.²⁰

Dirksen's mother was from a family of farmers. Maude Logemann was one of ten siblings and grew up on a farm near Freeport. The Logemanns loved baseball and while Dirksen was growing up, his own love for baseball developed with visits to the Logemann's farm. Maude's brother Phil Logemann was, according to family lore, a semi-professional baseball player for a farm team for the Cincinnati Reds.²¹ Dirksen always had a reputation himself as a good baseball player. Part of the lore at St. Albans²² School for Boys was that Dirksen had once thrown a baseball over the top of the apse of the Cathedral, although this was most likely a paper airplane, or at least this is what Dirksen wants us to remember.²³ Dirksen would use this baseball skill when he played many games building a rapport with the choir boys outside of rehearsal.

Other Musical Influences from Freeport

¹⁸ Dirksen catalog, 40.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ GD, interview and corroborated by MD, 15 April 2016. The frequency of these introductions to the radio program is unknown. The source for this came from Dirksen's mother Maude, who had a love of hyperbole.

²¹ Geoff interview.

²² By tradition, St. Albans school does not use the apostrophe s in its title.

²³ John Shenefield, TCA Summer 1991. There are two variants of this story. One is that Dirksen had thrown a tennis ball over the apse, the other is that he had thrown a paper airplane over the cathedral. Dirksen mentions the tale of the associate director throwing a paper airplane over the great choir in a collection of reminiscences called *Make a Joyful Noise: Alumni Notes on the Choir of the National Cathedral* which were compiled for The Choir Reunion on Friday 28 September 1990, the same day as the Festival Evensong honoring those who had contributed to the cathedral leading up to its dedication, 7.

Dirksen's mother was also a choir director, singer, and a pianist. Dirksen said that she was his earliest music teacher.²⁴ He also lists subsequent teachers in keyboard as Iva Swingly Wheat for piano²⁵ and a Eugene Nordgren as an organ teacher.²⁶

Karl Henry Kubitz was the director of music at the public schools in Freeport. He approached Dirksen in sixth grade to invite him to learn to play the bassoon for the junior high band.²⁷ The bassoon, a double reed instrument, is one of the most difficult wind instruments to play. However, Dirksen learned the instrument well enough to advance to the high school band during his eighth grade year and then proceeded to win several bassoon competitions in his high school years.²⁸ In his junior year, he became the assistant band director.²⁹ This would have been his first regular experience as a conductor. From the conductors vantage, he would have been able to hear the instrumentation in a more complete way and he would go on to orchestrate several of his own compositions in later years. Dirksen noted that the experience with Kubitz was to be very formative. He was a disciplinarian as well as a very good teacher. Dirksen claimed that Kubitz had the most influential role in his musical development up to that point.³⁰

Earliest Work in Church Music

Dirksen's mother and father were Presbyterians and both families had roots in Presbyterianism. Dirksen's Grandfather (RD) Dirksen had been an elder and had been the contractor to design and rebuild the second Presbyterian Church in Freeport after a devastating fire.³¹ Dirksen himself was baptized a Presbyterian. His mother also had a choir at one of the Presbyterian churches in Freeport. This would have been Dirksen's first introduction to Sacred

²⁴ Dirksen catalog, 40.

²⁵ Mrs. Wheat was the director of music at Grace Episcopal Church in Freeport.

²⁶ Dirksen catalog, 40.

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ RWD interview with researcher, 18 May 1999. In Hendricks, 49

²⁹ Dirksen catalog, 40.

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Karen Fyock, from a 7 April 1911 "clipping." Source unknown.

Music. However, Dirksen does not say much about this time with the Presbyterians except by way of finding something he liked better.

Dirksen recalled that during his youth he passed by Grace Episcopal Church in Freeport and the choir director, Mrs. Iva Swingley Wheat, yelled out to him, "Wayne, come on in," and Dirksen did. After going to their choir practice, he said that he found their music much more satisfying than the Presbyterian Church, so he stayed.³² Mrs. Wheat apparently had a great influence on a number of the young people in Freeport with regard to music. She also presided over a fairly advanced music program for a small town. A newspaper clipping from 1929 lists a number of works to be sung at the Midnight Eucharist at Grace with Mrs. Wheat at the organ. These include works by Tallis, Handel, and Gounod.³³ Grace Church had a boy choir from 1922-1940 and Dirksen became one of its members. This choir was first exclusively a choir of men and boys and were 40 voices when Mrs. Wheat became their director in 1930. By the mid 1930's, the choir became a "mixed" choir with boys as well as women. There was also a junior choral program or a training choir made up exclusively of boys.³⁴ This kind of "training choir" would be one of Dirksen's first assignments at the National Cathedral years later. The Freeport boys were paid 10 cents a week by Mrs. Wheat. Here Dirksen would have been exposed to organ and choral literature by often performed composers of Western sacred music. This kind of training with great choral literature on a child has a lasting effect and must have been a key aspect in the earliest parts of Dirksen's formation as a church musician. The Dirksen's kept a filial piety for Mrs. Wheat. Geoff Dirksen remembers the family every summer dutifully making

³² RWD interview with researcher, 18 May 1999. In Hendricks, 49. Hendricks incorrectly identifies the director at Grace Episcopal as "Iva Sweeny."

³³ *Freeport Journal-Standard* (Freeport, IL), 23 December 1929.

³⁴ *Freeport Journal-Standard* (Freeport, IL), 29 August 1958. Retirement notice of Mrs. Wheat. Don Isaac, phone interview with the author, 5 April 2016.

visits to Mrs. Wheat's house to visit this sweet old lady.³⁵ Rick Dirksen remembers the fondness that R. Watson and Maude held for Mrs. Wheat and remembers visiting her often when they returned to Freeport.³⁶

There are accounts of entire families getting involved with Grace Church through their boys participating in the choir. Mr. Don Isaac was invited by Mrs. Wheat to join the choir in 1935. He liked the music and the liturgical aspect of the church, so he stayed. Not only that, his entire family followed and became Episcopalians. Mrs. Wheat became his Godmother as well.³⁷ The Dirksen family seems to be one of these families evangelized through the musical program of Mrs. Wheat because the entire family became involved with Grace Episcopal before Wayne Dirksen was in high school. The details about the transition of the family from the Presbyterian Church to the Episcopal Church are not totally clear, but one can surmise that the pattern of Mrs. Wheat recruiting a boy to sing in the choir and then the parents getting involved as well would have worked for Dirksen. According to the Ocala newspaper, the Dirksen parents became members of Grace Episcopal in 1935.³⁸ Maude Dirksen, Wayne Dirksen's Mother, would later become known for her leadership as well as strong opinions in the life of Grace church.³⁹ This immersion in a church music program whose repertoire included some of the most common choral works of sacred music would have been foundational in Dirksen's formation.

Formation in the Catholic Church

³⁵ GD email conversation with the author, 12 April 2016.

³⁶ RSD email conversation with the author, 11 April 2016.

³⁷ "Looking back: Grace Episcopal Church cares for the community" Harriet Gustason, *Journal Standard* (Freeport Newspaper), 6 June 2010. Also Don and Peggy Isaac, phone interview with the author, 5 April 2016.

³⁸ *Ocala Star-Banner* (Ocala, IL), 22 December 1969.

³⁹ Peggy Isaac, phone interview with the author, 5 April 2016. Apparently these opinions were not limited to the church, RSD interview 14 April 2016.

Many Dirksen biographies, including his own in his annotated catalog, mention that during high school he held a job at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Freeport.⁴⁰ In addition to his formation in sacred music in a robust musical program at Grace Church, Dirksen was also formed in a Catholic Parish with a fulsome music program. At this time before the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic liturgy was the older form of the Roman liturgy or the Traditional Latin Mass. This liturgy requires a particular skill set to accompany because it often requires the organist to do quite a bit of improvising to fill in gaps when the choir is not singing. However, there is nothing in Dirksen's writings or correspondence which indicates he learned how to play for this form of the liturgy. Rick Dirksen does not remember his dad ever mentioning St. Joseph's to him.⁴¹ However, further study into the history of St. Joseph's is revealing.

St. Joseph's was founded in 1862 as a parish primarily for German immigrants. Before this, the Germans had worshiped in neighboring St. Mary's Parish. At St. Joseph's foundation, St. Mary's donated their reed organ to the new German church "due to their great interest in music."⁴² In 1904, this was replaced by a mechanical action instrument by Schulke of Milwaukee.⁴³ On major feasts, the choir and organ would be joined by a small chamber orchestra.⁴⁴ When hiring a new organist/choirmaster in 1905, the Pastor of St. Joseph's stipulated that the musical program must be in accord with *Tra le sollicitudini*, the Moto proprio issued by Pope St. Pius X in 1903. This included an elimination of operatic elements in sacred music as well as a broad use of Gregorian Chant.⁴⁵ Apparently, these reforms were somewhat unpopular in Freeport, but nonetheless, they were implemented. This included excluding women

⁴⁰ Dirksen Catalog, Hymnal Companion, etc.

⁴¹ RSD, interview with the author, 4 June 2015.

⁴² Paul Fry, *The Story of a Parish*, 2012, 4. Predominantly German parishes were known to have more of an interest in liturgical music than other parishes in the United States.

⁴³ Fry, 31.

⁴⁴ Fry, 8, 30.

⁴⁵ Fry 31.

from the liturgical choir.⁴⁶ At this time, a concert choir or type of Catholic Community Chorus of mixed voices was developed to give concerts from time to time.⁴⁷ This was very similar to the situation where Dirksen would later work at the National Cathedral. However, by the mid nineteen twenties, a mixed choir was again singing for liturgies at St. Joseph's.⁴⁸

Sr. Geraldine Demes OFM of the Joliet Franciscans was hired as organist and choir director of St. Joseph's in 1931 and worked there until 1959. With a background in piano, violin and organ performance, Sr. Geraldine had previously been a classroom teacher. With this background in education, Sr. Geraldine set about building a music program of high caliber which included apprenticing young people to play the organ. One of her pupils, Amelia Wiegand Scholz is listed as the organist from 1933-1978.⁴⁹

When Dirksen worked at St. Joseph's, his father had already had a relationship with the parish since 1929 when he took over the maintenance of the Schulke organ. The elder Dirksen was very admired by Fr. Berg, St. Joseph's Pastor, and thus he asked Dirksen's father to oversee, along with the Reuter organ firm, the electrification and expansion of the organ in 1958.⁵⁰ There is other evidence though that Dirksen did know something of the pre-vernacular liturgy of the Catholic Church. In a letter to his brother Gerriet, Dirksen writes in a joking and less formal style as brothers often do when talking to each other. He concludes the letter by saying "Dominus vobiscum" and then writes "et cum Spiritu[m] tuo...threeo...fouro..."⁵¹ This indicates

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Fry, 32.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Fry, 33.

⁵⁰ Fry, 44. Fry devotes three pages to the organ project in his history. This includes the background history of the Dirksen and Watson families in the Freeport area. Curiously, in no place does Fry mention Wayne Dirksen, who along with Gerriet the silversmith was the most famous of the family.

⁵¹ Richard Wayne Dirksen, Washington, DC, to Dugan, Maude, and Gerriet Dirksen, Freeport, 18 August 1942, from "Letters to Freeport: Jo and Wayne Dirksen's first years in Washington 1942-1943," transcribed and edited by Mark Dirksen (hereafter MD). Dirksen misspelled "Spiritu" by adding a final "m."

that Dirksen had at least heard and remembered the typical liturgical greeting and possibly had some familiarity with the Roman liturgy.⁵² Although he does not elaborate on his high school formation at St. Joseph's church, Dirksen was undoubtedly immersed in chant and sacred music in the Catholic tradition that would go on to influence his own compositions.

On the issue of high school church employment, the matter is complicated further by the printed announcement on the occasion of Dirksen's first appointment at the cathedral. In "The Cathedral Age," the newsletter for the National Cathedral, Dirksen's biography says that he was organist at St. Mary's Church in Freeport, IL where his mother was choirmaster.⁵³ However, both Mark and Rick Dirksen believe that this is incorrect information - especially the part about their grandmother. They never heard of their grandmother referred to as a "choirmaster"⁵⁴ at all much less at a Catholic church.⁵⁵

My own theory with regard to his high school employment was that Dirksen needed a job to make some extra money and he could play well, especially for a high school student. I believe that Sr. Geraldine, the longtime organist at St. Joseph's, may have hired Dirksen in an apprentice capacity, much like she did with Amelia Scholz. Sister could have stood next to the console during the Traditional Latin Mass and given him directions so that he would not have to have had a deep familiarity with the rubrics of the liturgy. Since the Parish had tried to implement the reforms of Pius X, this job would have immersed Dirksen in plainsong (chant), a type of music that he would consistently refer back to in his compositions. Although he himself did not comment much about his employment in the Catholic Church, it was undoubtedly another source of musical formation for him in his early years and gave him yet deeper rooting in the broader

⁵² MD is in agreement with this too - email with the author, 27 August 2015.

⁵³ *The Cathedral Age* (Washington, DC), Spring 1942.

⁵⁴ This is interesting as there are sources claiming she was a choir director at the Presbyterian Church in Freeport.

⁵⁵ MD, RSD, email correspondence 4 August 2015.

tradition of chant in sacred music which would influence his works at the time of liturgical reform.

Dirksen, along with his sweetheart Joan Shaw, graduated from Freeport High School in 1938. The Rector of Grace Episcopal Church was able to help secure a scholarship for Dirksen at Hobart College, a college in New York historically affiliated with the Episcopal Church. However, Dirksen did not attend Hobart in favor of studying the organ in a more intensive way. He remained living at home where he practiced the organ and rode the train to take lessons every other week with Hugh Price of LaSalle, Illinois. Dirksen also took a job in a canning factory.⁶⁵ This arrangement went on for two years.

During his study with Price, Dirksen spent a lot of his time memorizing works of organ literature as well as studying advanced piano, harmony, and theory. In Dirksen's own words, during these two years his goal was "to reach a level of ability and training that would enable me to compete for a major scholarship."⁶⁶ Price was head of the Organ Department at Sherwood Music School in Chicago.⁶⁷ He was also a former teacher of Virgil Fox, with whom Dirksen would go on to study. Dirksen notes that he and Price also became friends during this time.⁶⁸

There are two contrasting accounts of the next key event. According to Hendriks, who based his information on an interview with Dirksen, he had decided to enter into organ competitions at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. However, just before the second competition, a box of cans hit his knee and it prevented him from performing until his knee healed. Having missed the Curtis competition, Dirksen decided to enter a competition at the Peabody Conservatory of Baltimore Maryland. He submitted a list of seventeen compositions

⁶⁵ Hendricks, 49.

⁶⁶ Dirksen catalog, 40.

⁶⁷ MD, interview, 15 April 2016.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

that he could play from memory, and he did not even bring his scores with him to the competition. This greatly impressed the Peabody organ professor Virgil Fox. Dirksen was rewarded a three year scholarship to study under Fox. However, he finished his Performers Certificate in just two years.⁶⁹

The other version of this story comes from the Dirksen family lore and was related by Mark Dirksen. According to this narrative, Dirksen first auditioned for a scholarship at Curtis, but was not accepted and returned to Freeport. Undaunted, he continued his private study to make a second try. When departing for Curtis, Dirksen packed up all of his belongings into a wooden trunk and told his family that he was headed to the east coast for good. He played the second competition, but lost again. In shock, he went out on the steps of the Curtis Institute to ponder his future. There the Curtis organ teacher Alexander McCurdy found him and felt really bad for him. McCurdy suggested that Dirksen go down to Baltimore to audition for Virgil Fox. It was the fact that McCurdy felt horrible about not being able to give Dirksen a scholarship that he was directed to Fox. For the rest of his life, Dirksen spoke highly of McCurdy's work and always was grateful to him for his help.⁷⁰

I think that it is impossible to know which version of these narratives are ultimately true. Perhaps there are elements of truth in both stories. Perhaps Dirksen was embarrassed by this seeming failure at Curtis and did not offer the narrative about McCurdy to Hendricks when he interviewed him. In the Hendricks version, Dirksen indeed does go to Curtis to enter at least one competition. However, as Dirksen himself stated in his brief autobiographical sketch, his own goal was to compete for a scholarship, not merely competitions. In the Hendricks narrative,

⁶⁹ Hendricks, 49-50. GD confirms the job in the canning factory, 9 November 2015.

⁷⁰ MD, interview with the author, 26 August 2015.

there is no mention of a scholarship. In any case, Dirksen began his study with Fox at Peabody in 1940.

Peabody

During his years at Peabody, Dirksen took no conducting or composition classes.⁷¹ This is remarkable since he was known to excel at both of these arts during his time at the cathedral. He concentrated solely on organ performance and learning lots of literature. His son Geoff said that Dirksen did not approach music or performance in an "academic manner" but rather, music came to him when he worked at it.⁷² Dirksen indeed had most of his musical formation not in the academy, but on the job and under the influence of other great musicians.

Virgil Fox was only twenty seven years old and in his second year of conservatory teaching when Dirksen began studying with him, but Fox was already widely known as a concert artist at this time.⁷³ In Dirksen's own words, "[Fox] was a master of the instrument, convincing in his enthusiasm and knowledge, and he conveyed all of it to his pupils through a compelling and exciting way of speaking about and playing music."⁷⁴ It is interesting to note that this is the same way the choirboys at the National Cathedral as well as the boys at St. Albans would describe Dirksen himself.

After two years of study, in the spring of 1942, Dirksen would play his senior recital and receive an award for it.⁷⁵ The repertoire for this recital reveals just how proficient at the organ Dirksen was by age twenty one. He played Bach *Prelude and Fugue in e* "the wedge," Bach *Trio Sonata V in C major*, Healy Willan *Introduction, Passacaglia and Fugue*, Samazuehl

⁷¹ Hendricks, 50.

⁷² GD interview with the author, 9 November 2015. I interpret this to mean Dirksen worked hard to learn the notes and figured out the musicality by intuition and experience.

⁷³ Dirksen catalog, 40.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

Prelude, and *Mulet Tu es petra*. It is usual practice for an undergraduate or a graduate student to perform one major Bach work and some other minor Bach works in a recital. But for an undergraduate to program both the wedge and a trio sonata is incredible. Both of these works would be viewed as advanced organ literature. The Willan is also an advanced work. In addition to the difficulty of the literature, the whole program was 95 minutes in length increasing the physical and mental difficulty of such an undertaking.⁷⁶ To receive an award indicates that the performance of this recital was at a high level, showing just how good of an organist he had become. Dirksen graduated *magna cum laude* with his Church Organist Certificate in early June.⁷⁷ According to a letter home, Dirksen actually received three awards upon his graduation, although I am unsure what these awards were for precisely.⁷⁸ It is clear that he was of advanced musical skill for his age. The very next morning after graduation, Dirksen enlisted in the United States Army where he served until 1945.

Dirksen describes the two years he spent at Peabody as years of "intensive study and practice."⁷⁹ It seems as though what Dirksen was doing in Freeport under Price was also what he did at Peabody. Dirksen said that all of the other musical influences on his life had prepared him for this point where at Peabody and with Fox Dirksen would develop a "sound foundation of keyboard mastery and classic repertoire."⁸⁰ This hardworking habit of study and practice served Dirksen well all of his life. These skills developed during the four years of tutelage with Price and Fox would serve him well as the foundation for his work as a church musician and beyond. At his young age, he had already been exposed to and performed a wide spectrum of organ

⁷⁶ RWD, Washington DC, to Dugan and Maude Dirksen, Freeport, 8 March 1942.

⁷⁷ Dirksen catalog, 40. Also in Richard Wayne Dirksen, Washington, DC, to Dugan and Maude Dirksen, Freeport, 1 June 1942, from "Letters to Freeport."

⁷⁸ Richard Wayne Dirksen, Washington, DC, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 1 June 1942, from "Letters to Freeport."

⁷⁹ Dirksen catalog, 40.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

literature, a number of choral works, had learned to improvise, and been exposed to and worked with instrumental ensembles. The collegiate level study at Peabody would also put him in geographic proximity to the greatest musical influence on his life as well as the greatest artistic inspiration for his music, Dr. Paul Callaway and the National Cathedral.

Chapter III. 1942 - 1964 at the Cathedral - Associate Organist, Glee Clubs, and Choral Society

Washington National Cathedral

Before delving into the details of the relationship between Dirksen and the National Cathedral, a relationship that will occupy the rest of this narrative, we must pause and dwell a little on the institution of the cathedral itself and on the vision and state of the music ministry there up to 1942.

The “Cathedral Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in the City and Diocese of Washington,” commonly called Washington National Cathedral, is the cathedral of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington. This neo-gothic building, built on Mt. St. Alban which is the most commanding vista in the city, was under construction from 1907 to 1990. Washington became an independent Episcopal diocese in 1895 and the cathedral was the dream of its first Bishop, Henry Yates Satterlee (bishop 1896-1908). The foundation stone of the cathedral was laid in 1907. The second Bishop of Washington Alfred Harding began the process of building in earnest in 1910 with the laying of the cathedral foundations and the construction of the Bethlehem Chapel, completed in 1911 and open for services in 1912.

Harding not only laid the physical foundations of the cathedral, but the foundations of the spiritual work of the cathedral as well by establishing the basic programs for the worship of God and the care of souls. One of his goals was to establish a musical program appropriate for a

cathedral in the Anglican tradition. Mr. Edgar Priest, a native of Northern Ireland, a product of the Royal College of music and former assistant at Manchester Cathedral, began working with the cathedral from the laying of the foundation stone. Priest was working at St. Paul's Parish in Washington when he was hired to form and direct a choir for the service of the laying of the foundation stone. Priest eventually was hired on as the first full time director of music, and with the opening of the Bethlehem Chapel, directed the newly founded cathedral choir of men and boys. Priest held this post until his death in 1935.⁸¹

Construction on the cathedral continued, despite World War I. By 1932, in the midst of the great depression, the choir had been completed and the high altar was in place. Cathedral worship moved from the Bethlehem Chapel and began to be celebrated in the cathedral proper. By 1936 the north transept and the crossing were completed. At first the congregation sat on benches facing the altar while the choir sat in temporary stalls in the chancel. By 1940, the choir stalls were installed.⁸²

An Historically Informed American Cathedral

The cathedral building itself is an historically informed structure. At its core, the cathedral is English Gothic in style but reinterpreted in an early twentieth century context. Early fights over architectural style highlight the link with the past and the mission of the present Cathedral. The debate was over Renaissance vs. Gothic style. Ernest Flagg was the proponent of the Renaissance design arguing that it was emblematic of casting off medieval thought and superstition which he believed the Gothic style embodied.⁸³ Renaissance architecture would also resonate with the federalist architecture of the public government buildings of Washington.

⁸¹ Quinn, HNC, 50.

⁸² Yang, 43.

⁸³ Quinn, HPAP 9.

However, Bishop Satterlee favored the Gothic style calling it "God's style."⁸⁴ Satterlee argued that the cathedral must be a "house of prayer for all people" and that "experience has plainly shown that the Gothic is distinctively religious and a Christian style."⁸⁵ In order to realize this Gothic style, Satterlee was first attracted to the work of an English architect George Frederick Bodley. However Satterlee saw the need for an American architect so he chose the architect Henry Vaughan, who had been a former student and head draftsman of Bodley's.⁸⁶ Vaughan sought to reproduce Bodley's work faithfully and at least one architectural historian, William Morgan, speculated that Vaughan would have produced the exact same work had he stayed in England.

However, the cathedral would not be a carbon copy of an English Cathedral. First of all, the church would be designed with statues and stained glass that would reflect American History such as the Civil War and later, the landing on the moon with the "moon rock window." The cathedral iconography would also feature Protestant religious figures like John Bunyan, George Fox, and John Wesley.⁸⁷ There were changes made by Satterlee in the overall building as well. He desired to make it much larger. He lengthened the nave design and raised the level of the choir.⁸⁸ Thus already the cathedral was built on English Gothic foundations but with an American twist in the iconography as well as an American enlargement of the project. This American interpretation was to be augmented by the architectural work of Philip Frohman. Both Vaughan and Bodley would die before the cathedral was built. Frohman, who became cathedral architect in 1921 would govern the project for the next half century. In addition to the English

⁸⁴ Quinn, HPAP 10.

⁸⁵ *ibid.* It is interesting to note that Satterlee did not seem to include non-Christians in his "all people." His "apostolic writings" condemning Catholicism also show that he did not include Catholics in his definition of "all people" but seemed rather to focus on the ecclesial communities born of the reformation.

⁸⁶ Quinn, HPAP 11.

⁸⁷ Quinn, HPAP 12.

⁸⁸ Quinn, HAPA 13.

square towers and long nave, Frohman would add a French inspired polygonal shaped apse as well as French inspired flying buttresses. He also made the towers taller and enlarged the west front. He lengthened the nave windows to let in more light. He also added several crypt chapels such as the Joseph of Arimathea Chapel and the Resurrection Chapel. He also added the children's chapel up in the cathedral proper. This was perhaps another American innovation in this chapel with the idea to have a special place for youth. Rightly then cathedral historian Frederick Quinn says that the building became, "The spirit of an English cathedral of the fourteenth century, as interpreted by Frohman in a Washington setting."⁸⁹ An historically informed building with a primary English style and some secondary French elements with an American twist is an example of a hermeneutic of continuity with the past yet still very much a product of contemporary time. The building was analogous to what would become Dirksen's distinctive musical style.

The Choir and Organ Program at the National Cathedral - Edgar Priest

The choir developed under Priest. From 1909 forward, the boys were chosen from St. Albans School for Boys, founded as a choir school and located on the Cathedral Close. The boys are given a partial scholarship for school in return for their services as choristers.⁹⁰ The boys are joined men who are all paid singers. The cathedral choir of men and boys sang for two services each Sunday - the morning liturgy at 11 a.m.⁹¹ and Evensong. The choirboys also sang Evensong three days during the week and rehearsed for two to three hours every day except Saturday.⁹²

The choirboys were chosen from among those who sang in the junior choir which also

⁸⁹ Quinn, HPAP 53.

⁹⁰ Yang, 44.

⁹¹ This service started out being primarily choral Matins (Morning Prayer) with Holy Communion once a month. Communion became more frequent in the 1960s and in the late 1970s the service became "Holy Eucharist" every Sunday.

⁹² Yang, 45.

functioned as a training choir. The junior choir sang the earlier (9a.m.) Sunday service as well as two Evensongs per week. This junior or "training choir" also came into being during Priest's tenure at the cathedral.⁹³ They rehearsed two hours a week and this whole system allowed for the training of up and coming boys in musicianship and discipline.⁹⁴

The development of the music program in addition to the development of the choral program included the installation of pipe organs. The first organ was installed in the Bethlehem chapel organ and later, the Great Organ was installed in the Choir of the cathedral. Priest negotiated with the well known American organ builder Ernest M. Skinner to build the Bethlehem Chapel organ and later the Great Organ.⁹⁵ Priest's choice of Skinner to build the instruments which would be the foundation of the music program at the cathedral is significant. Although a British Subject by birth, Priest did not choose a British builder but chose an American firm widely associated with a style of organ building known as "American classic." This style of organ building was in its own way both synchronic and diachronic. On the one hand, these were organs of their day which used the latest technology but at the same time used tonal design and stop lists which reflect the prevailing style in organ building in Europe at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. They were a unique forward looking American blend of style, newer European trends, and new technology. However, they are also diachronic in the sense that they took from older organ building traditions, especially the English and French organ schools. Skinner and many of the related organ firms at the time were able to establish a distinct American organ style which fit within the larger organ building style in the world at that time and across time. Organs are not incidental to a church music program. Rather, they are formational, and the program at the National Cathedral would be formed with

⁹³ Yang, 44.

⁹⁴ Yang, 45.

⁹⁵ Quinn, HNC, 51.

the tonal palate, articulation, and overall American aesthetic of E.M. Skinner. This is also in a sense what Priest and his successors, Dirksen included, tried to do with the entire musical establishment at the National Cathedral.

The Great Organ of the cathedral was installed and dedicated in 1938. Priest had begun planning the instrument with Skinner in 1917.⁹⁶ However, lack of funding and then the *ad intra* dispute between the newly created Aeolian Skinner and E.M. Skinner and Sons firms as well as the personal wishes of the donor of the organ slowed its construction. Priest's untimely death in 1935 left the completion of the organ to his successor, Mr. Robert Barrow, who played the dedication recital in 1938.

Robert Barrow

Barrow was a graduate of St. Alban's and a former cathedral choirboy.⁹⁷ He began his job as director with great enthusiasm. He also called for an increase in the size of the choir to accommodate the growing size of the cathedral. Barrow desired a choir that would be able to do antiphonal music which was the model from British Cathedral choirs.⁹⁸

However, despite having come through the cathedral "system" of training and knowing Priest's ways and vision, Barrow himself had some unique and even strange ideas. He disliked preludes because of congregational noise. He also suggested that a long organ solo be played after the Sermon. He opposed processional and recessional hymns because the choir could not hear them well. Finally, he opposed chanting the psalms as congregations could not chant them well.⁹⁹ Barrow was considered opinionated, high strung, and a poor administrator.¹⁰⁰ Finally, the Christmas season of 1938 took its toll on Barrow. There were complaints from the men of the

⁹⁶ Yang, 83.

⁹⁷ Quinn, HNC, 51.

⁹⁸ Yang, 31.

⁹⁹ Quinn, HNC, 52.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

choir about the discipline of the boys, and there was a proposal by some of the cathedral staff to put Barrow on "trial" in hopes that the situation would improve.¹⁰¹ Sensing all of this, Barrow took a job at the Williams College music department in Massachusetts and the National Cathedral was, after four short years, looking for another music director.

Stability and Longevity - Dr. Paul Callaway

The choice of Dr. Paul Callaway as director would have an immense impact on the music program of the National Cathedral as well as on the life of Dirksen. Callaway, like Dirksen, was an Illinois native. Born in 1909, he attended the Missouri Military Academy and Westminster College of Fulton Missouri.¹⁰² At age 20, Callaway went to New York City to study with T. Tertius Noble at St. Thomas, 5th Avenue. During this time, Callaway was organist at St. Thomas Chapel, which was associated with St. Thomas Parish. He also studied with David McK Williams and Leo Sowerby. For a brief time in 1938, he traveled to France and studied with Marcel Dupré.¹⁰³

By age 30, Callaway had already performed recitals for the American Guild of Organists convention, St. Thomas, St. Bartholomew New York, Yale, and Princeton. In February of 1939, he was invited to give a recital at the National Cathedral which was very well received.¹⁰⁴ His teacher and mentor Noble had sent several letters to the Cathedral recommending Callaway to take the spot vacated by Barrow. Callaway was chosen in June of 1939 from a large field of candidates. He would remain at the helm of the music program until 1977.¹⁰⁵

Despite the uncertainties of the Barrow years, Callaway inherited a music program with a good foundation built up by Priest. There were twenty choirboys and nine men. This was a

¹⁰¹ Yang, 36.

¹⁰² Quinn, HNC, 99.

¹⁰³ Yang, 40.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Yang, 41.

small number, especially for double choir music. However, Callaway set out to expand the numbers and he did little by little as funds became available.¹⁰⁶ Callaway desired to take the cathedral music program to a greater level of excellence and prestige. First, he sought to shore up the liturgical ends of sacred music and to make the cathedral, "a citadel for glorious church music."¹⁰⁷ He turned his attention to the choir and instituted a high level of discipline and stability. This discipline had a lasting effect. Douglas Major, commenting in the late 1990s said that a cathedral rehearsal of the present day would look remarkably similar to a Callaway era rehearsal.¹⁰⁸ An account of these rehearsals comes from a choirboy of that era, John Shenefield, "the routine was always the same - drilling, learning new music, repairing flaws in presentation, always perfecting."¹⁰⁹ This measure of stability, discipline, and drive for musical excellence was certainly welcome after the chaos that followed the end of Barrow's time and necessary due to the large amount of choral literature that was sung daily at the cathedral. It also provided the structure in which a man with Dirksen's talent and musical formation was to thrive.

Callaway inherited a newly installed organ which was regarded to be of the highest quality for its time. To promote this instrument and to raise awareness of the cathedral, Callaway instituted a monthly organ recital series.¹¹⁰ He played some of these recitals and others were played by guest organists, thus promoting the instrument among both the public and other professional church musicians. Callaway began with the works of Bach and sought to present great organ works from each historical period.

In 1941 in order to expand the music program beyond the rigorous task of providing great choral music at daily and Sunday services, Callaway founded The Cathedral Choral Society.

¹⁰⁶ Quinn, HNC, 99, 100.

¹⁰⁷ Dean Francis Sayre, letter to Bishop Angus Dunn 8 June 1954.

¹⁰⁸ Hendricks, 45. Taken from interview with Hendricks, 18 May 1999.

¹⁰⁹ Hendricks, 45. John H. Shenefield, "Paul Callaway" in *Saint Albans an Illustrated History*, 83, 84.

¹¹⁰ Yang, 41.

This organization, which still exists, is a very fine community chorus affiliated with the cathedral which sings large scale choral works. The inspiration behind this chorus was the cathedral itself. Callaway wished to be able to perform the great sacred choral works in the magnificent setting of the cathedral. This unique setting of the cathedral was the source of many of Callaway's projects, and the source of energy to execute them. It was the cathedral primarily that inspired Callaway to grow the music program, even as the cathedral itself grew. The impact of the Cathedral Choral Society was to have an immediate effect on its performers as well as long term effects in the city of Washington.¹¹¹ It would also have a deep effect on Dirksen by giving him even more experience and breadth with regard to choral literature.

Callaway also changed the character of the choral program of men and boys. At its outset, it was formed in the manner of a traditional English choir of men and boys. However, through Callaway and Dirksen's leadership, the choir took on a distinctly American identity specifically by singing more works of American composers and promoting newly composed sacred music. The sound was also distinctly American. It was not the characteristic sound of the “hooty” British choir, but a full bodied sound to fill a large church. Again, this distinct sound was spurred on by the vastness of the building itself.

Discovery of Dirksen by Paul Callaway

In order to facilitate a growing music program in the midst of a physically expanding cathedral, Callaway needed an assistant. He got one in the person of Richard Wayne Dirksen with whom he collaborated in some form or another for the next 35 years.

At age 21, Dirksen was in his final semester at Peabody and working for a Methodist church in Baltimore. Shortly before Christmas 1941, Callaway decided that he would hire an

¹¹¹ Yang, 46.

assistant.¹¹² At the end of January in 1942, Callaway made a trip to Baltimore to hear a number of organists. Dirksen impressed him and he was hired as the assistant organist of the National Cathedral.¹¹³

Dirksen was immediately impressed by the organ but even more impressed by the cathedral as such. In a letter to his parents, Dirksen related that as he gazed upon the "tremendous arches" and was meditating on the stained glass that he could tell, "God is truly present there."¹¹⁴ For the rest of the semester, Dirksen commuted to Baltimore four times per week while he finished his work at Peabody.¹¹⁵

Initial Work at the Cathedral

According to the announcement of Dirksen's appointment in "The Cathedral Age," Dirksen was intending to "continue his work on a science degree at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore."¹¹⁶ This is an interesting statement because none of the Dirksen sons ever remember their father talking about the possibility of him doing a degree at Johns Hopkins. Mark Dirksen suggested it might have been a "backup plan" for a young man about to start a family who may have been concerned about the instability of being a professional musician. Geoff Dirksen relates that his father did have a scientific mind and read popular journals on science even during his retirement years. Geoff rightly points out that there is a correlation between music and math and that Dirksen would have come by this naturally as he was the "son of a master craftsman and a world class tinkerer."¹¹⁷ The natural ability to think scientifically and critically would explain

¹¹² Yang, 63.

¹¹³ RWD, Baltimore, MD, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 1 February 1942, from "Letters to Freeport."

¹¹⁴ *ibid.* This was one of the rare moments that I could find in his early life where he opined on the spiritual aspect of his job.

¹¹⁵ Dirksen catalogue, 41.

¹¹⁶ *The Cathedral Age* (Washington, DC), Spring 1942.

¹¹⁷ This was the same announcement that had incorrect facts about Dirksen's former employment at St. Mary's in Freeport as well as about his mother being a choirmaster at this same Catholic Church. RD, GD and MD, email correspondence with the author, 16 December 2015.

how Dirksen could comprehend complex music without a lot of formal academic training in musicology. With a scientific mind, a person who learns a piece of music will not just learn notes, but naturally ask questions and observe the structure of the work. He was called a polymath by many people¹¹⁸ and this interest in science may point to the many skills and depth of knowledge that Dirksen possessed yet did not flaunt.

Dirksen's initial duties were to help Callaway in turning pages at the organ for the main Sunday 11 a.m. Cathedral Service, Sunday Evensong, and daily Evensongs sung by the main choir of men and boys. Dirksen was also completely responsible for the junior choir who sang the 9 a.m. Communion Service on Sunday as well as a few Evensongs per week. He was very happy about "getting his own choir" with the Junior Choir.¹¹⁹ On his first day on the job, Dirksen also began working with the Cathedral Choral Society. He sang bass in the very first performance of the Society which was of Verdi's *Requiem*.¹²⁰

Although he was Callaway's assistant, Dirksen did not initially accompany the choir, but rather turned pages for Callaway who conducted and accompanied from the console. This was the custom for the assistant organist at this time both in the choral establishments of America and in England.¹²¹ This would later become a source of frustration to Dirksen whose only liturgical duty at major liturgies in the cathedral was to turn pages. It was not until later in his tenure at the cathedral that Callaway came out from behind the organ and conducted the choir while letting someone else accompany on the organ.¹²²

Dirksen was first left completely in charge of the choir on Ash Wednesday of 1942 when Callaway went to New York. This was impressive for the young Dirksen who keenly felt the

¹¹⁸ GD email correspondence with the author, 16 December 2015.

¹¹⁹ RWD, Baltimore, MD, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 1 February 1942, from "Letters to Freeport."

¹²⁰ RWD, Washington, DC, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 4 February 1942, from "Letters to Freeport."

¹²¹ MD, email 29 September 2016.

¹²² RD, interview with the author, 4 June 2015.

responsibility of such a post.¹²³ During these initial days he also encountered male altos for the first time which at first were a bit of a shock to him.¹²⁴ This experience must have been somewhat overwhelming for the young man who only recently moved from a Midwestern small town to a big city and then with the responsibilities of high quality music. Despite all of this, Dirksen was still in awe of the program at the cathedral. In his words it was "the best music in the world presented flawlessly every Sunday."¹²⁵ Callaway worked hard at getting even the smallest details to perfection, often forcing the choir to rehearse even a single measure over and over until it was just the way he wanted it.¹²⁶ Dirksen would have known some of this choral literature from his days at Grace in Freeport. However, now he would be developing his skills as a conductor - including his own listening skills - for the achievement of excellence.

That Easter, with the cathedral packed with people both in the main church and downstairs in the chapels,¹²⁷ Dirksen was completely enthralled by the beauty and grandeur of the liturgies and music. Reflecting on it in a letter to his parents, he speaks about how well the Junior Choir did. However, the most impressive thing seemed to be the 11a.m. Service. He did not have a specific role to play other than page turner, so he was able to take in the whole of the liturgy. He describes the music as "perfection" and spoke about the pageantry of the procession, the clergy, and the whole event. He "made his communion" at that liturgy as well. This is one of the few places where Dirksen speaks openly about his personal faith. It is not a direct reference to his relationship with God, but the feeling of being overcome with beauty and

¹²³ RWD, Washington, DC, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 17 February 1942, from "Letters to Freeport."

¹²⁴ *ibid.* I presume that the mixed choir in Freeport at Grace Episcopal did not have male altos. At one point, the choir was purely men and boys, but then became "mixed" at some point and would have been mixed during Dirksen's time there.

¹²⁵ RWD, Washington, DC, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 8 March 1942, from "Letters to Freeport."

¹²⁶ *ibid.*

¹²⁷ Dirksen says in a letter home, I think with some hyperbole, that there were 12,000 people who came through the cathedral doors. That would have been an immense number of people for the building at the time.

making an act of piety in communion.¹²⁸ This reflection on an Easter Sunday liturgy, in which Dirksen had very little to do in terms of practical music making, shows that sacred music was not merely a job for him but really did touch him at some level very deeply. He was so moved by the whole event that he did not get to sleep until after 3a.m. Easter night. Even with the stress of his final recital approaching, Dirksen took time to reflect that he thought he would never forget this first Easter where he fully participated in the great cathedral tradition of sacred music for the first time.¹²⁹ This marked a new chapter of his own musical formation and development in encountering in a very practical way the great works of sacred music.

Work in the Military

In June of 1942, in the midst of World War II, Dirksen enlisted in the Army. After a brief stay in basic training, he got the job which he would hold for much of the war, chapel janitor at Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington DC. The janitorial obligations including keeping the chapel clean and setting up and taking down for the various services that would happen there. He was on duty for eight hours a day but he said that his duties took him only three. Therefore he had a lot of free time to compose and to practice.¹³⁰ Initially, Dirksen seems to have felt guilty for having an "easy" time of it during the war and thought of possibly trying to join the bombardier squad.¹³¹ During his military days, he continued to play recitals both on the military base and back at the cathedral.¹³² Dirksen was further honing and perfecting his musical skills during the context of the war.

¹²⁸ RWD, Washington, DC, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 7 April 1942, from "Letters to Freeport."

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ RWD, Bethesda, MD, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 17 June 1942, from "Letters to Freeport."

¹³¹ RWD, Bethesda, MD, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 24 June 1942, from "Letters to Freeport." He had bad eyes, and thus never made it in the bombardier force.

¹³² RWD, Bethesda, MD, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 4 September 1942, from "Letters to Freeport."

In addition to practicing the organ, Dirksen also helped out with radio broadcasting. He had done some broadcasting in high school and now he gave a daily broadcast of organ music over the hospital's loudspeaker system. He chose one composer a week and played a work.¹³³ Later on these broadcasts would have light or popular music which shows that Dirksen did not only know music in the classical style but in a popular style as well.¹³⁴ Dirksen would continue to work with recordings and sound systems for the rest of his life. This is a reflection of his own scientific and mechanical mind. The breadth of musical knowledge and musical ability even beyond the classical realm would also serve Dirksen well later in life and influence his compositions.

Dirksen expanded his broadcasting skills from the hospital loudspeaker system to a radio station broadcasting from Walter Reed. Dirksen and his friends rigged up a radio room which had most of the equipment in place but needed repairs. Dirksen fitted it out with turntables and broadcasting equipment.¹³⁵ In order to fix the broken parts but due to the scarcity of materials during the war years, he scrounged from unlikely sources including broken pinball machines. They started broadcasting organ recitals over the radio, but soon they were broadcasting all sorts of things. Records were hard to come by because of rationing. However, they put out an article in the New York Times for used records and got 2-3000 albums.

Beginnings of Marriage and Family

If Dirksen had originally been feeling guilty about spending much of the war practicing the organ, this guilt was no longer mentioned when he began a new aspect of his life, his marriage to Joan (Jo) Shaw. Jo and Wayne met in high school and were happily married until Joan's death in 1995. Jo came to visit Dirksen in August 1942 and they made their plans to

¹³³ RWD, Bethesda, MD, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 24 June 1942, from "Letters to Freeport."

¹³⁴ RWD, Bethesda, MD, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 4 September 1942, from "Letters to Freeport."

¹³⁵ RWD, Washington DC, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 26 August 1943, from "Letters to Freeport."

marry at a small family celebration in late December of that year.¹³⁶ However, on December 18th of that year Joan's mother committed suicide.¹³⁷ Dirksen remarked on Joan's strength in dealing with this tragedy which was not often talked about.¹³⁸ The two were married in Freeport on January 9th 1943.

Their marriage was followed by both taking odd jobs to supplement Dirksen's small army pay. However, in a short time, Joan was pregnant and their first son Richard Shaw Dirksen was born in October 1943. Jo loved being in Washington as much as her husband. She describes the beauty of going to Dumbarton Oaks for the first time and going to gatherings with the British Ambassador.¹³⁹ Just as her husband was impressed by the cathedral, so Joan, a Midwestern woman now in the nation's capital, was impressed by the big city and the people.

Christmas of 1943 was their first Christmas as a family. Dirksen writes to his parents that he gives thanks to God for all He had done for them in the past year. Dirksen opined that he, Joan, and Rick had started their own Christmas traditions and that he really felt as though they were a new branch of the Dirksen family.¹⁴⁰ Christmas was always a special time for the Dirksens, and this first Christmas with his newly formed family, even in the midst of World War II, was a time of new beginnings and blessings. This new family would continue to support Dirksen throughout his life and his memory beyond.¹⁴¹

The time of broadcasting, practicing, and being a young family together came to an abrupt end in October 1944. Dirksen's radio station had changed the broadcast in the middle of a speech by presidential candidate Thomas Dewey to cover a boxing match instead. The enlisted

¹³⁶ RWD, Bethesda, MD, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 12 August 1942, from "Letters to Freeport."

¹³⁷ MD, "Letters to Freeport," 1.

¹³⁸ RWD, Bethesda, MD, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 26 December 1942, from "Letters to Freeport."

¹³⁹ Joan Dirksen, Washington DC, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 26 August 1943, from "Letters to Freeport."

¹⁴⁰ RWD, Washington DC, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 26 December 1943, from "Letters to Freeport."

¹⁴¹ His children were some of the biggest helps in compiling this treatise.

men preferred to listen to the fight. However, the military officers, being more Republican by inclination had wanted to listen to Dewey. The action from above was swift for this offense and Dirksen was shipped off to Fort Barkley Texas to report for infantry training. The Battle of the Bulge was about to occur, so Dirksen believed he would have been called up anyway. Joan and Rick moved back to Freeport to wait for the war to end.¹⁴²

Dirksen would eventually serve in Europe and wound up a technical sergeant with the 19th Special Service Company. This is where he would be at the end of the war.¹⁴³ During his time in Northern Europe, Dirksen got a taste of show business as he put together a "four man show" that played all over northern Europe. Dirksen claimed that this love of theater never really left him.¹⁴⁴

Return to the Cathedral

While stationed at Walter Reed early during Dirksen's time in the military, he went back down to the cathedral to hear Callaway play a recital. Callaway had also been inducted into the military and was preparing to leave for service. At that recital, Dirksen had a conversation with Canon Smith, the acting Dean of the cathedral, who assured Dirksen that he was *expected* back at the cathedral at the end of the war no matter who was director or not.¹⁴⁵ During the interregnum when both Dirksen and Callaway were away from the cathedral, music was led by Ellis Varley who was good, but not as good as Callaway.¹⁴⁶

However, Dirksen had other plans. When the war was over, he returned to the United States to his wife and young child, now living back in Freeport. Dirksen was going to take the

¹⁴² MD, "Letters to Freeport," 35.

¹⁴³ RWD catalog, 41.

¹⁴⁴ The Cathedral Age, Fall 1989.

¹⁴⁵ RWD, Bethesda, MD, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 9 July 1942, from "Letters to Freeport." Emphasis Dirksen.

¹⁴⁶ Joan Dirksen, Washington DC, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 29 April 1943, from "Letters to Freeport." Joan makes a point of saying that this was the Easter Service but she was disappointed with the choir. This was a big change from Dirksen's glowing review of Easter 1942.

two of them and move to New York City to work on Broadway.¹⁴⁷ However, days after returning home from Europe he received a phone call from the cathedral. Callaway was still away with the military and Mr. Varley was sick. Dirksen was asked to come back and help with the music. Dirksen returned to the Cathedral on 15 November 1945,¹⁴⁸ with a small raise¹⁴⁹ and continued in continuous employment there in various capacities until 1 April 1991.

It seems as though Dirksen may have also had an intent to return to formal studies following the war. An article in the newsletter announcing the return of Dirksen and Callaway to the cathedral after the war says that Dirksen was enrolled in George Washington University to work on a Bachelors in Art degree and at Peabody conservatory to do a Bachelors in Music degree.¹⁵⁰ In a memorandum from Canon Curtis Draper to Dean John Suter with regard to Dirksen's return, Canon Draper states that Dirksen intended to continue his studies at either George Washington University or Georgetown.¹⁵¹ However, if he began any of these courses of study, they did not last long. The system of taking lessons and being tutored had served him well in the past. He learned by observation and by doing, and there would be a lot of "doing" at the cathedral now that the war was over. Callaway was at the helm, and Dirksen proved to be an able collaborator for a music program about to expand and gain a worldwide reputation for excellence.

Dirksen and Callaway

Paul Callaway returned to the Cathedral in 1946 and his collaboration with Dirksen resumed. In many ways, these men were completely the opposite. Dirksen was 6'4" tall. He

¹⁴⁷ MD, interview with author, 26 August 2015. Mark says that this story has become part of the family lore - Wayne could have worked on Broadway, but ended up with the Church instead.

¹⁴⁸ Yang, 64.

¹⁴⁹ Canon Curtis Draper, Washington DC, memorandum to Dean John Suter, 13 November 1945, in Cathedral Archives.

¹⁵⁰ *The Cathedral Age* (Washington, DC), Easter 1946.

¹⁵¹ Canon Curtis Draper, Washington DC, memorandum to Dean John Suter, 13 November 1945, in Cathedral Archives.

also had a vivacious personality and was known to get along with almost anyone he met. Callaway on the other hand, was very small, only around 5'3."¹⁵² Callaway was also known for measured correctness and being almost reclusive.¹⁵³ Dirksen described Callaway as a "titan of a musician, handling his choir with an iron hand."¹⁵⁴ "Dr. Callaway" as he was known, was a person who was in control of the situation and who had the respect of his choir. If one were to look at a picture of Dirksen and Callaway side by side from this period, he would certainly break out in laughter. The vergers of the cathedral used to think it was hilarious for the short Callaway to be dashing about the building in his cassock and surplice with the six foot plus Dirksen running along behind him.¹⁵⁵ Yet despite this, from all accounts they were an incredible team.¹⁵⁶

In fact, they both shared quite a bit. First and foremost, they had a vision for the music program at the cathedral that it should consist of only the finest music in the tradition of sacred music. In addition to the objective quality of the music, they both insisted on discipline and hard work from their choirs, albeit with different methods. The result was the choirs attained a level of excellence and reputation throughout the country and eventually the world. Finally, they both believed in the development of new sacred music, and especially, music by American composers. This included Dirksen himself. The result of this was that Dirksen developed as a composer, a conductor, and organist.

Dirksen spoke of Callaway as a "steadfast musical influence" on his life.¹⁵⁷ In the same manner as he learned from Hugh Price and Virgil Fox, namely by observing, absorbing and imitating, Dirksen would now learn from Callaway. Dirksen first continued to advance his organ

¹⁵² RWD, Washington, DC, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 22 February 1942, from "Letters to Freeport." Apparently Callaway was even shorter than this at 5'1" RSD email 26 September 2016.

¹⁵³ Donald Irwin, in *St. Albans the First 100 Years*, 145.

¹⁵⁴ RWD, Washington, DC, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 22 February 1942, from "Letters to Freeport."

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Donald Irwin, in *St. Albans the First 100 Years*, 145.

¹⁵⁷ Dirksen catalog, 41.

skills. However, he also bettered his conducting skills as he viewed Callaway as a master conductor.¹⁵⁸ Callaway was also known for his knowledge and "good taste" when it came to choral and instrumental music for a cathedral music program.¹⁵⁹

Callaway's experience and abilities were diversified even more due to the fact that he conducted much more than liturgical music. These other works included many large scale choral works, oratorios, and cantatas with the Cathedral Choral Society. He also had a growing interest in opera. He helped found the Opera Society of Washington as well as the Lake George Summer Opera. These not only exposed Callaway to more repertoire and a richer and diverse musical background, but these experiences raised Callaway's general musicianship.¹⁶⁰ The more Callaway explored and conducted all sorts of music meant the standards at the cathedral got even higher. This also meant that Dirksen's own knowledge would expand as Callaway's chief collaborator developed as a musician. Dirksen himself would say of the process that, "Through daily contact with him I was able to observe and imitate and convert to my own mastery his wealth of his musical experience."¹⁶¹ The mimetic style of learning that had served Dirksen so well in Freeport and Peabody would now serve him well at the Cathedral.

Dirksen claims that one of the greatest gifts that Callaway gave him was the fact that Callaway was so open to performing Dirksen's compositions. Over half of the *oeuvre* of Dirksen's compositions were sacred works that were performed by the cathedral choirs or the Choral Society. Dirksen claimed that this gave him as a composer, "confidence by immediately hearing what was satisfactory, and learning what was not as good as we could expect."¹⁶² Often times composers, especially younger composers, do not get to hear many of their works

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*

¹⁶² *ibid.*

performed. Dirksen now had the advantage of a great choir and an eager director to make his compositions come to life. The result of frequent performances lead to an increase in confidence and drive to compose more, thus leading to Dirksen's maturation as a composer.

Junior Choir

One of Dirksen's very first and long lasting duties on the cathedral close was to work with the youngest musicians, the Junior choir. As stated above, the Junior choir was the training ground for the main choir. In these first years, Dirksen spent much of his time training the boys.¹⁶³ By 1947, the Junior Choir consisted of thirty-two boys.¹⁶⁴ Dirksen's son Mark remarked that Dirksen had no formal training in vocal pedagogy or in working with young voices. However, he did have the charism of enthusiasm and encouragement.¹⁶⁵ He also was someone who could figure things out quickly, someone with excellent musicianship and performance ability. Finally, he had his own experience as a choirboy at Freeport. All of these things proved to be invaluable with the youngest boys. In many ways, he was the mediator of "raw talent" on Mt. St. Alban. This often meant dealing with boys who did not know how to use or control their voices.¹⁶⁶ A choirboy from these early years describes Dirksen as the one who was "the guide out of primordial tonelessness."¹⁶⁷ Dirksen was known for driving his choirs hard, in a manner perhaps more jovial than Callaway, but he got the same results - great music, and unwavering loyalty.¹⁶⁸

Cathedral Choral Society

¹⁶³ RSD, interview with the author, 4 June 2015.

¹⁶⁴ Yang, 49.

¹⁶⁵ MD, interview with the author, 26 August 2015.

¹⁶⁶ Hendricks, 48.

¹⁶⁷ Donald Irwin, in *St. Albans the First 100 Years*, 145.

¹⁶⁸ Hendricks, 48.

In 1946, Dirksen became the assistant musical director and accompanist for the Cathedral Choral Society.¹⁶⁹ Rick Dirksen said that for his father, this was a major outlet for musical creativity and study. It was a crucible of quickly learning a lot of new music and having to accompany it. This ensemble performed not only large scale choral works such as the Bach Passions, the Mendelssohn and Handel Oratorios, but it also performed many new works, especially works by American composers.¹⁷⁰ These choral works were often accompanied by large orchestra. As accompanist for the choral society, Dirksen would have been responsible for playing orchestral reductions, which are often exceedingly difficult. This would have been another skill that Dirksen worked to perfect.

In 1949 the Choral Society grew as it absorbed the "other choral society" in the District, the Washington Choral Society. The cathedral choir was included in many of the Choral Society performances, thus combining very robust musical forces. This whole project was neither in Callaway's or Dirksen's contracts. It was born from the drive to expand the musical reach of the Cathedral as well as enrich the choral and artistic life of the city of Washington.¹⁷¹ In a real sense, they became musical evangelists, seeking to expand the musical reach of the cathedral beyond liturgical requirements. Performing this music also formed Dirksen and influence his own compositions. His direct association with the Cathedral Choral Society would last unbroken until 1972, and then again as interim Director 1984-85.¹⁷²

Associate Organist Choirmaster

In April 1947 Callaway was ill for almost a month and Dirksen had to take all of the responsibilities of the cathedral music himself. During this time, he also had to play for a

¹⁶⁹ Dirksen catalog, 6.

¹⁷⁰ RSD, interview with the author, 4 June 2015.

¹⁷¹ Yang, 50-51.

¹⁷² Dirksen catalog, 6.

Special Convention of the Diocese of Washington as well as prepare a last minute recital for the ladies of the National Cathedral Association.¹⁷³ It was clear that Callaway trusted and relied more and more on Dirksen. In appreciation of Dirksen's work in his absence, Callaway made a declaration of thanks and trust in Dirksen to the Cathedral Chapter gave a recommendation for him to receive a monetary bonus.¹⁷⁴ In June of 1948, Callaway recommended to the Cathedral Chapter that Dirksen be promoted from Assistant to Associate Organist Choirmaster. As Yang points out, this move was prompted from the trust Callaway had for Dirksen, not just musically, but because he shared the same vision as Callaway, that of making the cathedral a great center of sacred music and beyond.¹⁷⁵

Extension of Evensong - a Liturgical Setting for Longer Music

Callaway successfully petitioned that Evensong on the last Sunday of the month, beginning in December 1947, become an extended musical service. On the final Sunday in the month, the Sermon would be replaced by a "musical sermon" consisting of a longer musical work. In the classic Anglican version of the Divine Office (Matins and Evensong), there is not technically a Sermon. Thus when added on a Sunday, it often bore the title "Morning Prayer and Sermon" or "Evensong and Sermon."¹⁷⁶ In the Anglican version of the Office there is a place after the Collects for a choir anthem. This musical piece is usually five minutes or so in length. What Callaway did was to provide room for a fifteen or twenty minute musical work which usually would be too long for inclusion in a classical Anglican liturgy.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Yang, 48, 49. The National Cathedral Association was a national auxiliary of sorts which helped raise awareness of the cathedral project and to help raise money across the country.

¹⁷⁴ Paul Callaway, Washington DC, memorandum to Dean John Suter, 16 May 1947, in Cathedral Archives.

¹⁷⁵ Yang, 49.

¹⁷⁶ Yang, 50.

¹⁷⁷ By the late 1960's and early 1970's, these extended Evensongs were no longer made up of larger musical works but collections of smaller anthems which would have been sung at other cathedral liturgies. They had become events to hear sacred music but outside of the context of the particular liturgies. MD email 2 June 2016.

This move by the Chapter to allow a musical sermon shows their trust in Callaway to pick music which was capable of inspiring the congregation in the way that preaching can. In order procure music for these extended Evensongs, the already rigorous rehearsal schedule of the choir had to become even more intense. These extended works included, the Byrd Masses, the Requiems of Cherubini and Faure, *Forsaken of Man* by Leo Sowerby, and parts of *Messiah* by Handel. Some parts of these extended works could be taken and used in the regular rotation of liturgical music, but some could not. This meant that the choir would have to rehearse music which might not be used constantly liturgically.¹⁷⁸

Yang rightly points out that in those days, the musical landscape of Washington DC was not as rich as it is today. In those days there was no Wolf Trap and no Kennedy Center. There was musical activity at Constitution Hall, but aside from this not much. The performances by the choir at the extended evensongs as well as music performed by the Cathedral Choral Society greatly enhanced the musical life of not just the cathedral, but the city as well.¹⁷⁹

The Push for American Sacred Music

These extended Evensongs also included new works by American composers such as *The Corinthians* by Ned Rorem, *Four Motets* by Ronald Arnatt,¹⁸⁰ *The Proverbial Canons* by Dirksen, and *Requiem* by Wilmer Welsh.¹⁸¹ In 1947 Callaway began a project to commission new sacred choral works by American composers. In his annual report to the Chapter, Callaway suggested a fund be developed whose purpose would be to compensate the composers for these works.¹⁸² The result of this campaign was a flourishing of sacred music coming from American

¹⁷⁸ Yang, 49.

¹⁷⁹ Yang, 50.

¹⁸⁰ Arnatt is an interesting case since he was English and was educated in England until he turned 17, then immigrated to America where he lived and worked all of his professional life. It would be hard to exclusively categorize him as either American or English. THC, v.2, 319.

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*

¹⁸² Yang, 49.

composers such as Lee Hoiby, John Corigliano, Ned Rorem, Ronald Arnatt, Samuel Barber, Dave Brubeck, John LaMontaine, and Gian Carlo Menotti. American musicians continued to compose sacred music for the cathedral all the way through the 1970s when Callaway retired and continuing through the 1990's by Dirksen. These works were sometimes composed for a particular one time performance, but many of them entered into the regular repertoire of the cathedral choirs and the Choral Society. Beyond the compositions which added new works of high quality choral music to the overall genre of sacred music, even more importantly, the regular integration of these new American works into the liturgical life of the Cathedral gave the music program a distinctly American flavor. The choir also became nationally and internationally known for the promotion of American music.¹⁸³ One of these American composers of new sacred works was Dirksen himself.

Beginnings of Composition

Dirksen was already composing by the time he came to the cathedral. In letter to his parents in 1942 he expresses hope that his work called *Benedicite* would be published soon by either Fischer or H.W. Gray.¹⁸⁴ There is no record of this piece in either Dirksen's own catalog or the later catalog of the cathedral archives. This *Benedicite* is not a choral setting of the canticle of the three children from the book of Daniel,¹⁸⁵ but is a piano and vocal setting of a poem titled *Benedicite* written by John Greenleaf Whittier. It was written by Dirksen on a notebook that he kept from his time in Peabody and is dedicated to Jo. It has pianistic elements, Faure-sounding aspects and, according to Mark Dirksen, is not the type of thing that H.W. Gray would publish.¹⁸⁶ In this same letter home to his parents, Dirksen also mentions that he is working on

¹⁸³ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ RWD, Washington DC, to Dugan and Maude, Dirksen, Freeport, 8 March 1942, from "Letters to Freeport."

¹⁸⁵ Daniel 3.57-88 and 56.

¹⁸⁶ MD email correspondence with author, 23 December 2015.

his latest composition, a setting of a poem by a Sara Teasdale.¹⁸⁷ In fact, in numerous letters home, Dirksen says that he has time to compose. None of these works from this time period were published and Dirksen does not include them in his catalog nor are they included in the catalog of the archives of the Cathedral.

However, in the wake of Callaway's call for new American sacred choral music of the highest quality, Dirksen produced two canticles which are the first works that he included in his catalog. These are settings of the *Cantate Domino*¹⁸⁸ and *Deus misereatur*¹⁸⁹. In the announcement in the cathedral newsletter that Dirksen had been promoted to associate organist choirmaster, there is also a reference to these canticle settings.¹⁹⁰ These two works were sung at the extended Evensong on May 30, 1948. Neither of these settings were published and Dirksen did not enter them into any form of computer notation. Was Dirksen not totally happy with them? Perhaps these early works were not of the quality that Dirksen had in the later works.

This same announcement from the newsletter also says that Dirksen composed six other works; five for organ and choir and one for organ, choir and instruments.¹⁹¹ The newsletter does not list these works by name. However, one of the first works from this period, and one written for organ, choir and instruments was the famous *Christ our Passover*. This work was written no later than the early months of 1948. There are a number of questions surrounding the date and genesis of this composition. I have chosen to address them later in this work in the year 1960 which is the date that Dirksen gives for this composition in his catalog.

¹⁸⁷ She was an American lyric poet.

¹⁸⁸ Psalm 98. This was introduced into the Book of Common Prayer 1552 as an alternative to the Magnificat at Evensong. Massey Hamilton Shepherd Jr., *The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 27. Henceforth called "OABCP"

¹⁸⁹ Psalm 67. This was introduced into the Book of Common Prayer 1552 as an alternative to the Nunc Dimittis at Evensong. Shepherd, OABCP, 28.

¹⁹⁰ *The Cathedral Age* (Washington, DC), Autumn, 1948.

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*

In 1948, he also wrote two choral works, a "Christians to the Paschal Victim" for trebles and organ as well as a Magnificat and Nunc dimittis. These works were never transcribed for computer notation nor were they published. In 1949 Dirksen composed a setting for men's voices¹⁹² of the Vespers Hymn *Jam sol recedit igneus*. It is the earliest work of his that he later computer engraved.¹⁹³

Glee Clubs

1949 and 1950 were momentous years for Dirksen. In the late 1940's after returning from World War II, he got settled back into his job in the cathedral. But after a few years he began wondering if this all he were going to do.¹⁹⁴ He had given up going to work on Broadway, he had not pursued a degree in science nor further degrees in music, and was now in Washington turning pages for Callaway and basically acting as a "number two man." He had his own choir with the junior choristers, but other than that, he was worried that he was not doing enough - that he was just "hanging around."¹⁹⁵ In his own words, he was developing "assistant-itis."¹⁹⁶ To combat this, he sought another creative outlet that would be "his turf." He asked Bishop Angus Dun if he could found a mixed voice glee club from St. Albans School and the National Cathedral School for girls. According to Dirksen, the students in those days did not mix much.¹⁹⁷ This endeavor was supported by Callaway and the Bishop and it served not only to boost the life of the school but of the larger cathedral program as well.¹⁹⁸ Rick Dirksen says that these choirs would become a major creative outlet for Dirksen.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹² Not only was this a response to Callaway's call for American sacred music, but a need as the men of the cathedral choir sang the liturgies in the summer and on other times when the boys were away on vacation.

¹⁹³ Dirksen catalog, 9.

¹⁹⁴ RD, interview with the author, 4 June 2015.

¹⁹⁵ Dirksen interview with S. Hendricks 18 May 1999. In Hendricks, 52.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Perhaps this opportunity for mixing between the sexes was one of the reasons for the popularity of the choirs.

¹⁹⁸ Yang, 66.

¹⁹⁹ RD, interview with the author, 4 June 2015.

Dirksen believed that his new choir of teenagers should perform great works of choral literature and accompanied by some of the finest musicians available. For example, in the spring of 1956 the combined glee clubs performed three choral works by Mozart, a full set of Liebeslieder Waltzes by Brahms, and the Bach Cantata *Christ lag in Todesbanden*. This was all accompanied by Callaway and by members of the National Symphony Orchestra.²⁰⁰ A program of choral literature such as this would be formidable for any high school choir or even a college choir. Dirksen also made use of the finest instrumental players in Washington. Now not only the Cathedral, but other institutions on Mt. St. Alban as well would be known for musical excellence.

Musical Theater

However, these glee clubs did not only sing concerts of high art music, they also put on musicals and other works of musical theater. Dirksen had wanted to work on Broadway after the war. However, his dreams of Broadway style music did not end with his return to the Cathedral, and this significant compositional interest of his must be included in any study of his musical influences. He found an outlet for his love of musical theater with the Glee Clubs. The choirs put on musicals by Gilbert and Sullivan, Kurt Weill, and other shows from the repertoire of American Musical Theatre.²⁰¹ Rick Dirksen said that after his father put on a couple of shows from other composers, he thought he could also write some. He produced a number of original musical theater shows himself.²⁰²

The first, *The Flamingo Hat* was composed in 1954. The librettist was Frank Baer who had written it one year previous. The plot was set in Georgetown in the 18th century and was centered on a hat plumed with many feathers which had been cursed by the Indians and had

²⁰⁰ Program in the Cathedral Archives.

²⁰¹ Yang,

²⁰² RD, interview with the author, 4 June 2015.

magical powers. The work was first performed in May of 1954 and was reviewed favorably by the Washington Post and the Washington Times. Dirksen correctly notes that this was indeed impressive for a high school performance! It was revised and performed again in 1958.²⁰³

In 1957, Dirksen again teamed up with Baer as librettist for *The Houseboat on the Styx*. The plot is derived from a book by John Kendrick Bangs and is centered around a houseboat that is moored on Pluto's river Styx where it serves as a clubhouse for an exclusive club of historical "shades." However, the club is reserved exclusively for men, and there is agitation from the woman shades who desire to be let into this exclusive club.²⁰⁴ It was performed once in 1957. Indeed this plot was timely in the growing desire for equality between the sexes that was happening from the 1950's into the 1960's.

In 1959 Dirksen composed *The Rose and the Ring*. For this operetta, Dirksen teamed up with his wife Jo as the librettist. The plot was developed from a Christmas pantomime by William Thackeray who wrote under the pseudonym W.A. Titmarsh. It centers on a gluttonous pretender to a royal throne and a magic ring. It was performed in May of 1959 and again in 1968. The 1968 performance would be Dirksen's last with the Glee Clubs and featured his daughter Laura in one of the leading roles.²⁰⁵

Dirksen composed *Tularosa* in 1961. Again, Jo Dirksen was the librettist who was inspired for the plot by a newspaper article about Tularosa New Mexico. Geoff Dirksen says that the genesis of the plot came from the idea of a secret government site in New Mexico²⁰⁶ and because of rumors that certain Texans were trying to get the King Ranch to secede from the

²⁰³ Dirksen catalog, 26.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Dirksen catalog, 27.

²⁰⁶ GD, interview with the author, 9 November 2015.

Union.²⁰⁷ The cold war was on at the time, and these ideas and stories about secret facilities in the mountains and deserts of the West were in the air. The story takes place on a two million acre dude ranch. There is trouble with the Air Force over part of the land of this ranch and the owners respond by seceding from the Union, declaring independence, and putting themselves under the protection of the United Nations. It was performed in 1961 to great reviews. Paul Hume, music critic for *The Washington Post* wrote that the work was "first rate theater" and it was a show that "could do very well on the musical circuit."²⁰⁸ This is high praise for a composer who was not principally known for his operettas. The role of Lucky in this musical was created specifically for Rick Dirksen, Wayne's son.²⁰⁹ Dirksen would use the memorable solemn melody he composed as the "national anthem" of *Tularosa* in other compositions, most notably a hymn tune with that name with the words "Hearken to the anthem glorious" and arranged in 1983.²¹⁰ This was also a distinctively American operetta in its subject matter.

Although Yang counts four Dirksen operettas, in fact, Dirksen seems to count five in his catalog.²¹¹ *Houseboat* was written in 1962 with Jo again as the librettist. Dirksen insists that it is not a mere rewriting of the 1957 show. The basics of the plot are the same and some of the music is retained from the 1957 show as well. However, most of the adventures in the plot are new as the female shades try to gain access to the exclusive male club.²¹²

Dirksen himself claims that the choral parts of the operettas are complex with *divisi* often into eight parts. Dirksen said that he did this in order to provide the sense of the choir

²⁰⁷ RSD, email CHECK!!! FROM RICK'S EDITS chapter2

²⁰⁸ The Cathedral Age, Summer 1961.

²⁰⁹ Dirksen catalog, 27,28.

²¹⁰ Dirksen catalog, 14.

²¹¹ Yang, 67.

²¹² Dirksen Catalog, 28.

"accompanying" the solo piano accompaniment²¹³ that was used in these productions. The glee clubs were popular and had so many members that all of them were not used as actors in the various musical theater productions. They would dress as many of them as possible to be on stage for the chorus. The rest would be seated on either side of the piano in the pit and would sing from there to give more sound to the choruses.²¹⁴

In 1991 at Dirksen's retirement festivities, there was a festive Evensong which included many of his sacred compositions. However, following the liturgy, there was an extended party where former members of St. Albans and the National Cathedral Glee clubs surprised Dirksen by performing music from the four original operettas. A video was made of this occasion. The music has typical elements of Gilbert and Sullivan as well as other musical theater elements - namely very singable "numbers" and choruses. Dirksen was developing his skill at composing melodies. REFERENCE In the video Dirksen and Jo can be seen singing along from memory. It is clear that the works made a lasting impression on both of them. Dirksen drew attention to this period in his retirement speech as a very special period in his life. He said he could challenge these students to sing almost anything and they would rise to the occasion. He also remarked that they had a lot of fun doing it too.

Christmas Pageants

In addition to works of choral literature, and putting on Broadway style musicals or operettas, the members of the combined Glee Clubs also put on Christmas Pageants at the cathedral. Throughout the 1950's, they would perform a version of a medieval play "The Representation of Adam" combined with elements of the medieval "Office of the Magi." which were adapted by the drama teacher at the NCS Madeline Hicks. This was a service of readings,

²¹³ Rick Dirksen says that most of the solo piano accompaniments were improvised from Dirksen's own shorthand manuscript.

²¹⁴ *ibid.*

music, dance, and dramatic pantomime. It could also be altered from time to time and year to year. Dirksen composed and arranged music for this pageant. Most of the melodies are from traditional Christmas music sources except for some recitatives.²¹⁵ Christmas themes were always a part of his compositions, and these arrangements helped imbibe him with these seasonal ideas.

Just as the music critics of the major Washington papers reviewed the cathedral choir, Choral Society, and the operettas, they also reviewed the Christmas Pageants. A reviewer for the Washington Post and Times Herald who styled himself as someone who dislikes the early celebration of Christmas was none the less enthralled by the Christmas play put on during Advent in front of an audience of thousands.²¹⁶ The reviewer notes that the cathedral is not only the church of the Episcopal Bishop of Washington, but functions also like a "community center." He also comments on the artistic use of lighting and the great musical precision of Paul Callaway who was assisting. After noting the traditional carols, the reviewer summarizes the play as a blend of "joyfulness and dignity."²¹⁷ When one thinks of Christmas pageants, one of the first adjectives often attached to them is "cute," and possibly "kitch" or even "silly." However, Dirksen's pageant was clearly one which matched great musical talent, good artistry, and a dignified atmosphere that nevertheless exuded joy and created a profound environment to enter into the Christmas season. Dirksen and Callaway were constantly trying, even as something with a wide popular appeal as a Christmas pageant, to use the highest quality music, thus showing that quality and popularity were not mutually exclusive terms.

In 1956, there was a failed attempt to replace the Christmas Pageant. Many of the cathedral clergy and some laypeople felt it unacceptable to anticipate Christmas by singing

²¹⁵ Dirksen catalog, 19.

²¹⁶ *The Cathedral Age*, Spring 1955. Reprinted from the Washington Post.

²¹⁷ *ibid.*

carols around the Third Sunday of Advent, which is when the pageants would take place because this was around the time the schools broke for the end of the year recess. Dean Francis B. Sayre commissioned his predecessor John Wallace Suter to write a play using Advent themes and applying them to contemporary moral problems. During the composition process, Dirksen went up to Concord New Hampshire where Suter was chaplain of St. Paul's School. The two of them talked through the themes of Advent and their theological and spiritual import for the practical lives of students. Each scene of the play would depict a different moral problem and solution using an Advent theme. The problem would be solved by using the Advent theme as a spiritual support. Dirksen would compose incidental music to the play consisting mostly of choral arrangements of advent hymns. Dirksen would also produce it. The play, *There Standeth One Among You*, was in the words of Dirksen given a "passable performance" that Advent.²¹⁸ However, its reception was a failure. There was dissatisfaction among the parents and families of the students at being denied their family Christmas on Mt. St. Alban. The themes of the play were also deemed "too preachy" and moralistic. Despite the failure of the play, Dirksen admired Suter and said he learned a lot about theology from the process.²¹⁹ Dirksen was one who learned "on the job" and it seems that the process of composing this play was one where Dirksen was tutored in the science of thinking theologically. Like his music, Dirksen was experimenting in taking the theological tradition and applying it to contemporary reality – a synchronic and diachronic project. It would be a worth-while endeavor despite the failure of the play.

Father Figure at St. Alban

²¹⁸ Dirksen catalog, 30.

²¹⁹ *ibid.*

At the founding of the glee clubs, their membership was about 32. By 1961, there were over 100 members of the combined glee clubs.²²⁰ Doubtless many of the students desired to perform for the sake of the music as well as the opportunity to mix with the opposite sex. However, one of the great reasons for the success and high level of participation of this group was Dirksen himself who was a father figure to many on the cathedral close. Dirksen admitted that he did not have a lot of experience working with young people. In fact, early on, the fourth and fifth grade girls actually gave him an ulcer.²²¹ However, always the optimist, Dirksen decided that all he really needed to do was to know the music really well and to "believe in the kids" and that they were actually capable of performing the music that it would in fact happen. And indeed, it did happen with all sorts and styles of music.

Other Appointments

In the early years of Dirksen's career, money was tight. He was no longer a bachelor and eventually, there were four children in addition to his wife and self to support. Dirksen picked up as much extra work as possible to augment his salary from the cathedral. Church musicians, especially assistants, are notoriously underpaid, which makes it hard to support oneself much less a family of five.²²²

Dirksen became the Organ teacher at American University in 1949. He picked up the job of director of the Department of Agriculture Chorus.²²³ He also directed a group called the "Doctor's Symphony" which was affiliated with the National Institutes of Health.²²⁴ Dirksen

²²⁰ Yang, 66.

²²¹ RWD interview with Hendricks, 52.

²²² His son Mark was not born until 1957.

²²³ Yang 65.

²²⁴ To date, there have been four orchestras which have come from the NIH.

drove up to Baltimore to conduct the "B&O Chorus" which was primarily made up of employees of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.²²⁵

This was all incredibly difficult for Dirksen because the cathedral schedule was already demanding as Callaway had ceded many of the duties of the choir and organ to him when he was out playing recitals or conducting elsewhere.²²⁶ Also Callaway would sometimes be "under the weather" on Sundays and Dirksen would have to bear all of the responsibility for music at the services.²²⁷ With all of these side jobs as well as the cathedral, Dirksen was rarely home at night in those years.

Faith of Our Fathers

In 1950, the city of Washington celebrated the 150th anniversary of its foundation. The sesquicentennial committee sought to have a work composed by a Washington composer, and Dirksen was chosen.²²⁸ Playwright Paul Green had written an historical play about the founding of the city. Dirksen set about writing an overture and symphonic score to accompany the play. He wrote choral music for the event too and also formed and prepared the choirs.²²⁹ The choir consisted of 48 voices, one for each state of the Union at the time. The vast majority of choir members were non-professionals, composed of members of Washington area schools.²³⁰ According to *The Cathedral Age*, Dirksen took the Glee Clubs to form this chorus.²³¹ However, Dirksen's own notes make no mention of this, only that local high school students were auditioned for the chorus.²³² Regardless of which schools were involved, once again, Dirksen set out to make great music with musical forces which needed formation and practice. The

²²⁵ RSD, GD, MD email 1 October 2016.

²²⁶ Yang 65.

²²⁷ Callaway was a known alcoholic - see below.

²²⁸ Press release, 2 June 1950. In Cathedral Archives.

²²⁹ Draft of Short Biography of Dirksen, 1950, in the Cathedral Archives.

²³⁰ Press release, 2 June 1950. In Cathedral Archives.

²³¹ RSD questions this because the work was performed in the summer. RSD correspondence, 17 January 2017.

²³² *The Cathedral Age*, Spring 1952.

result, as with his work with the young voices on Mt. St. Alban was the same - great music produced with raw talent.

Dirksen set out a "hymn to Democracy" for the choirs. He also composed a two part overture. He selected the organ as the primary instrument for the play because of the "solemnity and grandeur of the occasion."²³³ Much of the music consisted of hymns and psalms to accompany the play.

The choir was auditioned in held in early May of 1950 and the show premiered in August. Ronald Arnatt, played a Hammond organ for the occasion. President Truman was in attendance for the first performance. In late May of 1951, the show opened again, but the organ was replaced by a thirteen piece orchestra under Dirksen's baton²³⁴who were members of the National Symphony Orchestra.²³⁵ The show played the next summer as well and in Dirksen's mind was even better than before. However, it did not open for a third season as the attendance had slacked off at the end of the second season and in Dirksen's words, "hymns and psalms didn't make an exciting evening of theater in a large city."²³⁶ The orchestral part of the work was performed several times during the 1950's and then shelved.²³⁷

The music was all copywrited by the playwright Green who wanted to publish it, but never was able to. The music itself is not in the Dirksen files and one would have to go to the Library of Congress to gain access to it. The texts for the choral music include psalms, hymns and texts composed by Green. They were often accompanied by dance. The music was a combination of Anglican Chant and Plainsong for the psalms, acapella SATB music for the

²³³ Press release, 2 June 1950. In Cathedral Archives.

²³⁴ Dirksen catalog, 22.

²³⁵ *The Cathedral Age*, Spring 1952. The Newsletter announcement makes it sound as though Dirksen conducted the entire National Symphony Orchestra and not just thirteen members.

²³⁶ Dirksen catalog, 29.

²³⁷ Dirksen catalog, 22.

hymns and other texts, and orchestral movements.²³⁸ It is a unique work blending the sacred and the secular. It is also an early example of the Dirksen synthesis of bringing together American themes, the sacred tradition Western Music, and all to celebrate the founding of the American capital.

Other Compositions from 1950

The 1950's were some of the most fruitful years for Dirksen as a composer and some of his best known choral works date from this period. One of these well known and often performed even today works is *Chanticleer*, a setting of Ann Austin's Christmas poem. Christmas was a very special time of the year for Dirksen and he would often set Christmas texts in his compositional career.²³⁹ This work was composed in 1950 as a work for a broadcast by CBS from the cathedral. The broadcast was to consist mainly of the second part of Bach's Christmas Oratorio for 26 December *Und es waren Hirten in derselben Gegend* BWV 248. The work was only 26 minutes, so Dirksen composed *Chanticleer* to fill in the remainder of air time for the 30-minute broadcast.²⁴⁰ Originally scored for strings, two flutes, and two English horns, an orchestration identical to that of the cantata, versions for organ solo and for brass and winds were also made, as well as a later setting for brass quintet. Only the organ version has been published in 1974.²⁴¹ The piece possesses many of the melodically angular characteristics of a typical Dirksen work. The multi-metric structure, also an aspect often employed by Dirksen, gives it a playful quality. The opening fanfare announces Christ's birth as in Austin's text the rooster makes the announcement. The work also bears some semblance to the Bach cantata

²³⁸ *ibid.*

²³⁹ MD, interview with the author, 26 August 2015.

²⁴⁰ RSD remembers a different story about the genesis of the composition. He believed it was composed for another Christmas broadcast where the Dean's proposed sermon was to be three minutes short. Rick believes that *Chanticleer* was orchestrated the way it was because it was paired with Berlioz' *L'enfance du Christ*. Either way, the work was composed as broadcast filler and to fit with the orchestration of another work.

²⁴¹ Dirksen catalog, 7.

which begins in contrapuntal passages between the lower voices and upper voices and in the chorale-like section immediately preceding the close. The work resides clearly in the 20th century both in rhythm and in its vagrant harmonic fabric. It has also been recorded and is in print to this very day. However, its inspiration lies in the counterpoint of Bach cantatas, especially in the technique of “pre-imitation” where Bach uses snippets of a chorale in short contrapuntal figures before presenting a full chorale at the end.

Organ Works

Although Dirksen's formal course of studies after high school were focused almost exclusively on organ, he composed very few organ works with only three works being conceived and composed originally as organ works. They were all composed in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Although Dirksen often comments extensively on his compositions in his annotated catalog, he says nothing about any of the organ works other than their date of composition and publication information if applicable. His son Rick offers a personal reflection that Dirksen later became disenchanted with the organ as a musical instrument and felt that it was very mechanical and not capable of the senses of touch and breath as were other instruments.²⁴² This would explain the relative paucity of compositions for the instrument that Dirksen primarily studied academically. It would also explain why in his later employment at the cathedral that he did not agitate to be playing all the time.

He composed an organ prelude in 1948 on the chant tune "Urbs beata Jerusalem." This work was published later in 1965 by Novello.²⁴³ Although there are a number of other later works which were published before the organ work, it is one of the oldest works of his that was published. The work itself is tonally challenging to listen to with lots of non-chord but still

²⁴² RSD email, FIND REFERENCE EDITS!

²⁴³ Dirksen catalog, 22.

diatonic notes added. It also is a free meter following the pulse of the chant. Again, this is a completely 20th century work but inspired by ancient plainchant.

Another remarkable work composed in 1950, the same as *Chanticleer*, and still in print is the Organ Prelude on the hymn tune "*Dominus Regit me*" by John Bacchus Dykes which often accompanies the text of "The King of Love."²⁴⁴ This organ work is similar to other Dirksen works in that it plays with free rhythm and variations on the melody which is only obliquely present. However, the most remarkable thing about it is that it begins in G major. Then when it comes to the first ending, it repeats to the beginning but now with 4 sharps going into a tonal area that sounds like g# minor. This is a "very efficient way of varying the repetition."²⁴⁵ It is remarkable that Dirksen could conceive a work in this way. In many ways, this very early work is similar to his choral work *Humbly I Adore Thee* that he composed at the end of his life. In both instances, there is considerable play with melody, rhythm, and key signature alteration.

The third and final organ solo work was the *Sonata for Organ in Three Movements*. The fast, slow, fast structure reveals a classical structure. The second movement was published by Belwyn-Mills in 1966 as *Cantilena*.²⁴⁶ This work is an expansive arioso with contrasting material.²⁴⁷ The melody is a lyrical but chromatic melody often set to a very adventuresome accompaniment. He also employs other classic *cantus firmus* procedures such as the use of canon and putting the melody in the tenor and bass voices. The work is complex and reveals Dirksen's ability as a composer to work with classical forms yet in the tonal idiom of his day - a synchronic and diachronic reality.

Other Compositions from 1951

²⁴⁴ Hymn 345, second tune, *The Hymnal 1940*.

²⁴⁵ MD email 21 September 2016.

²⁴⁶ Dirksen catalog, 23.

²⁴⁷ MD email 21 September 2016.

For seventy five years, the Phillips Memorial Gallery in Washington DC has hosted a series of concerts which have featured many famous performers such as Jessye Norman, Emmanuel Ax, and Glenn Gould who made his premiere performance there. Dirksen composed three art songs for medium voice and piano for one of these Phillips concerts. The poems *Triad*, and *November Night* by American poet Adelaide Crapsey, as well as *Sixth Anniversary* by American poet, novelist and satirist Peter de Vries were set by Dirksen for the "medium voice" of singer Paul Hume.²⁴⁸ This is another example of Dirksen trying to provide for a uniquely American tradition of art music. Using American poetry, Dirksen the American composer sets out to compose in the time honored genre of art song for the performing venue of an American art gallery. In the ensuing years, Dirksen would be a chamber performer at the Phillips Gallery playing in a trio with the first chair violinist and the first chair cellist of the National Symphony.²⁴⁹

Compositions from 1952

In 1952, Dirksen ventured into his only composition for instrumental chamber ensemble. The result was the three movement eighteen minute long *Sonata for String Quartet, Clarinet and Piano*. This was composed at the request of Emerson Myers who was head of the Piano department at The Catholic University of America. The principal string players of the National Symphony Orchestra were forming a quartet and wanted an original work for their premier concert. Dirksen leaves no remarks on how this work was received by the players or audience. However, he does say that these players became lifelong friends with him and that they continued to make music together for forty years after that.²⁵⁰ This again was an attempt of the

²⁴⁸ Dirksen catalog, 21. Hume, then one of the paid singers at the cathedral would go on to be a famous music critic writing for the Washington Post.

²⁴⁹ RSD, email CHECK FROM EDITS!!!

²⁵⁰ Dirksen catalog, 23.

young composer to venture into a traditional form for a work with a traditional ensemble using his own compositional style. However, following this, there are no records of Dirksen composing further for instrumental chamber music.

Dirksen also continued to compose for the Glee clubs at this time. He wrote music for and composed text for a *St. Albans March* for men's voices and piano. He composed this as a type of "spirit song" or "fight song" to be sung at pep rallies. However, it never caught on.²⁵¹ Sports teams at schools are a particularly American phenomena, and so again, Dirksen was trying his hand at composition for a more American genre.

Compositions from 1953

Dirksen only has one composition listed for 1953 - a song for baritone and piano called *The Last Word*. The melody of the song was composed by Merle Thorpe, head of an oil company and the text was from the poet Matthew Arnold. Thorpe was a member of the secretive and elite Bohemian Grove Club that met in the costal redwood forests of California near Occidental. The noted baritone John Charles Thomas who was also a member of the Bohemian Grove promised to sing the song at one of their club meetings if a piano arrangement could be made. Thorpe's son was friends with Dirksen and persuaded him to make this arrangement and paid him a bottle of Wild Turkey as the composition fee. Apparently the performance was a success.²⁵² The entry for this work in Dirksen's catalog is a delight to read and reflects Dirksen's folksy and humorous approach to life in circumstances where it was appropriate. This also exemplifies the temperament which allowed Dirksen to be so successful in dealing with powerful people who often created difficult situations for work. This made Dirksen a good candidate in

²⁵¹ Dirksen catalog, 21.

²⁵² Dirksen catalog, 21.

the future to be Precentor of the Cathedral when dealing with powerful churchmen and politicians in a context of an era of political and liturgical upheaval.

Other Works from 1954

1954 saw a flurry of compositional activity from Dirksen. Much of his creative energy was focused on the glee clubs. In addition to the operetta *The Flamingo Hat*, the musical theater work performed by the joint glee clubs, he also composed *The Treasure Chest*, an eleven minute work for the spring concert of the combined glee clubs. The text was written by a fourth grader in the Lower School named Suzy Hayes. It was a poem about Captain Kidd and his pirate treasure and it won the prize for the best writing in the school that year. It was scored for men's voices and instruments and performed only once.²⁵³

This year, Dirksen also returned to the composition of sacred music. He had written only secular music for the past two years, and not written any sacred compositions which could be used in the liturgy since 1950. *For this cause I bow my knees* was composed for mixed voices and string quartet and was commissioned by St. Alban's Parish on the Cathedral Close to celebrate their centennial.²⁵⁴ The text was taken from the King James Version of Ephesians 3.14-19. It was revised for organ and choir in 1988.

Dirksen also began composing canons in 1954. In the summers when the boys were on break, the men of the choir would sing the liturgies. Composers often turn to the device of canon when composing for equal voices in order to create polyphonic textures but with limited capacity for range. One summer, the cathedral men sang a set of ten canons by Joseph Haydn where each canon focused on a text based on one of the Ten Commandments. Dirksen was so inspired by these works that he decided to compose a set of them himself. Rick Dirksen said that his father

²⁵³ Dirksen catalog, 35.

²⁵⁴ RSD, email 2 June 2016.

set about to compose these canons at a picnic table in their backyard during the summer break from school. Dirksen called the kids together and told them "you can run around, play, and shout - however, do not sing or whistle any melodies while I am working on this project." He was trying to figure out the musical puzzles of canons which required precise work.²⁵⁵ The result was the composition of *Eleven Canons for Psalm 101*. All of them are to be sung *a capella*. Some of these canons are very straight forward three or four voice structures with one meter throughout and a simple harmonic pattern, but others have more chromatic alterations and metric shifts. Canon three has three separate canons back to back. Canon ten has articulation changes and rhythmic challenges. Canon eleven, the final canon and doxology, is particularly difficult in that it is chant like with no real meter and with chromatic harmonies that are sometimes very close with intervals.²⁵⁶ (FIGURE OUT HOW TO QUOTE SCORE). Each canon has a "map" that will help the performers to make their way through the canon, to go from one section to the next if there are multiple sections, and the all important aspect in performing a canon, figuring out how to stop.²⁵⁷ Dirksen did intend them to be sung at liturgies and to take the place of an anthem or motet.²⁵⁸ They could also be sung together as a set and were heard as such at the "extended Evensong and concert" given in August of 1954 by the men before the boys returned.²⁵⁹ Again, this is an example of Dirksen composing with traditional forms, yet bringing his own love of fluctuating rhythm and adventuresome harmony.

Compositions from 1955

In 1955, Dirksen continued to compose sacred music with a second set of canons. The *Twelve Proverbial Canons* were settings of the first few verses of the book of proverbs. Again,

²⁵⁵ RD, interview with the author, 4 June 2015.

²⁵⁶ QUOTE SCORE!!!

²⁵⁷ Dirksen catalog, 13.

²⁵⁸ introduction to score.

²⁵⁹ Dirksen catalog, 13.

the choir premiered these at one of the extended evensongs. Dirksen sees them as a continuance of the project from 1954 which were inspired by Haydn and intended for use either as a set or as individual works during the liturgy.

This year also saw the beginning of a number of compositions of sacred music that would be published. These would have enduring power, most still being used today as standard repertoire at the National Cathedral and for many American church choirs. *A Child my Choice* was composed in 1955 and published by H.W. Gray in 1957. It was the first work of Dirksen's to be published. The setting of yet another Christmas text was taken from Robert Southwell's poem was for four part mixed choir. The structure is homophonic with no contrapuntal movement and repeats in a hymn-like nature for each strophe of the poem. After a fairly straightforward beginning in the key of F major, the harmonic progression goes into the very different territory in the third phrase to the key of Ab major and then plays back and forth between Ab and C major until the final phrase which returns to the straightforward progression of the first two phrases. This vagrancy of key is something that Dirksen would do in many of his compositions and hymns. He would tend to move from a very straight forward harmonic progression to a far flung tonal area and then back in a very short span of time. *A Child my Choice* would become one of Dirksen's personal favorite and most beloved Christmas works. It has been sung every Christmas at the cathedral since 1958.²⁶⁰ This work is still widely performed and has been recently recorded by both the cathedral choir as well as the Atlanta Singers.

Compositions from 1956

In addition to the unsuccessful Advent Morality Play mentioned above *There Standeth One Among You*, Dirksen composed a setting of the Communion Service in E Minor for low and

²⁶⁰ The Cathedral Age, Summer 1991.

high voices with organ.²⁶¹ This was published by HW Grey in 1960 and was the second of Dirksen's works to be published. *A Trisagion* was added to the setting in 1990. The text for this communion service was that of *The Book of Common Prayer* published in 1928 by the American Episcopal Church. This Prayer Book was substantially revised and republished in 1979. The 1979 version retained the 1928 translation as one option called "Rite I" and added the possibility of a Trisagion in place of the Kyrie. This setting is another example of Dirksen's practical side with a composition for limited choral forces and then revised for use in the newer form of the Episcopal liturgy.

The music of this setting is informed by chant and uses modal melodies. The first two invocations of the Kyrie have a modal melody over a vocal drone. The third invocation is a chant like melody with a few notes changed with chromaticism. This is an example of a work inspired by an older form, yet very much a work of its time. The Sanctus begins in a plainsong style in unison but soon goes into a slower and harmonized texture. Each invocation of the Agnus Dei is a two part canon at the fifth. Finally, the Gloria, which in the 1960 edition was at the end of the service corresponding to its historic position in the Anglican liturgy at the end of the service,²⁶² has a modal opening which is a variation on the opening of John Merbecke's Gloria which would have been very familiar to all Anglicans. However, it is changed with the raised second note. As the Dirksen sons would described it, it made you think "oh, here is the traditional opening of the Gloria - nope!"²⁶³ Mark Dirksen counts this work as one of his own personal favorites in the Dirksen oeuvre. It is indeed a work which illustrates the thesis of this dissertation. It is a work which is informed by the traditions of plainsong and counterpoint. The tradition is so blatantly obvious that most older Episcopalians would recognize the homage to

²⁶¹ RWD catalogue, 18.

²⁶² The Gloria was not restored to its position at the front of the Eucharistic liturgy until the 1979 Prayer Book.

²⁶³ Email correspondence FINISH FOOTNOTE!!!

Anglican plainsong. However, it is a contemporary work with just enough notes changed and dissonance added to be a truly independent work of art.

Compositions from 1957

In addition to the composition of the musical *Houseboat*, 1957 saw a year of a flurry of compositions for Dirksen. He composed an anthem for men's voices in *For those who minister and heal* which was a setting of a hymn in *The Hymnal 1940* and was composed for the graduation of the Garfield Hospital nurses.²⁶⁴ He also composed the Christmas work *Fairest of Morning Lights Appear* which is an eight part SSAATTBB unaccompanied setting of the "Psalm for Christmas Day" by the 17th century Caroline Divine Thomas Pestel who was chaplain to the unfortunate King Charles I. This work is a chorale fantasia. The chorale is presented last after quite a bit of foreshadowing, which is a Dirksen trait and present in *Welcome all Wonders* and *Chanticleer* among other pieces.²⁶⁵ *Fairest of Morning Lights* would be published by HW Grey in 1960.

One of Dirksen's more well-known works, *Hilariter*, or *The Whole Wide World Rejoices Now*, an Easter Anthem for SATB choir, brass quartet and timpani was composed for Easter Day in 1957 and published by HW Grey in 1960. This macaronic text was first "Die ganze Welt, Herr Jesu Christ" by Friedrich Von Spee and was written in the early 17th century. It was translated in the 19th by Percy Dearmer. The anthem has a very angular brass and organ part which illustrate the jocular virtue of "*hilarotes*" which, according to Dearmer, is listed by the Shepherd of Hermas as one of the virtues which the young holy maidens possessed.²⁶⁶ Raymond Glover describes Dirksen's setting as resembling renaissance song and if sung at "a sprightly

²⁶⁴ RWD catalog, 8.

²⁶⁵ MD email 29 September 2016.

²⁶⁶ Percy Dearmer, *Songs of Praise Discussed* (London, 1933), 105. I believe he is talking about the virgins of the early church.

tempo with the feeling of one pulse per measure [which] becomes the apotheosis of a jubilant dance."²⁶⁷ The text and the setting reflect the response of all of creation to the reality of the resurrection. This is an example of grounding his work in an established form like a renaissance dance, yet with angular melodies and rhythms which are indicative of 20th century composition.

The chorale like nature of the first verse lead the Standing Commission on Church Music to ask Dirksen to revise this part and create a new hymn. Dirksen "regularized" the rhythm to make it easier for congregational singing and published it as the hymn *Hilariter* in the Hymnal 1982.²⁶⁸

The Golden Anniversary of the Cathedral - 1957

In 1955 the cathedral staff began planning for the 50th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone which would be in 1957. As part of the celebrations, it was decided that Leo Sowerby, sometimes referred to as the "Dean of American Church Music" would be commissioned to compose a large scale work.²⁶⁹ *The Throne of God* was commissioned for the Washington and the Cathedral Choral Societies under the direction of Callaway. The Kingdom of God as presented in the Book of Revelation was the subject. The work required orchestra and the addition of fifty male voices from the St. Albans glee club. It was presented along with the oratorio "The Mount of Olives" by Beethoven in a concert which included a reading from the scriptures by the Presiding Bishop as well as his blessing. The concertgoers were given commemorative books for the occasion. This is a fine example of pairing the old and the new for the cathedral and an example of what Callaway and Dirksen were trying to do to promote a new American tradition. The programming of a standard large scale work from the choral

²⁶⁷ The Hymnal Companion (henceforth called THC) Volume IIIa, 428.

²⁶⁸ Hymn 211.

²⁶⁹ The Cathedral Age, Christmas 1957.

repertoire by Beethoven with a newly composed work by an American composer from the Episcopal Church was part of the vision of establishing a new choral tradition rooted in the old.

Two 50th anniversary events also provided compositional impetus for Dirksen in 1957. The first was the golden anniversary of the foundation of St. Albans School which had its start the same year as the laying of the foundation stone. Dirksen composed both the *Bishop Dun Fanfare* for 3 trumpets and the *Entrata Festiva* for 3 trumpets, organ and timpani for this service of thanksgiving. The National Cathedral is one of grand stature and the architecture lends itself to grand processions where fanfares lend a fitting touch. Dirksen once remarked to his colleague Leo Nestor that he had probably composed or improvised more than 500 fanfares during his tenure at the cathedral.²⁷⁰

Dirksen lent his compositional abilities to the anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone. Two works were composed for the commemorative service on Michalmas Day 29 September 1957. The first, *Yet Even Now Saith the Lord* a work for SSAATTBB was a setting of scripture from the books of Joel, Hosea, and psalm 145. Dean Sayre called upon his predecessor, Dean John Suter, to "write the service"²⁷¹ for the anniversary celebration and he chose these passages from scripture. Dirksen describes the pastiche of scripture melded together for this service as, "a most brilliant and effective liturgical effort...involving all cathedral foundation and music forces."²⁷² The second work is one of Dirksen's best known compositions.

Welcome All Wonders

²⁷⁰ GET SOURCE

²⁷¹ This service was a paraliturgy which consisted of a procession which stopped at various parts of the church and had prayers and responsive precees. When the procession moved, there were all different types of music. The text of the service itself was a type of pastiche of scripture with other quotes from Woodrow Wilson, Jeremy Taylor and PG Medd. This is an interesting collection of people – three noted Anglican clerics and an American President who was a Presbyterian but buried in the National Cathedral. This is also representative of the blend of classical Anglican and American elements in the cathedral. The music was the eclectic blend of traditional European sacred music and newly composed works. QUOTE THE PROGRAM!!!

²⁷² Dirksen catalog, 12.

The second work composed by Dirksen for this anniversary service on St. Michael's Day 1957²⁷³ would be perhaps his most famous, *Welcome All Wonders*. This oft performed work is usually fittingly programed around Christmas time as the text is from the more extended work "A Hymn of the Nativity" by the Caroline poet Richard Crashaw. The original version was for three trumpets, three trombones, timpani, organ and SATB chorus. Dirksen made several different orchestrations of this work. In 1972 a version was arranged for 2 flutes, oboe, English horn, bassoon, and strings to augment the original instrumentation for performance at the Choral Arts Society's Kennedy Center Christmas program. In 1975, Dirksen made another arrangement for brass quartet, timpani and organ. This arrangement was published by Shawnee Press in 1977. The reason for reducing the numbers in the brass forces was to make the work more practically accessible to a church music program with only limited financial resources for a quartet. The final orchestration was done by Dirksen in 1991 and described by Norman Scribner as,

...for 2 flutes, oboe, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, strings and organ. The intent of this was to make the piece available for virtually any combination of instruments available. It also provided woodwind parts for several of the running eighth note passages for organ in the original instrumentation, presumably for performance in venues with no organ.²⁷⁴

This final version was also computer engraved by Dirksen in 1992 and is still available from the cathedral archives.²⁷⁵ In 1982, *Welcome All Wonders* was performed on a special PBS broadcast with the Choral Arts Society with special guest soloist Leontyne Price, narrator Richard Thomas,²⁷⁶ and conducted by Norman Scribner.²⁷⁷

²⁷³ The published octavo of this work incorrectly says that it was written for and first performed at a televised Christmas Day service in 1975 and broadcast by NBC. Both the Dirksen catalog and the Order of Service for the Anniversary commemoration contradict this.

²⁷⁴ The history of the genesis of this piece came from Norman Scribner in an email correspondence with Leo Nestor, 3 October 2011.

²⁷⁵ Dirksen catalog, 12.

²⁷⁶ He was presumably narrator for the Christmas Special as *Welcome All Wonders* does not have a narrator *per se*.

²⁷⁷ Dirksen catalog 12.

This seven plus minute work contains many features which are common in Dirksen compositions. It begins with a great brass and timpani fanfare which were very common for Dirksen's works written for the National Cathedral. The key is essentially D major with a lowered seventh. Like many other Dirksen works, it also goes into various key areas in quick succession, often getting there by common tone modulation. The metric structure is also very complex, another Dirksen gesture, rapidly changing from measure to measure to accommodate the text. There are some angular melodies, particularly in the organ and brass parts, but also in the choral parts. Dirksen says that the first two minutes may be used as an introit. Indeed, this is a heraldic opening suitable for an introit. However, after these first two minutes the work slows down and becomes more harmonically complex. During this slow section, the harmonies go far afield from D major to realms such as Ab minor, Cb major, Eb major, Db major Bb major, and finally returning to a reprise of the fanfare. Near the end the chorus sings a chorale in D major punctuated by heraldic motifs in the brass. This chorale seems to be an homage to the baroque and is not unlike a Bach cantata which usually ends with a chorale. This chorale is very straight forward harmonically in D major. The melodic material for the chorale is also prefigured throughout the work - another imitation of Bach who would often base the earlier material of his cantatas on the chorale melody which he used at the end. This is also a compositional technique that Dirksen frequently used especially in works such as *Chanticleer* and to a certain extent *Welcome Happy Morning*. After the chorale, there is a brief return of the fanfare in D with the lowered 7th and the work ends. This is an example of the baroque form reinterpreted with Dirksen traits – totally new American and totally traditional.

Despite some of the complexities, especially in the difficult organ parts and sometimes angular choral parts, *Welcome All Wonders* is a very accessible work and is one of the most oft

performed works of Dirksen to this day. It has been featured on recordings by the Choral Arts Society of Washington, The Cathedral Choral Society, and several other well-known musical groups.

1958

In 1958, the great organ console was being replaced. After twenty years of almost daily use, the console needed a major overhaul. One of the issues with American Classic organs and organs with electric action is that they have the tendency to need frequent rebuilding. To read the narrative of the overall history of music at the National Cathedral is to read a history of not only building a building and building a choir, but also constant rebuilding and enlarging the organ. In the summer of 1958 while the console was replaced, a small portative organ built by Dirksen's father and gifted to the Dirksen family was used instead. This instrument is still stored at the cathedral and is called the "Dirksen portative organ."²⁷⁸ Dirksen composed two works for use with this portative organ for the summer of 1958, *Blessed are thou, O Lord God* (the *Benedictus es*) and *O be joyful in the Lord* (the *Jubilate*).²⁷⁹ The *Benedictus es* was for TTBB and baritone solo. The *Jubilate* was written for high and low voice. The translations were both from the BCP 1928 and are alternative canticles given for Morning Prayer. Once again, Dirksen's practical side governed his compositional output. These were works written for a particular musical situation in the cathedral and responding to the resources available. The *Jubilate* was published in 1960.

The carol *Christmas Lullaby* or *Hush my dear, lie still and slumber* is another one of the strophic and homophonic *a capella* Christmas works of Dirksen.²⁸⁰ Typical for him, the meter

²⁷⁸ RSD, phone interview with author, 20 September 2016. Note that this instrument does not belong to the cathedral per se.

²⁷⁹ The canticles in the BCP are often referred to by their Latin incipits.

²⁸⁰ Dirksen's catalog uses the first words of the piece whereas the published octavo has the title "Christmas Lullaby."

changes all over the place to accommodate the text, and the key centers are vagrant and sometimes even jarring in this lullaby for mixed voices. It was published by Lawson-Gould in 1961.

Another Christmas anthem composed in 1958 but not performed until quite a bit later was the lively *Run Shepherds, Run*. Dirksen juxtaposes slower homophonic verses in 4 with the rhythmically driven refrain on the phrase "run shepherds run...run...run" in 6/8 which sonically imitates the patter of the shepherd's running to Bethlehem. The slow verses are true to the Dirksen love of moving to many different keys without any preparation as well as many metrical changes. However, the staccato refrain, which has a number of dissonant chords, is still very much in the key of G major. This piece is very accessible aurally. The Rondo form mimics his *Psalm for Christmas Day*.²⁸¹ Although it was composed in 1958, it was not performed until 12 December 1987, and then in a revised version. It was published in 1993 by Oxford University Press.²⁸² I am unsure of any reason for this delay.

Jonah - An Oratorio - a different kind of work

During this extremely prolific period of composition for Dirksen, he composed and produced a number of operettas, wrote many short works for use in the liturgy, and also some longer works such as *Welcome all Wonders*. However, he also wrote a few works that were even greater in their magnitude, their orchestration, as well as their harmonic palate and style. One of these works which was entirely different in style was the Oratorio *Jonah*. Begun in 1957, it was fully orchestrated by early February of 1958 and composed for the annual concert for the combined Glee clubs of The National Cathedral School for Girls and St. Albans. The first performance was on 23 February 1958 which consisted of the high school students and twenty-

²⁸¹ MD email 29 September 2016.

²⁸² Dirksen catalog, 10.

four members of the National Symphony Orchestra and performed in the gymnasium of the Girls school. The role of Jonah was sung by Dirksen's friend Robert Ellinwood.²⁸³ It is an incredible feat to finish a work only a few weeks before performing it. No doubt the choral parts must have been done sooner in order to prepare a high school choir to sing an oratorio that is not simple. It also would have been an incredible honor to have a high school choir accompanied by players from the National Symphony Orchestra, one of the most prestigious orchestras in the world.

The libretto is the work of Dirksen's good friend Day Thorpe. Both Dirksen and Thorpe had a love for Herman Melville's novel, *Moby Dick*. They also believed that the novel and the King James Version of the biblical Jonah narrative, although very different in a certain aspect, still fit nicely together. They decided to weave parts of chapter 9 of the novel which is Father Mapple's sermon inspired by Jonah with the biblical story of Jonah. The biblical account is quite brief, only one chapter of narrative and one chapter of Jonah's prayer (canticle). In chapter 9 of the novel, the whalers are in a Whalemen's chapel in New Bedford. Fr. Mapple the chaplain leads a fairly dark "Whaler's Hymn" which is followed by an emotional sermon. Thorpe fills in the details of Jonah's adventures with the whale by supplying material from Father Mapple's sermon. Thorpe's second edition of the libretto ends with the Whaling Hymn as a concluding hymn.

The music itself is exceedingly difficult and complex. Dirksen had never written an oratorio, nor had he ever tried to compose such a lengthy work aside from the musical theater works. What prompted him to do such a thing? Rick Dirksen notes that the glee club of 1958 was quite precocious and Dirksen wanted to compose something special for them.²⁸⁴ Indeed, the

²⁸³ Dirksen catalog, 32. Robert Ellinwood had gone through the choir program at St. Albans and the cathedral. He is the son of the music scholar Dr. Leonard Ellinwood, who for many years worked in the music department of the Library of Congress and was an expert on the works of Thomas Tallis. RSD, email 19 September 2016.

²⁸⁴ RSD email 9 June 2016.

glee club would have had to have been of incredible talent to perform this difficult work. The role of Jonah is sung by a Baritone. The narration is sung by the Alto section.²⁸⁵ The Word of God as well as the grumbling of the mariners aboard the ship is given to the whole chorus.

Why an oratorio? Why a piece so different than all of the other music he had written up until now? Why so different than all of the many other works he composed at the end of the 1950's? To begin to answer this question, we should look at Dirksen's own compositions. *Faith of Our Fathers* was foundational in his compositions, especially for larger works. This was his first endeavor with large scale musical forces, and the rest of his compositions are shot through with that experience. Although different musically, *Jonah* was the next long "serious" work. However, Rick Dirksen believes that this Oratorio actually is a bridge between the more serious sacred works and the more light hearted Operettas.²⁸⁶ The same could be said of *Faith of Our Fathers*.

I believe another source we should look to are the works performed by the Cathedral Choral Society around the time *Jonah* was composed. One of the works which may have inspired Dirksen was William Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* which the CCS performed in 1954. It is an extended oratorio, and makes use of more contemporary harmonic devices than much of the other music Dirksen was performing at the time. Walton's subject matter is also biblical, dramatic, and from the Old Testament. It opens in a heraldic way like *Jonah* does. Another possible influence might be Leo Sowerby's oratorio *The Throne of God*. This oratorio was performed for the 50th anniversary of the foundation stone which was the same year that Dirksen began *Jonah*. Indeed, Sowerby's work is harmonically adventuresome as well. However, it does not have soloists. Dirksen seems to have a veiled criticism of this in the review he writes for the

²⁸⁵ Both Rick Dirksen and Mark Dirksen believe that this alto narration was inspired by Ralph Vaughn Williams *Mr. Valliant for Truth*, a work that Dirksen loved.

²⁸⁶ RSD email 19 September 2016.

Cathedral Age when he says of speaking of the dense choral fabric that "the relief of a single voice, as heard in many oratorios, is not present."²⁸⁷ The notion that Dirksen was not especially fond of Sowerby's oratorio was confirmed by Rick Dirksen.²⁸⁸

Perhaps Dirksen decided to write this oratorio with the Walton oratorio somewhat fresh in his mind, having performed it three years before. He would have had the Sowerby in his mind and in his fingers as he was the accompanist for the CCS and helped rehearse it. In addition, there is the motet *Mr. Valiant for Truth* by Vaughan Williams where Dirksen most likely got his idea for Alto narration.²⁸⁹ Finally, the CCS performed *The Mount of Olives* by Beethoven in 1957 (along with the Sowerby), the *Christmas Oratorio* by Bach (really three oratorios in one) and *Israel in Egypt* by Handel in 1958. He was inundated with oratorio from many different time periods, including two contemporary oratorios. I suspect that all of this had an influence on him to try and compose one himself. It would have characteristics of all of these oratorios, yet it would be uniquely Dirksen - a diachronic and synchronic reality.

The oratorio *Jonah* was performed only six times. The first performance was by the Cathedral glee clubs. The second performance was performed in New York City on 19 January 1961 the night before President Kennedy was inaugurated and in the midst of a raging snow storm. It was directed by Thomas Dunn and performed by the musicians of the Church of the Incarnation in New York City. It was for this performance that the work was revised to include the Whaling hymn. The original version ended with a quiet orchestral coda. However, this was thought a weak ending especially for the dramatic nature of the work and the moral message of

²⁸⁷ The Cathedral Age, Christmas 1957.

²⁸⁸ RWD, email exchange 13 June 2016.

²⁸⁹ MD, email exchange – FIND SOURCE!

the need to follow the Will of God in our lives. Dirksen supplied the powerful music to accompany this text of the Whaling hymn.²⁹⁰

The oratorio was performed one more time at the cathedral schools, and then in 1967 at All Saints Church in Chevy Chase, MD. This performance was recorded and was conducted by Richard Roeckelein who had succeeded Dirksen as director of music at the Cathedral Schools. The soloist was Baritone Richard Stilwell.²⁹¹ It was performed twice more in 1997 by the Glee Clubs of Horace Mann School in New York - once in New York City and once back at the cathedral. The conductor for this was Johannes Somary who was a St. Albans graduate and Dirksen's eldest son, Richard S. Dirksen was the Baritone soloist.

1959

Following the monumental year of 1958 and preceding some more big compositions to follow, 1959 was a "slower" year. However, by no means was it unproductive. Dirksen composed the operetta *The Rose and the Ring* discussed above. He also wrote a fanfare for the installation of Bishop Arthur C. Lichtenberger as the twenty first Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. The Bishop Primate of the Episcopal Church has no particular territorial diocese directly under her or him. However, the Presiding Bishop does have a *cathedra* in the National Cathedral, thus having a unique situation with two Bishop's Chairs in one church building. Bishop Lichtenberger was installed on 14 January 1959. This is one more occasion of Dirksen's musical output being shaped by the life of the particular ecclesial communion that he was a member of and whom he worked for all of his life.

The other four works composed in 1959 were *a capella* motets for three part men's voices. They were written for the summer choir and are, according to Dirksen, "traditional Latin

²⁹⁰ Dirksen catalog, 33.

²⁹¹ RSD email 9 June 2016.

introit texts." However, these texts are not introits from the traditional introit texts as found in the *Missale Romanum*. Rick Dirksen suspects that Dirksen used the term "introit" not because they were formal introits of the liturgy but rather that they might be used at the start of the service before an opening hymn.²⁹² They also can be used as the principal anthem. *Jesu, rex admirabilis* is the first verse of a hymn for the Holy Name of Jesus. *Tua Jesu dilectio* seems to be a devotional hymn that was also set by several other composers. *Accende, lumen sensibus* is the second verse of the hymn *Veni, Creator Spiritus*. *Hodie! Christus natus est* is the antiphon for the Magnificat at Second Vespers for Christmas.²⁹³ All four motets are basically homophonic with a few contrapuntal moments. *Jesu Rex* and *Hodie* are sprightly motets with a driving rhythm. The *Hodie* ends with the tempo marking "as fast as possible" with the final text "Alleluia." By contrast, the *Tua Jesu* and *Accende lumen* are slower and introspective. Three of these motets, *Jesu, rex admirabilis*, *Tua Jesu dilectio* and *Hodie! Christus natus est* were published in 1978²⁹⁴ by Shawnee Press as *Three Songs of Prayer and Praise*. In this edition, the Latin texts were given an English underlay which was an extremely loose if not altogether different translation by Dirksen himself. Apparently he did this for poetic reasons because he also offers a more literal translation below the score. Another interesting facet of these four motets is that Dirksen said in his catalog that all four of them were published in the Shawnee publication.²⁹⁵ However, *Accende lumen* was not. Rick recalls that Dirksen was not happy with

²⁹² RSD email correspondence 10 June 2016. The "Anthem" is a special work in the Divine Office for Anglicans after the final collects and before the closing blessing. Also, according to Rick, there were no introits of any sort used at the National Cathedral in those days.

²⁹³ These liturgical references are for the Catholic Liturgy of the Latin Rite. The Anglican liturgy does not have proper texts for Introits, nor do they have proper hymns at the Divine Office for feasts or antiphons for the Magnificat. The *Veni, Creator Spiritus* is an exception as it is a proper hymn used at ordinations in the Anglican liturgy.

²⁹⁴ Dirksen's catalog says 1975, but the edition says 1978.

²⁹⁵ Dirksen catalog, 6.

this decision. But it is an oddity that all *four* should be listed in Dirksen's catalog as published in "Three Songs of Prayer and Praise."

The Compositions of 1960

1960 saw the composition of two more big works. The Communion Service in E was composed for Easter. It is a big festival setting scored for two trumpets, two trombones, timpani, organ, and SATB choir. The work is dedicated to Dean Sayre. It indeed is a big setting with a lot of parallel 4ths and 5ths in heraldic motifs both in the brass and in the choir. The whole work has an epic sound to it as is appropriate for Easter. The organ part is also incredibly complex in meter and a fast rhythm with lots of notes. Dirksen quotes the *Victimae paschali laudes* in the Sanctus in parallel 4ths. He also quotes his own *Christ our Passover* in the Gloria.²⁹⁶ This shows his musical borrowing to reflect the connectedness of his compositions to the past as well as to the rest of his works.

The Mass was re-orchestrated in 1964 for double wind quintet - 2 oboes, English horn, 2 bassoons, 2 trumpets, and 3 trombones. This was to match the orchestration of the Stravinsky *Mass*. That year the cathedral glee clubs performed both Masses in their concert and Dirksen wanted to make full use of his players. Other than the orchestration, the two works bear little semblance in common, especially with the Dirksen being a big festival setting and the Stravinsky being a very subtle, introspective, and quiet work. The Dirksen Mass was published by H.W. Gray in 1964. In 1987 the work was once again revised as the text was made to match the more contemporary language of Rite II.²⁹⁷

The second work from 1960, *The Temper*, was composed for the 60th anniversary of the National Cathedral School for Girls. For the text, Dirksen again turned to the Caroline poet

²⁹⁶ Perhaps this is why he put the incorrect date of 1960 in his catalog for *Christ our Passover* since this work was composed the same year and uses some of the same musical material.

²⁹⁷ Dirksen catalog, 18. An act contributing to the process of liturgical reform.

George Herbert. The orchestration is for flute, oboe, bassoon, horn, trumpet, strings, percussion, timpani and piano. Dirksen wanted to involve all 390 girls in the school from 4th - 12th grade. He decided that one of the things that any students can do together is to cheer and to try and out cheer each other. It is a poem about the human drama of salvation of the individual man - stretching forth to heaven, but often times failing and veering towards hell. To each of these extremes, the non-gee club members of the school would cheer one side or the other from their risers located around the center of the crossing of the cathedral. Dirksen added the gee club of the boys school to the girls gee club for the singing parts. He also put a lot of drums into the score. Finally, he composed "a forceful solo piano part" and he turned to one of the more well known performers in the Washington area, Fr. Russell Woollen from the Catholic University of America as featured piano soloist. Dirksen says of this piano part and performance that it gave the work "the shape of a hard battle." The work lasts 12 minutes and has not been performed since. Dirksen also did not make a computer engraving of this work as he did for many of his other works.²⁹⁸

The Mystery of *Christ our Passover*

One of the most famous of Dirksen's Choral works is his setting of the Easter Canticle *Christ our Passover*. This cento of texts is often referred to as the "Easter Anthems"²⁹⁹ by Anglican liturgists and is a combination of texts from 1 Corinthians 5.7-8, Romans 6.9-11, and 1 Corinthians 15.20-22. In the 1928 BCP, it was appointed to be sung in place of the *Venite* at

²⁹⁸ Dirksen catalog, 35.

²⁹⁹ This term seems to come from Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer, 1549 where he appointed them to be sung before Morning Prayer on Easter. Marion J. Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book* (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), 105-106.

Morning Prayer on Easter Day and throughout the Easter Octave.³⁰⁰ Dirksen's dramatic setting for Brass, timpani, organ and choir is one of his most often performed works.

The work is in three sections and has some highly angular motives. One of the notable characteristics are the modal type of fanfares from the brass. The trombones begin with a line which makes heavy use of accidentals. It is modal sounding and the key is ambiguous. At the moment that Dirksen was composing this, he was also working with the Cathedral Choral Society on Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*.³⁰¹ Although the works are different, the Stravinsky also begins in a very harmonically ambivalent way using modal techniques. Above the trombones Dirksen writes trumpet fanfares with ascending fourths. The trombones repeat their motive now in parallel fifths. The trumpets again repeat their fanfares. The theme of the trombones occurs over and over in a passacaglia style figure in the first part in the choral, organ and brass. This recurring motive is another parallel with the Stravinsky with its repetitious opening theme. The second half of Dirksen's work begins with a staccato motif in the organ and then the trumpets that introduces the text "likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin." The original theme of the trombones returns with the text, "Christ is risen from the dead." It is a well constructed work based on a few motives. It makes effective use of the trumpets with a traditional horn call motive of an ascending fourth. However, the motives of the trombones and the trumpet in the middle section seem to be derived in a playful manner from the opening material with some medieval sounds with the parallel fifths in the trombones. It also is mostly in d minor with a D major final. D minor is also the key often used for the *Victimae* as well as many hymn tunes associated with it. The *Christ our Passover* would fit nicely paired with these works.

³⁰⁰ Hatchett, 105.

³⁰¹ The CCS performed it on 29 December 1947. With the new dating of the composition of this work as 1948, the connection with the Stravinsky work becomes much more plausible.

This work is highly unusual in the way it was documented or rather for the lack of documentation in Dirksen's own catalog as well as the complete lack of compositional history. Dirksen left entries in his catalog for almost every piece that he composed. These often describe what the inspiration behind the piece was, the occasion for which it was written, and often a memorable story attached to the work. For this most famous work though, nothing. Dirksen only gives its date of composition as 1960, its publishing in 1965 by H.W. Gray, and musical forces as "SATB, organ, 2 trums., 2 toms, timpani." The archives are also bare as to manuscripts or compositional history clues. Usually Dirksen saved many of the manuscripts which led up to the publication of a work. For *Christ our Passover* there is nothing in the archives except 4 copies of the completed published octavo. The 1960 compositional date situates this work right in the middle of one of Dirksen's most prolific periods of composition which includes works such as *Hillariter*, *Jonah*, *The Fiery Furnace*, and *Welcome All Wonders*. However, *Christ our Passover* is actually a much earlier work.

In an interview with former choir boy John Shenefield, he recalled that one of the happiest memories of Dirksen was singing his *Christ our Passover*. However, Shenefield was a choir boy in the late 1940's and remembered quite clearly singing this work then. It was also orchestrated for brass and timpani at the time.³⁰² Rick Dirksen remembers it being sung in 1952 and that the choir boys were disappointed that it was not sung again in 1953.³⁰³ The Order of Service for Easter Day confirms that it was sung in 1948, 1949, 1950, and 1952 (the leaflet for 1951 is missing).³⁰⁴ Thus the latest date *Christ our Passover* could have possibly been composed is early 1948.

³⁰² SHENEFIELD INTERVIEW – insert citation!!!

³⁰³ RD, email conversation 25 June 2016.

³⁰⁴ Orders of Service, Archives of the National Cathedral.

Thus, instead of *Christ our Passover* coming in the midst of more mature compositions by a 39 year old Dirksen, it must be Dirksen's earliest orchestrated work and really his first important work. Dirksen wrote nothing even comparable to this work until *Chanticleer* in 1950. Aside from a Magnificat and Nunc dimittis, a setting of the *Victimae Paschali laudes* for junior choir, and two other short works, there are no other works before *Christ our Passover*. A setting of *Iam sol recedit* written in 1949 was the first work he would later transcribe into computer notation. Nothing from this time period is published either, save for the somewhat subdued organ prelude on *Urbs beata Jerusalem*. It would seem that Dirksen was not overly excited about publishing these earlier works. He also lists his first orchestrated work as *Faith of our Fathers* in 1950. However, *Christ our Passover* precedes it by at least two years. Rick Dirksen opines that *Christ our Passover* may have been the work which prompted Howard Mitchell to recommend Dirksen to Paul Green for *Faith of our Fathers*, especially since the brass and timpani players who would have accompanied it would have come from the National Symphony Orchestra. According to Rick, this was a watershed moment in Dirksen's career.³⁰⁵ *Christ our Passover* was not a product of the mature Dirksen, but a seminal work which launched his career. Indeed, *Christ our Passover* is actually the first major work of Dirksen's. Yet the mystery of his lack of documentation remains. The Cathedral newsletter lists the new compositions *Cantate Domino*³⁰⁶ and *Deus misereatur* by name and recalls that they were sung at Evensong in May of 1948. The newsletter also makes reference to a work for Easter that is probably *Christ our Passover* but does not list anything about this much more distinctive work. Also, Dirksen was very meticulous in documenting and arranging his compositions. Why did he

³⁰⁵ RD, email conversation 25 June 2016.

³⁰⁶ Psalm 98. This was introduced into the Book of Common Prayer 1552 as an alternative to the Magnificat at Evensong. Massey Hamilton Shepherd Jr., *The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 27. Henceforth called "OABCP"

not say anything about this work which is so identified with him and which was also important in his development as a composer? The silence is deafening.³⁰⁷

The Crisis of the early 1960's

In many ways, the 1960's were a watershed time for the cathedral.³⁰⁸ It was the era when Dean Sayre was pushing the building and the vision of the cathedral outward and upward. This decade included the dedication of the South Transept, and the completion and dedication of the Gloria in Excelsis tower. There were many new chapels dedicated, and construction on the nave began. This time period also included a massive growth for the musical program to include the College of Church Musicians and the Advance Program which brought many musical festivals to the cathedral. The great organ was renovated as well as other smaller organs acquired or built for use in chapels and as continuo instruments. For Wayne Dirksen too, the late 1950's and early 1960's were a watershed moment for compositions with many of his famous and more adventuresome works being written during this period. However, it also included a time of crisis and discernment.

Dirksen had begun to make a big mark on the national music scene and this did not go unnoticed by others outside of the cathedral close. Sometime in 1960, the Oberlin Conservatory of Music offered Dirksen a position at the school. This included a substantial salary, a house, an entertainment budget, and free tuition for his children.³⁰⁹ This is a tremendous honor and speaks to Dirksen's competence as a musician. He did not hold any degrees other than a performance certificate. However, he now had several published works and also had made a name for himself

³⁰⁷ Rick suggests that perhaps in the early 1990s when Dirksen was organizing his catalog, his primary focus was actually on the computer engraving of scores. He would have paid less attention to published works and he may have been thinking of *Christ our Passover* in terms of its publication date. RSD, email 19 September 2016. Mark Dirksen wonders if he just did not get around to making the entry for this work. Dirksen could have come back to it later because its history was obvious in Dirksen's mind.

³⁰⁸ Quinn, 118.

³⁰⁹ Correspondence between Dean Sayre and Neil Phillips, 3 January 1963, Cathedral Archives.

through both his organ playing and his choral development with the Glee Clubs. There were other offers too. West Point had been making overtures to Dirksen to head up their music program and to play the immense chapel organ there. The organ firm Aeolian Skinner was also offering him a job.³¹⁰ Other Episcopal establishments were also inquiring after Dirksen. In a letter from 8 February 1960 from Dean Sayre to the Very Rev. Benjamin Minifie, outgoing Dean of the Cathedral of the Nativity in Bethlehem Pennsylvania and incoming Rector of Grace Church, Manhattan, Sayre asks his fellow cathedral dean to back off recruitment of Dirksen. Apparently as Minifie was going to New York, he needed a new organist for Grace Church.³¹¹ Sayre also asks how much Minifie plans to offer to pay Dirksen so that he can pay him more. Sayre was extremely committed to keeping Dirksen on his team in running the cathedral.³¹²

There were troubles in his working relationship with Callaway too. There were rumors of Callaway's drinking getting in the way of his job. Often he would be "under the weather" on a Sunday morning and Dirksen had to fill in.³¹³ Finally, as with his "assistant-itis" in the early 1950's, Dirksen again was feeling the need for his own turf - to have his own creative space. On the first Monday of Advent of 1961, this all came to a head and Dirksen had had enough. It is uncertain exactly what happened. Mark characterizes it as a "nervous breakdown" whereas Rick and Geoff characterize it as "he'd just had enough and couldn't take it anymore."³¹⁴ Basically Dirksen could not bring himself to get out of bed or to work.

Dean Sayre intervened and began to give him other responsibilities to keep Dirksen working at the cathedral and to give him his own turf. The cathedral already had a music

³¹⁰ Geoff Dirksen - CITATION NEEDED.

³¹¹ This church also has a musical tradition which is very strong and features a choir of men and boys.

³¹² Letter from The Very Rev. Francis Sayre to The Very Rev. Benjamin Minifie, 8 February 1960, Cathedral Archives. Minifie would go on to be a very well known if outspoken Rector of Grace Church - especially dealing with social issues.

³¹³ J Shenefield, interview Mt. St. Alban, 16 May 2016.

³¹⁴ Rick, Geoff and Mark Dirksen, Email exchange 6 November 2015.

director who Dirksen worked well with. But he felt the need for creative space where he could direct for himself. Sayre got innovative with this and looked around for projects for Dirksen to lead. First, Sayre helped relieve Dirksen of the stress of some of his manifold duties by hiring a second assistant organist. Norman Scribner, newly appointed Music Director of St. Alban's Parish³¹⁵ became part time assistant to Dirksen and Callaway at the Cathedral. This freed up Dirksen for more time for composing and other cathedral endeavors.³¹⁶

Compositions from 1961

With the exception of the monumental musical theater work *Tularosa*, 1961 would see Dirksen writing exclusively music for children. Gwendolyn Coney set a number of medieval mystery plays together to form *A Festival of Plays* for Christmas. They were arranged for the Girls of the National Cathedral School and Dirksen provided the music. The works are *About the fields they piped full right* (Tyrley, tyrlow) for SA and organ, *Alleluia: A newe work is come* for SA, organ and handbells, *From heaven high* for unison and organ (the final chorale of the whole festival), *Hail, O Sun, O blessed light* for SA and organ, *O my deir hert* for SA and organ, *O radix Jesse, supplices te nos invocamus* for SA and organ, and a setting of the *Magnificat* for SA and organ. In many of Dirksen's Christmas works, the texts tend to sometimes be more obscure - little nuggets of poetry that Dirksen discovered when going through books of English verse.³¹⁷ However, with this play, the texts tend to be very traditional and fairly well known to those who work in choral music.³¹⁸

³¹⁵ St. Alban's is the Parish Church located on land adjacent to the Cathedral Close. The National Cathedral is not, as such, a Parish Church.

³¹⁶ Yang, 68.

³¹⁷ Geoff Dirksen said that his father's anthology of English Poetry was very worn and dog-eared as his dad would constantly return to it as a source of artistic inspiration. GD initial conversation,

³¹⁸ Dirksen catalog, 20.

Continuing the Christmas Pageant theme, Dirksen wrote the music to the program *Both All and Some*. It was written in collaboration with Sara Best, drama director of the National Cathedral School. The choral movements include *The people that walked in darkness*, *Gloria in Excelsis*, *Give the King thy judgments O God*, and recycled from the four motets, *Hodie*, *Christus natus est*. The motet where the pageant gets its name is for the macaronic text *Rex pacificus*. It is an SATB acapella setting and it was published by Flammer in 1971 as *Nowell sing we, both all and some*.³¹⁹

Dirksen also composed the work *Night* based on a poem of the same name by William Blake. It was set for children's voices and piano or organ and composed for use with a Diocesan Junior Choir Festival Service.³²⁰

The *Fiery Furnace* and the Dedication of the South Transept

On November 18, 1962, the South Transept was dedicated. When Dirksen joined the cathedral in 1942, the Choir and the North Transept were complete. Construction had halted during World War II, but for a decade and a half following it, an ongoing construction project finished work on the crossing³²¹ and the South Transept. When it was completed, the building was one third larger than it had been previously. To celebrate the completion and dedication, a massive festival was planned that included church services and concerts.³²² Dirksen lent his hand to the dedication by offering a sophisticated work involving not only challenging music, but designed to take advantage of the new acoustical and spatial reality of the cathedral. This composition was *The Fiery Furnace*.

³¹⁹ Dirksen catalog, 19.

³²⁰ Dirksen catalog, 20.

³²¹ Except for the tower.

³²² Dirksen catalog, 33.

The text is the scripture from the Book of Daniel about the story of the three young youths who were cast into the fiery furnace for refusing to worship the god of the Chaldeans. They were saved by an angel of the Lord. During their time in the fiery furnace, the three young men sang the canticle known liturgically as the *Benedicite, omnia opera Domini*³²³. There are thirty one bosses in the vaulted ceiling of the South Transept. These keystones were carved with thirty one images corresponding to the thirty one verses of the *Benedicite* and its companion canticle, *Benedictus es Domine*.³²⁴ Dr. Leonard Ellinwood, a musicologist from the Library of Congress and a member of the Cathedral Choir suggested these texts for the occasion due to their fittingness with the boss stones of the transept.³²⁵

Dirksen was motivated in his composition by the vast new acoustical space of the enlarged cathedral and the balcony of the South Transept, along with its already existing counterpart in the North Transept. Three musical organizations were to be involved - the Cathedral Choir of Men and Boys, the Cathedral Choral Society, and the Glee clubs of the schools. All needed a part to sing. The Glee Clubs were placed in the North Transept balcony. The Cathedral Choral Society was in the Great Choir. The Cathedral Men and Boys were first in their own bay in the Great Choir to sing Evensong. The sermon was preached by The Very Rev. Provost H.C.N. Williams of Coventry Cathedral which at that time was finishing building their striking new cathedral replacing the one fire bombed in World War II. After the Offertory at the end of Evensong, the dedication as such began with a procession going through the South Transept for prayers at various stations along the way. Finally the Cathedral Choir made their

³²³ In the contemporary Episcopal Prayer Book, this canticle is referred to as "The Song of Creation." It is an alternative canticle to be sung at Morning Prayer in place of the Te Deum. As with many of the canticles sung in English at the Anglican Office, it is commonly referred to by its Latin title with the pronunciation anglicized into *Ben-e-dice-ee-tae*. Hereafter referred to as "the *Benedicite*."

³²⁴ This canticle is also found in the book of Daniel and is another alternate at Morning Prayer. It is often referred to as the *Benedictus es* to distinguish it from the *Benedictus* or Gospel Canticle of Zechariah.

³²⁵ Dirksen catalog, 33.

way from the choir to the South Transept Gallery and the Dirksen piece began. The rubric in the program introducing the piece said "Then shall all be seated to hear the festival setting of the scriptures which are the theme of the keystone carvings in the Clerestory of the South Transept."³²⁶ Rick Dirksen believed that, inspired by this new space, Dirksen wanted to produce something that was like "Gabrieli in Venice." Indeed, Dirksen used the Italian terms "Coro I, Coro II, Coro III" to indicate the various musical ensembles, perhaps another indication of a nod to Gabrieli.

If the use of the space was inspired by Gabrieli's works for the many balconied churches of Venice, the music as such was not. The music itself is very difficult and harmonically complex. According to Yang, the *Fiery Furnace* marked a watershed moment in the cathedral's musical history.³²⁷ Never before had the musical forces of the cathedral attempted a work so complicated and difficult and never had there been so many resources used.³²⁸ The work was composed beginning of August of 1962, and the entire work finished and orchestrated by October of the same year. This left only a month or so to get the work ready for its performance. It is an extremely difficult piece and challenging to both singers and instrumentalists alike.³²⁹ The preparation must have been intense. Like *Jonah* a few years before, *The Fiery Furnace* is so different from all of the other works Dirksen composed at the time, the question must be asked - what was the musical inspiration behind this piece?

A search of the CCS repertoire from this time might, as with *Jonah*, give a clue. In 1960, Paul Hindemith came to the cathedral and conducted his *When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd*. This is a setting of poetry by Walt Whitman commemorating the dead of World War

³²⁶ Dirksen catalog, 34.

³²⁷ Yang, 68.

³²⁸ *ibid.*

³²⁹ See Jeremy Filsell's comments from the performance (2012? GET NOTE!)

II. The work is typically Hindemithian with basic classical scaffolding and Hindemith's own harmonic language superimposed on them. In 1961, the CCS performed Stravinsky's *Threni, id est Lamentationes Jeremiae Prophetae*, which was, like the Hindemith, very different harmonically than the rest of the repertoire that the CCS had been performing. It is one of Stravinsky's first completely twelve tone works and one of the most musically difficult of his religious works. It had only been composed in 1957 with its first premiere in America in 1959 with Stravinsky himself conducting. To have performed two extremely challenging and harmonically innovative works as the Hindemith and Stravinsky in just two years certainly had a deep influence on Dirksen. Little wonder then that *The Fiery Furnace* was more harmonically adventuresome than perhaps anything else Dirksen ever wrote. Walton's *Belshazzar's feast*, which the CCS also performed around that time, begins very similarly to *The Fiery Furnace*. Instrumental fanfares are followed by a very strong choral *a capella* opening. Dirksen recounts that in his work, this strong musical statement had the effect of immediately making the new sonic space ring and show how the acoustic in the building would be henceforth much magnified. Menotti's *The Unicorn, the Gorgon and the Manticore* is similar in writing for chamber choir and scoring as *The Fiery Furnace*. Callaway had conducted this in 1956 and Dirksen had copied out the parts and supplied fanfares. Finally, Dirksen had conducted the Bartok *Concerto for Orchestra* with one of the orchestras he worked with around that time, and the tenor drum solo that opens and closes the *Benedicite* is almost a direct rhythmic quote of the Bartok.³³⁰

³³⁰ The final two comparisons with Bartok and Menotti came from MD email 21 September 2016. Unfortunately many of these orchestras and choruses that Dirksen moonlighted for are no longer in existence and there are no records which show where Dirksen would have performed this work. His son Mark has his father's marked score from the event.

Ronald Arnatt again conducted *The Fiery Furnace* for the Episcopal Church's Triennial Convention in St. Louis in 1964. The *Benedicite* from the work has been used on its own several times including for the dedication of the central tower in 1964. Norman Scribner made a reduction of the *Benedicite* in that same year for use with choir and organ.³³¹ The only other known performance of the entire work was undertaken in the cathedral by Dr. Jeremy Filsell in 2012 as a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the dedication of the South Transept. The performance here did not involve multiple choirs and orchestra and brass, but used a skilled large chamber choir and used only the organ as accompaniment. The effect was still stunning and a gift to bring this difficult music to life once again.³³² However, Dirksen gives extensive and much more detailed instructions as to the performance for the work than to almost any other work he composed. It is very clear from his instructions that they are specific to the cathedral space and with the choral forces as they stood in 1962. It was a work inspired by the cathedral itself. However, the composition was also conceived with many different musical influences in mind including Gabrielli, Hindemith, Walton, Bartok and Stravinsky. Yet, the work is uniquely Dirksen's - an American work for an American cathedral but with connectivity to the musical traditions of the past and present European fashions as well.

Other Compositions of 1962

Other than the operetta *Houseboat*, the only other composition of Dirksen from 1962 was a fanfare for 3 trumpets on the occasion of the installation of The Rt. Rev. William F. Creighton as the fifth Bishop of Washington on All Saints' Day 1962.³³³ Bishop Creighton would be the bishop who would shepherd the Diocese of Washington through the tumultuous years of the late

³³¹ Dirksen catalog, 34.

³³² GET INFO!!!

³³³ Dirksen catalog, 24. The catalog incorrectly says that Bishop Creighton was consecrated on this day. In fact, he was consecrated but as coadjutor to Bishop Dunn on 1 May 1959. See Quinn, HAPAP 119.

1960's as well as the completion of the central tower and the nave in 1964 and 1976 respectively. He showed little interest in the cathedral and left most tasks up to Dean Sayre. However, unlike Sayre, who tended not to get involved in theological or liturgical matters, Creighton took a strong stand on some key issues. He was a "low churchman" and was favorable to the ordination of women which became a reality in the Episcopal Church in the 1970's.³³⁴

The College of Church Musicians

On September 13, 1962, one of the most adventuresome endeavors of the cathedral was undertaken by developing a formal program to train church musicians for members of the Anglican Communion. This would become the College of Church Musicians (CCM). The idea of having a college on the Cathedral Close was as old as the cathedral itself.³³⁵ In 1953 at a gathering of church musicians at the cathedral, Leo Sowerby made the point that many music schools completely ignored the vocation of the church musician.³³⁶ The specific idea for an institution for Church Musicians came as early as 1954 when the men and boys choir made their first tour outside of the Washington DC area to raise funds and promote the idea of the College.³³⁷

The music program had reached a very high quality at the cathedral. This included the choir of men and boys as well as the glee clubs. As the quality improved, so did the reach of the cathedral music program beyond Washington. Through the radio and television broadcasts of major services as well as the thousands of visitors that came to the cathedral each year, the music program reached the ears and hearts of music lovers far and wide. Many of these music lovers believed that it would be beneficial for the wider church if there could be a training institution at

³³⁴ Quinn, HPAP 119, 168.

³³⁵ Quinn, HPAP 4.

³³⁶ Yang, 184. Also *The Cathedral Age* summer, 1953.

³³⁷ Yang, 53 and Hendricks,

the National Cathedral.³³⁸ From the outset, this endeavor was envisioned as ecumenical.³³⁹ Indeed, those first groups of fellows were from many protestant denominations as well as a Jesuit Priest.³⁴⁰ Dirksen, along with the head of the National Cathedral Association Admiral Neil Phillips presented the cathedral chapter with the vision of the college and it was approved. Phillips gave a plan which was to begin as a slow process like a pilot program with only one faculty member and a few fellows. Adjunct faculty could be brought in to supplement the main teacher. The idea was to build up a small endowment to fund the endeavor. Dirksen and Callaway were both supplemental faculty.³⁴¹

The leadership of CCM was entrusted to the venerable Leo Sowerby, a Pulitzer Prize winner who was widely known throughout the sacred music world and beyond. He had made his mark as a church musician at St. James Cathedral in Chicago. There he endeavored to raise the standards of cathedral music and he composed some of his best known and prize winning work there.³⁴² He left Chicago at the age of 61 to take up the job on Mt. St. Alban as head of the CCM.³⁴³ The college was designed to give musicians hands on experience with what had become one of the leading church music programs in the country. The advisory board of the college included Vernon DeTar, Samuel Barber, Howard Hanson, and Alec Wyton.³⁴⁴ These were some of the leading figures in sacred music in the United States of their day and the college was certainly an attempt to bring together some of the leading experts and composers in the field of sacred music in America.

³³⁸ Yang, 183, 184.

³³⁹ Yang, 185.

³⁴⁰ Yang, 191.

³⁴¹ For a more full version of the proposal see Yang, 186, 187.

³⁴² Yang, 188.

³⁴³ Quinn, HPAP 144-146.

³⁴⁴ Yang, 189.

Workshops and seminars complimented the hands-on study. Sowerby taught composition, Dirksen and Callaway taught conducting and organ lessons. The cathedral's Canon Precentor, William Workman taught liturgy. Leonard Ellinwood, a musicologist from the library of congress, taught the history of sacred music.³⁴⁵ The student fellows were responsible for the music at the Friday Matins service where they would train the choir, direct it and play the organ.³⁴⁶

Starting in 1964, fellows of the college graduated with a Masters in Church Music degree. The fellows went on to fill some of the most major posts in church music throughout the country and included John Fenstermaker at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, David Koehring at Christ Church Indianapolis, Dale Krider at First United Methodist in Hyattsville, MD, and Robert Grogan at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington DC.³⁴⁷ The fellows played an important role in enriching the musical life of the cathedral by playing services, running rehearsals, and giving organ recitals.³⁴⁸

Sowerby died in 1968 and his ashes were interred in the cathedral. Following his death, new faculty were appointed, but none had the "star power" of Sowerby. The college did not survive much longer. In June of 1969, it was incorporated into the worship department of the cathedral. In the late 1960's Dirksen was appointed "Provost" of the college. Dean Sayre wanted a report about the continued feasibility of the college and Dirksen recommended it be shut down which it was.³⁴⁹ Dirksen's comment was that many other educational institutions existed at this time which could provide similar coursework as well as accredited degrees. John Fenstermaker

³⁴⁵ Yang, 188.

³⁴⁶ Yang, 191. This would have added another choral service to the cathedral horarium and at a time that was not usual for a choral liturgy in American churches.

³⁴⁷ Yang, 192.

³⁴⁸ *ibid.*

³⁴⁹ Rick Dirksen, Interview.

opines that Sayre may have already had it in his mind to close the college, but he needed Dirksen to back him up.³⁵⁰

Although the existence of the CCM was relatively short, it did foster collaboration among some of the leading American figures in sacred music at the time. It was an important part of establishing a tradition - an American tradition of sacred music, rooted in the history of the sacred music and liturgy of the past, but with a practical bent to enrich American churches in the 20th century with fine music and composition.

Composition from 1963

Although Dirksen was freed from many of his duties as Associate Organist and Choirmaster, there was still quite a bit to be done. Following the dedication of the South Transept, Dirksen moved on to coordinate the Dedication of the central *Gloria in Excelsis Tower*. This would take so much time that his compositional output dramatically fell. The only composition from 1963 is a work titled *O lux beata trinitas* which is a work for the soon to be installed carillon in the central tower. It was composed for Ronald Barnes, the first cathedral carillonneur and performed at the dedication recital in September of 1963. As Dirksen was preparing to compose a work for the new instrument, Newell Ellison Jr., a St. Albans Student was murdered. Dirksen chose the plainsong of this Vespers hymn which deals with the day passing away as the theme to honor the deceased student.³⁵¹

The Dedication of the Gloria in Excelsis Tower

Following the very successful dedication of the South Transept, Dirksen was assigned with Canon Workman in 1963 to prepare for the dedication of the Gloria in Excelsis tower. In order to better fulfill this duty, Dirksen left the post of Associate Organist and Choirmaster at the

³⁵⁰ John Fenstermaker, Interview.

³⁵¹ Dirksen Catalog, 23.

cathedral in January of 1964. After many years of playing and turning pages for Callaway on Sunday services, he now moved to the next chapter of his life which, for the time being, would not include being present every Sunday helping with the music.³⁵² Dirksen was also, along with clerk of the works Richard T. Feller, put in charge of the acquisition of a carillon for the cathedral as well as bells for a peal.³⁵³ For Dirksen, the bells were never simply a new toy but an instrument that he was fascinated by and tried to incorporate into many works. He made a lengthy proposal early in 1962 to Dean Sayre discussing the matter of the bells and proposing that he take a long trip to the continent to study them.³⁵⁴ This proposal would have gotten in the way of the important work of the dedication of the South Transept, but it shows Dirksen's renewed dedication to the cathedral. He ends the proposal with a pledge of loyalty to stay and be "permanently dedicated" to the cathedral. Apparently Dirksen had made his peace with the idea that he was going to stay at the cathedral for his professional life. There would be no more "assistant-itis" or desire to look at other places for employment. Now as a man with his own turf, he was attached for life.

This tower was to be the most prominent feature physically on the cathedral. It was to be the highest point in the District of Columbia. Indeed, the cathedral architect Frohman had extended the height of the tower to make it even more prominent. Today this tower is a landmark which can be seen from many parts of the City of Washington and is a beacon for airlines landing at Reagan National Airport. However, as the south transept was being completed, Sayre and the Chapter were faced with the question to build the tower or to commence construction on the nave. A bequest from a James Sheldon allowed for enough

³⁵² Yang, 69.

³⁵³ Yang, 68.

³⁵⁴ Dirksen proposal to Dean Sayre, 7 February 1962, Cathedral Archives.

money for either the tower or the nave to be built first.³⁵⁵ Sayre, contrary to a majority of the chapter, favored building the tower first.³⁵⁶ Although it may seem to have been counter-intuitive to build the tower first, the fact remains that this action may have actually saved the tower from not being built. If the nave had been completed and a debt present, there would have been a real temptation to postpone and perhaps never build the tower.³⁵⁷

The tower was dedicated on Ascension Day 7 May 1964, an appropriate day as the actor Basil Rathbone said of the day, and of the ideal of the Cathedral: that it was "a living ideal, beckoning us onward...It [the tower] reminds us of Him who said, 'I if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.'"³⁵⁸ The daylong event included five services beginning at 7a.m.³⁵⁹ The amount of new music composed for the dedication of the tower is unequalled in the history of the cathedral. The works were composed by prominent American composers Samuel Barber, Lee Hoiby, Leo Sowerby,³⁶⁰ John La Montaine, Ned Rorem, Roy Hamlin Johnson, Milford Myhre, Stanley Hollinsworth, and Dirksen himself with his carillon work.³⁶¹ Most of these newly composed works are settings of texts for the feast of the Ascension or inspired by the event of the Ascension. These include Hoiby's *Ascension*, Sowerby's *O God my Heart is Ready*, La Montaine's *Te Deum, laudamus*, Hollinsworth's *Gloria in excelsis*, and Rorem's *The Ascension* which was a festival setting of John Beaumont's 17th century sonnet. Samuel Barber contributed

³⁵⁵ *The Living Church* 8 January 1961, 8,9.

³⁵⁶ Quinn, 132. Quinn makes a big error in his narrative here. Quinn says that the completion of the tower caused the cathedral to take on a debt of more than 10 million dollars. In fact, the cathedral did not start taking on debt until 1966 when the Chapter authorized a line of credit with Marine Midland Bank. Up to that point, building was only allowed if funds were in hand. RSD email 19 September 2016 and phone interview with author 20 September 2016.

³⁵⁷ Such was the case with the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York which still has no completed towers, and with no plans to complete the work. The nickname often used to describe it is *St. John the Unfinished*.

³⁵⁸ Quinn, 148.

³⁵⁹ Quinn, 147.

³⁶⁰ Quinn misleadingly attributes the Dedication of the Tower as "one of Sowerby's most remembered events." Although Sowerby composed music for this day, the event itself reflects the planning of Dirksen and Workman. I do not believe it should be characterized as a "Sowerby event" as though Sowerby were the driving force behind the events of the day. Other witnesses of the event, such as RSD agree. RSD, email 19 September 2016.

³⁶¹ Yang, 69.

the *Chorale for Ascension Day* for Brass. Myhre and Johnson supplied works for carillon based on hymns and chants. A number of other musicians including Sowerby, Scribner, and Grogan supplied hymn arrangements.³⁶² The hymns include Sowerby's famous "Come Risen Lord" set to the tune of *Rosedale*.³⁶³ The whole dedication event was a celebration of American Sacred Music. This was highly appropriate as it exemplified what went on with the tower itself. Here was a building with a grand tower. The architectural style was medieval. Yet with the aid of 20th century technology it was built quickly. It was also raised, with the aid of a steel frame, even higher than originally planned, and raised over the American Capitol. Thus it was a 20th century tower of a 20th century American cathedral that was nevertheless built on principles and designs inspired by its European predecessors. Likewise, the event highlighted American sacred music that was inspired by the Christian faith and composed in the mode of western art music. Yet, it was also uniquely American.

The combined events of the dedication of the South Transept and the Gloria in Excelsis tower were true watershed moments in the life of the music programs on Mt. St. Alban. They were also watershed moments in the life of Dirksen. He had composed some of his most mature works during this period and had helped facilitate a festival of new American sacred music.

IV. 1964 - 1977 - Advance Program and Precentor

In the winter of 1964, Dirksen took over as the new Director of Advance Program for the cathedral. With the completion of the Crossing, South Transept and the Gloria in Excelsis Tower, construction on the cathedral now focused on completion of the nave. However, the vision of the cathedral was not only centered on creating a big building, the vision of what to do with that building needed to be actualized. It was to become a center of culture and outreach.

³⁶² Yang, 213-214.

³⁶³ Rosedale was the name of the estate near the cathedral where the CCM was housed. Sowerby also lived at the estate.

Dirksen was tasked by Dean Sayre and the chapter with helping to make this a reality. His duties were to include, "developing comprehensive programs in drama and music and broadening the cathedral's ministry through publications, conferences for lay and religious leaders, and missionary outreach programs."³⁶⁴ It was also to be a program to attract more people to the new magnificent gothic building. In order to fund these new ventures, the Cathedral Chapter agreed to assign some undesignated funds to a three year pilot program designed to attract new ventures at the cathedral. The choice of Dirksen to lead this was natural from Sayre's point of view and he said of Dirksen, "no man ever wore Joseph's coat with more imagination than this man of creative devotion."³⁶⁵

Dirksen admitted that the impetus and drive for much of the Advance program came from his own need to be creative. With the dedication of the South Transept and the Gloria in Excelsis Tower, Dirksen slowly moved out of the practical part of the music department of the cathedral. Although he retained his musical work in the schools, Dirksen felt the need to be creative at the cathedral that he was now attached to for life. Dean Sayre promised him that he would have an outlet for these energies, and they would be on his "own turf" in the Advance Program.³⁶⁶ Dirksen realized that the magnificent building of the cathedral stood dark and quiet for about 350 days of the year.³⁶⁷ Dirksen set out to change this and develop programming that would transform the cathedral from a tourist attraction and a (primarily) Sunday worship space into a cultural center for the city and the country.

Initial Works of the Advance Program

³⁶⁴ The Cathedral Age, Winter 1964.

³⁶⁵ Dean Sayre, Report to the Cathedral Chapter, The Cathedral Age, Winter 1964. Quoted in Yang, 70.

³⁶⁶ Yang, 70. It was touching that Sayre told Dirksen in a symbolic way, "I'll get you an organ bigger than any other organ to play on..."

³⁶⁷ TCA Fall 1967.

In addition to the full round of Anglican liturgies, the cathedral began to host more cultural events both inside and outside of the building. One of the first events was the New York based Pro Musica society presenting the 13th century "Play of Herod" and the "Play of Daniel" directed by Noah Greenberg in 1965. The medieval modal plainsong melodies were accompanied by the organ and bells. The cathedral was a magnificent medieval style venue which was very fitting for this performance.³⁶⁸ This was followed in 1967 by the Advance Program funding an American commission, with John La Montaine's opera *The Shepherd's Playe* with a libretto based on 4 Corpus Christi medieval plays.³⁶⁹ Thus the actual medieval play was followed programmatically by a contemporary opera inspired and informed by a medieval play. This is a fine example of a hermeneutic of continuity with regard to contemporary music which is historically informed.

In 1965, the Advance Program also began the Summer Festival which was a series of concerts, often times outdoors, and open free to the public to help bolster the cultural life in Washington DC. The initial festival was a series of chamber music concerts held at night on the steps of the South Transept. Dirksen himself often performed with them playing keyboard instruments. The initial crowds were big, sometimes getting as high as 1,500 or 2,000 people. These concerts were positively reviewed by the *Washington Post* and the *Evening Star*. Senator Wayne Morse complimented the cathedral for these undertakings and specifically praised Dirksen. Senator Morse believed that these concerts contributed significantly to the cultural life in Washington and had his positive remarks about them entered into the Congressional Record.³⁷⁰ Yang describes the Summer Festival as *the* cultural event of the summer in 1965.³⁷¹

³⁶⁸ TCA Winter 1964.

³⁶⁹ Yang, 70.

³⁷⁰ Yang, 70-71.

³⁷¹ Yang, 71.

In 1966 the Summer Festival was expanded to include Drama and Ballet.³⁷² The cathedral budget also had to expand to accommodate the performances. However, the enthusiastic response of the community helped spur on the work.³⁷³ The Summer Festival continued on into the 1990s with cultural events of all sorts including exhibitions of art. They also included groups such as the D.C. Youth Symphony, various ensembles affiliated with Wolf Trapp, ensembles from American University, the Manchester String Quartet which was made up of members from the National Symphony Orchestra, the Washington Ballet, the Washington Bach Consort under the direction of J. Riley Lewis, the Folger consort, the Washington Camerata, the Choir of St. John's College Cambridge, and the Hilliard Ensemble.³⁷⁴ In short, the Summer Festival was an extraordinarily successful program to showcase the arts with both noted local and international ensembles.

In 1970, the Advance Program would also help sponsor a Summer Choirboy Seminar which would accept thirty boys every year. The two week institute was led by the cathedral's assistant organists and included daily music lessons and training as well as tours of the monuments and attractions of the American Capital City, all concluding with a concert. This program attracted boys from both the Washington area and around the country.³⁷⁵

The Advance Program also ventured out beyond the arts and cultural events to current issues in the scientific field. For example, in May of 1971, the Advance Program along with the National Presbyterian Foundation and a Methodist group for Social Concerns sponsored a "three medical futures" conference. This conference included ethical issues with regard to new technologies such as cloning, in-vitro insemination, genetic therapy, and issues with regard to

³⁷² *ibid.*

³⁷³ Yang, 72.

³⁷⁴ *ibid.*

³⁷⁵ Yang, 73.

industrial pollution.³⁷⁶ This further established the cathedral as a cultural force in the broader sense of the term with regard to social issues.

The Advance program began the Cathedral Open House in 1967 which would showcase the cathedral and all of its programs to tourists and Washington natives alike.³⁷⁷ This included tours of the inner workings of the cathedral including bell ringing demonstrations in the Gloria in Excelsis tower, demonstrations of the organ, and choral concerts featuring the men and boys as well as the Cathedral Choral Society. All of the programs were successful in bringing people to the cathedral. In the 1970-71 report, Dirksen estimated that 40,000 plus had passed through the cathedral to view the art exhibit of photos of the Sistine Chapel and that the concerts for that year had an average of 544 people per concert.³⁷⁸ Thus the cathedral widely expanded the reach of whom it served.

Dirksen's Compositions from the Mid-1960's

Dirksen said in an interview in 1967 that his composing was always done "with a specific purpose in mind."³⁷⁹ There was always an occasion and he was not one to compose for the sake of composing. The occasion could be a church service, a film, a pageant, a TV broadcast, for the bells, but there had to be an occasion.³⁸⁰ Thus, when many of these occasions became fewer and far between, so did his compositions. He also was a very busy man with the dedication of the transept, the tower, and then with the beginnings of the Advance Program which left him with far less time to compose. Following the completion of the Fiery Furnace in 1962, there was only one work in 1963 (for bells), none in 1964, seven short works in four collections in 1965, two for 1966, one in 1967, none in 1968, and two for a wedding in 1969. In contrast to the 1950's and

³⁷⁶ Dirksen, *Report of the Director of Advance Program - 1 October 1970 - 30 September 1971*.

³⁷⁷ Yang, 73.

³⁷⁸ Dirksen, *Report of the Director of Advance Program - 1 October 1970 - 30 September 1971*.

³⁷⁹ TCA Fall 1967.

³⁸⁰ *ibid.*

early 1960's, Dirksen's compositional output had indeed slowed down. None of the works from this period would be ones that Dirksen would be known for in future times.

True to his stated need for occasions to compose, all of Dirksen's seven compositions in 1965 were for four occasions. He composed a suite of three anthems for SATB choir, brass quartet and timpani for Christ Church, Christiana Hundred in Wilmington Delaware. These anthems, *Hear my Crying, O God, O Sing unto the Lord*, and *Lamb of God the Heavens adore thee* (based on the third stanza of the chorale "Sleepers wake), were never published and Dirksen never entered them into computer notation.³⁸¹ In 1965 he also composed *Unicorn Fanfares* and a *Sarabande* which were the entrance music and music to cover movements to compliment Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Unicorn, the Gorgon, and the Manticore* which was presented in the Cathedral that year. Dirksen composed a wedding processional for harpsichord and two flutes for the wedding of Holly and John Chalmers. He also re-worked some material from various earlier works into an instrumental suite for trumpet, organ, and handbells called *Alleluia: A Newe Work is Come* for use by the Wheeling, West Virginia chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

Dirksen also composed a thirteen minute work for Mezzo Soprano Soloist, piano, and spoken words for a memorial service for T.S. Eliot in 1965. This work, called *A Song for Simeon*, is a setting of Eliot's poem by the same name. The work is primarily a difficult soloistic work for the pianist and soprano. The choir boys read the poem, and the men of the choir chant the biblical text of the *Nunc dimittis*. The work ends with a very interesting combination of elements. There is a slow fanfare on the trompette-en-chamade which is echoed by a flute in a far balcony. It concludes with a 72 note toll, one for each of Eliot's life, on the largest of the

³⁸¹ Dirksen catalog, 8, 9, 10.

Cathedral bells followed by some handbells and the congregation departing in silence.³⁸² This interesting combination of musical forces also shows Dirksen's ability to be creative in the use of the space and the instruments in the cathedral. His work is constantly informed by the unique space of the building.

In 1966, Dirksen composed *Unfold thy face, unmaske thy ray* for SATB choir and flute. This was a setting of the Caroline poet Christopher Harvey's poem, *The Nativity* and was published by H.W. Gray.³⁸³ It is a work in 6/8 in the tradition of the "Christmas pastoral" but is sprightly and like a dance. It is also not too harmonically complex, but still very interesting. His other composition in 1966 was a setting of the Communion Service in G. This was composed for a convention of Episcopal Schools that same year and was written for handbells, organ, unison and two part harmony. It also had a part for "grand carillon" in the Gloria and called for the bells to be amplified into the building. The Sanctus and Benedictus were revised for the installation of John Maury Allin as Presiding Bishop in 1974.³⁸⁴ With this work, again, Dirksen takes advantage of the new bells of the cathedral to augment his compositions.

The one composition for 1967 is Dirksen's first entry into the genre of hymnody. He wrote several hymn-like passages in his choral works, but had never written a hymn intended for congregational use. His *Introit, Fanfare, and Hymn* was an SATB festival setting of an original hymn tune called *Campaign*. It was composed for the service commemorating the 60th anniversary of the cathedral. The text was Howell Lewis "Lord of Light whose name outshineth" and was named *Campaign* for the many campaign workers who helped with raising the money for the cathedral.³⁸⁵ It begins with a large organ and choral fanfare then segues into

³⁸² Dirksen catalog, 32.

³⁸³ Dirksen catalog, 11.

³⁸⁴ Dirksen catalog, 18.

³⁸⁵ Dirksen catalog, 9, 15.

the congregational hymn. The hymn itself has a common characteristic of many of Dirksen's hymns - it travels to far key centers within a very short time. This hymn moves from G major to Gb major and back to G for the end. It would be extremely difficult to sing this melody without the organ to lead a congregation. Again, this composition is an example of Dirksen composing as the situation warranted and using the musical forces well that were available to him.

The occasion for Dirksen's two compositions of 1969 was the wedding of John Fenstermaker, who was then assistant organist at the cathedral and who would go on to be the Organist and Choirmaster of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. *A Holy Charivari* and *May the Grace of Christ our Savior* were settings of text from the evangelical Anglican cleric and Abolitionist John Newton. Newton is also the author of well known hymns such as *Amazing Grace* and *Glorious things of Thee are spoken*. The Dirksen settings were for SATB, organ and flute. *May the Grace of Christ our Savior* also includes 4 tambourines.³⁸⁶

Cathedral Precentor - 1969

1969 brought about another job shift for Dirksen as well as an historic moment for the Anglican communion. Dirksen was named Precentor by Dean Sayre and would hold the post until 1973, and then again from 1977 until Dirksen's retirement in 1991.³⁸⁷ According to Sayre, Dirksen was the first layman to hold that position in the 400 year history of the Anglican communion.³⁸⁸ The Precentor of a Cathedral is the de facto director of liturgy and his jobs include supervising the music program, coordinating major liturgies, assigning clergy to

³⁸⁶ Dirksen catalog, 6, 9.

³⁸⁷ Dirksen catalog, 5.

³⁸⁸ The Cathedral Age, fall 1969.

particular services, and generally watching over the liturgical life.³⁸⁹ This also made Dirksen Paul Callaway's supervisor, but their personal friendship remained strong as before.³⁹⁰

Dirksen was not a trained liturgical scholar, nor did he have interest in liturgical theology. However, he was an easy person to get along with, and this was very important in the often contentious work of the liturgical life of any community. Dirksen saw his role as being available to hear all of the divergent voices and to try and get them to move together.³⁹¹

Dirksen was apparently not a stickler for liturgical precision. For instance, the Radcliffe Choral society came to sing the Sunday Services on Septuagesima Sunday. At Evensong, instead of singing a Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis, the choirs sang other motets in place of the canticles. The first motet by Morales had a text about the beauty of virginity and the second motet by Taverner was suitable for All Saints' Day or Advent. Neither of them had anything to do with the Gospel or the readings of the Day.³⁹² The motets were also not the proper texts to be sung at Evensong following the lessons. Perhaps even more interesting, the choir sang a setting of the Eucharistic text *Ave verum corpus* during the offertory at that same non-Eucharistic service. Again, a strange choice for one coming at the music from a liturgical perspective.³⁹³ I suspect Dirksen just thought it good music and this liturgy was a good vehicle for it to be performed in. I also could find no evidence that this example of lack of liturgical precision was a regular occurrence and it seems that this was an exception to the rule at the cathedral.

Dirksen and Canon Jeffery Cave - A Study in Differences

³⁸⁹ Initial conversation RSD.

³⁹⁰ *ibid.* This also shows the unique humility of Dirksen and his ability to make situations work even if they might prove awkward for a less virtuous man.

³⁹¹ Initial conversation RSD. Dirksen was a definite team builder. The music world is often saturated with prima donnas whose egos get in the way of the mission of the whole. Dirksen was the opposite of this.

³⁹² The Gospel for the day in the 1928 BCP was Matthew 20 - the laborers who went into the vineyard at different times of the day and all received the same wage.

³⁹³ Dirksen, Letter to Miss Julie Anderson, 21 January 1971.

Dirksen was made director of Programming in 1973 and his replacement as Precentor, Canon Jeffery Cave produced a lengthy report to the Dean and chapter on the cathedral liturgy. It is in three parts with the first part liturgical theory, the second a report of what the cathedral did liturgically in 1973, and third, Cave's recommendations as to where the liturgy might go. In 1973, the Sunday services were 8a.m. Holy Communion, 9.00a.m. Morning Prayer 1st and 3rd Sundays with Holy Communion on the 2nd and 4th. The "Principal Service" was at 11a.m. and was Holy Communion 1st and 3rd Sundays with Morning Prayer 2nd and 4th. There was also a "guitar mass" held in one of the crypt chapels which was a communion service with experimental or folksy music. Evensong was sung in the afternoon. This horarium was common throughout the Episcopal church in the 1970's with the early service always being Communion and the later service alternating between Holy Communion and Morning Prayer. This later service would become almost exclusively Holy Communion by the late 1980s in most cathedrals and parishes. In his report, Cave advocates for only the Eucharist to be celebrated at the 11a.m. service. He speaks of Morning prayer to be "thoroughly Anglican and thoroughly parochial and unfitting for a cathedral." In advocating for the 11a.m. service to become strictly a Eucharist, Cave does make a mention that "choral repertoire for Morning prayer should not be excluded." It seems that Cave's statement was meant to pacify the musicians who might be upset about their musical repertoire being curtailed.³⁹⁴

This report perhaps highlights the differences between someone like Cave and Dirksen, both Precentors at the cathedral, in their approach to the liturgy. Cave does mention in the introduction of the report that he consulted with Dirksen in its preparation, although the lengthy

³⁹⁴ Jeffery Cave, *Worship at Washington Cathedral - A Report to the Dean*, cathedral archives. One wonders how the Morning Prayer choral repertoire could have been preserved if the service was cut? These proposals of Cave seem to be mutually contradictory. Perhaps the Morning Prayer canticles could serve as anthems at the Eucharist?

theorizing was certainly not part of Dirksen's interest.³⁹⁵ However, once a decision was reached as to what service or translation would be used, Dirksen would see to it that the service was clothed with exquisitely beautiful music. His essential approach to liturgy was practical. If there was a need for new settings of the ordinary or hymns, he would provide them.

Minor Works 1970-1975

Dirksen began composing settings of the new liturgical texts in 1970. These included both "service music" and hymns and will be treated below under the heading of liturgical reform. Most of his sacred works from this period are for dedication services as new windows and other parts of the cathedral were finished. In 1970, Dirksen composed no works. In 1971, he wrote *O God of Beauty* which is a work for trebles and handbells. The musical themes are based on two melodies from Stravinsky's *Firebird* and this was composed as processional music for the dedication of stone bosses in the St. Mary's Chapel of the cathedral. The donor, Archie Palmer, gave the gift in memory of a friend who built the stage sets for Stravinsky's ballet. Dirksen also composed in 1971 a work for treble voices, four soloists and handbells in *The Conversion of Saul*. This was a nine minute work written for the dedication of the gates on either side of the high altar. His youngest son Mark Dirksen was the narrator³⁹⁶ and his eldest son Rick, then Baritone Soloist for the Cathedral Choir, sang the part of Saul.³⁹⁷

In 1972, Dirksen composed *Close your bright eye* which set a text from W.H. Auden's "Christmas Oratorio." It was for SSAATTBB chorus, organ and optional strings and published by Oxford in 1993. He also composed *I sing the birth*, a setting of the poetry of Ben Johnson for SATB acapella and published in 1973 by H. Flammer.³⁹⁸ He wrote *My Joy, my Life, my Crown*

³⁹⁵ This point was agreed to by all of Dirksen's sons in several emails and conversations.

³⁹⁶ Dirksen catalog 19.

³⁹⁷ RSD, email 20 September 2016.

³⁹⁸ Dirksen catalog 9.

from Herbert's "A true hymn" for medium voice, piano, and flute or oboe and composed it for the birthday of his good friend Dick Hynson.³⁹⁹ Finally, he composed the secular work *Sing levy dew* for guitar (or piano) and medium voice for his daughter Laura Dirksen's wedding.⁴⁰⁰

In 1973 Dirksen composed four secular songs for the Trapier Theater Shakespeare & Company summer productions. This was a summer program at the New Trapier Theater at St. Albans school under the direction of Ted Walsh and Howard Witt. Two of the songs are from *Romeo and Juliet* and two from *Midsummer Night's Dream*. They are written for medium voice (one specifically for a countertenor) and guitar or piano. He also composed some incidental instrumental music for these plays for organ, handbells, guitar and percussion.⁴⁰¹

1973 also saw the composition of two sacred choral works. *At Break of Day O how the Bells did Ring!* was composed for SATB choir and orchestra for Christ Church Alexandria in commemoration of its bicentennial. He also composed *Give Thanks Unto the Lord*, a setting of the first four verses of Psalm 94. It was written for the National Cathedral Association service honoring Mary DuBose.⁴⁰² This short work in a "lyrical lively style"⁴⁰³ is for two voices and keyboard. It is in 6/8 and bears similarities to the compositions of William Matthias. It also has a musical joke at the second part of the Gloria Patri with the words "as it was in the beginning" where the musical material from the start (beginning) of the work is presented again. It was published in 1974 by Harold Flammer.

1974 was a prolific year compositionally. Dirksen composed *Bless the Father*, a paraphrase of Psalm 103 for the 50th anniversary of Chevy Chase Presbyterian church. The

³⁹⁹ Dirksen catalog 10. Dick and his family were deeply connected with the cathedral. RSD, email 20 September 2016.

⁴⁰⁰ Dirksen catalog 21.

⁴⁰¹ Dirksen catalog, 21-23.

⁴⁰² Dirksen catalog, 8.

⁴⁰³ Dirksen's rhythm note.

work is for SATB choir, brass, and timpani. For this same occasion, he also composed a hymn tune named *Chevy Chase* and set to it Hugh Kerr's text "God our Life." He did a choral arrangement of this too with brass and timpani. Dirksen also composed a work in 1974 for unison trebles and 8 handbells called *Deer walk upon our mountains*. This was composed for the dedication of the Leland Garner Jr. window and the text taken from Wallace Stevens poem "Sunday Morning."⁴⁰⁴

1974 saw the dedication of the Churchill porch in the St. Paul tower. To celebrate, the cathedral had an exhibition of Churchill memorabilia in the Rare Book Room of the cathedral. Dirksen wrote a canon for the opening called *The Land is Bright* taken from a verse by Arthur Clough which ends with the phrase "but westward look, the land is bright." Churchill had used this verse in a broadcast 27 April 1941.⁴⁰⁵ In this speech, Churchill lamented the dark days of Europe when Hitler and Mussolini were occupying one country after another.⁴⁰⁶ Britain looked to stand alone, but Churchill spoke of the resolve of the American Democracy to stand with her elder sister Britain in this fight. The hope was that America and Britain must stand together. It is fitting to reference then for a Churchill memorial in an American cathedral.

In 1974 Dirksen also composed an experimental sacred work called *Celebration of the Transfiguration*. This work is for 5 soloists, choir and keyboard, guitar, organ pedal, timpani and other drums all used as "rhythmic instruments." The text is a combination of the proper Introit in the Roman Rite for the feast, 1 Kings 19.1-2 and Matthew 17.1-9. The work takes about 14 minutes if readings and processions are used. Dirksen meant it to be used in a Sunday liturgy

⁴⁰⁴ Dirksen catalog, 7,8.

⁴⁰⁵ Dirksen catalog, 13. Dirksen incorrectly lists the date as 17 April and not 27 April.

⁴⁰⁶ On the very day of this speech, the government of Greece capitulated to the Nazi invasion and German forces entered Athens.

near the feast of the Transfiguration or on a Sunday in Epiphany.⁴⁰⁷ This work was used once when it was written and probably not after that.⁴⁰⁸

29 November 1974 marked the occasion of the 50th wedding anniversary of Dirksen's parents and to commemorate this, a "Dirksen Thanksgiving Stone" was dedicated. Dirksen's third grandson Richard William Dirksen was baptized that day too. In honor of the 50th anniversary, Dirksen composed the *Fifty-Note Fanfare* for the trompette-en-chamade.⁴⁰⁹

In 1975, Dirksen again composed several works. He wrote *Father in thy Gracious Keeping* which is a memorial anthem for 2 voices and organ in memory of cathedral treasurer Benjamin Thoron. The basis for the work is a famous French carol often sung with the words *Il est ne le divin Enfant*. He composed an orchestration for the work in 1991 and this version was conducted by Douglas Major in a concert. It was published by Oxford University Press in 1993.⁴¹⁰ Dirksen also used the opening verse of this anthem in his movie score *The American Adventure* written for the Bicentennial.

Dirksen composed *Welcome Happy Morning* for Dale Krider and the First United Methodist Church of Hyattsville, MD for Easter Sunday 1975. It is scored for SATB choir, organ, brass, and timpani. This work is about nine minutes long and sets many of the verses of Fortunatus long hymn.⁴¹¹ However, Dirksen made provision in the score for two cuts to the end if the work needs to be shortened for liturgical reasons and he touts the practical nature of this work in the written introduction to the score. It was published by Harold Flammer in 1978.⁴¹² The music is a scherzo like rhythm with a lyrical melody. The rhythmic complexities are

⁴⁰⁷ Dirksen catalog, 19.

⁴⁰⁸ RSD, email 20 September 2016.

⁴⁰⁹ Dirksen catalog, 25.

⁴¹⁰ Dirksen catalog, 8.

⁴¹¹ This hymn was well known in Anglican circles and widely sung on Easter morning.

⁴¹² Dirksen catalog, 13. Musical score, 2.

combined with the idea of a chorale used as a refrain. Mark Dirksen believes that this contains many "pure Dirksen gestures" especially with regard to the rhythm and chorale used as musical rhetoric.⁴¹³

He set a poem by cathedral organ benefactor Anna Ardenghi called *Holy Little Child* as a solo work for one of the choirboys and handbells. Dirksen taped it and sent it as a Christmas present to the aging Ardenghi. The next year, as she was in her sickbed, she was able to hear the boys sing it on the NBC Christmas broadcast.

Finally in 1975, Dirksen rewrote his *Bless the Father* from 1974 into an anthem for unison chorus, flute, organ and bells with the title *A Wedding Prayer - May the Grace of Christ Our Savior* for his son Geoff's wedding.⁴¹⁴ It is an angular melody for singers and flute. It begins on a Bb major chord and goes through many key changes until it ends in B major. For a short work, it transverses many keys and is typical of many of the hymns that Dirksen would write. It was published by E.C. Schirmer in 1995.

Dave Brubeck and Dirksen

A somewhat different inspiration to Dirksen in addition to La Montaigne, Callaway, Hoiby, and Bernstein, was Jazz musician David Brubeck. Dirksen was always open to alternative types of music. For example, he had welcomed a drum circle to come and perform at the cathedral in 1965.⁴¹⁵ He had also been moved when Indian musician Ravi Shankar who came to play the prelude on the sitar at a memorial service for Gandhi in 1969.⁴¹⁶ It would come as no surprise then when Dirksen was moved by the works of the Jazz great Brubeck.

⁴¹³ MD initial conversation.

⁴¹⁴ Dirksen catalog, 9.

⁴¹⁵ GD initial conversation,

⁴¹⁶ Letter from Dirksen to Ravi Shankar, Cathedral archives.

In the mid 1960's, Dirksen heard that Brubeck was playing nearby at Sidwell Friends School in Washington. Dirksen went and heard him and approached Brubeck at the end of the evening. Dirksen volunteered to drive Brubeck back to his hotel. Brubeck agreed and as they were driving they passed the cathedral. Dirksen remarked that this was where he worked. Brubeck, impressed, asked to go in. Dirksen unlocked the dark building, brought in Brubeck and turned on the organ. Then Dirksen began to improvise on all of the themes that Brubeck had played that night. Brubeck, even more impressed, became friends with Dirksen on that day. This meeting also coincided with Brubeck's initial forays into composing sacred Music. Dirksen encouraged him to bring these new pieces to the cathedral, and Brubeck took him up.⁴¹⁷

Dirksen would conduct Brubeck's Oratorio *The Light in the Wilderness* at a performance for television broadcast from the cathedral in 1969.⁴¹⁸ Very soon after, Brubeck would compose the Cantata *The Gates of Justice* in 1969 which is an interesting fusion of jazz, Hebrew chant and psalmody, with the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Brubeck dedicated the work to the National Cathedral and would premiere the work there.⁴¹⁹ Brubeck who would later become a Catholic, would go on to compose a Mass which was video recorded at the cathedral as well as a set of variations on the chant *Pange lingua*. Brubeck himself became an interesting example of fusion of tradition and contemporary music. In his religious works he incorporated elements like plainsong and Hebrew chant along with his own native idiom of jazz creating contemporary

⁴¹⁷ Initial conversation with RD. Brubeck recounted a slightly different version of the conversation in an interview late in the composers life. Tom Wilmeth, "A Previously Unpublished Interview with Dave Brubeck" in *Jazz Times* 18 November 2013.

⁴¹⁸ Bittner, R Andrew, *Building Washington National Cathedral* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2015), 88.

⁴¹⁹ John Lebec, "The Time I Met Dave Brubeck at the National Cathedral" in *Washington City Paper* 11 December 2012.

works within the hermeneutic of continuity. The friendship between Brubeck and Dirksen endured.⁴²⁰

A Thanksgiving for Light

Dirksen composed an entire liturgy for the 11 a.m. service on 27 August 1972. The service was called *A Thanksgiving for LIGHT!* The orchestration is for horn, bassoon, flutes, handbells, drums (including a trap set), guitars, piano, organ and electric organ. In addition to setting the ordinary of the Mass, Dirksen set hymns for the introit, gradual, offertory, and communion.⁴²¹ The work really is an attempt at composing a whole Eucharist service and doing it almost as if it were a play or perhaps a musical. Dirksen includes rubrics in the highly detailed score. He also includes some responses for the people to the Celebrant's greetings. Mark and Rick Dirksen believe one of the principal influences on this composition was the "Mass" by Leonard Bernstein.⁴²² This is not a Mass as such, but is more like a musical about a Mass. In between movements of the Mass, there are skeptical interludes. There is also a mixture of styles including orchestra, children's choirs, rock bands, and jazz. Dirksen was the organist for the Mass at its premiere at the Kennedy Center in 1971. He then arranged this liturgy as though it were a play. However, Dirksen's composition was actually used at the Eucharist. Like the Bernstein work, it combines classical, rock, jazz, and Broadway styles. Dirksen also uses a lot of hymn texts from protestant hymnody in his work. This is a good example of Dirksen absorbing other styles and then making them his own.

Galileo Galilei (1972)

⁴²⁰ There is a great story about Dirksen's 80th birthday and Brubeck calling on the speaker phone to wish him well. RSD 20 September 2016.

⁴²¹⁴²¹ Dirksen catalog, 17.

⁴²² MD initial conversation and RSD, email 20 September 2016.

Ted Walsh, founder of the Trapier Shakespeare company put on a production of Berthold Brecht's play *Galileo Galilei* as part of the summer festival of 1972 and it was performed in the crossing of the cathedral. Funds were becoming scarce as the cathedral was borrowing money to complete the nave, so Dirksen began to run the summer festival as "in house" as possible to curtail costs. Three to five thousand people were estimated to have attended the successful performances. Brecht begins each scene of his play with poetic quatrains or couplets, and Dirksen set these to music. There were also some instrumental interludes. Nine male singers including four boy sopranos formed the chorus. The orchestra was sparse with a few solo instruments, electronic keyboard and the great organ.⁴²³

The Annunciation Story (1973)

This work combines two of Dirksen's favorite mediums - drama and sacred music. He conceives this as a stational liturgy with three parts - Annunciation, Visitation, and the Nativity with processions in between. He includes congregational texts and responses that were compiled by Canon Cave for this occasion. The music for the first two stations involve acapella recitative like a tone for a reading at the liturgy. The Annunciation and Visitation stations also each have a section of chant. The chant for the Annunciation was composed by Dirksen and has some angular elements whereas the chant for the Visitation is the Magnificat sung in English to the Solemn version of Tone VIII.⁴²⁴ Each of the stations has a choral segment as well. Dirksen meant each station to have a familiar Advent or Christmas hymn sung between them in procession as all moved through the church. The final station of the Nativity would be held in

⁴²³ Dirksen catalog, 30, 31.

⁴²⁴ This version was in the *Hymnal 1940*, 658.

the chancel with the Gospel of the Nativity being read at the high altar.⁴²⁵ The score was published in 1975 by Harold Flammer.

Minor Compositions 1976-1979

Lazarus was composed in 1976 and is described by Dirksen as a mini cantata in two parts - the sickness and death of Lazarus and Christ raising Lazarus from the dead. It is scored for handbells, percussion, piano and organ. It has a cast of soloists corresponding to the major characters in the biblical narrative and an SATB choir. Part two was adapted from material from his 1961 work *The York Cycle*.⁴²⁶

Low How Soft the Light is a work written in 1976 for two equal voices and handbells. The text is by Dean Sayre himself and carved onto the oak screen in the Good Shepherd Chapel. Sayre had given the chapel in memory of his parents. This music was sung for the chapel's dedication in November of that year.⁴²⁷ Most of the short work is composed in imitative counterpoint with two strong unison sections. It was published by E.C. Schirmer in 1995.

Curiously, in 1977 when the new proposed translations for the liturgy were widely in use and one year before the Prayer Book 1979 would be adopted and required at all cathedral liturgies, Dirksen composed a setting of the Preces and Responses for Evensong with the 1928 text. It was for three part treble voices unaccompanied. He never engraved it with the computer, perhaps because it was hardly used.⁴²⁸

Angels we have Heard on High was an arrangement of "St. Peter's Song" from the *Ballad of Dr. Faustus* composed for the Bicentennial and nave dedication. It is a very sweet melody

⁴²⁵ Instructions in the score.

⁴²⁶ Dirksen catalog, 72.

⁴²⁷ Dirksen catalog, 9.

⁴²⁸ Dirksen catalog, 18.

and composed for trebles in union with keyboard accompaniment⁴²⁹ and handbells. It was published by Harold Flammer in 1979.⁴³⁰

Bicentennial and Nave Dedication (1976)

When Cave took over as Precentor in 1973 and Dirksen was made Director of Program, he was given the specific charge to prepare for the American Bicentennial as well as to celebrate the completion of the nave. Dirksen had prepared for monumental celebrations before like the dedications of the South Transept and the Gloria in Excelsis tower. However, the celebrations at the cathedral for the bicentennial and the nave completion were not on the same scale as they were in the early and mid 1960's. Whereas there is a lot written with regard to reflection to the dedication festivities in the 1960's there is very little written about the 1976 celebration. For the Bicentennial, there was an extended summer festival which included a number of theatrical productions. These included two operas composed and conducted by Gian-Carlo Menotti - *Martin's Lie*⁴³¹ and a cathedral commissioned opera called *The Egg*.⁴³² Rick Dirksen sang lead roles in both.⁴³³

The summer festival also featured a newly composed theatrical recreation of Christopher Marlowe's famous play. *The Ballad of Dr. Faustus* was staged and produced by Ted Walsh and his Shakespeare company.⁴³⁴ This famous morality play was recast in the historical time of California's gold rush. Dr. Faustus is a traveling preacher and medicine man. Mephistopheles is

⁴²⁹ Dirksen does not mention the accompaniment in his catalog - an uncharacteristic error. In the score, he suggests that the keyboard part may be played on piano, celesta, glockenspiel, or using light flute stops on the organ. He also suggests solo flute players could be used or a combination of many instruments with a zimbelstern.

⁴³⁰ Dirksen catalog, 6. This work was recorded by St. John in the Wilderness Cathedral, Denver. This recording uses harp, bells, celesta, and zimblestern to accompany the piece with great effect.

⁴³¹ The American premiere of this work.

⁴³² Yang, 218. MD reflects that this work was not received well and that Gian-Carlo was late at getting the score completed.

⁴³³ RSD, email 20 September 2016.

⁴³⁴ The same company that Dirksen had written incidental music for when they produced plays at the theater at St. Albans.

a Franciscan Friar who comes to assist the medicine train and to tempt Faustus. Lucifer is the wealthiest mine owner in the land. The Ballad was a commentary on each of the scenes and sung in between the theatrical action by a tenor.⁴³⁵ With the full nave completed, the stage was built in the crossing. The "orchestra" consisted of two electric guitars, percussion, synthesizer, and the Great Organ for certain dramatic effects.⁴³⁶ The whole thing had to be amplified, and so Geoff Dirksen was the sound engineer and he put together a system of body microphones.⁴³⁷ Mark Dirksen, who was working as an assistant for the summer festival remarked that Faustus was a "wow" moment for the festival.⁴³⁸

Dirksen composed a setting of the canticle "The Song of the Redeemed" from Revelation 15.3-4 for two treble voices, organ and handbells. It was composed for a service of Dedication for the nave on 8 July 1976 which was attended by Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip. The canticle was published by Harold Flammer that same year.

The American Adventure was an historical audio-visual production designed as a tourist attraction during the bicentennial and was shown in a theater downtown Washington for a number of years.⁴³⁹ Its subject was American History in general and the city of Washington DC in particular. The whole performance took 50 minutes, and Dirksen composed the orchestral score for the work. The performers were members of the National Symphony Orchestra and Dirksen conducted the score's recording sessions.⁴⁴⁰ It contained a verse from Dirksen's *Father in Thy Gracious Keeping* as well as some strains in the orchestra of his operetta *Tularosa*. The music also had marches and snippets of American patriotic songs. It also had several aspects of

⁴³⁵ This tenor soloist was Gene Tucker, a longtime cathedral soloist who would go on to become an Episcopal Priest. RSD, email 20 September 2016.

⁴³⁶ For a festival short on funds, this truncated version of an orchestra would certainly be easier to pay.

⁴³⁷ Dirksen catalog, 31, 32.

⁴³⁸ MD email, 14 September 2016.

⁴³⁹ RSD email, 20 September 2016.

⁴⁴⁰ Dirksen catalog, 23.

a movie score where dramatic moments would be highlighted by background music appropriate to the scene.

V. 1977 - 1991 - Organist and Precentor

On September 1, 1977 Dr. Callaway retired after 38 years of service. Dirksen, at the age of 56 first became acting organist and on 22 October 1978 became the fourth Organist and Choirmaster of the cathedral.⁴⁴¹ After working in some capacity with Callaway as director since 1942, Dirksen was now in charge of the music program. However, he also was asked to take on the job of Precentor again, and he would hold this until his retirement in 1991.⁴⁴² Douglas Major became his associate in 1980 and Dirksen also received an honorary doctorate from George Washington University that same year. 1982 marked forty years for him at the cathedral and in 1983 he was made a canon of the cathedral in a group of canons that included the first lay canons as well as the first women clerical canons.⁴⁴³ Upon Callaway's retirement from the Cathedral Choral Society in 1984, Dirksen became interim director until J. Riley Lewis was chosen in 1985 as the ensemble's permanent director.⁴⁴⁴

The late 1970s and 1980s were Dirksen's final years of active employment at the cathedral. The first part of this period was spent helping to fully implement the liturgical revisions of the time. The second half of this period was spent looking forward to and planning for the completion of the cathedral. During this era of Dirksen's leadership, although Yang and other histories of the cathedral music program do not list any major new developments in the choral program, Mark Dirksen says that his father took the cathedral choir to new heights in

⁴⁴¹ Yang, 74.

⁴⁴² I suspect that the lack of funds at the cathedral in 1977 along with Dirksen's abilities were the reasons he was asked to do both jobs.

⁴⁴³ The Cathedral Age, Summer 1983.

⁴⁴⁴ Yang, 75.

terms of the quality of the singing and musicianship.⁴⁴⁵ This was also a period of regrouping as the cathedral underwent a major financial shock, the retirement of Dean Sayre, and a reorganization of leadership.

Financial Troubles in the Cathedral - the Retirement of Dean Sayre

In 1977, John Walker succeeded Creighton as Bishop of Washington. Walker was the first African American Canon of the cathedral and likewise the first African American as Bishop of Washington. Walker, as a Canon, had been under Sayre's authority. However, now as Bishop, he was his superior. There was also an announcement that the cathedral had incurred a debt of over \$12 million with an interest payment per annum exceeding 1 million dollars.⁴⁴⁶ This was the construction debt in the push to complete the nave.⁴⁴⁷ Finally, Bishop Walker's vision for the cathedral sought greater integration between the cathedral and the Diocese of Washington. In times past, these entities had functioned separately. Sayre retired in early 1978, and Walker, instead of appointing a successor assumed the title himself and thus became both Bishop and Dean.⁴⁴⁸ From this time on, the day to day administration of the Cathedral would be handled by Provost Charles Perry and Bishop Walker would serve as overall head and chief liturgist.⁴⁴⁹

Thankfully for Dirksen, he was very close with Sayre and Walker and respected them both immensely. Dirksen was able to seamlessly transition to the head music job as his superior changed as well. The music program took a budgetary hit though as all funding was slashed to deal with the problem of the debt. Callaway had always sought to maintain the number of boys

⁴⁴⁵ Initial conversation MD.

⁴⁴⁶ Thankfully, the interest rate was capped on the cathedral loan at this point at 10% as interest rates soared to almost 20%.

⁴⁴⁷ Quinn HPAP 159.

⁴⁴⁸ Quinn HAPA 162. For a fuller history of the fight between Sayre and Walker see Quinn HAPAP 132-135 and 149-163.

⁴⁴⁹ Quinn, HPAP 163.

in the choir at 30. In his 1975-76 annual report to the chapter, Callaway reports 28 boys and 22 men in the choir. In the 1977-78 annual report to the chapter, Dirksen reports 21 boys and 15 men, two of whom were volunteers. This is quite a big reduction, and especially at a time when the cathedral was complete and the choir had to fill the entire building - choir, transepts, and long nave with sound. The numbers in the choir had increased only a little by the time Dirksen retired with 22 boys and 18 men in the report for 1988-89.⁴⁵⁰ The choir was not the only cultural program to be cut. Dirksen had been trying to keep the budgets down for the advance program. He wrote in a report to the Dean in 1973 that the summer festival had been mostly "in house" with regard to performances. This enabled the budget to stay lower, but it also affected the quality. Dirksen warned that if the festival became too inward looking, it would fail to bring in people from outside the cathedral and continue as an outreach.

Although this slashing of resources, especially for the choir of men and boys which is at the heart of the cathedral's musical program, would be a musical difficulty, I could not find any place where Dirksen complained about the situation. One has to go to the statistics to even find out that this had happened. He was a realist, and if he had complaints, he would say them and then get on with doing the best with what he had. Even with this reduction in musical forces, Dirksen managed to raise the overall musicianship of the choir to even greater heights.

Anglican Liturgical Revision

In order to examine Dirksen's response to liturgical revision, it is necessary to summarize the history of reform in the Episcopal church. In the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* for the Episcopal Church, the liturgy was significantly revised. The previous Prayer Book was published in 1928. Although it was one of a series of minor revisions to the American Book of Common Prayer, it was substantially similar to the English *Book of Common Prayer* of 1662.

⁴⁵⁰ See the annual "Dean's Report to the Chapter" from the cathedral archives.

Analogous to the sea changes in the Catholic liturgy in the 1960's, the Prayer Book Revision altered the highly stylized and treasured Elizabethan style of English that had dominated Anglican worship from its inception. It also revised the liturgy for Holy Communion, now called "Holy Eucharist" and produced a liturgy very similar to the rite found in the Missal of Paul VI. These revisions came out in stages throughout the 1960s and 70's, often being called by the color of the cover of the book.⁴⁵¹ Following the revisions to the Prayer Book were revisions of the Hymnal 1940. Beginning in the late 1960's, new settings of the revised liturgy as well as new hymns were published in various supplements from the Church Hymnal Corporation. The culmination of musical revision was *The Hymnal 1982*.⁴⁵²

The Cathedral and Dirksen in the Midst of Change

In the midst of this often politically charged climate in the Episcopal Church, the cathedral was an interesting mix of tradition and change. Dean Sayre had been a political activist on race relations and in the controversy over Senator Joseph McCarthy. He also came from a strong social activist background since his days ministering to union workers in Cleveland in the late 1940's and early 1950's. He famously took on the Israeli government in the early 1970's over their treatment of Palestinians, angering many in the Jewish community.

However, with regard to the liturgy and theology, Sayre seemed to be indifferent. He never said much at all about the place of women in the church,⁴⁵³ nor about Prayer Book or worship service reform.⁴⁵⁴ Sayre did allow for a "guitar Mass" to be celebrated in the crypt of

⁴⁵¹ The most used of these books were the "zebra book" and the "green book."

⁴⁵² For an excellent summary of the history of the development of Hymnals in the Episcopal Church of the United States, see the essays by Leonard L. Ellinwood and Charles G. Manns, "The Publication of the Hymnal of the Episcopal Church" and Raymond F. Glover, "The Creation of the Hymnal 1982" in *The Hymnal 1982 Companion* (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1990), 49-98.

⁴⁵³ A major controversy over the possibility of ordaining women as Priests erupted in the Episcopal Church in the 1970's and continues in many places to this day.

⁴⁵⁴ Quinn, HPAP (PAGE!)

the cathedral at 10a.m. Other than this, he made the liturgical changes when they were proposed, but did not dwell on them.

Dirksen was much in the same mold as Sayre with regard to the changes. He implemented them, but did not dwell on them. The "guitar mass" was the place for experimentation, but the principal liturgies - the 11a.m. Sunday morning service and the Sunday and daily Evensongs remained very traditional in their musical style and dignity of celebration.⁴⁵⁵ Dirksen did show leadership in desiring the cathedral to be on the forefront of liturgical life as far as beauty and quality of the music were concerned.⁴⁵⁶

Although Dirksen was not one to be caught up in liturgical theory, he was one to have a practical response to it. The new liturgical texts required new musical settings.

Dirksen's Practical Response to Liturgical Reform - The Psalter

In 1978 Bishop Walker asked that the newly approved Book of Common Prayer (1979) be used at all cathedral services unless special permission was given otherwise.⁴⁵⁷ This meant an immediate problem for the cathedral with regard to the Daily Office. Rite I in the new book allowed for the use of the more traditional language with regard to the canticles. However there was no such option with regard to the psalter. The only option was to use the more contemporary translation. In practical terms, this meant over twenty psalms per month from the new translation of the Psalter had to be pointed to sing with Anglican Chant. This had to be done by hand and with little assistance from the outside of the cathedral since few choral establishments in the United States sang Evensong on an almost daily basis.

The psalter revision also provided an opportunity for the composition of new Anglican Chants. Between Dirksen and his assistant Douglas Major, they composed 35-40 new Anglican

⁴⁵⁵ Initial conversation with RD.

⁴⁵⁶ Phone conversation with GD.

⁴⁵⁷ Dirksen catalog, 16.

chants and pointed all of the 150 psalms in the new translation.⁴⁵⁸ This is a prime example of the hermeneutic of continuity within liturgical reform. The traditional method of chanting the psalms with harmonized psalm tones (Anglican Chant) was retained by Dirksen and the cathedral.⁴⁵⁹ However, the chants themselves were now often newly composed with a harmonic structure reflecting the 20th century, or as Dirksen said they are "harmonically sophisticated." Dirksen notes that these chants are double or triple chants - that is they are used for four or six lines of the psalm. None of his chants were meant for congregational use.⁴⁶⁰ Dirksen was definitely composing for a particular type of ensemble, the cathedral choir, a professional choir. Then these new chants are pointed with the new translation of the Psalter. The distinctive Anglican roots are maintained. However, the execution of the liturgy is very much a product of a late 20th century American cathedral with a professional choir.

Dirksen's Practical Response - Service Music for the Daily Office

In the Anglican office, an invitatory is sung at Morning Prayer and a canticle is sung after each of the two scripture lessons at both Morning and Evening Prayer. In the 1928 BCP, only a truncated version of Psalm 95 was given for the invitatory and eleven canticle options to be sung at the Daily Office - four at Morning Prayer and six at Evensong.⁴⁶¹ The 1979 BCP increased the invitatory options to three, gave a lucinarium hymn for Evensong (called an "invitatory")⁴⁶² and provided twenty one canticles to be sung after the lessons. There was considerable overlap

⁴⁵⁸ Hendricks, 62.

⁴⁵⁹ There was some controversy over this method of psalm singing. In his 1973 report on liturgy at the Cathedral, Canon Jeffery Cave suggests using Anglican chant as only one method of singing the psalms and rotating it with plainsong and Gelineau psalmody. It seems as though by 1978, Dirksen and others had maintained the course and the traditional method of singing the psalms in the Anglican liturgical patrimony remained the as the praxis for the cathedral.

⁴⁶⁰ Dirksen catalog, 16. There had been a tradition of Anglican and Episcopal congregations singing Anglican chant, but these were fairly simple and straight forward chants with very simple pointing.

⁴⁶¹ The 1662 BCP of the Church of England provided only eight canticle options. All four options for Morning prayer were often used in the United States. However, options were rarely used at Evensong where the *Magnificat* and the *Nunc dimittis* were almost always sung.

⁴⁶² The *Phos hilaron*.

with the 1928 book with regard to text. But there were also many new texts which required musical settings. Dirksen aided in providing choral settings of these texts. However, with the drop off of the use of Morning Prayer as a choral service, many of these works are never used.

In 1977 he composed a setting of the "Song to the Lamb" from the book of Revelation. It is for unaccompanied unison and three part voices alternating between the unison chant of the *tonus peregrinus* and verses in fauxbourdon.⁴⁶³

Perhaps the most complex musical contributions that Dirksen made to the texts of the new Prayer Book with regard to the canticles were the choral settings of the three *Songs of Isaiah*. These were composed in 1982 for the Biennial Convention of the American Guild of Organists held in June in Washington DC. They were first performed by the choir of St. Thomas, Fifth Avenue, New York under the direction of Gerre Hancock at a festival Evensong⁴⁶⁴ closing the convention. Dirksen said that they were intended as a trilogy and to be performed as a series. However, he also said that they could serve as individual canticles as well.⁴⁶⁵ I can find no evidence that these works have been widely used liturgically, perhaps due to the infrequent celebration of Choral Matins and the widespread use of only the *Magnificat* and the *Nunc dimittis* for Evensong in the United States. These settings of the first two canticles are unaccompanied while the third has organ accompaniment. *Surely it is God* is built on a refrain with a recurring ritornello theme. The second, *Seek the Lord* is based on a chant like theme intoned at the beginning and developed by the voices in a very striking contemporary harmonic fabric and a driving rhythm. The third, *Arise shine* is a more dramatic work which begins and ends with the opening words of the canticle in a powerful setting for full choir and organ. The

⁴⁶³ Dirksen catalog, 17.

⁴⁶⁴ The new BCP allowed for any of the canticles at Morning and Evening Prayer to be used interchangeably. Thus you could use these canticles at Evensong.

⁴⁶⁵ RW Dirksen, *Three Songs of Isaiah - I. Surely it is God who Saves Me*, 2.

organ accompaniment is complex and difficult. The three settings are incredible and difficult works which is undoubtedly why they are seldom if ever used liturgically. They deserve wider use and could function as offertory or even communion motets or as a set in a choral concert.

It is interesting to note that in 1991, Dirksen composed the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* for two voices and organ, but not for the new translation. It was composed for the service commemorating the rebuilding of the Bethlehem Chapel organ and was commissioned by the choirboys as part of Dirksen's retirement honors in 1991.⁴⁶⁶ However, this was a setting of the Rite I or more traditional translation. This is also no longer an attempt by Dirksen to answer the need for settings for new texts. Evensong, where it was sung in the United States, by and large tended to retain the more traditional language.

Dirksen's Practical Response - Communion Services

In the 1970's and 80's the Communion Service or Eucharist became the most widely used Sunday service in the American Episcopal Church. Thus, it was to this service as well as to the corpus of Hymns that Dirksen made his largest contributions with regard to liturgical reform.

The 1979 BCP restored the fraction to the traditional spot right before the communicants received. The rubrics of this rite say that during this action either the antiphon "Christ our Passover" or "Lamb of God" may be sung. A form of Christ our Passover had been inserted into the Cranmerian Prayer Book of 1549 but was removed from subsequent books.⁴⁶⁷ The 1979 version is a short dialogue between Priest and people. Dirksen composed a musical setting of this dialogue in 1971 for unison, organ, and handbells. He rewrote the response for brass quartet for the Christmas television broadcast of 1975.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁶ Dirksen catalog, 18. Rick says that it was mostly the older choir alumni who funded the commission and they definitely preferred the traditional language. RSD email, 20 September 2016.

⁴⁶⁷ Marion J. Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book* (New York: Seabury, 1980), 380.

⁴⁶⁸ Dirksen catalog, 17.

In 1973, Dirksen composed a Sanctus and Benedictus for SATB with organ with the Rite II translation for the service of the National Organization of Women (NOW) at the cathedral. In 1974, he revised into the Rite II text another Sanctus and Benedictus originally composed for the 1966 service for the Episcopal Schools Foundation and rewritten for the installation of John Allin as the Presiding Bishop. In 1975, he revised his setting of the Sanctus and Benedictus from the Service for Light (see above) into the Rite II text for use at the Christmas television broadcast. With these three settings, Dirksen seems to be filling an immediate need in the liturgy for a sung Sanctus with a Rite II text.⁴⁶⁹ At this Christmas telecast in 1975, he also composed a new setting of the Gloria for the Rite II text with SATB choir, organ, brass, and timpani. The Gloria was published by Harold Flammer in 1977.⁴⁷⁰

In 1979, again responding to a need for music when the Archbishop of Canterbury Donald Coggin visited the National Cathedral on October 19, 1979, Dirksen composed a Gloria and a Sanctus for SATB organ, and 3 trumpets. Dirksen would later go on to add a Kyrie and an Agnus Dei.⁴⁷¹ The Sanctus and Gloria were perhaps the most used "service music" movements in the 1979 Eucharistic liturgy.⁴⁷²

In 1980, Dirksen again was composing new music for the Rite II texts. This time he composed the Communion Service in C minor for two voices high and low and organ. The Gloria and Sanctus were written for use with the men in August during the summer. As Dirksen had done in earlier years in the summer months when only the men sang, he now wrote some

⁴⁶⁹ Dirksen catalog, 18. It was common in the Episcopal liturgy, as in the Revised Roman Rite, that a Sanctus and Benedictus by one composer for congregational use is sung at a festival Eucharist while the Gloria and fraction might be from different composers. However, in the Episcopal liturgy, it is more rare for the memorial acclamation or the Great Amen to be sung, and often the Sanctus is the only thing sung between the offertory and the communion.

⁴⁷⁰ Dirksen catalog, 8. Dirksen curiously lists this Gloria under "Sacred Choral" rather than service music. As far as I can tell though it is a liturgical work.

⁴⁷¹ Dirksen catalog, 17.

⁴⁷² In Rite II, when the Gloria is sung the Kyrie is omitted. Also, the "Christ our Passover" was often recited and no Agnus Dei used. Thus, generally speaking only a Gloria and Sanctus were needed.

music again for men's voices but now for the new translation of the Communion liturgy. The music is not easy with a difficult organ accompaniment. In November of that year, he added a Lord have mercy and Jesus Lamb of God for Advent use.⁴⁷³ The Jesus Lamb of God is based on the spiritual "Listen to the Lambs." Here is another great example of Dirksen composing highly crafted and difficult art music but blending influences of scholarly counterpoint, developed harmonies, and a uniquely American melody.

Dirksen also composed a few other works for the reformed liturgies. The Palm Sunday rite for blessing of palms and procession had been removed from the Anglican liturgy at the reformation. However, by 1960, it was included in a book of Occasional Offices for the Episcopal Church. The 1979 BCP has an introit text with versicles and responses for the start of the liturgy before the procession.⁴⁷⁴ Dirksen made an acapella SATB setting of these in 1974.

As the Palm Sunday procession was dropped at the time of the Reformation, likewise the Easter Vigil was done away with in the 1549 BCP. However, the 1979 book restored the ancient liturgy. In 1976 Dirksen composed a setting of the *Exsultet* to be sung by high solo voice with handbells and the choir singing refrains of "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again" sung in fauxbourdon and repeated as needed. In 1989 he was asked by the cathedral liturgist to revise the work and make it completely conform to the text of the 1979 BCP. He did this and added a "closing prayer set as a unison hymn for the choir and congregation to sing." He added in his catalog that this version has never been sung at the liturgy.⁴⁷⁵

Dirksen's Practical Response - Hymns and The Hymnal 1982

⁴⁷³ *ibid.*

⁴⁷⁴ Hatchett, 223, 224.

⁴⁷⁵ Dirksen catalog, 18. By "closing prayer" Dirksen is referring to the last part of the text of the *Exsultet* which reads "and now Holy Father accept..." Rick Dirksen is hoping to sing this version for the Easter Vigil, 2017. RSD correspondence 17 January 2017.

Perhaps one of the most significant offerings made to the music of the reform of the liturgy in the Episcopal church were the 6 hymn tunes Dirksen contributed to the Hymnal 1982. The liturgical reform of the Book of Common Prayer also prompted the promulgation of a new Hymnal for the Episcopal Church. The book is a combination of styles from across the history of Christian music and is itself a testament to a hermeneutic of continuity with some of the very first Chant hymns to experimental harmonies and aleatoric elements with every other style represented.

Dirksen himself composed a total of 23 hymn tunes. He would set 30 texts to these 23 tunes with multiple texts to the same tune. Although he composed some hymns like *Campaign* and *Vineyard Haven* well before the hymnal was published and a few tunes after, the vast majority of his hymn compositions were written in 1983 when the Hymnal was being finalized. He submitted 16 of these tunes to the Hymnal committee for consideration and six were ultimately approved. Although he may have been disappointed that more of these hymns were not published, still Dirksen was one of the most well represented contemporary composers in the entire hymnal.

Kimberling and others referred to *Vineyard Haven* as "the hymn of the decade."⁴⁷⁶ In addition to the organ and unison congregation setting, there is an extensive brass arrangement and soprano descant all composed by Dirksen himself. This setting is published, well known and often performed at festive occasions today. It was composed for the installation of John Allin as the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in 1974 with the text for which it is best known, "Rejoice ye pure in heart." The tune was named in honor of Dean Sayre who had lots of ties with the town of Vineyard Haven on Martha's Vineyard. This is where the dean would also

⁴⁷⁶ Kimberling, 19.

retire.⁴⁷⁷ It is interesting to note that this well known hymn and text almost did not make it into the Hymnal 1982. Raymond Glover, general editor of the hymnal said that the committee did not like the text.⁴⁷⁸ He pleaded with Dirksen to provide other texts for consideration with this tune. Dirksen held firm in his resolve that the original text, now in wide use and published elsewhere, should remain the same. Dirksen eventually relented and let Glover use the Isaac Watts text "Come ye that love the Lord" with the tune.⁴⁷⁹ In the end, both texts were published with the tune. The memorable refrain and powerful harmonic structure have made this a favorite of many congregations.

The other very well known hymn tune is *Innisfree Farm* sung to the text of the vespers hymn "Christ Mighty Savior." Innisfree Farm was the name of the home and workshop of the stained glass artist Rowan Le Compte who designed the great rose window over the west entrance of the cathedral. Dirksen had originally another name in mind for the tune, but during Evensong when the hymn was sung he noticed a connection between the brilliance of the afternoon sun shining through the western facing window during the time of Evensong. This hymn was also the first to be sung during the service of dedication of the Hymnal 1982.⁴⁸⁰ This is ironic because this hymn also almost did not make it into the hymnal. The hymn itself is free rhythm with groupings of two and three beats as a contemporary attempt to write chant. The committee putting together the hymnal thought that this was too challenging for a congregation

⁴⁷⁷ Letter to Raymond Glover, 5 January 1981.

⁴⁷⁸ I can find no specific reason why Glover or other members of the committee did not like this text. The letter that he wrote to Dirksen concerning this only said that the committee had a lengthy discussion about it and were doubtful of the text's inclusion. My speculation is that he did not like some of the more militaristic imagery about marching forth and holding up the banner of Christ. However, not only does the text appear with Dirksen's tune, but also with the tune *Marion* which has often been associated with this text. Perhaps when the committee decided to keep the text, they decided to keep both tunes as well?

⁴⁷⁹ Correspondence between Glover and Dirksen found in "Hymn Project for the Hymnal 1982" in the cathedral archives. Dirksen said that "come we that love the Lord" was suggested to him as a text for his tune by Erik Routley for an earlier hymnal. But Dirksen also defends "Rejoice ye pure in heart" whose refrain was conceived with the text "Hosanna, Hosanna, Rejoice give thanks and sing" in mind.

⁴⁸⁰ HC IIIA 34.

to sing. Not wanting to lose the melody altogether, the committee suggested to Dirksen that he revise the tune with a more "regular" rhythmic pattern. Dirksen did that and the result was the tune *Decatur Place*.⁴⁸¹ Both of these versions ended up in the Hymnal, however, the "parent tune" is by far the more widely known and used of the tunes. Dirksen composed a descant for the tune as well which can be heard in a number of recordings of this tune, but lamentably, was not included in the Hymnal 1982.⁴⁸²

Three other hymn tunes are in the Hymnal. *Hilariter* is an adaptation of the refrain of the earlier choral work for Easter from 1957. *Mt. St. Alban NCA* was named for the mountain that the cathedral is built on as well as the National Cathedral Association - the national group that did a lot of fundraising for the construction of the cathedral and who celebrated their 50th anniversary in 1983.⁴⁸³ *Wyngate Canon* differs from Dirksen's other hymns due to its form. The name comes from the street where his son Rick and wife Libby lived in Bethesda MD. The text is Peter's confession of faith, and Dirksen decided to honor his son Rick with this title because he believed his son was a musical rock (a reliable musician), a dedicated son, and had stability as a father.⁴⁸⁴ Indeed, the harmonic stability of this canon further amplifies the rock solid testimony of St. Peter which is the subject of the text.

Minor Works (1980-1985)

In 1980 Dirksen composed a setting of the *Te Deum* according to the 1979 Prayer Book text, but from Rite I. It was commissioned for Christ Church Grosse Pointe Michigan to commemorate its fiftieth anniversary. It was scored for SATB choir, organ, brass, timpani and

⁴⁸¹ HC IIIA 51. The name for the hymn is the street where Callaway lived. His Godson and Dirksen's son Geoff and his wife also lived for a time in the apartment below Callaway's.

⁴⁸² Dirksen catalog, 14.

⁴⁸³ HC IIIB 633.

⁴⁸⁴ HC IIIA 254.

gong.⁴⁸⁵ I am including it here rather than in the service music because it seems as though it was composed for a festival occasion as a stand-alone work and not as a piece of service music to be used regularly at the liturgy.

Dirksen was so busy with the work of Organist Choirmaster, that he did not have the time as before to compose. Thus his compositional output in the late 1970's and 1980's is greatly diminished from what it had been. In 1981 when Robert Runcie, the Archbishop of Canterbury visited Los Angeles, Tom Foster commissioned Dirksen to compose a fanfare. Los Angeles did not have an Episcopal Cathedral at that point, so the reception was at the Biltmore Hotel. Dirksen told Foster that he did not have time to compose anything. Foster told him to "throw something together anyway." The result was the *Fanfare and Chorale* with herald trumpets at one end of the ballroom and a brass septet at the other.⁴⁸⁶

Dirksen's compositions for 1982 and 1983 were either focused on the new hymnal or service music with the exception of a fanfare and processional work for trumpet and organ composed for his niece Brooke's wedding.⁴⁸⁷

1984 saw an increase again in composition. *Thank we all our God* is a paraphrase of the hymn and set to a Japanese tune *Hitotsu-toyo*. It was composed for a window given by a Japanese family and is for unison children's voices and handbells.⁴⁸⁸ This is a prime example of Dirksen reaching out and trying to incorporate and inculturate other traditions into his own by uniting a psalm paraphrase text from the protestant tradition to a Japanese melody.

The Eternal Gifts of Christ the King or *The Knights of God* was composed in 1984 for St. Paul's Church Indianapolis in honor of the Bicentennial of the Episcopal Church in the United

⁴⁸⁵ Dirksen catalog, 12.

⁴⁸⁶ Dirksen catalog, 25. N.B. the Archbishop's last name was Runcie not "Muncie" as Dirksen's catalog says.

⁴⁸⁷ Dirksen catalog, 22.

⁴⁸⁸ Dirksen catalog, 11.

States of America. It is for acapella SATB choir and makes use of plainsong in the refrain. The verses make use of interesting and complex rhythms. Dirksen was always working with plainsong and with modified and complex rhythmic structures. They were two building blocks for many of his compositions.⁴⁸⁹

Finally in 1984, he composed a set of six secular works setting the poetry of American poet Archibald MacLeish for SATB unaccompanied choir. He called the set *Six Choral Exercises*. They were composed for the American Vocal Ensemble under the direction of Douglas Major and first performed at the National Gallery of Art 22 January 1984.⁴⁹⁰

Minor Works (1986-1990)

Dirksen only composed two works during this five year span. In 1987 he composed a three voice paraphrase of the Gloria for unison and organ. He composed the work at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley California. He also gave it the name *Gibbs Hall*⁴⁹¹ which indicates that, although he lists it under his choral works in his catalog, he thought of it more as a hymn than a choral work.⁴⁹² *Come, O Come, Our Voices Raise* is a setting of George Wither's text and composed in 1988 for St. John's Episcopal Church, Beverly Farms, Massachusetts. Mark Dirksen was choirmaster there at the time and the SATB and organ anthem was written to honor Helene Canning, a chorister who had been singing at St. John's for 50 years.⁴⁹³ He reset this in 1992 for the 50th anniversary of the Cathedral Choral Society as *Cantate Dominio, canticum novum*.⁴⁹⁴

Dedication of the Finished Cathedral

⁴⁸⁹ MD initial conversation,

⁴⁹⁰ Dirksen catalog, 21.

⁴⁹¹ Gibbs hall is the name of the original seminary building at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, the Berkeley based Episcopal Seminary for Province VIII, the western Dioceses of the Episcopal Church.

⁴⁹² Dirksen catalog, 8.

⁴⁹³ Dirksen catalog, 7.

⁴⁹⁴ *ibid.*

Dirksen stepped down from his position as Organist Choirmaster in 1988 and was succeeded by his assistant, Douglas Major. However, his work at the cathedral was not complete. One final task remained for Dirksen and this would become his magnum opus⁴⁹⁵ - planning the dedication service for the completed cathedral.

On 29 September 1989, the last stone was laid on the St. Peter Tower, marking the end of 83 years of construction, kicking off a year of events surrounding the dedication of the cathedral, and would provide a foretaste of the last stone final ceremonially put in place on the St. Paul Tower one year later. At this same service, Bishop John Walker's death was announced. These were very important events for Dirksen.⁴⁹⁶ The cathedral for which he had worked 47 years was finally complete. Dirksen's own life had been spent growing as a musician along with this growing building that he loved so much. Walker's death too had a profound impact on Dirksen as Walker had guided the cathedral through this final phase which also coincided with Dirksen's headship of the music program at the cathedral.

Thursday September 27th through Sunday September 20th 1990 marked four days of celebrations for the dedication of the cathedral. These festivities included a festival evensong on Friday in recognition of cathedral founders, benefactors, artists, builders, staff and volunteers. On Saturday, the feast of St. Michael and All Angels and the 83rd anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone, was an ecumenical service at noon setting the final stone. That evening a musical thanksgiving was held. Finally, on 30 September, Sunday, the cathedral was consecrated by the Presiding Bishop at the 11 a.m. service.⁴⁹⁷ Dirksen was personally involved with the planning and execution of all of these services.

⁴⁹⁵ MD email conversation with author 14 September 2016.

⁴⁹⁶ TCA, Fall 1990, 28.

⁴⁹⁷ TCA Fall, 1990, back page.

The evensong on Friday the 28th was a grand affair that included three simultaneous processions with 857 people in them.⁴⁹⁸ The music was sung by a Cathedral Alumni Choir and the music sung reflects the American tradition that Callaway and Dirksen sought to achieve. The hymns were a mixture of English and American, including Dirksen's own *Innisfree Farm*. The choral literature included works by English composers Tallis, Stanford, Davies and George Martin as well as Americans Major, and newly commissioned works by David Hogan and Ronald Arnatt.⁴⁹⁹

The noonday ecumenical service on the 29th for the placement of the final stones was attended by President George H.W. Bush and included patriotic music provided by the Marine Band. The band also played a premier performance of a mediation on "I am for Peace" by Warren Benson. The hymns were *America* with the words "God bless our native land" and the "Doxology" or Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow were the only vocal music sung. Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* concluded the service. The Order of Service was likewise a red white and blue cover.

The concert the evening of the 29th was called *Sursum corda* and was sung by the Cathedral Choir of Men and Boys and the Cathedral Choral Society. The music was again representative of the repertoire that Callaway and Dirksen had tried to promote in the establishment of an American Tradition. Works by the English composers Parry, Vaughan Williams, Goss, and Bairstow were sung as well as by J.S. Bach. The American works were by Barber, Arnatt, Larry King, and of course, Dirksen. Dirksen's hymn *Decatur Place* and his choral mini-cantata *Welcome All Wonders* were sung.

⁴⁹⁸ Dirksen's reflections on the consecration.

⁴⁹⁹ Program.

The culminating service of the Consecration of the Cathedral Church of Sts. Peter and Paul on Sunday 30 September was itself an example of more ancient liturgies adapted in an American context. The BCP 1979 provides a rite for The Dedication and Consecration of a Church. This rite includes several texts including blessings of the church building as a whole, the baptismal font, the pulpit and the altar. However, the BCP also gives an outline for a service to be used if the church is “Long in Use.”⁵⁰⁰ I believe that the altar(s), and pulpit had already been dedicated. Since the cathedral took so long to build, individual elements of it were blessed and dedicated along the way. Now this church, some 70+ years in use, was being dedicated and the consecration service followed the general outline of the BCP. However, many other sources were used to form this liturgy too. These included the liturgies for the consecrations of the Liverpool, Coventry, and Atlanta Anglican Cathedrals. They included prayers used at previous dedication services at the National Cathedral, an American publication called *The Student Prayer Book*, and two collections of prayers edited by the former Dean of the Cathedral, John Suter.⁵⁰¹ Thus the liturgy itself was a compilation of older English elements and newer American prayers.

The music for the liturgy was paradigmatic of the American tradition with its Anglo-continental roots. The hymns were a mix of German, English and American compositions, including Dirksen’s *Decatur Place* and *Vineyard Haven*. The choral literature included Continental composers Palestrina, Mozart, and Bruckner. The English composers included Byrd and Howells. Finally, the American composers included Barber, Koehring, Sowerby, Fridell, Rorem, and Dirksen himself. Dirksen’s “*Yet even now, saith the Lord*” composed in 1957, the same year as *Welcome all Wonders*, was sung. The Barber *Chorale for Ascension Day*, a brass fanfare, was first played for the dedication of the central tower and was repeated for the entrance

⁵⁰⁰ BCP 1979, 577,8.

⁵⁰¹ Consecration program, 27.

of the procession for the consecration. After the prayer of Consecration and before the Liturgy of the Word, the *Te Deum laudamus* by Herbert Howells and composed for the cathedral was sung and was the premiere of this setting. It had been commissioned by the men of the Cathedral Choir to honor Callaway when he retired. However, the work was not quite complete when Howells died in 1983. People knew that the manuscript existed, yet had never seen it. Finally it was found, the final few measures finished, and the whole thing edited in time for the cathedral dedication.⁵⁰² This is a great example of how the musical tradition began to flow in the opposite direction. Now instead of English music for English cathedrals coming to America, a noted English composer was writing first for an American cathedral.

The events of the consecration were indeed, as his sons described it, Dirksen's *Magnum opus*. They were all examples of the American tradition of Cathedral Choral music with its roots in the English and Continental traditions. It was also a celebration of some of the many American compositions which had now had time to mature and were included in these days of consecration. If one were to look at the musical selections for these liturgies, he would see the thesis of this treatise laid out in a very practical way.

VI. 1991 - 2003 - Retirement

On 1 April 1991, Richard Wayne Dirksen retired after 49 years of work at the Washington National Cathedral. His achievements were commemorated by two events that year. First, on the evening of April 1st, he and his family were honored by a festive Evensong where the Bishop of Washington Ronald Haines commemorated Dirksen as a true "Renaissance man" and spoke of many of Dirksen's passions besides sacred music. The Evensong included lots of his music including *Innisfree Farm* and his fanfare for *T.S. Eliot*. A needlepoint cushion with musical notes and the words "Cantate Domino canticum novum" flanked by organ pipes was

⁵⁰² Howells score, inside front cover.

dedicated in his honor.⁵⁰³ When Evensong was done, all gathered at Hearst Hall where several alumni of St. Albans and The National Cathedral School for Girls Glee Clubs surprised Dirksen. They had secretly rehearsed many of the numbers from his musical theater shows. Dirksen had made reference to them in his farewell speech, recounting that these shows were one of his favorite things during his tenure on the Cathedral Close. Following this speech these alums came forward and under the direction of Norman Scribner began a surprise performance of many of Dirksen's show tunes. Dirksen's wife Joan was in on the surprise.⁵⁰⁴

The second honor was a concert of many of his most beloved sacred works on 15 April. It was a joint effort by the Cathedral Choir of Men and Boys under Douglas Major, The Cathedral Choral Society under J. Reilly Lewis, and the St. Albans and National Cathedral School Chorale under Richard Roeckelein. While these massive choirs processed in, four of Dirksen's fanfares were played. Dirksen's works performed were the hymn *Decatur Place*, the *Jubilate* composed in 1958 for use with the Dirksen portative organ, his Anglican chant for *Psalms 46, Christ our Passover, A Child My Choice, and Welcome All Wonders*. These last two works were sung by all of the choirs combined under the direction of Lewis. Interspersed between Dirksen's works were pieces by Vaughn-Williams, Bach, Vierne, Schütz, Schubert, and Brahms.⁵⁰⁵ This concert represents a sampling of his sacred works with a hymn, two psalm settings and his three most famous choral works. Ever the supporter of the cathedral, the proceeds from this concert went to fund the restoration of the organ in the Bethlehem Chapel. Dirksen's organist friends Douglas Major and J. Reilly Lewis performed the solo organ works. Paul Callaway was in attendance.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰³ TCA Summer 1991.

⁵⁰⁴ Video of RD retirement.

⁵⁰⁵ Concert Program, Cathedral Archives.

⁵⁰⁶ TCA, Spring 1991.

Compositions after Retirement

Dirksen lived a very active retirement before his wife's death. He initially set about putting his compositions in order. He went back through all of the unpublished works and edited a majority of it and engraved it into computer notation.⁵⁰⁷ He also put together an annotated catalog of all of his works up through 1993.

At the reception following the April 15th 1991 concert commemorating Dirksen, John Shenefield, former choirboy from Dirksen's earlier years, surprised all with a new commission for Dirksen from his former choirboys who had such great respect for him.⁵⁰⁸ The result was a setting of the evening canticles *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis in F# minor*. This setting for two voices (the boys) and organ was first used in the spring of 1992 for the service of rededication of the organ in the Bethlehem Chapel.⁵⁰⁹ This was the project that the concert in 1991 was raising funds for.

The setting of these canticles is very much in the style of other 20th century Anglican composers. Following the meaning of the text, the Magnificat is faster moving and more jovial than the plaintive Nunc Dimittis. Also, following compositional custom, the music for the Gloria Patri of the Nunc dimittis is a reprise of the material from the Magnificat. However, it is American in that while the overall text is the traditional Rite I, the Gloria Patri uses the words "Glory to the Father...and to the Holy Spirit...and will be forever" instead of "Glory be to the Father...and to the Holy Ghost...and ever shall be world without end."⁵¹⁰ Dirksen is definitely

⁵⁰⁷ Dirksen catalog, 3.

⁵⁰⁸ TCA, Summer 1991.

⁵⁰⁹ Dirksen catalog, 18.

⁵¹⁰ This pairing of the more traditional texts of the canticles with the more contemporary translation of the Gloria Patri is an interesting and unique feature of the American Prayer Book. There is a proviso in the BCP 1979 for the optional use of the earlier text, however, Dirksen does not.

using the tradition of great Anglican composers such as Stanford and Howells, yet he is using the American translation for an American cathedral.

Ever the family man, when his granddaughter was eight years old and studying piano, Dirksen composed *Jennah's Own Music Book*. Seven of his works were transcribed, a Haydn Adantino, and an original work were all designed for performance by small hands. Each piece had its own cover and came with pedagogical instructions to perform the works. It was a Christmas present to her in 1992.⁵¹¹

For the Evergreen conference⁵¹² in 1993, Dirksen composed *When Jesus Died to Save Us* whose first verse was by Bland Tucker, second by John Donne or Elizabeth I, and the third verse by Dirksen himself. The anthem is like a complicated hymn anthem for SATB choir, organ and handbells.⁵¹³ Dirksen's original tune is used through all three verses and for the most part is a stepwise tune in 6/8. However, there are a few leaps which can catch singers unaware. The second verse is an acapella fauxbourdon.

Always the fan of Christmas, Dirksen composed his final Christmas work *The Christ Child Lay on Mary's Lap* in 1993 for the Washington Choral Arts society and Norman Scribner. This setting is very much like his beloved *My Child* in that it is homophonic and strophic. It also has a shifting rhythmic tactus as many Dirksen works do. The text is by Chesterton, except for the last verse which was poetry composed by Dirksen himself.⁵¹⁴

The Death of Joan and Final Works

In the fall of 1994, Joan Dirksen, his faithful wife of 51 years, dear friend, and the light of his life had a stroke and a few months later on 27 January 1995 she died. This was devastating

⁵¹¹ Dirksen catalog, 22.

⁵¹² An Anglican church music conference founded in Evergreen Colorado by Canon Charles Winfred Douglas.

⁵¹³ Dirksen catalog, 12.

⁵¹⁴ Dirksen catalog, 11.

for Dirksen. In his grief, he worried that he would not be able to finish the compositions he had begun nor start new ones. The next year he understandably did not produce any new compositions. However, as he processed his grief, he was able to compose again. Most of these final works are incredibly well composed and all involve the use of plainsong and complex rhythmical structures.

In one of his first works after Joan's death Dirksen completed a work he had sketched out right before Joan's death, a setting of the *Te Deum*. It was originally commissioned in 1994 by Bruce Neswick for the bicentennial of Christ Church Cathedral in Lexington, Kentucky. It was completed in 1996 and is a setting of the Rite I translation of the hymn of Ambrose and Augustine. It is a festive setting for SATB choir, brass and timpani. Dirksen was inspired by the plainsong version in the *Play of Daniel and Herod* as performed by Noah Greenberg in his first year (1965) as the director of the Advance program. The newly installed cathedral bells ringing out and accompanying the chant were still in his mind years later when he composed this work. He dedicates the work to the memory of his wife Joan.⁵¹⁵ There are some more obvious quotes of the plainsong *Te Deum* in places like the text "Holy, Holy, Holy." However, more often than not, the chant is more obscure or the modal melodies are newly composed but inspired by earlier chant. As with most of his works, the rhythm is quite complicated.

In 1996 Dirksen also composed one of his most academically complex works, *Humbly I Adore Thee*. It was composed for the 89th Evergreen Music Conference under the direction of Donald Pearson. The English translation of the Eucharistic text by the Dominican *Doctor angelicus* St. Thomas Aquinas is set to the traditional Mode V chant melody in the first and fourth stanzas. However, Dirksen, true to his pattern of making variations, sets the chant to a very complicated rhythmic structure. Verses two and three are based on a melody where the

⁵¹⁵ Final page of score, 17. At the end of the score is touchingly printed "+Jo's song+ 1/27/15.

original chant has the sharps and flats removed then placed in retrograde to produce a new modal melody. The third stanza uses this retrograde modal melody in fauxbourdon in canon at the octave. The work is published by Trinitas and is also dedicated to Joan.⁵¹⁶ This whole work is perhaps the most developed example of Dirksen's fondness for chant and for complicated rhythm.

Dirksen's final complete work was *Sing ye Faithful, Sing With Gladness*, an SATB and organ setting of John Ellerton's hymn which he composed in 1997 for All Saints' Beverly Hills. It was first performed there on Pentecost Sunday of that year. He meant the playful right hand part of the organ to "create a soft cloud of sound."⁵¹⁷ Against this, the voices sing a lyrical melody that is nonetheless challenging rhythmically. When he comes to the part of the text about Christ going to the Cross, the organ quotes the plainsong *Dies Irae*. Again, this is another example of Dirksen playing with rhythm and plainsong. The concluding section is rhythmically challenging yet with very straight forward harmonic structures. It was published by Trinitas in 1999.

Dirksen was very attached to this work emotionally, especially as it was written after the death of his beloved wife Joan. One wonders if the hint of the *Dies irae* were not just in reference to the death of Christ or the judgment of the world in the end times, but for Joan as well. The text also says "sing ye faithful, sing with gladness...till the appointed work be done." Dirksen was getting back into composition and trying to move on until his appointed time and his work being done. Dirksen often said that "it was the best anthem I ever wrote."⁵¹⁸ Indeed it contains many aspects of Dirksen's compositional style. There is the use of plainsong, lyrical melody, and there is also a very complex rhythmic structure, one of his favorite compositional

⁵¹⁶ Final page of score, 11.

⁵¹⁷ Score, 16.

⁵¹⁸ RD, email conversation with author 10 November 2015.

gestures. It also just seems to convey the mystery of life, death, and redemption, which Dirksen surely must have been comprehending at this point.

In the year 2000, Dirksen produced perhaps his last artistic creative endeavor when he rewrote his hymn tune *Beverly Farms* with the text "Blessed God be our great Creator" for the centennial of the National Cathedral School for Girls. When asked to compose a hymn for the occasion, Dirksen was at first reluctant. However, he finally agreed but on the condition that his friend Joy Kraus compose the text.⁵¹⁹ It is fitting that his final creative musical effort should be for something at the cathedral.

Sonata for Organ - CANTILANA?

Final Years and Death

As Dirksen approached death, he was accompanied by his friend and Rector of St. Alban's Parish, the Rev. Francis Wade. Dirksen was suffering from cancer, and so his leaving this world and his goodbyes were slow and not always easy. Often when our mortal frame approaches immortality, we can see the gap between where we are and where we would like to be with God. Dirksen died on 26 July 2003. Wade had the privilege of preaching Dirksen's funeral at the cathedral. Wade touched on Dirksen's awareness of the distinction between holy things, which all church musicians deal with, and the holiness of God. Wade pointed out that we realize that it is a massive difference between the beauty that we can create, even to the Glory of God, and the beauty of the Glory of God Himself.⁵²⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas famously knew this distinction when 6 months before the end of his life after seeing a vision of heaven he said, "All I have written is straw compared to what I have seen." Dirksen died without the benefit of Thomas' vision, but he still knew the difference and this bothered him as he approached death.

⁵¹⁹ RD email conversation with the author 15 September 2016.

⁵²⁰ The Rev. Francis Wade, Funeral Homily for RWD.

However, his legacy lives on as his music continues to make God known in the world through beauty. And he especially lives on in his sacred music - uniquely 20th century American, yet in the tradition of great Western Sacred Music.

VII. Conclusions