

OLD SOURCES IN NEW SAUCES: JOHN JOUBERT AND THE ANALYSIS OF ANCIENT MATERIALS IN MODERN MUSIC

BY MARK R. H. GOTHAM

Abstract. Anyone who has had sustained contact with Anglican choirs probably knows music by John Joubert; anyone who hasn't probably doesn't. This article begins by considering the starkness of those divisions between different kinds of canons, framing this in terms of "local" canons that each serve a particular purpose. The local canons of this kind for teaching music theory and history tend to serve a demonstrative role and to prioritize clear-cut examples at the expense of music that handles a wider range of materials in a more complex way. This introductory discussion contextualizes and motivates an analytical vignette on a short piece by Joubert which has a firm standing in the relevant performance canon (Anglican choirs), but which is unknown beyond that. I argue that music theory pedagogy might benefit from adopting this example to get at important but analytically complex issues concerned with post-common-practice uses of pre-common-practice modal materials.

KEYWORDS AND PHRASES: John Joubert; pedagogy; anthologies; analysis; repertoire canons; "local canons"; modes; modal writing; range.

1. ON CANONS, GLOBAL AND LOCAL

THE CANON (CAPITAL T, CAPITAL C), the membership thereof, and its criteria for inclusion, have been a focal subject in modern music theory since at least Lydia Goehr's seminal *Imaginary Museum* (1992). Attention to these questions in recent years has focused on a surge of laudable efforts to diversify the music we encounter in teaching, research, and performance.¹ This diversity effort rightly

centers on composers who have been historically excluded and/or erased for reasons of prejudice.

At the same time, there are many other reasons why music does or does not achieve canonic status. Musicians and scholars clearly have finite time and mental space, and so there is a constant pressure towards pragmatic choices, including continually re-using repertoire already known to be effective; i.e., there's a tendency to "stay in our lane," so to speak, playing and teaching pieces we already know well. It takes a proactive effort to broaden out, whether or not that specifically involves diversifying the demographic of representation.

¹ All card-carrying music theorists must surely by now know Ewell's (2020) seminal keynote-cum-article "Music Theory and the White Racial Frame." Other very notable campaigns include scholar and pianist Samantha Ege's championing of music by Florence Price and others in both the concert hall and in print. Beyond this, a striking number of ensembles now profess to champion neglected composers—these are welcome efforts, though when publicity portrays

this is as radical, it risks coming over as exaggerated or even opportunistic.

Clearly, these are big disciplinary questions, beyond the scope of a short article.² I raise them here simply as a frame for the more modest motivations of this short vignette. Presented with *Intégral*'s call for this issue, and the opportunity to pitch a short analytical idea to a readership centered on scholars and teachers in the American music theory world, I found myself returning to these questions of "who knows which music." Having now taught music theory at universities for ten years in different countries (including the US) and operated in a much wider range of musical contexts, I am repeatedly struck by how rarely musical works manage to become more widely known. I find myself taking on a kind of "ambassadorial" role for the music I happen to know (and I also happily benefit reciprocally by discovering new music from my colleagues in return). In short, even in this ostensibly globalized world, we still seem to have deep divisions between what might be called "local canons": repertoires of musicians and works that are well-known and often performed and/or discussed, but only within a specific (and often relatively small) working environment.

2. THE LOCAL CANON OF SACRED CHORAL MUSIC

Local canons seem to be defined and delimited literally by the "local" geographical area (1), but also by other considerations such as the fashions and policies of the times (2), and specific performing forces (3). For example, many composers:

1. are well known at home but not abroad; and/or
2. fall foul of the priorities of a specific commissioning policy;³ and/or

² And I certainly don't raise these matters to stoke or perpetuate any kind of "culture war."

³ William Glock's programming of music at the BBC (including direction of the BBC Proms 1960–1973) is often cited and relevant to Joubert's case. Glock's stance is typically characterized by the prioritizing of more apparently modernist composers, including certain mainland Europeans like Boulez and a younger generation of British composers. This would seem to disfavor John Joubert, though in a personal communication to Kenneth Birkin dated October 2015, Joubert writes, "All I can say is that, during the Glock years, I had more broadcasts on the BBC than ever before or since." (This quote also appears in Howard Friend, "A Lifetime in Music," *Cathedral Music Magazine: The Magazine of the Friends of Cathedral Music*, November 2017. I thank Birkin for correspondence on this and other matters.) All the same, Joubert has never had a performance at the proms—neither during the Glock years or since—despite a large catalogue of suitable works (symphonies, concerti, etc.) that have had performances elsewhere and many of which have been commercially recorded. Perhaps the centenary season in 2027 is the time for that to change?

3. are associated with music for one ensemble type (e.g., choirs) but not others.

Sacred choral music provides an interesting example of all the above.⁴ First (point 1), choral music comes with a text and all texts risk limiting the geographic breadth of appeal and reach. While music is sometimes called "the universal language"—and that is problematic enough—it's clear that specific languages are not universal: texts lend themselves more to those familiar with the language at hand, especially native speakers. This includes the English language (increasingly ubiquitous though it certainly is today) and is perhaps especially relevant for works in ancient languages like Latin which are common in sacred music.

Moreover (points 1 and 2), texts don't only exist *neutrally* within a language, but also typically convey *specific ideas and sentiments* that individuals may or may not buy into. Texts of a religious—or any other values-based—nature may be considered to define at the outset who the work is and isn't "for." Naturally, texts (both sacred and otherwise) vary in how in- or ex-clusive they are in this respect, and it is certainly possible for people of all religions and none to enjoy each other's music, though that is more of a given for music that does not have a specific values-stance in the first place.

Finally (point 3), there is a case for describing sacred music as a particularly clear case of the "local canon by ensemble type." There certainly exist people primarily active in composition who are known as "choral composers": i.e., that specialize in writing for choir. Success begets success and a high-profile commission for one choir will often lead to further choral commissions elsewhere. That career pattern is not unique to the choral world; more specific to the choral world is the strong culture of *performers also composing*. It is perfectly routine for church choir directors to compose and to program both their own music and the music of their colleagues who have a similar career pattern (i.e., primarily performance with some composition on the side). Put another way, and notwithstanding the near impossibility of establishing this statistically, it seems that:

- more high-level composers of choral music also direct choirs than comparable composers of orchestral music also conduct orchestras, and
- there are fewer choral composers that also frequently write for orchestra than orchestral composers also writing for choir.

In short, choral composition seems to be simply "more open," with choirs generally more prepared than other en-

⁴ For the avoidance of doubt, I don't imply any broad-strokes criticism here or present this as a straightforwardly good or bad situation overall; I simply raise the issues at stake in the formation of local canons.

sembles to perform the works of semi-professional composers (who may be fully professional *performers*). Choirs are also often populated with *amateur* singers, of course. The typical pattern for choral-orchestral performances with a fully professional orchestra and a fully amateur choir provides a double case in point for this. We see this pattern in both nominally *amateur* contexts (i.e., amateur choirs hire professional orchestras for a concert one or a few times per year) and in *professional* settings (professional orchestras which have an affiliated “symphony chorus” comprising singers who are good and auditioned, but nonetheless unpaid amateurs). For many reasons, the reverse case of professional choirs performing with amateur orchestras is very much rarer.⁵

Related to all these considerations, as well as the performing constraints of idiomatic writing for choirs (particularly amateur ones), we often see a more “conservative” and “retrospective” style of musical writing for choirs, and this is highly relevant to our specific questions about the formation of local canons for pedagogy.

3. PEDAGOGICAL CANONS

Yes, pedagogical canons can also be seen as “local” canons, and how and why they come to include some works and exclude other reflects as wide a range of complex priorities as in any other kind of canon. Nevertheless, we can identify some themes and throughlines among which is the selection of musical examples to serve *clear demonstrability*, at least in introductory settings. The historical anthology seeks examples that are clearly demonstrative of practice in a particular *time* (e.g., the Renaissance) and the theoretical counterpart promotes pieces that are similarly unequivocal examples of the *technical subject* matter at hand (e.g., specific church modes). Both can be very hesitant about music which has a complex blend of references to different historical time periods and use of varied compositional materials.

That blend is highly relevant to twentieth-century choral music, much of which features an intriguing synthesis of ancient and modern styles and techniques. Consider, for instance, how often this music quotes or otherwise uses ancient plainchant. This can lead to an uneasy relationship

between this repertoire and the kinds of anthologies discussed above, as well as the curricula built around them. By the same token, this repertoire can provide a useful way to “teach our way out of” the simple, clear-cut demonstrations of style X and technique Y, to enrich our students’ analytical sensitivity, and to open their minds to the huge range of music already “out there,” as well as the infinite possibilities for how new music “could be.”

In this contribution to *Intégral*, which explicitly seeks to “explore and exploit the increasing pluralism of the music-theoretic field” and specifically to *Intégral*’s “Symposium of Analytic Vignettes” issue, I present the American music theory community with John Joubert’s *O Lorde, the maker of Al Thing* for its intrinsic interest, its pedagogical potential, and its resonance with the above discussion of local canons. This work is thoroughly established within the performing canon for choirs (particularly Anglican ones) but is almost entirely unknown beyond that context. It blends the ancient and modern, the theoretical and practical, the abstract and applied.

4. PEDAGOGICAL CONTEXT AND USE FOR THIS WORK

For those reading this with a view to integration into specific courses, the subject matter will perhaps seem best suited to a relatively advanced level. That said, I would caveat that instinct with the suggestion that we present counterexamples and equivocal cases at an early stage—perhaps even as early as the moment of defining those terms—given that *definition by negation* can be a powerful tool for learning the boundaries of terms and categories.⁶

This article keeps a modern classroom setting in mind, with the broad expectation of a cohort that has encountered terms like “Dorian,” perhaps as part of an introduction to the “diatonic modes,” via courses on “fundamentals.”⁷ Students may also have learned declarative theoretic terms for modal schemas from jazz and pop courses, and

⁵ Again, we lack robust empirical data here and these are difficult effects to “prove” statistically. Attempts at least to operationalize these questions with the evidence of performance data would be welcome, and there are encouraging signs of a field growing around the curation, release, and analysis of that data. That said, it is early days for that field and the efforts have strongly centered on professional ensembles. Practitioner interviews may be more effective, at least in the short term. At the same time, it is no good waiting for this before embarking on any consideration of the effect of these forces on what music gets adopted and by whom.

⁶ For an example of my own attempts to balance this in an introductory pedagogical setting, see the “Augmented Options” chapter of *Open Music Theory* (OMT): <https://viva.pressbooks.pub/openmusictheory/chapter/augmented-options/>. OMT serves for examples throughout this article.

⁷ For instance, OMT has a chapter by Chelsea Hamm on diatonic modes in the Fundamentals Section: <https://viva.pressbooks.pub/openmusictheory/chapter/modal-schemas/>. This sets the modes out explicitly on an axis from “Darkest” to “Brightest” (Locrian, Phrygian, Aeolian, Dorian, Mixolydian, Ionian, Lydian) and relates them to the (now more familiar) major/minor modal pair. For example, Lydian is described by the successive intervals (W-W-W-H-W-W-H) and also “as a major scale but with raised 4.” This is broadly typical of Western music theory textbooks today.

even if not, they will almost certainly be procedurally familiar with pop repertoires relevant to those concepts.⁸ Students are less likely to have had extensive introduction to original Renaissance definitions of mode (from Tinctoris, Glarean, Zarlino, etc.). Modal counterpoint courses seem to be rarer these days, and “History of Theory” courses tend to be offered at the graduate level, if at all.

This vignette keeps that kind of cohort in mind: one that is basically familiar enough with the distinction between “Dorian” and “Aeolian” in a kind of general, style-neutral sense, and has no more Renaissance-specific terminology than that. There is a kind of anachronistic tension between ancient and modern in this context, but this is arguably profitable for illuminating the corresponding tensions in this piece and in wider currents of twentieth-century composers engaging with older materials.

In particular, I present this work for its handling of modes in *dialogue* with Renaissance models for composition, neither adopting those practices wholesale nor ignoring them outright. This example is not intended to replace clear-cut demonstrations of what a mode *is* in the sense of basic matters of pitch collections and finals. What it does provide is an analytically rewarding case for contextualizing how complex it can be to unpick even these matters of modal identification in *practice*, and how a wider range of terms originating in the Renaissance might prove relevant and useful to understanding this twentieth-century composition, particularly as it pertains to the under-discussed consideration of *range*.

5. JOHN JOUBERT

In introducing himself, John Joubert (1927–2019) notes the significance of his mixed background, especially his:⁹

- upbringing in South Africa (“with all that implies in terms of the political and racial tensions which have always prevailed there”),
- French and Dutch ancestry, and
- education at an Anglican school where he “was introduced to the riches of English music and the Anglican choral tradition.”

Joubert was steeped in the Anglican tradition and wrote for it throughout his life. And while his compositional output is wide-ranging, he is almost certainly best known for a few, relatively short, sacred choral works, partly for the reasons discussed above. So Joubert arguably

presents a quintessential example of the local canon: extremely well-known in one repertoire context (Anglican choral music) but much less so beyond. For our purposes, we can simply note that his works have not made their way into pedagogical or other academic canons, and indeed there is barely any scholarly literature on his music.¹⁰

Two of Joubert’s best-known sacred works are also among his earliest:

- *Torches* (op. 7a, 1951)
- *O Lorde, the maker of Al Thing* (op. 7b, 1952—hereafter “O Lorde”)

Torches is surely the best known of Joubert’s works, partly as it is eminently suitable for amateur choirs,¹¹ and (relatedly) given its inclusion in the hugely successful first volume of *Carols for Choirs*.¹² This article addresses the other work in that op. 7 pair: *O Lorde*.

6. MODES AND TERMS, ANCIENT AND MODERN

Our journey into Joubert’s Renaissance sources can begin with the text he sets: a metric English translation of the Latin *Te lucis ante terminum*. This English text is attributed to King Henry VIII and dates from at least *The King’s Primer* of

¹⁰ There are many short reviews and passing mentions of recent concerts and recording releases, in the *Musical Times* and *Musical Opinion*, for example, much of which is accessible through JSTOR, and none of which is relevant enough to warrant citation here. A more comprehensive summary of that material (albeit only up to the early-eighties) is available in a bibliography by Hart (1983). This is hard (but still possible) to access. Dedicated searchers will also see reference to a now-inaccessible 1990 catalogue of works for Novello publication (see Footnote 11) by Kenneth Birkin from whom much of the existing writing on Joubert comes and from whom a book on Joubert is forthcoming. Joubert also wrote some of his own reviews and essays on his own music and that by others (many of which are JSTOR-accessible), but much of his writing seems to concentrate on a defense of “accessible” music and rejection of the *avant garde*. There is basically no substantial analysis of Joubert’s music in print, beyond the more analytical type of review article that was once common (i.e., with musical examples of themes in a kind of expanded program note of the kind perhaps best known from D. F. Tovey’s writing in the nineteenth century).

¹¹ Amateur music-making has traditionally featured prominently in the British musical landscape, and Joubert makes a point of writing in praise of it in, for instance, a much-repeated quote first seen in Kenneth Birkin’s “Introduction to the Revised Novello Joubert Catalogued Works” (1990): “I also have a profound respect for the musical culture of amateurs and with this very important section of the musical public I have enjoyed some of my most rewarding musical experiences.” It is seemingly impossible to access this catalogue today and even bibliographic authorities like *worldcat.org* get confused between this and the Hart bibliography. See also Footnote 10.

¹² First published in 1961 by Oxford University Press and still in print today, this is probably the best-selling carol anthology ever issued.

⁸ For an introduction, see Megan Lavengood’s OMT chapter: <https://viva.pressbooks.pub/openmusictheory/chapter/modal-schemas/>.

⁹ See Joubert’s entry (457–458) in Morton and Collins (1992).

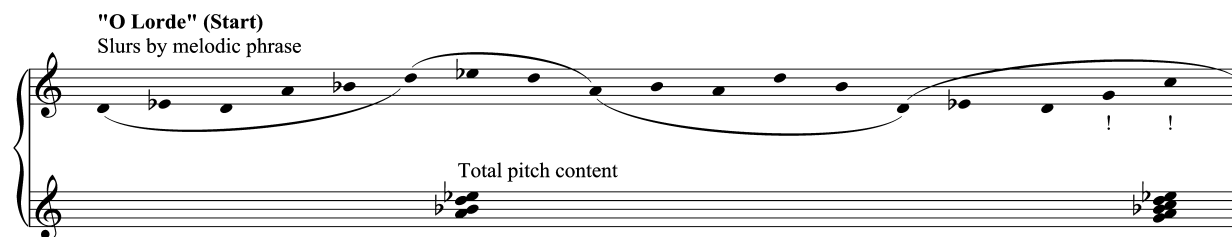


Figure 1. Summary of pitch material in the opening, unaccompanied passage of Joubert's *O Lorde*.

1545.¹³

1. O Lorde, the maker of al thing,
We pray Thee nowe in this evening
Us to defende through Thy mercy,
From al deceite of our our en[e]my.¹⁴
2. Let neither us deluded be,
Good Lorde, with dreame or phantasy;
Our hearts waking in thee thou kepe
That we in sinne fal not on slepe.
3. O Father, through thy blessed Son,
Grant us this oure peti[t]ion,¹⁵
To whom, with the Holy Ghost alwaies,
In heav[e]n and yearth be laude and praise.¹⁶

The use of this Renaissance text immediately suggests the potential relevance of Renaissance musical sources and Joubert's music duly delivers on that impression, but certainly not with a straightforward pastiche. Joubert's *O Lorde* setting is an anthem for SATB Choir and Organ which won the first prize in the Novello Anthem Competition in 1952. The score was published by Novello but also in *The Musical Times*, making it unusually accessible to scholars, for instance via JSTOR.¹⁷

As discussed, I present this work to the music theory community partly for the potential pedagogical utility it has for discussing the use of modes and collections in the twentieth century. Many courses and textbooks introduce materials like the "church modes" and related concepts like

"modal finals." Equally, they often don't go much beyond that, and if there are musical examples at all, then they present relatively *simple, unequivocal* use of these materials rather than anything more *nuanced* and perhaps even *typical* of what twentieth-century composers did with them. Classes that have the scope to take on analytical ambiguity and more equivocal cases might consider a look at Joubert's *O Lorde*, perhaps asking questions like "what is the mode of this work" or, more specifically:

- "How would you describe the pitch content of this piece?"
- "What role might modal factors play?"
- "How does the opening (recurring) motif interact with that choice of mode?"

7. MODAL FINAL IN THE OPENING SECTION

I sometimes present students with the piece in its entirety first (with or without the score), inviting them to keep these questions in mind.¹⁸ Other times, we might look and/or listen to the first (unaccompanied) passage first before moving on. In either case, this is a work for which I prefer to start discussion with that first passage, the pitch content of which is summarized in Figure 1.

There is a case to be made for D as the modal final of this piece, and therefore Phrygian as the likely mode. That reading is perhaps most convincing in this opening passage and particularly so when presented in the relatively abstract form of Figure 1. This D-centric reading is plausible enough, not least because of the following considerations.

1. *Pitch usage*: The total pitch content of {D, E \flat , G, A, B \flat , C} is consistent with a single mode and, assuming the "missing" F would be natural, D Phrygian is a candidate. Until the end of this passage, the pitch content is further limited to {D, E \flat , A, B \flat }, of which of which D and A are simply used a lot, especially when weighted

¹³ King Henry VIII is, of course, most famous for other reasons, of which relevant to our purposes are his establishing the Anglican church and his apparently being an accomplished artist (musician, poet, and more). Apart from texts like the above, there are also several musical works attributed to him, including the evergreen *Pastime with Good Company* and (most dubiously) *Greensleeves*. Attribution is often complicated, of course, and especially in the case of a person with such unrivaled power and influence. Imagine being an author or major contributor to a work he claimed and ask if you would see fit to defend your rights. Suffice to say, the extent of his actual role in translating or editing this text is unclear.

¹⁴ Word completed here. Joubert sets "en'my."

¹⁵ "Petition" (sic, with c) in the Tudor original set by Joubert.

¹⁶ Word completed here. Joubert sets "heav'n."

¹⁷ Here, for convenience, is the DOI/URL: <https://doi.org/10.2307/935617>.

¹⁸ There are numerous recordings available via all major streaming platforms (which, in turn, comments on another kind of musical canonization).

- by length (for which see the score, not Figure 1). Moreover, that strength of D and A is due not only to sheer usage, but also the subsidiary points 2–5 that follow.
2. *Starts and ends*: all the phrases start and end on D or A as indicated by the slur markings in Figure 1.
 3. *Pitch hierarchy*: the secondary pitches of E \flat and B \flat can often be seen as subsidiary to D and A as upper neighbor notes (especially the E \flat).
 4. *Melodic intervals*: perfect-interval leaps typically connect pitches important to the scale. The leaps between D and A suggest an important status for them.
 5. *Lowest and (nearly) highest*: The lowest pitch is D (e.g., D $_3$ for the tenor and bass parts); the highest is just over an octave higher (D $_4$ for the tenor-bass). The slight extension beyond to E \flat falls between two Ds and can be seen as an upper neighbor note to that D. As such we have a broadly D–D range for each voice, again with that range delimited by an important pitch.

Most students alight on this D-final reading, but I argue that this view starts to ring hollow at least with the music that follows, and arguably even here at the opening. Most importantly for the classroom, the D-reading might be considered evidence of an excessively *theoretical*, insufficiently *analytical* approach. I make a point of including this work in courses partly to catch that view and present the counterargument which follows, in the hopes of recalibrating that theory-analysis balance.

I propose an alternative reading, with a G-final and thus Aeolian as the primary mode. According to this reading, the opening measures de-emphasize the tonic final of G,¹⁹ and dwell instead on what might be read as the “dominant” of D.²⁰ I further argue that this is not a matter of analytic pedantry,²¹ but rather a significant figure-ground reversal that substantially affects the hermeneutic reading: in short, the G-Aeolian reading leaves the music much more *open and questioning*. We might begin by picking apart the points 1–5 above.

Concerning point 1, yes, the “pitch-class profile” (PCP) for proportional *pitch usage* in this passage is clearly different from what is considered typical in a fixed given key or mode (at least in Renaissance music). At a minimum, one would expect more use of the tonic final.²² That said, even

these “typical” PCPs often emphasize a greater use of scale degree $\hat{5}$ than $\hat{1}$, partly due to the presence of $\hat{5}$ in the triads rooted on $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{5}$ (tonic and dominant chords, if you will). Moreover, these headline PCP statistics can claim only to capture a rough picture of what is highly varied usage in real musical practice. Put more musically and as relevant to our purposes: some passages simply *dwell on the dominant*, de-emphasizing the final. That is central to the “open and questioning” reading of this passage, discussed above.

Many students find the idea of dwelling on the dominant familiar enough in *tonal music* but they are less prepared for it in a *modal* context and may be especially confused by what tools to use for music that draws ambiguously on both. In post-common-practice music, even of the apparently “modal” sort, composers frequently come up with a fusion of tonal and modal elements (and often more besides). We do well to build preparedness for that fusion.

There are other complications too: apart from being more familiar in *tonal* settings, dominant prolongation may also be expected *later* in the work and associated not with ambiguity but with *explicit tension building* (before a tonic reprise, for example).²³ All of these associations may contribute to the tendency to overlook or reject the possible G-mode reading of this opening. These associations may even be considered to form an essential part of what makes Joubert’s opening gambit so intriguing.

Point 2 (*phrase starts and ends*) is closely related to 1: once again, phrases can start and end on the dominant (or indeed any other) scale degree. The main question for listeners is: “does this sound open or closed?” As part of the G-final reading, I argue that every phrase in this opening is left open, including those ending on the D. This is a subjective matter, of course, but an important one that analysis of this work cannot simply ignore on those grounds.

Points 3 (*pitch hierarchy*) and 4 (*melodic intervals*) are logical enough but weak in practice here given the many leaps between B \flat and D in this passage. These are as numerous as those between D and A (three of each), and they promote B \flat to more than a neighboring note in at least those contexts. Viewed this way, the D–A and D–B \flat leaps may even start to look like (partial, incomplete) outlines of the dominant and tonic chords respectively.²⁴

¹⁹ G first appears in m.10 of the piece (at the start of the second page) and at the end of Figure 1 (marked with an exclamation mark “!”).

²⁰ Having noted the anachronistic tension above, hereafter the term “dominant” is used for this note throughout.

²¹ I say “tom-ah-to,” my American students say “tom-ay-to.”

²² The When in Rome repository (<https://github.com/MarkGotham/When-in-Rome>) summarizes the many pitch-class profiles reported in previous literature. These are mostly tonal. Most relevant here is Vuvan’s work on accounting for the

natural minor and twentieth music (albeit not of the Joubert kind); see Vuvan et al. (2011) and Vuvan and Hughes (2021). The When in Rome summary is discussed and used in Gotham et al. (2021b).

²³ These can appear in any combination, of course. The extended dominant seventh introduction to Chopin’s Revolutionary Etude, op. 10, no. 12 is an oft-cited example of *tension building* dominant prolongation at the *start* of a *tonal* work.

²⁴ In the light of the range discussions that follow later in this article, very intrepid cohorts might even look at the status of the B \flat in relation to the reciting tones in hypo- versus authentic modes.

"Let neither"
Upper stave: Choir 2-part imitation:
Lower stave: harmony (simplified)

1. 2.

D G C F

3. 4.!

Bb Eb Ab !Db (C#)

Figure 2. Analytic reduction of the harmonic process from m. 11ff (score p. 2).

The Eb, by contrast, still looks like a neighbor note, supporting point 5's notion of a D–D *pitch range*. This D–D range is, however, just as suited to the G-final as to the D-final reading (Dominant–Dominant versus Final–Final). We return to this question below.

All told, the main goal here is to encourage students to be open, both specifically to a complex mixture of tonal and modal ideas in twentieth-century modal music, and in general to a range of analytical readings. As always with analysis, there are many valid readings, and students are of course welcome to stick with that original D-centered view; we simply consider an alternative perspective that opens minds and initiates fruitful discussion. They may also choose to stand by the D-reading at the end of this first section but revise that view in the light of what follows—all of these outcomes are consistent with a successful lesson plan.

8. SECTION 2: M. 11FF, THE CASE FOR G GROWS . . .

While the question of mode may be ambiguous in the opening, unaccompanied measures, the case for G is greatly strengthened with the entry of the organ accompaniment and choral imitation in tonal sequences in the sec-

ond section (m. 11ff, p. 2). Figure 2 provides an analytic reduction of the process here.

This sequence sees a descending cycle-of-fifths scheme within which we have two broadly exact iterations of the pattern ⟨D–G, C–F⟩ before slight alterations: the Ab arrives slightly earlier than in the previous, equivalent phrases and the melodic lines are altered too.

Significant for the question of mode overall is the clear harmonic positioning of the opening motive. Here the motive is of the form with the leap down a fourth as seen in phrase 2 of the opening, rather than the fifth (as in phrase 1). Now accompanied, we see strong reinforcement of the G-reading given that each iteration of this motive is harmonized with the semitone neighbor-note figure on the fifth of the chord. Assuming a consistent use of this motive, the strong fifth leap seen in the opening turns out to be a leap to a non-chord tone (chord versus key/mode being ambiguous in the case of this sequence). For example, the D–A leap is within a G-minor harmony.²⁵

Incidental to the main argument here, but potentially useful to a class on tonal/modal materials: note how although the first chord (G) is certainly minor, the pattern then hedges between major and minor quality, with the F and Eb appearing in both forms. That combination might be considered a typical route through the cycle of fifths

Related, while this article focuses on Renaissance models, there is a case to be made for also discussing plainchant, especially at this opening section in whole-choir monophony, with simple rhythms that closely match speech rhythms and thus at least one kind of performance practice for plainchant recitation.

²⁵ There is always the possibility of textural stratification in twentieth-century modal music (see, for example, Rupprecht (1996) and Straus (2014)). This is certainly relevant to some of Joubert's music (for instance, see the organ pedals versus choir and organ manuals at the start of the later anthem *O praise god in his holiness* (op. 52, 1968), but not (I argue) the effect at play here.

(D–G–C–F–B \flat –E \flat , etc., as shown in Figure 2), except that the major third comes first, before the minor version as part of a Phrygian (sic) style of descent to the tonic. For instance, F major comes before F minor on the way to the following B \flat .²⁶ That being the case, the potential for secondary or applied dominants here (which would be a thoroughly functional, common-practice device) is negated in favor of a more novel take on an old pattern. All this is thoroughly in keeping with the tension between ancient and/or modern sound worlds that is ever-present in this music.

9. CLIMAX AND MODAL RANGES

Whether or not that closer look at the second section fits into the class at hand, this work and the question of modality certainly call for a look at the climactic passage (p. 5ff., “In heav[e]n and yearth be laude and praise”). Here, all voices now return to a version of the main motive at the original pitch level, beginning in all parts with the D–E \flat –D neighbor note figure, but then leaping not to A but rather to G, and expanding the tessitura to its highest point (G₅ in case of the soprano). So, while D may lay claim to the “first,” “last,” and “longest” criteria, it is the G that is “loudest” in this work.²⁷

This climactic expansion to G opens up a second important topic for discussion about Joubert’s use of the old modes: range and the difference between “authentic” and “plagal” modes.²⁸ The opening can be described in terms of the “plagal” modal range (G-final, range centered on D–D); the climax, by contrast, occupies the upper tetrachord (D–G) and could thus be seen in terms of the complementary “authentic” (*hypo*-) form of the mode. Moreover, in both cases, this applies to *all* voices rather than both simultaneously in combination with one another (S+T *versus* A+B) as would be typical in Renaissance music (and is seen elsewhere in this Joubert work).²⁹ In short, once again, a con-

Climax:

Organ: Parallel major triads on G phrygian



Figure 3. Parallel major triads in the organ at the climax.

cept from Renaissance modal music comes to the fore as analytically important, but it requires a twentieth-century qualification for understanding its use in practice.

The concept of “authentic” versus “plagal” modes is a potentially confusing notion for our students, most of whom are not steeped in Renaissance music theory, and the concept is very rarely invoked in discussion of later music, common-practice or otherwise. When we teach modes in both their Renaissance and twentieth-century contexts, we need to provide a strong grasp of the similarities and differences. That gap is significant and the apparent use of the authentic-plagal distinction as a significant structural force in this twentieth-century work is notable for its rarity and potential utility in opening those discussions.

10. ADDED VALUE IN *O LORDE*

If class time allows, perhaps the most contiguous and seamless way to extend both the “natural minor versus Phrygian” and “authentic versus plagal” discussion is to consider the parallel major triads in the organ part of the climatic section. See p. 6 of the score and Figure 3 for a summary of the progression.

Against the emphatic G-final of this climactic section, several elements subtly come together in this organ part. Is it significant that the bass part outlines the collection {C, D, E \flat , F, G, A \flat , B \flat } and thus potentially G-Phrygian? Does this bring together the work’s “true” tonic (G), the “false” mode of the ambiguous opening (“Phrygian”), and the plagal style of spanning from not-tonic to not-tonic (here C₂–B \flat ₂)?³⁰ Does the subsequent fragmentation and narrowing of this range to focus on the G–D part of the scale (p. 7: {G, F, E \flat , D}) resolve that analytical question? Or is it still open? Does the *open*-endedness and the return to the opening material indicate that these ambiguities are best left *open*?

I set out my answers to these questions clearly enough—G is the final, D is “open,” and the piece draws much of its shape and power from the tensions between “natural minor versus Phrygian,” “authentic versus plagal,” and “ancient versus modern”—but again I’m primarily looking to start discussion and get students thinking

²⁶ Although the major third (i.e., potential leading note) does rise before this descent (e.g., A–B \flat –A \flat –G \flat –F), there is no support from the rest of the harmony for a tonicization. The apparent use of the Phrygian mode also complicates matters of course, and we will see this issue return at the climax as discussed in the next section.

²⁷ “First, last, loudest, longest” after Harrison (1994). It bears repeating that sheer pitch usage counts tend to show the dominant scale degree as more used than the tonic, partly due to its presence in both the tonic and dominant chords, as discussed above. See Footnote 22.

²⁸ See entries in any standard dictionary of music, for example Harold Powers’s articles on “Authentic mode” and related topics in *Grove Music Online*.

²⁹ The passage at “O Father, through thy blessed Son,” (p. 3 of the score, second system of Figure 4) and especially from “Grant us this oure peti[t]ion” (p. 4) sees soprano and tenor contrasted with alto and bass in this more typical way, these voice pairs being centered on a bare perfect fourth.

³⁰ Anyone building this into a wider curriculum might also consider including Lili Boulanger’s resplendent *Hymn au Soleil* as a partner example for parallel triads over fixed modes.

Verse 1:
"O Lorde, the maker"
 Semitones, 4th/5th apart
 Avoidance of tonic note
 = G-Aeolian (no f),
 Plagal ("Hypo-") range

Verse 2: "Let neither"
 Sequence of keys (but avoidance of cadence)
 Upper parts (S,T) = 1,3,5; Lower parts (A,B) = 2,4,6,7
 1. g 3. f 5. c^b * 4th up (sic); Same collection
 2. c 4. b^b 6. a^b 7. d^b (c[#])

Verse 3:
"O Father, throughe" Tune as previously, Though in 2 parts
"Grant this" Explicitly P4th dyad.*
"In heav'n and" Scalic tetrachords Return to G-Aeolian
Climax, voices upper tetrachord !
Climax, organ Parallel major triads
End Open, fade to sd5 Tune as previously
 = A-Aeolian (all pitches), Authentic and plagal ranges combined*
 = G-Aeolian
 Roots = G-Phrygian (sic)

Figure 4. Analytical reduction of the total pitch content in Joubert's *O Lorde, the Maker of al Thing*, summarizing everything discussed in this article.

about these alternatives. In short, while musical examples which simply and unequivocally set out the use of this or that mode may be useful for basic definitions, some of the real treasures of twentieth-century modal music are more ambiguous and Joubert's *O Lorde* potentially provides a useful, beautiful, and intriguing "way in" to that discussion.

11. OUTLOOK

This vignette has presented Joubert's *O Lorde* as a candidate for the theory classroom, first for its ambiguous use of mode, particularly the "red herring" opening that hints at the "wrong mode" in a way that contributes to both the piece's aesthetic and to fruitful classroom discussion. This serves to support the wider benefits of introducing analytically complex pieces into theory curricula, and thereby casting questions like "what mode is this in" in an open-ended fashion. Some works lend themselves to this more than others; the Joubert is a compelling case, but by no means the only candidate.

Joubert's *O Lorde* is a somewhat more unique case for discussing wider modal concepts that are foregrounded in Renaissance music theory, but de-emphasised in Western music since the Renaissance. This article focusses on vocal range in the Joubert, with a separation of the range at the opening and the climax that seems to be related to Renaissance models (albeit in a typically oblique way for twentieth-century music).

The motivation for considering this work in relation to Renaissance models is abundantly clear, though there are

much wider theories and repertoires that could be engaged here. Range features prominently in theories of mode associated with many global and popular musics. For instance, many pop/rock songs maintain a distinction between the register occupied during the verse and chorus.³¹ While this article limits itself to the possible influence of Renaissance theory in Joubert, modern theory classes often do well to draw on such wider links.

Clearly, the composer's authorial intention is not a requirement for any analysis. Nevertheless, for anyone more comfortable engaging with possible Renaissance models in Joubert's music on the basis of evidence that Joubert may have had these specific models in mind, I close with a brief insight into the context of this composition.

At the time of writing this work, Joubert had recently graduated from his formal education in music and immersed himself in university teaching, certainly including relevant courses in counterpoint.³² As David Wordsworth notes in his short biography of Joubert:

"After leaving the [Royal Academy of Music], Joubert took up a lecturing position at the University of Hull (where he remained for 12 years) and it is from around this time

³¹ To be clear, this is related to Joubert's range separation of the climax from the rest of the work; any link to Renaissance mode theory is another matter.

³² Joubert taught composition, harmony, and counterpoint courses as well as music analysis, history, and aural training, first at the University of Hull and later at Birmingham. He also directed choirs at both universities. I thank John Joubert's widow and daughter for correspondence on this and other matters.

that some of his most popular choral works began to appear.”³³

Moreover, Joubert himself acknowledges the specific connection of university life to his own compositional practice, observing that spending:

“a large part of my life working in universities as a lecturer in all aspects of music [. . .] had its effect on the way my music has developed. It has taught me to look analytically and critically at the great European musical tradition in a way which would never have been possible otherwise.” (Morton and Collins 1992, op. cit.)

Picture the young Joubert, fresh out of conservatoire, immediately starting to teach at the university level, and presumably investing all that overtime in developing his materials (a rite of passage that many *Intégral* readers will remember all too well!), almost certainly including Renaissance counterpoint. Now picture him getting a moment to himself for composition and settling on a Renaissance text to set . . .

REFERENCES

- Ewell, Philip A. 2020. “Music Theory and the White Racial Frame.” *Music Theory Online* 26(2). <https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.20.26.2/mto.20.26.2.ewell.html>.
- Goehr, Lydia. 1992. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Gotham, Mark, Kyle Gullings, Chelsey Hamm, Bryn Hughes, Brian Jarvis, Megan Lavengood, and John Peterson. 2021a. *Open Music Theory*, 2nd ed. VIVA Press-books. <https://viva.pressbooks.pub/openmusictheory/>.
- Gotham, Mark R. H., Rainer Kleinertz, Christof Weiss, Meinard Müller, and Stephanie Klauk. 2021b. “What If the When Implies the What?: Human Harmonic Analysis Datasets Clarify the Relative Role of the Separate Steps in Automatic Tonal Analysis.” In *Proceedings of the 22nd International Society for Music Information Retrieval Conference*, 229–36. Online: ISMIR. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5676067>.
- Harrison, D. 1994. *Harmonic Function in Chromatic Music: A Renewed Dualist Theory and an Account of Its Precedents*. University of Chicago Press.
- Hart Peter Hilary Langley. 1983. *John Joubert: A Bibliography*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Libraries.
- Joubert, John. 1953. “O Lorde, the Maker of al Thing.” *The Musical Times* 94(1319): 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.2307/935617>.
- Morton, Brian, and Pamela Collins. 1992. *Contemporary Composers*, Chicago, Ill.; London: St. James Press.
- Rupprecht, Philip. 1996. “Tonal Stratification and Uncertainty in Britten’s Music.” *Journal of Music Theory* 40(2): 311–46. <https://doi.org/10.2307/843891>.
- Straus, Joseph N. 2014. “Harmony and Voice Leading in the Music of Stravinsky.” *Music Theory Spectrum* 36. <https://doi.org/10.1093/mts/mtu008>.
- Vuvan, Dominique T., and Bryn Hughes. 2021. “Probe Tone Paradigm Reveals Less Differentiated Tonal Hierarchy in Rock Music.” *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 38(5): 425–34.
- Vuvan, Dominique T., Jon B. Prince, and Mark A. Schmuckler. 2011. “Probing the Minor Tonal Hierarchy.” *Music Perception* 28(5): 461–72. <https://doi.org/10.1525/mp.2011.28.5.461>.

³³ First published in *Choir & Organ* (Rhinegold, March/April 2017), this biography is provided on Joubert’s official website: <https://johnjoubert.org.uk/life-music/>