

Psalm 120

Psalm 120 (Vulgate), Music and Arrangement by Ed Kotski © 2010

1 Le va vi o cu los me os in mon tes un de ve ni et au xi li um

5 mi hi. Au xi li um me um a Do mi no qui fe cit cae lum et

9 ter ram. Non det in com mo ti o nem pe dem tu um ne que dormi tet qui cus to dit

13 te. Ec ce non dor mi ta bit ne que dor mi et qui cus to dit Is ra

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17 el. Do mi nus cus to dit te Do mi nus pro tec ti o tu a su per ma num

23 dex te ram tu am. Per di em sol non u ret te ne que lu na per

28 noc tem. Do mi nus cus to dit te ab om ni ma lo cus to di at a ni mam

34 tu am Do mi nus. Do mi nus cus to di at in tro i tum tu um et ex i tum tu um

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40 ex hoc nunc et usque in sae cu lum. Glo ri a Pat ri et Fi li o et Spi

46 ri tu i Sanc to. Si cut e rat in prin ci pi o et

50 nunc et sem per et in sae cu la sae cu

54 lo rum. A men.

This is my own choral setting of Psalm 120. I did it as a test to see if following the rhythm and meaning of the words of a wonderful psalm, in Latin, would suggest melody, phrasing, harmony, and structure to someone like me, who has no gift whatsoever for composition. As humble as is the result, it is still a huge improvement over previous attempts to create art better than what would normally be found stuck to a refrigerator door. The next step is to write a fugue, if I can figure out how. Watch out, JSB.

Levavi oculos meos in montes, unde veniet auxilium mihi.

I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence
help shall come to me.

Auxilium meum a Domino, qui fecit caelum et terram.

My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Non det in commotionem pedem tuum, neque dormitet qui custodit te.

May he not suffer thy foot to be moved: neither let him slumber
that keepeth thee.

Ecce non dormitabit neque dormiet qui custodit Israel.

Behold he shall neither slumber nor sleep, that keepeth Israel.

Dominus custodit te, Dominus protectio tua super manum dexteram tuam.

The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy protection upon thy right hand.

Per diem sol non uret te, neque luna per noctem.

The sun shall not burn thee by day: nor the moon by night.

Dominus custodit te ab omni malo, custodiat animam tuam Dominus.

The Lord keepeth thee from all evil: may the Lord keep thy soul.

Dominus custodiat introitum tuum et exitum tuum,

May the Lord keep thy coming in and thy going out
ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum.

from henceforth now and for ever.

Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

world without end. Amen.

A few words about Psalm 120

Different bibles number the psalms differently, and this is Psalm 121 in many editions. The Latin text is from the old Vulgate, the official Roman Catholic Bible. The Gloria Patri was typically added in Bach's time, and Bach set many of the Psalms this way.

The English translation given above is from the Douay Rheims Edition by Bishop Challoner, which is renowned for its accuracy, but also for following the Latin a little too closely, in a way that's not always suited to music. For that matter, all the old translations sound a little clunky, and I strongly prefer the sound of Latin.

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