"WHAT LANGUAGE SHALL I BORROW?"

SINGING IN TRANSLATION

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We have all likely done it at one time or another: we have conducted or sung works in translation. Our reasons probably varied. Perhaps we saw no point in teaching the original language to that particular choir. Perhaps we made the choice for the sake of a particular audience. Perhaps our decision was based solely on expediency. Regardless, any conscious or unconscious reason we had likely flew in the face of what many of us have heard or been taught: that the performance of vocal music in translation is a form of blasphemy.

The late Roger Doyle made a case for singing in translation in his 1980 *Choral Journal* article, "What? Sing It in English? What Will the Neighbors Think?" In it, he bases his thoughts on the principal question of how to involve, to the fullest extent, the musicians and the listeners in a performance. Doyle lists what he saw as the four usual arguments against singing in translation then proceeds to reason them away. Those arguments are:

1) The nuance of the composer's language is integral to the flow of the music.

2) Translations are provided in the printed programs.

3) The audience can't understand the English either.

4) Good English versions are very scarce.[1]

Though not advocating the use of English at all times and for all repertoire, Doyle does consider aversion to English performances as "snobbish."[2]

The present article will expand on Doyle's reasoning, present criteria for evaluating English singing versions, and offer performance suggestions based on the demands of a translation. The case studies following include the familiar and oft-performed in translation (Mendelssohn's "Es wird ein Stern," from *Christus*), the less performed but oft-translated (J. S. Bach's *Matthäus-Passion*), and a translation some simply avoid (Hindemith's "La biche," from *Six chansons*). This article will present ways to make performance in translation—as with all that we do—satisfying, not merely satisfactory.

The Arguments

Thoughts that rise in many of our minds flesh out Doyle's anti-translation arguments:

1) Most composers' music springs from the emotion or affect present in the text. Only through the knowledge and use of the original language can performers or listeners truly understand the composer's vision for the juxtaposition of text and music. Additionally, the actual sounds of the original words often serve to generate or underscore the composer's intended musical effect.

2) Translations are provided in the printed program. Put a less polite way, "Why should the musicians be the only ones working during a performance?"

3) The self-damning argument of poor English diction needs no discussion.

4) English versions are usually filled with archaic language such as "Thee" and "Thou," forced unstressed endings such as "endurèd," strange word order, impossible vowels to sing, and lines that bear no relationship to the meaning of the original or are just plain generic and meaningless.

Consider, however, the advantages:

1) Singing in our native language saves rehearsal time. As base and utilitarian as this may sound, it is true. Additionally, John Rutter believes that doing the opposite of one's regular practice—allowing ensembles unaccustomed to Latin to experience its beauty, or trying Fauré's *Requiem* in English—can bring a sense of immediacy for performers.[3]

2) As a result, the audience will also be able to immediately respond to the affect of the text. This spares the audience the distraction of reading translations, often in the dark, often without the original language printed alongside, all while trying to actually listen to the performance.

3) Historically speaking, the increased availability of inexpensive, printed music in the nineteenth century and, in England and the United States, the translation of works into English, made hundreds of works accessible to performers and listeners—works that otherwise would likely have been forgotten.[4]

4) As Roger Doyle states, "We must not prove the genius of [a composer's] art only by his [or her] skillful text underlay."[5] Taking J. S. Bach as an example, the communication of the text was of paramount importance, thus, Bach—and Luther before him—chose texts in the language of the listener. Even Helmuth Rilling admits, "In Bach's mind, the [*St. Matthew Passion*] was intended as a worship experience as well as a teaching device. Language should certainly infringe on those intentions as little as possible even today."[6]

The Familiar

The beloved chorus from Mendelssohn's unfinished oratorio *Christus,* "Es wird ein Stern aus Jacob aufgeh'n," provides an initial opportunity to examine the choices available to us as conductors and performers. As a favorite in American Christmas concerts, we most often hear the work in English, using one of four different versions included in American and British editions. Those English versions, the original German, and a literal translation appear in Table 1. (For the purposes of this discussion,

only the initial, Scripture paraphrase portion of the text will be examined, not the setting of the chorale WIE SCHÖN LEUCHTET that ends the movement.)

Bunsen paraphrases the biblical text as prose, so the number of syllables per line (9.10.10) and the fact that all the translators match them are less important than if it were poetic text. Details of note in the German include the division of the word "Israel" into three syllables in Mendelssohn's setting, the prevalence of bright [e] and [ɛ] vowels, the color of the last line deriving from the consonants, and the melodic highpoints of the three lines ("Stern," "und," and "-schmet-," respectively) (Figure 1).

Both Foote and Bartholomew match the syllabification of "Israel." The other two translators, however, are forced to divide the word into only two syllables because of its different location in the line. Compared to Foote

Table 1. Mendelssohn, *Christus,* "Es wird ein Stern," original text, literal translation, and published English versions	
Christian Karl Josias von Bunsen (1791–1860) (based on Numbers 24:17) Es wird ein Stern aus Jacob aufgeh'n und ein Szepter aus Israel kommen und wird zerschmettern Fürsten und Städte.	Author's Literal Translation There shall a star out of Jacob rise, and a scepter out of Israel come and shall crush princes and cities.
William Bartholomew[7] There shall a star from Jacob come forth, and a scepter from Israel rise up, and dash in pieces princes and nations.	J. C. D. Parker[8] There shall a star come out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, with might destroying princes and cities.
Henry Wilder Foote[9] Behold a star from Jacob shining, and a scepter from Israel rising, to reign in glory over the nations.	Don H. Razey[10] A star shall rise up out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall come out of Israel, and dash in pieces princes and nations.

Figure 1. Felix Mendelssohn, *Christus,* "Es wird ein Stern," mm. 2–6.

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Foote: Edition and organ arrangement by Archibald T. Davison,
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Razey: © Carl Fischer, LLC. Used with permission.

and Parker, Bartholomew and Razey bring more forward, closed vowels into their texts, echoing a similar prevalence in the original. In terms of word order and its effect on melodic highpoints, three of the translators are able to match the original with highpoints on "star," "and," and their varying translations of "zerschmettert" (Figure 2). Razey, however, moves not only the names Jacob and Israel but also the significant word "star."

The greatest difference among the four English versions occurs in the last line. Foote avoids the violence of the original text altogether by suggesting the "Star" will "reign in glory." Bartholomew and Razey find the most success in utilizing percussive, aspirate consonants here, mirroring Bunsen's German. With such instructive details gathered by comparing English versions of a piece we may know well, we can proceed to the criteria used for evaluation.

The Criteria

For English speakers, any work in the creation of an English singing version, or any performer's work in evaluating the quality of an existing version, must begin with a firm grasp of the literal translation. For choral literature in general, the four-volume set of *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire* published by earthsongs serves as an invaluable resource.[11] Where J. S. Bach's music specifically is concerned, several excellent sources for literal translations exist. Among those are invaluable books by Alfred Dürr,[12] Melvin Unger,[13] Richard Stokes,[14] Michael Marissen,[15] and two websites—one by Z. Philip Ambrose[16] and one simply called the Bach Cantatas Website.[17]

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Bunsen:	und	wird	zer -	schmet -	tern	Für -	sten und	Städ -	te.
Bartholomew:	and	dahs	in	piec -	es	prin -	ces and	na -	tions.
Parker:	with	might	de -	stroy -	ing	prin -	ces and	cit -	ies.
Foote:	to	reign	in	glo -	ry	o -	ver the	na -	tions.
Razey:	and	dahs	in	piec -	es	prin -	ces and	na -	tions.

Figure 2. Felix Mendelssohn, *Christus,* "Es wird ein Stern," mm. 32–35.

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Foote: Edition and organ arrangement by Archibald T. Davison, © 1936, 1963 by E. C. Schirmer Music Company, a division of ECS Publishing, Boston, MA. Used by permission.
Razey: © Carl Fischer, LLC. Used with permission.

With a literal translation in hand, one can begin to either create or judge the quality of a singing version. Translators of opera, art song, and oratorio have written and spoken frequently about the guidelines they give themselves in their work. Distilling these guidelines into categories and adding this author's supplementary category creates a set of four areas of concern. Any of these guidelines could, of course, be bent or ignored by a translator or performer if another rule is deemed a higher priority.

1) Listeners tend to readily notice poetic concerns, an element translators perhaps find the most difficult to address. The number of syllables and the order of stressed and unstressed syllables should parallel the original. The placement of key words should match the original, avoiding inversion of phrases. Although translators tend to be divided on the necessity of rhyme, most agree that it is essential at the ends of sections and in situations where the musical structure is informed by the rhyme scheme.[18] Rhyme is sometimes less important in dramatic texts than in humorous texts.[19] General rhymes or phonetic similarity and rhyming only the even lines of a four-line stanza also tend to be accepted compromises.[20]

2) Specific word choices affect more than literal meaning. The use of "Thee" and "Thou," though archaic, will likely be heard as natural and appropriate when referring to Deity.[21] Where the original language makes use of onomatopoeic words—essentially, words that imitate the sound they describe—or ideophones—words that evoke an impression with sound—an effort should be made to achieve the same in translation. And especially when different text sources are combined (as biblical text, original poetic, or chorale texts are in Bach's choral and vocal works), attention should be paid to any word correlations between bodies of text in the original.

3) The area of vocal concerns primarily covers the notion of diction and the challenges it presents in any language in

any voice. English versions should fit vowels appropriately to the extremes of range in the various voice types—with a general preference for open vowels [a, æ, ɔ] in the upper range of female voices, and a preference for closed vowels [i, e, o, u] in the upper range of male voices.[22] Consonants should be chosen to match the musical style—whether *legato* and connected; or *marcato* and heavily accented; or staccato and detached. Additionally, these diction- and vocal-related concerns should also take into account the level of training of the singers—acknowledging that, in general, the average soloist has more training than the average chorister.[23]

4) I have added to the list of translators' guidelines an area that is specific to sacred texts—that of theological concerns. Too often when sacred texts are translated, efforts to avoid sectarianism result in a text that is only quasi-religious or vaguely inspirational. Consider the English version "O Lord God,"created by N. Lindsay Norden for Paul Chesnokov's music. Clearly inspired by passages of psalms, the text conspicuously avoids any hint of Trinitarian doctrine, thus refraining from the promotion of a particular religion.[24] As a result, only Norden's final line is even remotely related to the original Church Slavonic of Chesnokov's "O Tebe raduyetsia," op. 15, no. 11, where references to the Son of God and to the Blessed Virgin Mary abound. A literal translation of that Church Slavonic text appears below.

All of creation rejoices in You, O Full of Grace—
the assembly of angels and the race of men.
O sanctified temple and spiritual paradise,
  glory of virgins,
from whom God was incarnate and became a
  child—
our God before the ages.
He made Your body into a throne,
and Your womb he made more spacious than the
  heavens.
All of creation rejoices in You, O Full of Grace.
Glory to You![25]

Furthermore, the poetic and chorale texts Bach selected demonstrate elements of both Lutheran Orthodoxy and Lutheran Pietism. In the simplest terms, distinguishing these influences requires attention to the poets' choice of first person pronouns—"I" (generally used by hymnwriters with pietistic leanings) versus "we" (preferred by orthodox poets). Finally, any translation of poetic texts used by Bach should adhere strictly to the tenets of Lutheran theology, especially the doctrine of justification by faith—that is, salvation that comes only by the gift of faith and not through human works.

The Oft-Translated

Several Americans and Britons have made substantial contributions to the availability of English singing versions of choral and vocal repertoire. Among the most significant is American Henry Drinker who, in addition to his many volumes of English versions of nineteenth-century German *Lieder* and choral works, published a four-volume collection of English versions of all Bach's choral and vocal compositions.[26] Charles Sanford Terry published a similar work in England.[27] The translations of these two prolific writers appear in the editions of American, British, and German publishing houses.

Adding the versions of Drinker and Terry to the original work, borrowings and revisions of Britons Helen Johnston,[28] John Oxenford,[29] John Troutbeck,[30] Claude Aveling,[31] Charles Villiers Stanford,[32] Edward Elgar[33] and Ivor Atkins,[34] and Neil Jenkins,[35] and Americans John Sul-

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livan Dwight,[36] Louis Koemmenich,[37] and Robert Shaw[38] results in a total of thirteen different—though at times related—English singing versions of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion,* the next case study (Table 2).

Into Matthew's Passion narrative, Bach interpolates chorale stanzas—stanzas he selected both for their familiarity to his congregation and for their very direct commentary on the narrative. The present example appears during the Last Supper, after Jesus announces that one of the disciples will betray him. The (eleven) disciples respond, "Herr, bin ich's?" [Lord, am I the one?]. Significantly, the first line of a chorale stanza by Paul Gerhardt immediately answers this question with "Ich bin's" [I am the one]. Therefore, word choice concerns and the order of lines ought take precedence.

The first words of this chorale are an immediate reversal of the words of the preceding *turba* chorus—"Herr, bin ich's?," "Ich bin's"—an admission of guilt on the part of the "congregation." Most of the English versions translate the *turba* words "Herr, bin ich's" as "Lord, is it I?" Shaw avoids the additional syllable by inventing the German-sounding contraction "Lord, is't I?" (Figure 3). Drinker solves the issue with "Lord, not I."

One must note whether or not Bach's reason for choosing this particular chorale stanza—its textual connection with Luther's translation of the disciples' word—is maintained. Table 3 shows that the versions of Johnston and Aveling completely omit the crucial mirroring of text. Troutbeck's version contains the phrase "'Tis I," but it does not appear until the last line, thus eliminating the immediate impact it could have. All other versions intentionally match the text correlation of the original German.

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A

German:	Herr	bin		ich's
Shaw:	Lord,	is't		I
Drinker:	Lord,	not		I
Others:	Lord,	is	it	I

Figure 3. J. S. Bach, *Mathäus-Passion,* BWV 244, No. 9, mm. 33, *(Neue Bach-Ausgabe).* No. 15, m. 19, *(Bach Gesellschaft Ausgabe).* Alto

Drinker[39]

Table 2. "Family Tree" of *St. Matthew Passion* English versions

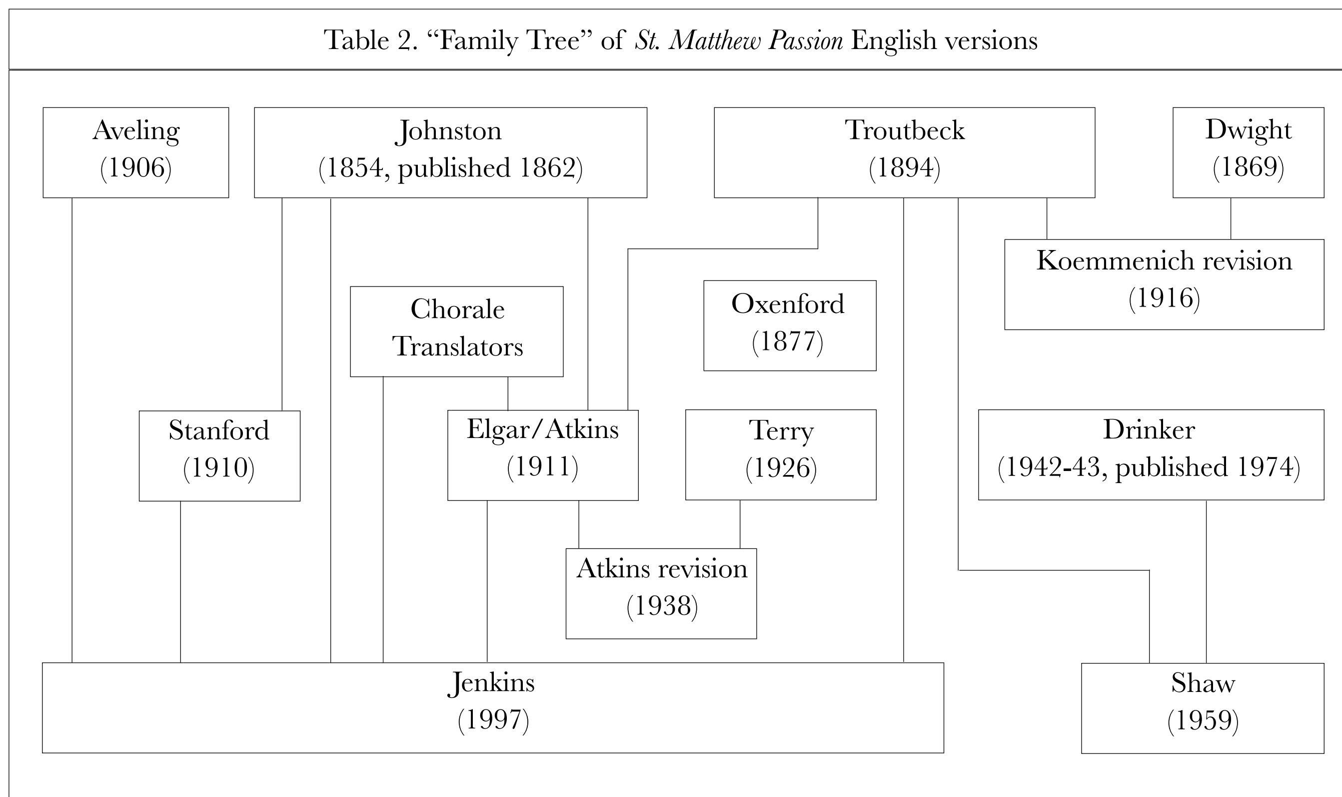

Table 3.
J. S. Bach, *Matthäus-Passion,* no. 10 (NBA) / 16 (BG), original text, literal translation and English versions

Gerhardt ("O Welt, sieh hier dein Leben," st. 10) Ich bin's, ich sollte büßen, an Händen und an Füßen gebunden in der Höll. Die Geißeln und die Banden und was du ausgestanden, das hat verdienet meine Seel.	Marissen (literal)[40] I am the one, I should atone: bound, hand and foot, in hell. The scourges and the bonds and what you have endured— my soul has merited that.
Johnston, Stanford My sin it was which bound Thee,[41] with anguish did surround Thee, and nail'd Thee to the tree; I must in hell have groaned and my sad fate bemoaned, but Jesus, Thou hast died for me!	Dwight 'Tis I! my sins betray Thee! Ah! foully I repay Thee, who died to make me whole! Of all the wrong Thou borest, the stripes, the crown Thou worest, the guilt lies heavy on my soul.
Oxenford 'Tis I, I am the traitor, no sin than mine is greater. Shouldst cast me in to hell, with heavy fetters bind me, of all Thy griefs remind me, the worst my soul deserveth well.	Troutbeck, Koemmenich The sorrows Thou art bearing, with none their burden sharing, on me they ought to fall. The torture Thou art feeling, thy patient love revealing, 'tis I that should endure it all.
Aveling All mine the sin that bound Thee, and mine the thorns that crowned Thee, enslaving Thee to hell; the score that mocked and shamed Thee, the scourge and stripes that maimed Thee, My sinful heart hath earned too well!	Elgar/Atkins 'Tis I, whose sin now binds Thee,[42] with anguish deep surrounds Thee, and nails Thee to the tree; the torture Thou art feeling, thy patient love revealing, 'tis I should bear it, I alone.
Terry 'Tis I should show contrition, deserving of perdition, and worthy deepest hell! The tortures that await Thee, the thongs that soon shall pain Thee, myself should bear, I know full well.	Drinker[43] 'Tis I who should, repenting, in torture unrelenting, endure the pains of hell. The shackles and the scourges thou bore from sin to purge us, were by us all deserved full well.
Shaw 'Tis I, my sin repenting, my hands and feet consenting, should take the bonds of hell. The scourge and thongs which bound Thee, and all the wrongs around Thee, are merit of my sinful soul.	Jenkins 'Tis I, whose sin hath bound Thee, with anguish did surround Thee, and nailed Thee to the tree. The torture Thou art feeling, thy patient love revealing, Thou hast endured it all for me.

In terms of poetic concerns, all the translators maintain the original hymn meter of 7.7.6.7.7.8. Troutbeck and Koemmenich, Oxenford, Dwight, and—in a weaker fashion—Drinker and Terry match the original rhyme scheme of AABCCB. Johnston, Stanford, and Jenkins greatly simplify the rhyme scheme to AAABBA, as does Aveling to AABAAB. Atkins and Elgar only slightly alter the scheme with their AAABBC; Shaw's AABCCD also shows only minor deviation.

The importance of word choice continues beyond the initial words "Ich bin's," because those two words inform the tone of the remainder of the text. Gerhardt places the majority of the emphasis on oneself in the first person, "ich" [I] and "meine" [my]. The text contains only one reference to Christ in the second person with "du" [you/Thou]. This emphasis gets lost in most of the English versions, many of which choose to end rhyming lines with "Thee" twice if not four times. Oxenford and Drinker do manage to capture the original's self-focused nature. However, the personal, pietistic use of the singular "I" disappears from Drinker's text; the subsequent move to the plural "us" eliminates the pointed identification intended.

Gerhardt's original text contains no references to "the tree" (the cross); neither does it directly refer to Christ's death. The English versions of Johnston and Stanford, Elgar and Atkins, Jenkins, and Dwight all make such allusions, leaping ahead in the Passion narrative from the Last Supper to the crucifixion. Although such references pose no theological problems, references to being bound in hell, being beaten and scourged—found in Aveling, Terry, Oxenford, Troutbeck and Koemmenich, Drinker, and Shaw—are more direct translations of the German.

The Avoided

Anyone who has studied or performed any of Hindemith's *Six Chansons* knows that the published performing editions include underlay of an English singing version by Elaine de Sinçay (ca. 1899–1952). As a frequent translator for B. Schott's Söhne and its American affiliates, her English versions appear in publications of Russian and Spanish art songs, songs by Virgil Thomson, excerpts from Prokofiev and Rachmaninov operas and cantatas, and smaller choral works in Spanish and Portuguese.

De Sinçay was the daughter of the head of the University of Paris School of Medicine and had been educated in Russia prior to the Revolution. She came to the United States in her late teens and worked as a French teacher and translator, but she also spoke German, Polish, and Italian, in addition to the languages noted above. Her friendship with Paul and Gertrud Hindemith began during her marriage to Hugh C. M. Ross (1898–1990), conductor of New York's Schola Cantorum. The composer heard de Sinçay's translations of others' works and asked her to create English versions of some of his art songs and the *Six chansons.*[44]

Three points must contribute to this discussion:

1) De Sinçay's English is included in the Hindemith *Sämtliche Werke* edition.

2) According to the critical notes in the *Sämtliche Werke,* Georges Haenni, the conductor of the choir for

whom the *Chansons* were composed, had to correct some details of Hindemith's text underlay and setting in order to accommodate the necessity to sound the French final 'e,' among other elements.[45]

3) Chester Alwes, in his 1995 *Choral Journal* article on the *Chansons,* relates that Hindemith preferred them in English.[46]

So at the very least, ensembles have "permission, if not endorsement"[47] to perform the *Chansons* in English, as no less a Hindemith proponent than Robert Shaw did in 1945.[48]

Rainer Maria Rilke's (1875–1926) original French poem appears in Table 4 alongside de Sinçay's English singing version. Italics in the French indicate word repetitions in Hindemith's setting that do not appear in the original poem. Additionally in the seventh line, the final "e" of "n'arrive" is only pronounced the first time; the repeat of the word omits the final "e" through elision with the next word, "à."

The underlined syllables in the English version indicate rhyme and meter concessions de Sinçay makes. The poetic meter of Hindemith's setting of the French, when including repeated words and the sung, final "e," yields 9.12.9.9.9.7.10.6.7. The English text—when splitting the word "secular" between lines one and two—yields a nearly identical meter 8.12.9.9.9.7.10.6.7.

Dividing the word "secular," however, creates problems when comparing the two rhyme schemes. The scheme of the original French text shows ABBACDCCD. De Sinçay matches this to a degree. First, one must accept a near-rhyme between "secular" and "fear." Additionally the word "bounding," which allows its line to fit the meter, must be heard as split up for the "bound-" syllable to rhyme with "astound" and "profound."

Taking the form of Hindemith's setting into consideration alters the perception of rhyme in the poem. The composer set the final syllable of "interieur" with a quarter note, but it is not the end of a phrase. The musical phrase does not end until "abonde," so that will be heard as the first word to be rhymed. Hindemith's settings of "ronde" and "combien de peur"—the ends of lines three and four—parallel each other musically but on scalar, descending eighth notes that carry no sense of closure.

Table 4. Rilke, "La biche," as set by Hindemith, with Elaine de Sinçay's English version

French	English
O la biche; quel bel intérieur d'anciennes forêts dans tes yeux abonde; combien de confiance ronde mêlée à combien, *combien* de peur. Tout cela, porté par la vive gracilité de tes bonds. Mais jamais rien n'arrive, *rien n'arriv(e)* à cette impossessive ignorance de ton front.	O thou doe, what vistas of se- -cular forest appear in thine eyes reflected! What confidence serene affected by transient shades, by shades of fear. And it all is borne on thy bounding course, for so gracile art thou. Nor comes aught to astound, aught to astound the impassive profound unawareness of thy brow.

Hindemith LA BICHE from 6 CHANSONS
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English translation by Elaine de Sincay
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Even the rest following "peur," though indicating the end of a phrase, does not allow for obvious aural correlation of "peur" with "interieur." Not until a *fermata* on the word "bonds" do we hear another sure phrase ending. This is matched by the final *fermata* on "front." The correlation would imply that Hindemith's notion of the significant rhymes falls on "abonde," "bonds," "front"—lines 2, 6, and 9. Examination of the early version of "La biche" (prior to Haenni's editorial corrections) shows that the composer truly did have this perception; he attempted to set "abonde" as a single syllable (Figure 4). In de Sinçay's English (for Hindemith's final version), those lines end with "reflected," "thou," and "brow," remaining more true to the rhyme scheme of Rilke's French.

This author now admits to never having performed this piece in English—not because it should not be, but because of misgivings about the English version. Several points are troublesome:

1) "Doe" is indeed an exact translation of "biche" and utilizes a vowel that allows sopranos, especially, a fair amount of vocal ease. Hindemith, though, surely knew the relative difficulty of the vowel [i] in the middle-to-upper parts of female voices, but he still set the word "biche" at what is generally a challenging pitch (Figure 5). Bearing that in mind, along with Hindemith's initial imagining of "biche" as a single syllable, the use of the word "deer" instead of "doe" becomes a legitimate choice.

2) According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word "secular" derives from the Latin word "saecularis" or "saeculum" meaning "generation" or "age," as in "et in saecula saeculorum. Amen." Instead of this meaning—the *OED*'s branch two definition—most listeners will likely hear the word as the opposite of "religious," the branch one definition in the *OED*.[49] The challenge becomes finding an appropriate replacement word that will be heard as a translation of "anciennes" [ancient].

3) Although Rilke uses the formal, second person pronouns "tes" and "ton," formal pronouns such as "thine" in contemporary English are generally limited to references to deity. In English, the informal pronoun "your" avoids religious or archaic overtones.

4) The intent of the seventh line in French—"Mais jamais rien n'arrive"—is a lack of activity, and the appropriately fluid consonants of the French ought be emulated in English.

Figure 4. Paul Hindemith, *Six Chansons,* "La biche," m. 4. Early and Final Versions

Paul Hindemith: "La Biche" from *Six Chansons,* Text by Rainer Maria Rilke, English translation by Elaine de Sincay
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Figure 5. Paul Hindemith, *Six Chansons,* "La biche," m. 1. Early and Final Versions

Paul Hindemith: "La Biche" from *Six Chansons,*
Text by Rainer Maria Rilke, English translation by Elaine de Sincay
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"What Language Shall I Borrow…?"

Three options present themselves to conductors and performers at this point, each one demonstrated by the repertoire examples prior.

1) One may compile an English version, borrowing portions of existing translations, as Neil Jenkins did in preparing his English version of

Bach's *St. Matthew Passion.* A suggested solution for Mendelssohn's "Es wird ein Stern" appears below.

Behold a star from Jacob shining, (Foote)
and a scepter from Israel rising, (Foote)
[to] dash in pieces princes and nations.
(Bartholomew and Razey, alt.)

This compilation takes the most natural sounding response to the challenge of unstressed endings of German words with Foote's "shining" and "rising." It borrows—with the necessary grammatical alteration—the forceful, final line shared by the versions by Bartholomew and Razey. Though this final line does not literally translate the original "Städte" as "cities," it does match the [ɛ] vowel in "Städte" with "nations."

2) One may simply choose from several English versions. Robert Shaw's English version of the chorale "Ich bin's, ich sollte büßen" shows the most similarity to a literal translation (Figure 6). He maintains a line-for-line correlation and begins with the crucial words "'Tis I." Shaw also matches other key words in the text such as "Höll" [hell], "Händen" and "Füßen" [hands and feet], and "meine Seel" [my (sinful) soul].

3) One may adapt an existing version or create one's own. One can turn to predecessor translators for inspiration when reworking or creating one's own version. Four translations created for poetic—rather than singing—purposes and a literal translation of Rilke's "La biche" appear in Table 5 and will serve as resources.

Utilizing these poetic and literal translations, one can address the troubling points mentioned on the previous pages.

a. As poetic translations, the English writers are bound to the feminine and literal "doe," rather than the general "deer" that would mirror the French vowel [i] in "biche."

b. All these writers translate "anciennes" literally as "ancient."

Gerhardt / Shaw	**Marissen** (literal)
Ich bin's, ich soll-te bü - ßen,	
'Tis I, my sin re-pent-ing,	*I am the one, I should atone:*
An Hän - den und an Fü - ßen	
My hands and feet con-sent-ing,	*bound, hand and foot, in hell.*
Ge - bun - den in der Höll.	
Should take the bonds of Hell.	.....
Die Gei - ßeln und die Ban - den	
The scourge and thongs which bound Thee,	*The scourges and the bonds*
Und was du aus - ge - stan - den,	
And all the wrongs a - round Thee,	*And what you have endured—*
Das hat ver-die-net mei-ne Seel.	
Are me - rit of my sin-ful soul.	*My soul has merited that.*

Figure 6. J. S. Bach, *Mathäus-Passion,* BWV 244, No. 9/16, Chorale Tune Only.
Gerhardt's original text, Shaw's English version, and Marissen's literal translation

Table 5. Rilke, "La biche," original text, literal and poetic translations

Rainer Maria Rilke O la biche; quel bel intérieur d'anciennes forêts dans tes yeux abonde; combien de confiance ronde mêlée à combien de peur. Tout cela, porté par la vive gracilité de tes bonds. Mais jamais rien n'arrive à cette impossessive ignorance de ton front.	Gordon Paine (literal)[50] O doe! How the beautiful interior of ancient forests abounds within your eyes; so much raw confidence fused with so much fear. All that, borne by the vibrant, lean grace of your leaps. Yet none of this ever appears in the unprepossessing blankness of your face.
A. Poulin, Jr.[51] Ah, the doe: what lovely hearts Of ancient woods abound inside your eyes; So much total confidence Fused with so much fear. All that, borne by the vibrance Of your graceful bounds. But in your brow's Unpossessive ignorance Nothing ever happens. Rainer Maria Rilke, "The Doe" from *The Complete French Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke*, translated by A. Poulin. Translation copyright © 1979, 1982, 1984, 1986 by A. Poulin, Jr. Reprinted with the permission of The Permissions Company, Inc. on behalf of Graywolf Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota, www.graywolfpress.org.	Grant E. Hicks[52] O doe, what lovely ancient forest depths abound in your eyes; how much open trust mixed with how much fear. All this, borne by the brisk gracility of your bounds. But nothing ever disturbs that unpossessive unawareness of your brow. © Grant E. Hicks. Used by permission.
Christopher Goldsack[53] O doe: such a handsome interior of ancient forests abounds in your eyes; so much round confidence mingled with so much fear. All that, bourne by the vivid gracility of your leaps. But nothing ever happens to that unpossessive innocence of your brow. © melodietreasury. Used by permission.	Mary Pardoe[54] O doe, what fair ancient forest depths appear in your eyes reflected! What confidence serene Mixed with how much fear. All this, borne by the brisk Gracility of your bounds! But nothing ever disturbs the unpossessive unawareness of your brow.

c. The informal English "your" appears, rather than the formal "thy" or "thine."

d. "Bounds," rather than de Sinçay's "bounding," is preferred by these translators. Goldsack and Paine use "leaps," which is a less attractive vowel and further removed from sound of the French "bonds" that appears at the same point.

e. The word "disturbs," used by Pardoe and Hicks, captures the sentiment of the French line but is just as percussive and non-legato as de Sinçay's offering of the same line. Additionally, any negative connotations of the French word "ignorance" ought be avoided in favor of creating a sense of innocence and unknowing.

Addressing these issues, and borrowing vocabulary choices from the above translations, this author suggests revisions to de Sinçay's English version:

O, the deer: what vistas appear
Of the deep, ancient woods in your visage
rounded!
Such confidence serene confounded
And mingled with shades, with shades of
fear.
And it all is borne on the vivid
Course of your elegant bound.
Nothing ever will grieve, ever will grieve
The impassive, naïve
Unawareness of your brow.

This revision attempts to balance faithfulness to the French rhyme scheme with the formal emphasis of Hindemith's setting. The resulting scheme could literally be classified as ABBACDEEF. With the imagination and the flexibility of Hindemith's ear (in his initial instinct to rhyme "abonde" as a single syllable with "bonds"), one can hear similarity among "rounded," "confounded," "bound," and

"brow." Additionally, the [ɪv] sound in "vivid" and the [iv] in "naïve" may also be heard as related. Taking these adjustments into account yields a rhyme scheme of ABBACBCCB—a simpler scheme than those of Rilke or de Sinçay but one that highlights the implied rhymes of Hindemith's setting.

Performance Suggestions

Once an English version has been compiled, chosen, adapted, or created, two principal areas must be addressed in rehearsal and performance. Phrasing comprises the first of those areas. Strophic works in any language, including traditional hymns and chorales, serve as prime examples. In such works, sentence structure, punctuation, the order of parts of speech, etc., may change from one strophe to the next. This will (or should) alter the musical phrasing, even though the melody remains the same.

When performing the chorales in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* in English, conductors and performers must exercise the same liberty with and creativity of phrasing. Any phrasing differences between a theoretical performance in German and a performance in English should not be considered egregious but, rather, necessary. As can be seen above, Shaw crafted his English version of "Ich bin's, ich sollte büßen" so well as to match even the general sentence structure—and, therefore, probable phrasing—of the original German.

The second area to address in practice is that of the differing vocal demands of any English version compared to the original language. The goals of emulating the sound or articulation of original consonants, and of matching vowels either to the original language or to the vocal range, have been addressed previously. The suggestion for a compiled English version of Mendelssohn's "Es wird ein Stern" highlights this goal, especially in the

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final line of text.

When neither of those goals can be met by the text, more responsibility falls to the performer. One clear example of this responsibility is a word choristers encounter frequently enough—"crucify," "kreuzigen" in German. The diphthong of the first German syllable [ɔʏ] consists initially of a more open vowel than the [u] in "crucify," but the [ʏ] creates a more brilliant, forward-focused sound. This brighter German vowel renders such fierce, angular settings of the word (as appear in Bach's Passion settings) aurally thrilling and vocally more accessible. When performing in English, singers must bring sufficient focus and projection to the vocal tone of [u] to replicate as much as possible the harshness and severity inherent in the brighter, German diphthong [ɔʏ] and in the meaning of the word itself.

In larger works, the subject of the text may inform one's choice of language. Perhaps with a familiar narrative—the birth, life, or death and resurrection of Christ—an English-speaking audience may be readily engaged even in the original language. Works with a less familiar narrative—Faust, King David, Joan of Arc—may deserve to be performed in translation. When text sources are combined, a macaronic performance might serve, such as Bach's *Magnificat* in Latin with the Christmas interpolations in English.

Conclusions

Nearly forty years after Roger Doyle, John Michael Cooper continued the defense of informed performance in translation (in his case, specifically where Mendelssohn's works are concerned). "Latter-day performers and scholars alike generally take it for granted that the translated versions were commercially necessary evils, unauthorized degradations of the poetry and the text/music relationships as the composer conceived them."[55]

Beyond these concrete musical grounds, some performers simply discount the idea of performance in translation with a mind-set of, "Who does the translator think he or she is?" This thought entirely misses the fact that—even of the few individuals mentioned in this article—many translators are significant composers, conductors, and performers in their own right. (In some cases, translators of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* were crafting words for their own ensembles.) Some translators had close, personal friendships with a composer, as de Sinçay and Hindemith; some had long-standing, collaborative relationships with a composer, as Bartholomew and Mendelssohn.

Though admitting that Mendelssohn's work with translators was atypical, Cooper concludes, "We should neither automatically privilege the authority of the [original]-language versions of [Mendelssohn's] works nor unthinkingly dismiss or downplay settings in other languages."[56] If one continues to see performance in translation as sinful and inexcusable, absolution lies in doing the work to find or adapt or create a text that will make it an experience that needs no excuse.

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NOTES

[1] Roger O. Doyle, "What? Sing It in English? What Will the Neighbors Think?," *Choral Journal* 21, no. 2 (October 1980): 5.

[2] Ibid., 7.

[3] John Rutter, preface to *Requiem,* Op. 48, by Gabriel Fauré, ed. John Rutter (Chapel Hill, NC: Hinshaw, 1984), 4.

[4] Judith Blezzard, "Artistry, Expediency or Irrelevance? English Choral Translators and Their Work," in *Words and Music,* ed. John Williamson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 103.

[5] Doyle, "What? Sing It In English": 6.

[6] Helmuth Rilling, *Johann Sebastian Bach* St. Matthew Passion: *Introduction and Instructions for Study,* trans. Kenneth Nafziger (Frankfurt: C. F. Peters, 1976), 9.

[7] William Bartholomew (1783–1867) received commissions from Mendelssohn to create English singing versions of *Hear My Prayer* and *Elijah,* the latter having its premiere in English. The publishing of *Christus* and Bartholomew's English all occurred after the composer's death. His text appears in publications from Neil A. Kjos Music Co., Concordia Publishing House, Roger Dean Publishing (an imprint of The Lorenz Corporation), GIA Publications, Addington Press (distributed by Hinshaw Music, Inc.), and Novello & Co.

[8] J. C. D. Parker (1828–1916) is not credited in any current publication. In his 1861 publication *Sacred Choruses*—the first appearance of the piece in the United States—he claims this text as his translation work. Parker taught at New England Conservatory of Music from 1871 to 1897 and served as organist at Boston's Trinity Church from 1864 to 1891. His text appears in publications from G. Schirmer, Inc., Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., Hal Leonard, Edwin F. Kalmus, and Boosey & Hawkes.

[9] Henry Wilder Foote (1875–1964) was a Unitarian minister and member of the Harvard Divinity School faculty. His friend and Harvard colleague Archibald T. Davidson arranged the organ part in the edition that carries Foote's translation, published by E. C. Schirmer Music Co.

[10] The translator is not credited in Don H. Razey's (1924–1979) out-of-print edition, published by Carl Fischer Music. Inquiring at Carl Fischer led me to contact his widow and executor of his estate, Regina Klimp. At the time of this writing, no response has been received. For simplicity, Razey will be treated as the presumed translator in this discussion. He served for many years as Education Director at J. W. Pepper and chaired the 1964 National ACDA Convention in Philadelphia.

[11] Ron Jeffers et al., *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire,* 4 vols. (Corvallis, OR: earthsongs, 1988–).

[12] Alfred Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach: With Their Librettos in German-English Parallel Text,* trans. Richard D. P. Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[13] Melvin P. Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts: An Interlinear Translation with Reference Guide to Biblical Quotations and Allusions* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1996).

[14] Richard Stokes and Martin Neary, *J. S. Bach: The Complete Cantatas* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2000).

[15] Michael Marissen, *Bach's Oratorios: The Parallel German-English Texts with Annotations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[16] Z. Philip Ambrose, "J. S. Bach: Texts of the Complete Vocal Works with English Translation and Commentary," The University of Vermont, http://www.uvm.edu/~classics/faculty/bach/ (accessed June 13, 2015).

[17] "Bach Cantatas Website," Aryeh Oron, http://bach-cantatas.com/index.htm (accessed June 13, 2015).

[18] Arthur Jacobs, quoted in Rodney Milnes, ed., "The Translator at Work—Part 2," *Opera* 25, no. 12 (December 1974): 1060.

[19] Nell and John Moody, quoted in Milnes, "Part 2": 1058.

[20] Henry S. Drinker, "On Translating Vocal Texts," *Musical Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (April 1950): 233.

[21] Arthur Mendel, "Thoughts on the Translation of Vocal Texts" in *A Birthday Offering to [Carl Engel],* ed. Gustave Reese (New York: G. Schirmer, 1943), 170.

[22] Humphrey Proctor-Gregg, quoted in Rodney Milnes, ed., "The Translator at Work—Part 1," Opera 25, no. 11 (November 1974): 952.

[23] Drinker, "On Translating," 229.

[24] A performance of "O Lord God," demonstrating N. Lindsay Norden's text may be found at https://youtu.be/31NLtK5sWpU.

[25] Paul Chesnokov, "O Tebe raduyetsia" (San Diego: Musica Russica, Inc., 1995).

[26] Henry Sandwith Drinker, *Texts of the Choral Works of Johann Sebastian Bach in English Translation,* 4 vols. (New York: Association of American Colleges, 1942). Between 1941 and 1954, Drinker (1880–1965) translated 212

Bach cantatas, both Passions, the Easter and Christmas oratorios, all of Brahms' vocal works, and all the songs of Medtner, Mussorgsky, Schubert, Schumann, and Wolf. In the estimation of Neil Jenkins (see below), however, Drinker's work "looks more like a guide to the meaning of the German than a true alternative option." Neil Jenkins, "*St Matthew Passion*: A New English Version," *The Organ* 74, no. 292 (1995: 67).

[27] Charles Sanford Terry, *Bach: The Passions,* 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1926; repr., New York: Johnson Reprint Corporaton,1972). Terry's English version did appear in an unusual published musical edition. Edited by W. Gillies Whittaker, and with a Welsh (!) singing version provided by E. T. Davies and Gwilym Williams, *A Short Passion (from St. Matthew's Gospel)* was published in 1931 by Oxford University Press. This edition featured copious musical cuts and lowered keys for the sake of accessibility.

[28] Johann Sebastian Bach, *Grosse Passions-Musik (according to the Gospel of St. Matthew)* ed. William Sterndale Bennett, trans. Helen F. H. Johnston (London: Lamborn, Cock, Hutchings & Co., 1862?). Bennett founded the Bach Society in 1849, with his Queen's College student Johnston (1832–1874) as a founding member. Using vocal parts from Mendelssohn's "revival" to prepare the score, Johnston printed scores on a press she set up in her own home. Their first performance of the abridged work took place in April 1854.

[29] J. S. Bach, *The Passion of Our Lord (according to S. Matthew)* ed. Josiah Pittman, trans. John Oxenford (London: Boosey & Co., 1877). In addition to his translation work, Oxenford (1812–1877) authored many opera libretti and plays, including his 1835 *A Day Well Spent* that—via Thornton Wilder's expansion—eventually served as the inspiration for Jerry Herman's *Hello, Dolly!*.

[30] J. S. Bach, *The Passion of Our Lord according to S. Matthew,* ed. Horace Wadham Nicholl, trans. John Troutbeck (London: Novello, 1894; repr. New York: G. Schirmer, n.d.). Church musician and translator John Troutbeck (1832–1899) not only produced English versions of both Bach Passions and the Christmas oratorio but also produced English libretti for operas of Gluck, Mozart, Wagner, and Weber, in addition to numerous smaller vocal works.

[31] J. S. Bach, *The Passion according to Saint Matthew,* ed. Salomon Jadassohn, trans. Claude Aveling (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1906). For a time, Aveling (1869–1943) served as secretary to the director of the Royal College of Music in Belvedere, Kent, but he is primarily remembered for his translation work. Those publications include operas of Gluck, Berlioz, Wagner, Delibes, Massenet, and Wolf-Ferrari; Neapolitan songs; and several Bach cantatas. According to his translator's note in the score, his is the first English edition to take the chapters of Matthew's Gospel without alteration, "so far as the present translator is aware."

[32] J. S. Bach, *The Passion according to St. Matthew,* ed. and trans. Charles Villiers Stanford (London: Stainer & Bell, 1910). This publication from composer, conductor, and teacher Stanford (1852–1924) appeared at virtually the same time as that of Elgar and Atkins (see below). According to composer Hubert Hastings Parry, Stanford interpreted this as "deliberately done to damage his edition. [Stanford] said it was 'the most infamous breach of professional etiquette he had ever known…but they shut your mouth by putting you [Parry] into the preface!!!'" Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 389.

[33] J. S. Bach, *The Passion of Our Lord according to S. Matthew,* ed. and trans. Edward Elgar and Ivor Atkins (London: Novello, 1911). Composer-conductor Edward Elgar (1857–1934), together with Ivor Atkins, produced an English version that strictly retains the words of the Authorized Version of the biblical text, and draws on the best of predecessors Johnston and Troutbeck for non-biblical texts. They, as well as Jenkins (see below), also borrowed from prolific hymn translators James Waddell Alexander (1804–1859), Henry Williams Baker (1821–1877), Frances Elizabeth Cox (1812–1897), and Catherine Winkworth (1827–1878).

[34] J. S. Bach, *The Passion of Our Lord according to Saint Matthew,* ed. and trans. Edward Elgar and Ivor Atkins, rev. Ivor Atkins (London: Novello, 1938). With the permission of Elgar's estate, English composer, conductor, and organist Ivor Atkins (1869–1953) undertook revisions to the pair's earlier translation. Principally, this included the use of pre-King-James English New Testaments—such as those of Wycliffe (1380), Tyndale (1534), and Cranmer (1539)—to revise biblical texts. Atkins also consulted with composer-conductor Ralph Vaughan Williams and tenor Steuart Wilson on non-biblical texts.

[35] J. S. Bach, *St. Matthew Passion,* ed. Neil Jenkins (London:

Novello, 1997). Renowned British tenor and Bach Evangelist, Jenkins (b. 1945) was brought up on the English versions of Stanford and Elgar and Atkins. His stated goals were to retain the Authorized Version of the biblical text as much as possible and to overhaul the non-biblical text based on previous translators and his own experience.

[36] J. S. Bach, *Passion Music: according to the Gospel of St. Matthew,* ed. Julius Stern and Robert Franz, trans. John Sullivan Dwight (Boston: O. Ditson, 1869). As founder and editor of *Dwight's Journal of Music* (1852–1881), John Sullivan Dwight (1813–1893) established himself as the first major American-born music critic. Of his method of translation, he said, "I wish in all cases to preserve the form as well as the spirit; for in lyric poetry the form is part of the substance. To retain the very idea of the author, with the exact rhythm and rhyme, and the fervor and grace of expression, is the ideal to which we ought certainly aim…." George Willis Cooke, *John Sullivan Dwight: A Biography* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1898; repr. New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), 21-22.

[37] J. S. Bach, *Passion Music: according to the Gospel of St. Matthew,* ed. Julius Stern and Robert Franz, trans. John Sullivan Dwight, rev. Louis Koemmenich (Boston: O. Ditson, 1916). In his preface to this revision, choral conductor Louis Koemmenich (1866–1922) cites Troutbeck as the source of alterations to Dwight's text. Koemmenich writes, "[A] supremely satisfying translation of any text is a practical impossibility, and this is all the more true when the words have to be fitted in to such a musical framework as Bach supplies. For with Bach not only the body but the soul of a word is converted in to tone."

[38] J. S. Bach, *The Passion of Our Lord according to St. Matthew,* trans. Robert Shaw (New York: G. Schirmer, 1959). James R. Oestereich reviewed a performance of Shaw's (1916–1999) translation for the April 6, 1996, issue of the *New York Times* and wrote, "Mr. Shaw's translation generally worked well enough, retaining an archaic biblical quality that suited the work's formality."

[39] J. S. Bach, *Matthäus-Passion,* BWV 244, ed. Alfred Dürr, trans. Henry S. Drinker, piano reduction (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1974), 46. Used by permission.

[40] Marissen, *Bach's Oratorios,* 35.

[41] Here, Stanford changed the first line to "Tis I, whose sin hath bound Thee."

[42] This line comes from Atkins's 1938 revision. Their original read, "My sin it is which binds Thee."

[43] J. S. Bach, *Matthäus-Passion,* trans. Henry S. Drinker, 47. Used by permission.

[44] Hugh Ross, interview by Caitriona Bolster, November 15, 1976, interview no. 30/66a, transcript, Hindemith Project, Yale Oral History of American Music, New Haven, CT.

[45] Alfred Rubeli, ed., *Paul Hindemith sämtliche Werke, Bd. 7/5 Chorwerke a cappella,* kritische Berichte (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne, 1989), 220.

[46] Chester L. Alwes, "Paul Hindemith's *Six chansons*: Genesis and Analysis," *Choral Journal* 36, no. 2 (September 1995): 37.

[47] Ibid.

[48] *Bach, Brahms and Hindemith,* RCA Victor Chorale '45–'47, dir. Robert Shaw, Pearl CD 180, 1992.

[49] *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* "secular, adj. and n.," http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/174620?redirectedFrom=secular (accessed June 13, 2015).

[50] Rainer Maria Rilke, "La biche," in *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire, Vol. 3: French and Italian Texts,* trans. and annot. Gordon Paine (Corvallis, OR: earthsongs, 2007), 39. © earthsongs, 2007. Used by permission.

[51] Rainer Maria Rilke, "La biche," in *The Complete French Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke,* trans. A. Poulin, Jr. (Saint Paul: Graywolf Press, 2002), 205.

[52] Rainer Maria Rilke, "La biche," trans. Grant E. Hicks, The Spectrum Singers: Illuminations of Now and Beyond—Texts and Translations (February 5, 2003) http://www.spectrumsingers.org/archives/2000-01/may01_words.html (accessed June 20, 2015).

[53] Rainer Maria Rilke, "La biche," trans. Christopher Goldsack, Mélodie Treasury, http://www.melodietreasury.com/translations/song121_Vergers.html (accessed June 20, 2015).

[54] Rainer Maria Rilke, "La biche," trans. Mary Pardoe, liner notes to *Ludus verbalis,* Vol. 2, Ensemble vocal Aedes, dir. Mathieu Romano, Eloquentia CD 1237, 2012, http://www.eclassical.com/shop/17115/art96/4791996-95a99d-3760107400376_01.pdf (accessed June 20, 2015).

[55] John Michael Cooper, "'For You See I Am the Eternal Objector': On Performing Mendelssohn's Music in Translation," in *Mendelssohn in Performance,* ed. Siegwart Reichwald (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 207.

[56] Ibid., 237-238.