

## **In Te, Domine, Speravi**

(Psalm 31)

by

Hans Leo Hassler (?)

SATB

General

This anthem has been attributed to Hans Leo Hassler (1562–1612), though I have not been able to verify that attribution. *Grove Music Online* lists an *In te, Domine, speravi* by Hassler, but describes it as for twelve voices, not four. The piece is available elsewhere on the Internet. I have used the notation posted by Peter Leys on the International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP) website, and I am grateful to him for introducing me to this intriguing composition. I post the piece again here to help make it more widely known, and also to share a thought about its structure.

With close acquaintance *In te, Domine, speravi* reveals that it is a strict canon of four voices at the fifth. The bass introduces the theme, consisting of two extended phrases separated by two measures of rest. The tenor enters with the same theme, consisting of identically the same intervals, but beginning on the fifth. The alto repeats the theme on the tonic, and the soprano on the fifth. Then each voice in turn, after a single measure of rest, begins the theme again.

Thusly the music continues until the tenor has completed its second complete iteration of the theme. The pattern's strict order is altered only in the final two measures, where the bass adds two notes and the altos and sopranos slightly alter their rhythms, so as to bring all parts to a simultaneous conclusion on a unison tonic.

I understand that Hassler wrote numerous pieces in strict imitative form. Whoever may have written this piece, however, it seems to me that the choice of a strict canon may serve a particular purpose. The text is Psalm 31:1:

<i>In te, Domine, speravi;</i>	In thee, Lord, have I trusted;
<i>non confundar in aeternum.</i>	let me never be confounded;
<i>in iustitia tua libera me.</i>	in your righteousness deliver me.

Dictionaries inform us that the Latin root of *confundar* can mean "confound," "confuse," or "throw into disorder." The root of *iustitia* gives rise to the noun "righteousness" and also to the adjectives "complete" and "perfect." In setting this text, is it not possible that the composer chose a strict canon for its quality of never being confused or thrown into disorder, and for the purpose of celebrating God's righteousness as complete and perfect?

Be that as it may, the final genius of the anthem is that it employs so uncompromising a musical form and yet conveys what *Grove Music Online* calls the characteristic "atmosphere of intimacy and repose" of Hassler's verified compositions. The musical setting reflects the Psalmist's trust in God with such warmth and grace that its structural severity can easily go unremarked.

To sing a prayer is sometimes to pray thrice: with language, with musical expression, and with compositional form.

Albert Blackwell  
February 20, 2012

# In Te, Domine, Speravi

( Psalm 31 )

Psalm 31:1

Hans Leo Hassler (1562-1612)  
edited by Peter Leys\*

1

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

In te,

In te, Do mi -

In te, Do - mi ne, spe -

In te, Do - mi - ne, spe - ra - vi;

7

S

A

T

B

Do - mi - ne, sper - a - vi; non

ne, spe - ra - vi; non con - fun -

ra - vi; non con - fun - dar

non con - fun - dar in ae - ter -

13

S

A

T

B

con - fun - dar in ae - ter - - -

- dar in ae - ter - - - num.

in ae - ter - - - num.

- - - num. in ius - ti -

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19

S num. In ius - ti - ti - a

A In ius - ti - ti - a tu - a li - be -

T 8 In ius - ti - ti - a tu - a li - be - ra

B - ti - a tu - a li - be - ra me.

25

S tu - a li - be - ra me. In te,

A ra me. In te, Do mi -

T 8 me. In te, Do - mi - ne, spe -

B In te, Do - mi - ne, spe - ra - vi;

31

S Do - mi - ne, spe - ra - vi; non

A ne, spe - ra - vi; non con - fun -

T 8 ra - vi; non con - fun - dar

B non con - fun - dar in ae - ter -

37

S con - fun - dar in ae - ter

A - dar in ae - ter - - - num.

T<sup>8</sup> in ae - ter - - - num.

B - - num. In ius - ti -

43

S num. In ius - ti - ti - a.

A In ius - ti - ti - a tu - a li - be - ra me.

T<sup>8</sup> In ius - ti - ti - a tu - a li - be - ra me.

B - ti - a tu - a li - be - ra me.