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## Psalm 130 (De Profundis), op. 50B



Title	Psalm 130 (De Profundis) for Mixed Chorus a cappella, op. 50B
Time of Origin	1950
Premiere	29 January 1954, Cologne
Duration	ca. 5 min.

In the summer of 1921, Arnold Schönberg was asked by the local authorities of Mattsee in Salzburg to leave the town because of his Jewish origins – an instance of racial resentment that led to a reassessment of his own national identity. Schönberg's reflections found expression in numerous letters and writings, but they influenced his compositions with even greater intensity. In 1933, Schönberg had to face personal consequences: in early March of that year, Max von Schillings, President of the Prussian Academy, declared during a meeting in which Schönberg was also present that Jewish influence in the Academy had to cease. Anticipating the official dismissal, Schönberg wrote a resignation letter on 20 March. In April, the "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service," specifically designed to target Jews, was passed in the Reichstag. After revealing the existential threat to German Jews posed by National Socialism in the essay "Einstein's falsche Politik" (Einstein's False Politics), Schönberg realized the precariousness of his position and left Germany together with his family on 17 May. On 23 May, 1933, Schönberg finally received his "leave of absence" from the Academy, which was changed to a dismissal in September. He first emigrated to Paris, where he produced a series of political writings on Judaism, founded a United Jewish Party, and converted to Judaism: "I have long been determined to be a Jew [...] Now, a week ago, I also officially returned to the Jewish religious community, although it is not religion that separates me from it [...] but rather my view of the necessity of adapting the church to the demands of modern life." (Letter to Anton Webern, 4 August, 1933) His reconversion took place on July 24 at the Union Libérale Israélite in the presence of Marc Chagall. On 25 October, Schönberg left France with his family, reaching New York on 31 October. After a series of further writings on "Jewish Affairs," Schönberg conceived the "Four-Point Program for Jewry" in 1938, in which he described ways of forming Jewish forces that could liberate and rescue the threatened Jewish population of Europe. With the exception of a few minor statements, this document effectively marked the end of Schoenberg's involvement with the political dimension of the Jewish cause. But the search for his nationality continued, even if now the focus had shifted primarily to a very personal level. The preoccupation with the concept of God, which Schönberg had recognized as a central element of Jewish identity (and had elaborated in "Moses und Aron" and "Der biblische Weg") culminated in the composition of the "Modern Psalms." "Dreimal tausend Jahre," op. 50A, sets a short lyric poem from the "Jordan Lieder" by Dagobert Runes. Opus 50B uses the original Hebrew text of Psalm 130, "De Profundis," while Opus 50C is based

on Schönberg's own text, the first in a series of sixteen short psalms written during the last ten months of his life. The setting of Opus 50B, "De Profundis," completed in July 1950 and dedicated to the State of Israel, owes its origin to a request by Chemjo Vinaver, a choral conductor who was compiling an anthology for the Jewish Agency for Palestine. Schönberg seems to have purposely written a piece that was easily singable, and in fact asked Vinaver in May 1951: "Should you have already performed it, I would like to know how it came out, that is, how the dramatic character appeared which is produced through the alternation of speaking and singing voices. I want also to know whether as a chorus director, you see great difficulties to perform the piece." The six-part texture mostly consists of voices that are rhythmically paired against each other, though there is great variety in the nature of these pairings. The opening words, for example, are spoken in unison by men's voices, while the first hexachord is divided polyphonically between the second soprano and alto. The work's climax is on the last word of the final verse, "He shall redeem His Israel," and is illustrated by a high B in the first soprano line sustained for seven beats, while the five lower voices repeat the verse in single rhythmic pattern. The chorus then concludes with a tutti repetition of the line; the women's voices lead the men's voices, although the two groups are linked by complementary rhythms.

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