

Analysis of Rihards Dubra's *Te Deum*
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Abstract

The *Te Deum* by Rihards Dubra will be analyzed with the purpose of investigating the formation and effectiveness of three climactic areas. Conventional form analysis in addition to data input of density into a chart graph help to understand the *Te Deum*. Other factors such as text, instrumentation, and dynamics will be considered in their role toward building up the climax sections. The study finds that a combination of musical elements work cohesively to make the *Te Deum* a moving and successful work.

History

Rihards Dubra composed the *Te Deum* in 2002. It won the Latvian Great Music Prize in 2003, a high honor from the Ministry of Culture, for its performance during the XXIII Latvian Song Festival.¹

Analysis

The first listen of Rihards Dubra's fourteen-minute *Te Deum* invites interest. Seconds later, it captures full attention with a directional build that the body can feel. In two minutes, a beautiful, glorious climax arrives, lasting about forty seconds. After a slight pause, a similar build begins, resulting in a second, nearly identical climax. At the end of the second climax, the listener's expectations may be set on hearing the same event a third time. Instead, a previously unheard soprano saxophone noodles around a melody in a minor scale. Possibly disappointed yet hopeful, the listener hears other music that seems to go on for a long time before the familiar

¹ "Great Music Award," Music in Latvia, accessed May 22, 2017, <http://www.music.lv/balva/en/laureati.asp#2003>.

climax occurs the third time. Questions arise regarding how Dubra set up the climaxes and what happened during the long wait for the third one. To search for an answer, this paper will examine what makes the climaxes visceral and effective through form and structure, tonal centers, and density data.

Form and Structure

An initial step to dissecting the listener's experience involves the simplicity of timing. In Example 1, the bracket above the line begins to space out the three climaxes. Since the first one occurs two minutes in, would each climax require two minutes of build up to be successful? The second one occurs two minutes later. If the last climax occurs at the thirteen-minute point, and it also needed a two-minute build up, the long wait between the second and third climax took seven minutes. Seven minutes roughly equals two pop songs. Seven minutes also constitutes more time than the three builds toward a rewarding climax. Yet, it can hint at a form, AABA.



Example 1. Timeline of Dubra's *Te Deum*.

The music at the climax wields immense power by sounding incredibly joyous and eternally hopeful. The tune itself could be an alternative pop song with great chords. Example 2 shows the melody and chords to the climax. The double bar separates the three different climaxes.

The musical score consists of six staves of music in G major, with various time signatures and chord progressions. The chords are written above the notes.

Staff 1: D D/F# F#m7 F#m6 D F#m Bm2 A6 A/B Bm G7 C D

Staff 2: 11 Bm F#m Bm7 G7 C Bb Gm7 Em7 Am DM7

Staff 3: 21 D D/F# F#m7 F#m6 Bm F#m D D/F# F#m7 F#m Bm D F#m Bm A Bm Dm/G A/G Bm/G

Staff 4: 31 C D F#m D F#m/B F#m D F#m7 D A Bm A G C C/Bb Bb Gm Bb C/A Am D

Staff 5: 39 D F#m Bm Bm7 F#m D/F# A/F# A/B Bm A/B D/G A/G D/G C D F#m

Staff 6: 49 Bm Bm7 F#m D/F# A/F# Bm7 Bm/G A/G Bm/G C Bb Gm7 D+7/A Am D

Example 2. Dubra's *Te Deum* mm. 47-66, 93-110, and 277-295.

The climax lasts about forty seconds, thereby negating the idea that each climax requires a two-minute build. The next steps to find more details about the form include researching the *Te Deum* text and instrumentation. The first mention of the *Te Deum* text is found in the *Rule of St. Caesarius*, A.D. 502, though its genesis may in part be from 252 A.D.² It contains twenty-nine verses of either single or double lines. Three clear sections are delineated by age and source. The first section of thirteen verses derives from ancient hymns to God the Father with the addition of Trinitarian doctrine in the last two verses. The second section of eight verses comprise a Christological hymn added some time in the fourth century. The third section contains pleas for

² Ron Jeffers, *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire Volume 1: Sacred Latin Texts* (Corvallis, Oregon: Earthsongs, 1988), 217.

mercy and promises of obedience derived from the Psalms. The *Te Deum* has been part of the liturgy of Sunday Matins with some exceptions, since the sixth century.

The composer professes that all his music revolves around spiritual content. He serves as organist in one church and as a cantor in another, both Catholic. He admires composers such as John Tavener who have dedicated their production to sacred purposes. Dubra states “Just as everyone has their own pathway to God, so every composer has his own pathway to emotion in music, and through that – also to God.”³ Thinking of steps on a pathway, the climax music in the *Te Deum* has a metronome marking of 102, setting its pace to a comfortably devout and secure wedding walk. (Step, touch, etc.) Since the text differs for each instance, the climax music cannot be considered a refrain, especially since no musical verses exists. However, the rhythmic differences in the three climaxes can be attributed to the difference in text.

When examining the music at the points of division in the tripartite text, they do not correlate. In Example 3, the “Aeterna fac” line sung by the female choir corresponds with the end of section two, while the “Salvum fac” line sung by the male choir corresponds with the beginning of section three. No musical form separates the two sections.

³ Rupert Gough, "Dubra: Hail, Queen of Heaven & Other Choral Works - CDA67799 - Rihards Dubra (b1964) - MP3 and Lossless Downloads," Hyperion Records, last modified 2008, http://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D_CDA67799&vw=dc.

Example 3. Dubra's *Te Deum*, mm. 178-180. (From *Te Deum*. Copyright 2007 by Musica Baltica. Reprinted with permission of Musica Baltica.)

Dubra has said, "People should not always understand the text exactly because its meaning is encoded in the music ... my main task is to work on people's subconscious level, people's emotional level."⁴ The music at his *Te Deum* climaxes reflect his intent, but the middle portion between climax two and three wane in effect next to the climaxes, or at least at the first few hearings.

Now to look at performing forces. Example 4 shows the opening with a single, triple piano note, about mid-range, by chimes. A second set of chimes soon echoes the same note. After about fifteen seconds of canonic chimes, organ enters on higher register notes at pianissimo. The chimes and organ introduce the listener to an unusual combination of performing forces.

⁴ Gough, *Dubra*.

The musical score consists of five staves. The first two staves are for Chimes I and Chimes II, both starting at measure 1. They play a triplet pattern of eighth notes. The next two staves are for Chimes I and Chimes II, starting at measure 5. They continue the triplet pattern. The fifth staff is for the Organ, starting at measure 5, playing a triplet pattern. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ppp*, *pp*, and *rubato ad lib.*

Example 4. Dubra's *Te Deum*, mm. 1-7. (From *Te Deum*. Copyright 2007 by Musica Baltica. Reprinted with permission of Musica Baltica.)

Dubra scored his *Te Deum* for six different choral bodies, two sets of chimes, organ, soprano saxophone, French horn, and a tamtam. The six choirs are girls' choir, boys' choir, female choir, male choir, and two mixed choirs. A mixed choir has all four voice types: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, also known as SATB. Dubra scores each choir with their own part, utilizing the sounds and timbres quintessential to each type of choir. The young voices have a sound that resonates through a smaller mouth cavity which makes the timbre bright and cute. The boys' choir and the girls' choir are often paired in same sections of the music. The difference between the two young choirs arise from the difference in physiology. The boys are beginning to develop

thicker and more porous bone structure in their jaw and brow line, both factors in morphology that affect timbre. They also have stronger muscles that control the moving cartilages of phonation which assures tighter adduction of the vocal cords, thereby creating a streamlined, direct, glassy sound. A girl's voice has softer edges, a subtle difference, but still apparent, as their hormones produce slight edema in the cells and male hormones encourage denser muscle tissue. The young choirs sing mostly in the upper middle range. The male choir, having the largest lung capacity of all the singers, covers the low range, often in open fifths and fourths, creating overtones that rise through all the space and voices. The female choir supplies a mature sounding middle to high range with a rounder, fuller sound. The two mixed choirs sometimes have a solo part, but when they don't, they fill in the chord of the vocal parts.

The choice for a soprano saxophone to mix into a choral setting rather than a violin or flute results in a timbre that cuts through the rest of the ensemble like an oboe, and also adds a brassy edge to the sound. The French horn also sparks intrigue in that it plays where a cello might be used with a choir. The sonority of a single horn amongst over two hundred singers sometimes can't always be deciphered, but it has other moments where it stands out as a mellow beckoning. The tamtam with its indefinite pitch, as opposed to a tuned gong with a clearer sound, shimmers with multiple overtones, growing in volume after being struck.⁵ The tamtam sounds at every climax.

After the opening of double chimes and organ, four choirs join in one by one topped by the saxophone until the tamtam sneaks in and delivers the mass of sound to the first climax. The climax ends with a *tutti* half rest then the layering process begins again toward the second

⁵ Phillip McNamara, "Gong or Tam-tam?," PM Gongs : Philip McNamara - Percussionist & Gong Practitioner, last modified 2017, <http://www.pmgongs.com/gong-or-tam-tam.htm>.

climax. The layering, build, and drop reveals a form and structure reflected in a detailed timeline.

:10	start, 2 chimes, organ loops
:29	boys 2-part, girls mimic
:45	soprano sax
1:04	male 4-part, parallel, sax end
1:30	female 3-part light singing
1:47	tamtam pppp
2:07	climax, mixed choir 1, horn
2:57	organ drone, girls 2-part
3:10	add horn
3:16	add mixed choir 2 4-part, boys, girls
3:56	add tamtam
4:03	climax 2, mixed 1, female, male, chimes
4:53	sax solo
5:17	sax end, organ loop
5:29	add female octaves
6:05	add sax
6:11	add girls
6:24	add mixed 1 choir 7-part, girls, female loop, organ
6:54	full measure tutti rest
6:59	boys solo, then girls solo, then 3-part call & response
7:54	add mixed 1, female
8:21	add sax, horn c&r
8:33	add male
8:46	add organ
9:20	add chime, tamtam
9:26	tutti except tamtam - intense but not climax
9:57	organ solo
10:40	add mixed 2 choir 2-part, chime 2
10:56	add girls loop
11:34	mixed 1 solo
12:33	add mixed 2, c&r w/female and male
12:47	add tamtam
13:00	tutti, climax 3
13:58	chromatic mess
14:12	ending chord for 9 seconds

With the above timeline, a new form emerges. AA¹BCA². This form is based on a section layering on performing forces until it ends abruptly and a new solo instrument begins the layering process again.

Tonal Centers

The beginning E note shown in Example 4 turns out to be an important note. The lack of key signature and many sharps on F and C puts the music in E Dorian. The music stays in this mode until the first climax in D major, as shown in Example 2. The chart below shows the keys and tonal areas of the *Te Deum*.

E	D	G	D	E	C	C	Ab	C	A	G	D
Dorian	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Lydian	Major	Major	Major	Minor	Minor	Major

The key signatures reveal more structural elements than the AA¹BCA² form. Seven out of twelve sections contain an F#, with only the middle C and Ab major, and A minor sections without a F#. D major holds an important position as the climax music key and the ending key. E Dorian relates to D major with identical accidentals. C Lydian relates to E minor again with an identical accidental. The tonal centers of C and E wrap around the important D. As for the presence of G minor, it is the tonic where D is the dominant, so once again it sets up the importance of D major. The A minor is puzzling as a dominant of D major because it is used in the minor. It may be considered more a relative of C major, a neighbor key to D. The presence of Ab major is significant because of its tritone distance from D. Both are in major and with their relationship being chromatically centered in either key, they provide a power struggle. The tritone aims to cut down the organization of a key and confuse the hierarchy of sound. In terms of the timeline, Ab major appears at 9:20, or 65.7% into the piece, a little over the Golden Mean.

Ab major also signifies the farthest key for the music to travel to and from, but aside from the distance, what makes the journey meaningful? Listening to the *Te Deum*, the modulations happen smoothly. In a way, a listener can expect change and yet not know the point of arrival. Are the changes of tonal center led by harmony or melody?

Example 5 shows the first nonrelated tonal shift. The blazing big sound of D major in the voices is marred by a B in chime 1, and a C# in the organ. Only because the organ pedal is in D and the top note is in D, does it not sound like a Bm⁹. After a brief rest, an open fifth drone begins on G. The common tone of D continues while the bottom G prepares the ear to accept the Bb introduced by the girls' choir. Another segue happens on the dynamic level. The D chord with an added 6th and major 7th still resonates in the inner ear from the impact of the *forte* as the G minor sneaks in at *pianissimo*. This example transitions harmonically.

Chimes I

65 f ~ 80

B in the chimes

Choir I

S. f

A. ae.

T. B.

Female choir

S. f

A. ae.

Male choir

T. f

B. ae.

Girls' choir

65 f p

Te glo - ri -

Hn. (in F)

65 f

Org.

65 f pp *sempre*

C# in the organ

Example 5. Dubra's *Te Deum*, mm. 65-68. (From *Te Deum*. Copyright 2007 by Musica Baltica. Reprinted with permission of Musica Baltica.)

A different technique returns the G minor back to D major. In Example 6, the sopranos and tenors work in parallel motion to the D and F#. The music is pulled by an ascending stepwise approach in the melody line.

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Example 6. Dubra's *Te Deum*, mm. 91-93. Second Climax. (From *Te Deum*. Copyright 2007 by Musica Baltica. Reprinted with permission of Musica Baltica.)

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Throughout the song, the homophonic sections control harmonic rhythm and the sections with imitative small motives and aleatoric passages form ambiguous harmonies as a result of polyphonic lines. In terms of horizontal musical line, small motives hold more melodic and rhythmic interest compared to longer lines of sung text, most often set to simple quarter notes or half notes.

The tonal centers, discoverable by linear and vertical notes, revealed a more complicated form. The key itself didn't warrant a structural assignation solely on that merit. In the process of understanding key modulations, the use of dynamics now deserve delving into.

Density

Several times during the *Te Deum*, neither melody nor rhythm prevail in shaping the music. These times merely hold sound. Example 7 shows every note in the diatonic C scale except C is being performed at the same time. The boys' and girls' choirs are singing aleatoric passages as shown on the left. The rhythms in this 12/8 meter are obscured by the many permutations of the four-note motifs. Though the dynamic is soft, the ear perceives this spectrum of dissonance as a block of ambiguous sound.

The image shows a musical score for Example 7, Dubra's *Te Deum*, measures 172-174. It features two vocal groups: Choir I and Female choir. The lyrics are: "in glo-ri-a nu-me-ra-ri. Ae-ter-na fac cum sanc-tis tu-is in glo-ri-a nu-me-ra-ri." The dynamic marking is *p sempre*. There are two pink arrows pointing to the start of the vocal lines at measure 172, and a pink box labeled "DEFGAB" is placed over the Female choir part.

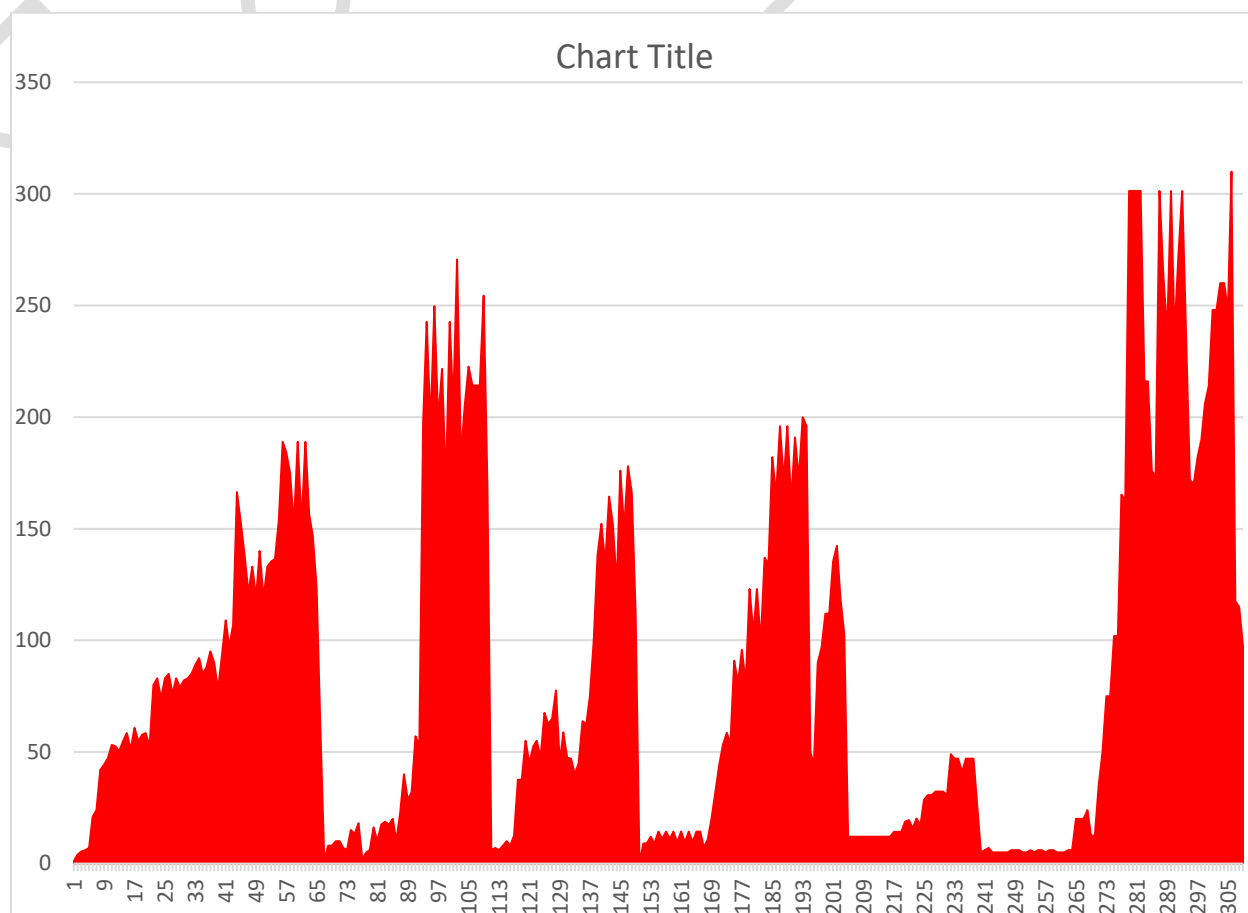
Example 7. Dubra's *Te Deum*, mm. 172-174. (From *Te Deum*. Copyright 2007 by Musica Baltica. Reprinted with permission of Musica Baltica.)

At the end of the *Te Deum*, every performing force is operating at quadruple forte, the horn, chime 1, and saxophone are in aleatoric mode, the organ has a long chromatic cluster, and four choirs are running aleatoric passages or glissandos. The tamtam alone on a forte roll would be difficult to quantify. The method used to ascertain the density was to count the number of notes per performing force, per measure, multiply that number by the volume, and divide that by the number by the meter. In the midst of entering the data in the spreadsheet shown in Example 8, a clear and concise visual aid developed that represents the process of layering.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG	AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL	AM	AN	AO	AP	AQ	AR	AS	AT	AU	AV	AW	AX	AY	AZ	BA	BB		
1		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53		
2	sax																	10	1	10	3	10	5	2	1																															
3	chimes 1	1	3	5	6	8	8	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	4	6	4	6	4	6	4
4	boys						2	8	6	6	10	6	6	8	6	6	10	6	6	6	10	6	6	8	6	6	10	6	6	8	6	6	10	6	6	8	6	6	10	6	6	8	6	6	10	6	6	8	6							
5	choir 1																																																							
6	choir 2																																																							
7	female																																																							
8	male																																																							
9	girls																																																							
10	horn																																																							
11	chimes 2	1	5	6	6	6	8	8	8	8	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
12	tam-tam																																																							
13	organ																																																							
14	dynamics	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
15	meter	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	
16	Density formula	1	4	6	16	7	21	24	42	44	47	53	53	50	55	59	51	61	55	58	59	53	80	83	74	83	85	76	83	79	82	83	85	89	92	85	88	95	90	78	93	109	97	107	167	153	138	121	133	119	140	119	133	131		

Example 8. Spreadsheet of data.

Upon completion, the spreadsheet was rendered into an area chart. See Example 9.



Example 9. Area chart.

The graph shows six major episodes of layering. The third and fourth episode contain a drop in density indicating separate smaller sections. An actual and true chart would be painstaking to make. The number of choir members and the pace each singer performs must be gathered to get the exact density calculation This chart helped to make more accurate delineations of sections to label for the formal structure. The factors used to derive this form reflect the density chart, measures where tonal centers changed, changes in tempo, the presence of text, meter change, and changes in dynamics.

Section	A	B	B1	B2	C	D	C1	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	K1	L	C2
Time	:10	:29	1:04	1:30	2:07	2:57	4:03	4:53	5:29	6:24	6:59	7:54	9:20	9:57	10:40	11:34	13:00
mm	1-8	9-21	22-32	33-46	47-66	67-92	93-110	110-119	120-139	140-150	151-166	167-194	195-204	205-219	220-239	240-276	277-309
Text		Te Deum laudamus: te Dominum confitemur.	Te aeternum Patris. Omnis terra veneratur.	Tibi omnes angeli, caeli et universae potestates: Te cherubim et seraphim incessabili voci clamant: podamunt.	Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt caeli et terra maiestatis gloriae tuae.	Te gloriosus Agostorum chorus: Te prophetas laudat ecclesia. Te monachos capitulatus laudat aedatus. Te per omnem terrarum sancta confitetur Ecclesia.	Patrem immensae maiestatis, Venerandum tuum et unicum filium, Sanctum quoque Paraclitum Spiritum.		Tu rex gloriae Christi. Tu Patris simplicibus es: Tu regis aedatus. Tu delecto modis accito, apertus creditibus regna caelorum.	Tu ad dexterae Dei sedes, in gloria Patris. Iudex credens esse venturus.	Te ego quaesumus, tua lamilla subveni, quod proi oso sanguine redemisti.	Adepta tu cum sanetis tuis in gloria numerari. Saluum hic populum tuum Domine et libera: heredita tuae.	Et rego eos, et exalte illos usque in aeternum.		Per singulos dies, benedicimus te. Et laudamus nomen tuum in saeculum, et in saeculum saeculi. Dignare, Domine die isto sine peccato nos custodire.	Miserere nostri, Domine. Fidei miser cordia tua, domine, super nos quoniam modum spera. Virum te.	In te, Domine, speravi non confundar in aeternum. Te Deum laudamus.
Meter	4				3, 4	3, 4	3, 4, 5	4	4	4	4, 5	12/8	12/8	4	4	4	3, 4
Tempo	74	74	74	74	102	80	102	74	74	74	80	88	88	88	88	54	102
Tonal Center	E dorian	E dorian	E dorian	E dorian	D major	G minor	D major	E minor	E minor	C lydian	C major	C clusters	Ab major	C major	C major	A & G minor	D major
Dynamics	cs ppp-pp	pp	p	p-mf	f	p-mp	f-ff	p-mf-p	mp-f	f-ff	p	p-mp-mf-f	f-ff	pp	pp	p-mf	ff-ffff
Txtr	imitation	aleatoric imitation	aleatoric imitation	aleatoric imitation	homophn	homophn	homophn	solo	aleatoric ostinato	homophn	homophn	aleatoric homophn	ostinato imitative	solo	aleatoric	contpt	homophn
Forces	chime 1, chime 2, organ	boys, girls, sax, chimes 1, chimes 2, organ	boys, girls, male, chimes 1, chimes 2, organ	boys, girls, female, male, chimes 1, chimes 2, organ, tam-tam	mixed 1, female, male, horn, chimes 1, tam-tam, organ	girls, organ, horn, choir 2	boys, girls, female, choir 1, choir 2, chimes 1, tam-tam, organ	sax, chimes 1, chimes 2,	female, chimes 1, chimes 2, sax, girls	girls, female, choir 1, sax, organ, tam-tam	boys, girls	boys, girls, chime 1, female, sax, horn, male, organ	chimes 1, organ/boys, girls, female, sax, male, choir 1, sax, horn	organ	organ, choir 2, chimes 2, girls, chimes 1	choir 1//choir 2, female, male, chimes 1, tam-tam	boys, girls, female, choir 1, choir 2, sax, horn, chimes 1, organ
Te Deum by Rihards Dubra. Brigitte Doss-Johnson																	

Example 10. Form chart for *Te Deum*. Attached as Appendix 1.

Conclusion

The form is A B B¹ B² C D C¹ E F G H I J K K¹ L C². The lighter shade colors at section G and J identify the interesting journey during the long period between the second climax and

the third. With this information, the preparatory music for the climax can be analyzed. The first is approached by *mf*, boys' and girls' choir on an imitative phrase, the male and female choirs on different homophony in four parts and three parts respectively, the soprano saxophone and organ on an aleatoric gesture, and the tamtam growing louder. See Example 11. The approach for the second climax is a subdued version of the first one, shown in Example 6.

te - mur. Te

mf poco a poco crescendo

in - ces - sa - bi - li vo -

mf poco a poco crescendo

poco a poco crescendo

in - ces - sa - bi - li vo - ce

poco a poco crescendo

te Do - mi - num con - fi -

p mp

(+ ad lib.) (+ ad lib.)

45 ~ 102

Chimes I
cresc. assai

Boys' choir
cresc. assai

De - um lau - da - mus:

Choir I
S. A. T. B. *f* Sanc

Female choir
S. A. T. B. *cresc. assai* *f* ce - pro - cla - mant: Sanc

Male choir
T. B. *cresc. assai* *f* pro - cla - mant: Sanc

Girls' choir
45 *cresc. assai* *f* te - mur. Te...

Hn. (in F) *f se*

T. 4. *mf f sff*

Org. 45 (+ ad lib.) (+ ad lib.) *f f*

IV - V - I

Example 11. Dubra's *Te Deum*, mm. 43-46. (From *Te Deum*. Copyright 2007 by Musica Baltica. Reprinted with permission of Musica Baltica.)

Looking at the area graph on Example 9, the shape of the approach and climax for the first two events are quite different. The immediate approach to climax three is even lighter than climax two, but the duration, higher dynamic, and the fact that the listener had to wait so long to hear it, makes this third climax larger than anything else in the song.

Both conventional and data input revealed the formal structure of Dubra's *Te Deum*. Though the text didn't help much in separating sections, the text was the superior force in the length of the composition and as an impetus for setting a new melody to it. On the other hand, when a melody wanted to take shape and the text didn't supply the correct number of syllables, either the first or last word of the phrase was repeated. The *Te Deum* is a study of contrast from the thinnest monophonic texture, to the heaviest chromatic texture, and from a single note in time and to a countless number, from a dominant key to a taunt from its opposite, and from the timbre of a young girl's voice and to the timbre of a *basso profundo*. These are the elements that make the music seem like a journey and time well spent. No wonder it won an award.

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