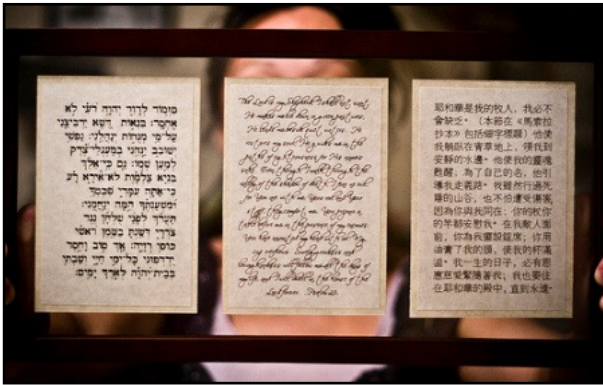


SOLI DEO GLORIA PSALMS PROJECT

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In their capacity to articulate the profundity of human spiritual experience, surely few bodies of texts in world literature can equal the Hebrew Psalter. Here we have a distillation of humanity's dealings with the divine which has never ceased to inspire believers across the centuries. Indeed, it might be said that the Psalms constitute a Biblical template for sung and spoken prayer, both individual and communal, which has shaped the entire Judeo-Christian tradition and had an incalculable impact on Western culture and beyond.



Psalm 23 - photo:OreoReoEoO - flkr.com

The poetry of the Psalms clearly transcends barriers of time and space, inspiring the greatest variety of music from the visceral intensity of Jewish cantillation to the imposingly rugged metrical settings of 16th century Geneva, from Allegri to Bernstein, Gregorian chant to Steve Reich, Bach or Schubert to Stravinsky, Schnittke or Mahalia Jackson. So, given the quantity and quality of this musical corpus of psalmody, why solicit a new collection of settings? Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that each

succeeding generation has found its own concerns mirrored in and interpreted by these texts on a deep level. If these pages contain treasured statements about the nature of God, they also display the full gamut of human feeling from the exultation of the 'Old Hundredth' to the penitent brokenness of the *Miserere* or the anguished cry of the *De Profundis*. No psychological state is too raw, no emotion too painful to be left untouched by the Psalms' embrace; these are words with universal relevance that seem to evoke, even demand a creative artistic response that cannot avoid being made in the first person.

While it is undoubtedly true that the Psalms speak to all, irrespective of issues of taste or levels of musical education, it is surely also true that their inexhaustible richness deserves the engagement of the most talented contemporary musical creators. We are therefore challenging several of the leading composers of our time to allow their imaginations to be fired by the Psalms' symbolic density and psychological depth. We do so in the hope that they will make their own unique personal contribution to a tradition which is both ancient and ever-new. It is our belief that in so doing they will enrich the lives not only of worshiping communities, performers and concert audiences, but also of all those, whatever their religious convictions, for whom the Psalter is a timeless source of inspiration and strength.

- Peter Bannister
Composer / Musicologist / Organist
Soli Deo Gloria Board Member