

Opera as a Teaching Aid for Song of Solomon; Israel's Music History: David & Solomon's Musical Genius; Characters in SOS Illustrate the Angelic Conflict

13. The texts of operas are sung. The singing and stage action are usually supported by instrumental accompaniment and many feature instrumental interludes called *intermezzi*.
14. If we were to define Solomon's Song with the vocabulary of modern opera it would be a *grand opera* where the entire text is sung accompanied by lavish sets and costumes, huge choruses, and brilliant vocal sections including arias and recitativo.
15. Music was a large part of Hebrew culture especially during the reign of David and Solomon was obviously trained in its theory, instruments, and applications.
16. The importance of music in Hebrew culture gives us insight into Solomon's knowledge of the subject and his liberal use of the medium:

Orr, James (gen. ed.). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 3:2095-96:

That the Hebrews were in ancient times devoted to the study and practice of music is obvious to every reader of the Old Testament. The references to it are numerous, and are frequently of such a nature as to emphasize its importance. Besides poetry, it is the only art that seems to have been cultivated to any extent in ancient Israel.

The events, occasions, and occupations with which music was associated were extremely varied. It accompanied leave-taking with honored guests (Genesis 31:27); celebrated a signal triumph over the nation's enemies (Exodus 15:20); and welcomed conquerors returning from victory (Judges 11:34; 1 Samuel 18:6). It was used to excite the inspiration of a prophet (2 Kings 3:15).

By far the most important evidence of the value attached to music by the Hebrews is afforded by the place given to it in Divine service. Music formed an essential part of the national worship of Jehovah, and elaborate arrangements were made for its correct and impressive performance. These are detailed in 1 Chronicles. There we are told that the whole body of the temple chorus and orchestra numbered 4,000; that they were trained and conducted, in 24 divisions, by the sons of Asaph *lā' safi*, Heman *hē' man* and Jeduthun *je-dū' thun*; and that in each group experts and novices were combined, so that the former preserved the correct tradition, and the latter were trained and fitted to take their place.

It is disappointing after all this to have to confess that of the nature of Hebrew music we have no real knowledge. If any system of notation ever existed, it has been entirely lost. We know nothing of the scales, or tonal system of the Hebrews, of their intervals or of their method of tuning their instruments. Two terms are supposed by some to refer to pitch (namely) *עֲלָמוֹת* *'alamoth* [A technical term used to indicate some aspect of a psalm, its tune, e.g., set to a certain voice (soprano) (Baker & Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 840, and Scofield, *The Scofield Study Bible: New American Standard*, 781 ftnt 1)] (in the title of Psalm 46), and *שְׁמִינִית* *sheminith* [A feminine noun used as a musical term; it may signify an instrument or an octave. (Baker & Carpenter, 1163-64)] (Psalm 6, 12).

Of one feature of Hebrew music we may be tolerably sure: it was rendered in unison. It was destitute of harmony or counterpoint. For its effect it would depend on contrast in quality of tone, on the participation of a larger or smaller number of singers, on antiphonal singing, so clearly indicated in many of the Psalms, and on the coloring imparted by the orchestra. That the latter occasionally played short passages alone has been inferred from the term *סֵלָה* *selah*.

It is rendered in the LXX [Septuagint] by *diapsalmos* [διὰ ψαλμοῦ, musical interlude, used by the LXX, in the Psalms, for the Hebrew *Selah*. (Liddell & Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 421)], which either means louder playing, *forte*, or, more probably, an instrumental interlude.

17. David was an extremely talented instrumentalist and of course he is the author of many of the Psalms. Internal evidence attributes at least 44 Psalms to David. As many as 75 could have come from his pen. It can even be suggested that David was the general editor of all 150.
18. David's exposure, education, and involvement in music can be derived from the academics of the united monarchy of Israel:

Vos, Howard F. *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Manners & Customs: How the People of the Bible Really Lived.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers 1999), 209-10:

(Israeli) society held mothers and fathers responsible for the education of their children during the united monarchy. The performance of vocal and instrumental music developed as an important dimension of Hebrew culture during the united monarchy, though largely on an informal basis. One person learned from another how to make a musical instrument and/or how to play it. We do not know how David got his lyre and how he learned to play it. But he came recommended to the court of Saul as an accomplished musician. Later David was called the "sweet singer of Israel" (2 Samuel 23:1).

In the days of Saul, David, and Solomon numerous musical instruments were made and played on a variety of occasions. David must be credited with the appearance of professional musicians in Israelite society—in temple and royal court (1 Chronicles 6:31-48; 15:16-16:6; 25:1-31). David appointed four thousand to praise the Lord with instruments (1 Chronicles 23:5), placing the musical direction under the direction of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun and their sons and relatives (1 Chronicles 25:1). This group totaled 288 men (1 Chronicles 25:7) organized into twenty-four divisions of twelve each. Plenty of education in music and rehearsal must have been involved. The text talks about "teachers and student" and "instruction in the songs of the Lord (1 Chronicles 25:7, 8).

19. Solomon as crown prince was surely educated in all the arts as well as academics. We learn from 1 Kings 4:32 that he was prolific in poetry, writing 3,000 proverbs, and in music, composing 1,005 songs.
20. The title to the book "Song of Songs" infers that this composition was the best of the lot. And thus it is not beyond reason to approach this book as if it were an opera. It was not, but it does serve as an effective teaching aid.
21. The operatic format makes it easy to divide the Song into acts and to assign parts to each individual singer. We are able to distinguish scenes, identify the "performers" who take part in each, and more efficiently follow the Shulammite's vacillations between real-time exchanges with Solomon and flights of fantasy and imagination with the Shepherd.
22. In the context of grand opera, Solomon is cast as the antagonist who is portrayed as a paramour: someone who woos. The Shulammite is the protagonist cast as a damsel in distress. And coming to her aid is her hero, the Shepherd, who rescues her from the clutches of the paramour.
23. In Act III, the Shulammite finds herself in Solomon's palace surrounded by his body guards, intimidated by his "daughters of Jerusalem," observed by his staff and attendants. In addition, Solomon has the advantage of his position and power at his disposal. This is a perfect description of Lucifer's rulership of Planet Earth.
24. The Evil One has his myriad armies of demons and his co-opted emissaries of the human species equipped with every asset conceivable in the field of propaganda, duplicity, and deception. Solomon, like Lucifer, is confident that he has supreme advantage while ensconced on his own turf.
25. The Shulammite represents the Church which is considered by Lucifer to be a hostile force and each of its members an alien in his territory. Every effort is made by him to prevent people from joining the insurgents and, if they should through faith alone in Christ alone, to prevent them from growing spiritually. Those who do make the advance come under intense pressures from the world because of their faith.

26. The Shulammite portrays a believer who has made the advance to esprit-de-corps love with the Shepherd-in-Chief, Jesus Christ. She takes her stand based on integrity, devotion, loyalty, and trust.
27. The Shepherd represents Jesus Christ who will deliver the Church from its warfare with evil at the Rapture.
28. In the meantime, the Shulammite must withstand the assaults hurled at her by means of Solomon's pick-up lines which resume with machine-gun rapidity beginning with Chapter Four. He begins the chapter with an aria filled with steady fire interrupted only twice by the Shulammite over the course of its 16 verses.
29. To prepare you for the onslaught of pick-up lines it becomes necessary to review a subject that I taught almost fifteen years ago. It is even prophetic in its assertions and gives guidance on how to identify both the positive and negative mental attitudes that occur during the dating years. These will be helpful for both parents and the nubile young adults who participate in this ritual.