Composition of “Requiem for the Innocent”

Final Report submitted for
Indiana University’s Faculty Research Grant

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During the month of May through August, 2009, I composed two movements of the oratorio “Requiem for the Innocent.” This work is a seven-movement composition that I am creating this year. I have scheduled the composition of this work to be finished by March 2010. The performance of the work by the South Bend Symphony is scheduled for October 2, 2010.

This grant provided the essential funding that allowed me to work on this composition without teaching any courses in the summer or working on any other projects. The focus I had was very important in the first stages of this creation.

During the summer of 2009, I set two objectives for this project:

1) I needed to do the necessary revisions and conclude my work with the consultants for the text used in the work. This work was extremely productive. By June I had all the text selected and refined. I believe that I have achieved a good balance of the different faiths present in this work: Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. While the consultants have been paid with a New Frontiers Grant I have also received, thanks to the Faculty Research Grant from IU South Bend, I was able finalize the texts. Part of the complexity of this stage resides in the challenges of working with other languages, such as Hebrew and Arabic. Also, bringing theological
common grounds proved to be time-consuming, but extremely fascinating. Rabbi Siroka, Imam Sirajuddin, Prof. Asma Afsaruddin, and Prof. Sheerin were extremely helpful.

2) Once I had completed the final version of the text, my objective was to compose the first two movements of the oratorio, which I was able to create in their orchestral (and final) version.

The first movement starts with Psalm 23 and the sequence *Requiem aeternam*. This first movement features prominently the baritone, who sings this Psalm in Hebrew. Rabbi Siroka was kind to provide very good transliterations, as well as recording his voice reading the text in Hebrew. After Psalm 23, the main chorus continues with the Latin sequence *Requiem aeternam*. Overall, this movement brings the audience to a moment of reflection on the souls of the departed.

The second movement, “Lord Have Mercy” is a movement devoted to the audience, an exploration of our own sins and the need for repentance. This is done by combining four texts:

a) the traditional *Kyrie eleison* (Lord have mercy) from the Ordinary of the Catholic Mass, which starts and finishes the movement,

b) a selection from the book *Reflections*, by Al-Ma’arri that dwells on one’s own soul (Prof. Afsaruddin provided the transliteration for this text),

c) *S’lach lanu, Mechal lanu, Kaper lanu*, a call for atonement, in Hebrew,

d) the first chapter of the Qur’an (in English), calling God to help us find the Straight Path.

There are five more movements to be composed, but I consider this summer to be seminal in the production of this work. I look forward to the next months, as I complete the composition and move to the final preparations for the premiere in 2010. With this report, I am including the score of the two movements composed during the summer, as well as final version of the texts used in this composition. The live recording will not be available until the premiere in 2010.

I would like to express my most sincere thanks to IU South Bend for the support in this project during the summer 2009.