

SYMMETRICAL MUSICAL STRUCTURES IN THE CREDO FROM *MISSA POPULARIS* (MÅRTEN JANSSON)

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SUMMARY. *Missa popularis*, was premiered on 25 April 2015, and is a fascinating interplay between simplicity and depth, between musical creation and sacred text. Our analysis is limited to the vocal performance system, trying to grasp the relationship between the text and melos, based on the premise proposed by Jansson himself that music is an expression of his Christian faith and a form of respect and genuine humility before the sacred text, a wonderful “offering” given to God, personally, through the act of composing, and ecclesiastically, through the act of performing. As he often stated about himself, Mårten Jansson is a ‘homo religiosus’, being rather a searcher for “beautiful music”, which could match the timeless sacred texts, than a composer *stricto sensu*.

Keywords: *Missa popularis*, credo, Jansson, symmetrical structure, musical motifs

Graduate of the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, composer and conductor Mårten Jansson (born 1965) impresses with his enthusiasm and achievements in the fields of composition and conducting. Actively participating in the promotion of sacred music as well as musical theory within the Dalcroze rhythmic system, Jansson breaks away from the patterns of postmodernism through the simplicity of musical discourse and a return to the expressiveness of words and melody.

One of the most appreciated creations of Mårten Jansson², *Missa popularis*, was premiered on 25 April 2015 and it is a fascinating interplay between simplicity and depth, between musical creation and sacred text.

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The dominant principle of this mass is the interference between prayer and melody, the composer being intensely concerned with the complexity of the issues raised by this simultaneity of the two intertwined planes.

Missa popularis is formed of five parts: *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei*. The musical form, as indicated by the title, is inspired from Scandinavian folklore. According to the composer's instructions, the first four parts were conceived as *Polska*, *Schottis*, *Gånglåt* and *Bakmes*. The final part, *Agnus Dei*, was conceived as a recapitulation, containing the melodic forms previously presented and confirming the structural symmetry of the mass.

Credo is the middle part of the mass. Our analysis is limited to the vocal performance system, trying to grasp the relationship between the text and melos, based on the premise proposed by Jansson himself that music is an expression of his Christian faith and a form of respect and genuine humility before the sacred text, a wonderful "offering" given to God, personally, through the act of composing, and ecclesiastically, through the act of performing.

Symmetrical structure

As we mentioned above, *Credo* was inspired from *gånglåt*, a Swedish traditional folk music³. For *Credo*, Jansson uses, by making minor aesthetic-melodic changes, the following elements inspired from *gånglåt*: the symmetric form ABA'B'⁴ (by comparison with AABB in *gånglåt*), the binary measure $\frac{2}{2}$ (by comparison with $\frac{2}{4}$ or $\frac{4}{4}$ in *gånglåt*), tempo $\text{♩} = 85$ (by comparison with $\text{♩} = 76-104$ in *gånglåt*). The melodic lines are rhythmically outlined over a march ostinato (except for measures 125-145).

E.g. 1



Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 1-4

³ Glossary of terms, neologisms, abbreviation setc. used in writings by Philip Tagg, p. 14, <https://tagg.org/articles/ptgloss.pdf> (30 Aug. 2024)

⁴ I chose to note the form of the work as ABA'B' to facilitate analytical discourse, rather than to refer to established musical forms. Cf. Kempf, Davorin. "What Is Symmetry in Music?" *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, vol. 27, no. 2, 1996, pp. 155–65. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3108344> (30 Aug. 2024)

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Credo has 255 measures, arranged as follows:

Instrumental intro (M. 1-4)

A. Apperceptive instrumental tableau (M. 4-24)

B. *Credo in Patrem / in Filium* (M. 24-165)

A'. Apperceptive instrumental tableau (M. 163-183)

B'. *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum / in Ecclesiam* (M. 183-249)

Amen (M. 249-254, measure 255 being an instrumental one).

The symbol of faith is designed for a choral arrangement of 3 female voices (SSA) or five mixed voices (SSATB) and has as its basic tone F major, a tone of inner peace⁵, often chosen by composers for masses or other works of a religious nature. Deliberately or not, F is also the classical abbreviation of the word *Fides* (faith) – nothing more fitting for the background of the musical discourse that envelops the symbol of faith. The exception is made for the 55 measures (91 – 145) that convey the theme of salvation, built on Mi b, a subject whose treatment exceeds the space allocated for this work.

Symmetrical musical motifs

The first four measures create the rhythmic scaffolding of the work, through a persistent progression of parallel fifths. These introductory measures can be seen as a reiteration of the Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo: nulla re antea exstante*. At the Christian mystical level, this *nothing* that will be annulled by God through the act of creation corresponds to the death that will be abolished by God through the resurrection of the dead⁶.

From measure 4, the apperceptive instrumental tableau begins (measures 4-8, E.g. 2), which is built on the theme of *expecto resurrectionem* (measures 227-231, E.g. 3). At the level of Christian doctrine, the initial creation (the *Cosmos*) and the final creation (the *Church*) are possible precisely because God is love. Jansson's creed begins precisely with the affirmation of the final resurrection. This ideological exposition is musically outlined through a seductive and expressive melodic path, with a clear reference to F major, as Jansson assigns a predominant role to the melody throughout the entire work.

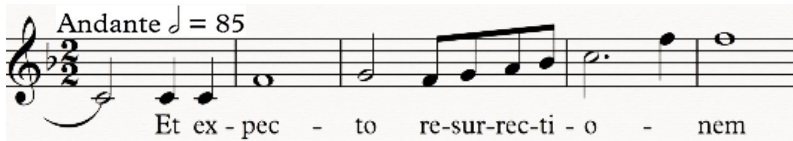
⁵ Schubart, Christian Friedrich Daniel, and Ted DuBois. "On the Human Voice and the Characteristics of the Musical Keys." *New England Review* (1990-), vol. 25, no. 1/2, 2004, pp. 166–71. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40244377> (6 Sept. 2024).

⁶ 1 Corinthians 15: 26.

E.g. 2

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 4-8

E.g. 3

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 227-231

Measures 9-16 are designed as a melodic-harmonic variation of the musical motif that accompanies the main assertions of faith in the Credo, whose melodic line could also be sung on this harmonic support.

This inverted introduction, moving from the theme of the final resurrection towards the theme of creation, plays a key interpretative role in the creed: the exegesis of the symbol of faith is approached from the perspective of the *Parousia* towards creation. The diversification of harmonic, rhythmic, or orchestral effects highlights the biblical concepts sonically, providing the listener with an innovative expressive experience.

The four main statements in the *Credo* are associated in pairs: the Father and the Son, the Spirit and the Church (as explained above). Jansson highlights grammatical and theological connotations. At the grammatical level, the transitive verb “credo” corresponds to four object complements: *Deum Patrem, Dominum Jesum Christum, Spiritum Sanctum și Ecclesiam*.

In Catholic theology, the Father and the Son are consubstantial⁷, and the Holy Spirit, although consubstantial with the other persons of the Trinity, proceeds from both the Father and the Son.

Our statement does not intend to reiterate the long debate surrounding the *Filioque* addition, but aims to explain the form of the *Credo* in the *Missa popularis*. Thus, B musically addresses the articles about the Father and the Son, while B' musically addresses the articles about the Holy Spirit and the Church.

⁷ Abogado, Jannel N. “The Anti-Arian Theology of the Council of Nicea of 325.” *Angelicum*, vol. 94, no. 2, 2017, pp. 255–86, footnote no. 83, p. 285. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26506514> (6 Sept. 2024).

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The main role of the two meditative instrumental pieces (measures 4-24 and 163-183), which separate the first 7 articles from the other 5, is to contribute to the musical symmetry of the work. The measures in question are identical, but Jansson prefers, for aesthetic reasons, a variation in measures 182-183 compared to 23-24, using 4 sets of 4 eighth notes arranged ascending.

The ideas stated above are reinforced by the introduction and conclusion: the introduction features four measures of ostinato that precede the first apperceptive tableau, while in the conclusion, “Amen” is presented in responsorial manner, four times, for the four “Credo.”

The musical climate created by the composer emphasizes his admiration for the melodic transposition of feelings and celestial images, which are characteristic of his sound thinking. The interference between content and melody, a dominant principle of the entire composition, is outlined from the very first measures, in which the voices lead the melody determined by the meaning of the text.

The choir debuts in measure 24, in unison, with the statement “Credo in unum Deum” (measures 24-27, E.g. 4), melodically identical to “Et in Spiritu Sanctum” (measures 183-186, E.g. 5). The simple yet subtle musical texture surprises with a tonal sound aspect, accentuating the classical stylistic sphere, which was not chosen by Jansson by chance.

A thorough study of this work highlights the consideration that the composer, through rhythm, thematic material, formal construction, and architecture, with many harmonic areas, cannot detach himself from the classicizing or neoclassical flavor of the score.

E.g. 4

Andante $\text{♩} = 85$

21.

S
S
A
T
B

Cre - do in u - num De - um

Cre - do in u - num De - um

Cre - do in u - num De - um

Cre - do in u - num De - um

Cre - do in u - num De - um

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 24-28

E.g. 5

Andante $\text{♩} = 85$

183.

S Et in Spi - ri - tum Sanc - tum

S Et in Spi - ri - tum Sanc - tum

A Et in Spi - ri - tum Sanc - tum

T Et in Spi - ri - tum Sanc - tum

B Et in Spi - ri - tum Sanc - tum

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 183-186

The assertions of faith are followed by the affirmation of the names, predicates, and divine attributes. The Persons of the Trinity are consubstantial but ontologically distinct. The section “Patrem omnipotentem factorem coeli” (measures 28-32, E.g. 6) has the same harmonic structure as “Filius Dei, unigenitus” (measures 47-51, E.g. 7) and “Dominum et vivificantem” (measures 187-191 E.g. 8), which creates a pattern of the consubstantiality of the divine Persons.

E.g. 6

Andante $\text{♩} = 85$

28.

S Pa-trem om - ni - po - ten - tem, fac-

S Pa-trem om - ni - po - ten - tem, fac-

A Pa-trem om - ni - po - ten - tem, fac-

T Pa-trem om - ni - po - ten - tem, fac-

B Pa-trem om - ni - po - ten - tem, fac-

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 28-30

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E.g. 7

Andante $\text{♩} = 85$

S
 Fi - li - um De - i
 S
 Fi - li - um De - i
 A
 Fi - li - um De - i
 T
 Fi - li - um De - i
 B
 Fi - li - um De - i

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 47-49

E.g. 8

Andante $\text{♩} = 85$

S
 Do - - mi - num, et
 S
 Do - - mi - num, et
 A
 Do - - mi - num, et
 T
 Do - - mi - num, et
 B
 Do - - mi - num, et

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 187-189

The personal manner of conducting the indissoluble relationship between text and melody is shaped by the use of sound textures that distinguish the earthly from the eternity of divinity. Thus, we observe the simple yet inconclusive harmonic evolution of G minor – mixtures of fourths and fifths superimposed (do-fa, sol-do, measures 33-35, E.g. 9) – of the earth. In contrast, we note the pronounced autonomy of the melodic-harmonic discourse in the following measures. The delayed cadence in A major, (measures 54-57, E.g. 10), *omnia saecula*, concludes the timelessness of divinity, subsequently integrating into the expressive climate of the whole.

Andante $\text{♩} = 85$

33.

S
ter - - rae

S
ter - - rae

A
ter - - rae

T
ter - - rae

B
ter - - rae

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 33-35

Andante $\text{♩} = 85$

54.

S
om - ni - a sae - cu - la

S
om - ni - a sae - cu - la

A
om - ni - a sae - cu - la

T
om - ni - a sae - cu - la

B
om - ni - a sae - cu - la

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 54-57

Another pattern can be observed in the visible-invisible relationship (compare E.g. 11, 12, 13), initially presented in measures 36-42, which is then found in measures 67-73, 155-160, 195-201, and 235-241. Jansson pays attention to the subtleties of the sacred text, which he perceives and conveys to the audience in an original and highly inventive musical manner.

These parallelisms, created on structures of 7 measures, refer to the 7 (6+1) days of Genesis, with the exception of the third section of the five, *cuius regni non erit (finis)*, which contains only 6 measures due to the omission of the word *finis*.

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This omission is an ingenious stylistic device: The Kingdom of the Son transcends any limit; or, referring to the chronology of the drafting of the creed (vide supra), Jansson seems to remind us that, although the Nicene symbol concluded here, this is not the end of the creed/faith. If in measures 36-42 there is a general reference to the conjunction of the seen and the unseen in creation, the following measures seem to allude to the concept of *creatio continua*.

In measures 67-73, the birth of the Son is both visible and invisible. Jansson understands that the birth of the Son in the context of this article of faith is visible, intelligible, in the Incarnation from the Virgin Mary, but invisible, impossible to comprehend for the human mind, at the level of consubstantiality with the Father.

In measures 155-160, the judgment of the living and the dead will be the final act of intersection between the visible Kingdom and the invisible, eternal, transcendent Kingdom. In measures 195-201, the adoration directed to the Holy Spirit, together with the Father and the Son, is visibly conjugated in the fighting Church on earth, while invisibly glorified in the triumphant Church in heaven. In measures 235-241, the repetition of the phrase *vitam venturi seculi* is striking. The life of the coming age is both visible (in the earthly Church) and invisible (in the heavenly Church).

E.g. 11

Andante $\text{♩} = 85$

41.

The image shows a musical score for five voices: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Bass (B), and a fifth voice part (S). The score is in 2/2 time and begins at measure 41. The tempo is marked 'Andante' with a quarter note equal to 85 beats per minute. The lyrics for all voices are 'in - vi - si bi - li - um'. The Soprano and Alto parts have a melodic line with eighth notes, while the Tenor and Bass parts have a more rhythmic line with quarter notes. The fifth voice part has a simple bass line with quarter notes.

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 41-42

E.g. 12

Andante $\text{♩} = 85$

71.

S con-sub-stan-ti-a-lem Pa-tri

S con-sub-stan-ti-a-lem Pa-tri

A con-sub-stan-ti-a-lem Pa-tri

T con-sub-stan-ti-a-lem Pa-tri

B con-sub-stan-ti-a-lem Pa-tri

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 71-73

E.g. 13

Andante $\text{♩} = 85$

153.

S cu-ius re-gni non e-rit

S cu-ius re-gni non e-rit

A cu-ius re-gni non e-rit

T cu-ius re-gni non e-rit

B cu-ius re-gni non e-rit


Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 158-160

The measures 45 (E.g. 14), 203 (E.g. 15), and 243 (E.g. 16) exhibit similarities of a harmonic and rhythmic nature. Jansson applies the text from the Credo only three times in a triple meter, connecting the notions of Lord, prophecy, and eternal life, which leads us to believe that the mentioned measures are interconnected. At a theological level, the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets about the Incarnation of the Lord and about life to come.

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E.g. 14

Andante $\text{♩} = 85$



45

Do-mi-num Je sum Chris tum

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 45

E.g. 15

Andante $\text{♩} = 85$



202.

qui lo - cu-tus este per pro phe - tas

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measure 203

E.g. 16

Andante $\text{♩} = 85$



242.

ven - tu - ri se - cu - li

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measure 243

A strong parallelism is created between 58-66 and 146-154. Both sections begin in D major (the key of triumphant hymns dedicated to God, but also the initial of the opening words: *Deus, dexteram*). The sequences have 8 measures, 8 being the number of the day of resurrection and of the new creation. Jansson notes that the sitting at the right hand of the Father of the crucified and resurrected Son is a natural act, resulting from the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father⁸. Also, *lumen de lumine* is connected with *iterum venturus est*: just as the birth of the Son from eternity from the Father is “light from light”, so too the second coming of the Son is like a flash of lightning⁹.

⁸ Abogado, Jannel N. “The Anti-Arian Theology of the Council of Nicea of 325.” *Angelicum*, vol. 94, no. 2, 2017, pp. 255–86, p. 277. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26506514>. (6 Sept. 2024).

⁹ Matthew 24: 27

E.g. 17

Andante $\text{♩} = 85$

58.

S De - um de De - o, lu - men de lu - mi - ne

S De - um de De - o, lu - men de lu - mi - ne

A De - um de De - o, lu - men de lu - mi - ne

T De - um de De - o, lu - men de lu - mi - ne

B De - um de De - o, lu - men de lu - mi - ne

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 58-61

E.g. 18

Andante $\text{♩} = 85$

146.

S dex - te - ram Pa - tris et i - te - rum ven - tu - rus est cum

S dex - te - ram Pa - tris et i - te - rum ven - tu - rus est cum

A dex - te - ram Pa - tris et i - te - rum ven - tu - rus est cum

T dex - te - ram Pa - tris et i - te - rum ven - tu - rus est cum

B dex - te - ram Pa - tris et i - te - rum ven - tu - rus est cum

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 58-61

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A suggestive parallel can be found between measures 73-76 (E.g. 19) and 161-164 (E.g. 20). All creation was made / is made through the Son; His is the created Kingdom that He has eternalized through His sacrifice.

E.g. 19

Andante $\text{♩} = 85$

73.

S per quem om - ni - a fac - ta sunt

S per quem om - ni - a fac - ta sunt

A per quem om - ni - a fac - ta sunt

T per quem om - ni - a fac - ta sunt

B per quem om - ni - a fac - ta sunt

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 73-76

E.g. 20

Andante $\text{♩} = 85$

161.

S non e - rit fi - nis

S non e - rit fi - nis

A non e - rit fi - nis

T non e - rit fi - nis

B non e - rit fi - nis

Mårten Jansson, *Missa popularis*, measures 161-164

Also, *propter nos* (m. 77-80) and *confiteor* (m. 214-219) are linked through the half-note triplet, interpreted in unison by all voices. Used only two times in Credo, these triplets interconnect the articles in the symbol that they open, those about the Incarnation (the death and resurrection of the Lord) and the confession of baptism (which, in Pauline theology, is the commemoration of the death and resurrection of the Lord¹⁰). We confess (*confiteor*) what Christ did for us (*propter us*): He died for our sins so we may live together with him, united in the mystery of baptism. If the plan of salvation outlined in m. 78 is constant (note C three times), the confession of baptism in m. 215 is an ascending melodic line (notes G, A, C). Another subtle connection is created here, between measures 79-80 and 102-104, between *homines* and *Maria Virgine*, through the ascending chain of chords: D-flat major, E-flat major, and F major.

The ending represents the musical and philosophical conclusion of the work. The coral color is always suitable for expression, the variable density, and the bold sounds are introduced imperceptibly, naturally, with an infallible skill, as the composer pours into classical molds the sensitivity and nobility of Christian piety. The entire work breathes deeply the tradition of the classical mass, striking with the simplicity and flexibility of the musical phrases. Jansson advocates for a return to clear vocal expression, thus opening the possibility, perhaps, of a new wave in European sacred music.

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¹⁰ Romans 6: 4