The texts of King David's lamentations for his friend Jonathan (2 Samuel 1:17-27) and his son Absalom (2 Samuel 18:33 and 2 Samuel 19:4) are derived from the Biblical accounts. The first musical settings of David's lamentations (i.e., Montes Gelboe nec ros, Saul et Jonatha, and Rex autem David) originate from medieval antiphonals and their function was liturgical. There are only two other known musical settings from the medieval period: a monophonic *planctus* by Peter Abelard, *Planctus David super Saul et Jonatha* and an anonymous fourteenth-century polytextual motet, *Doleo super te/Absalon, fili mi*. A tradition emerged during the sixteenth century in which Catholic composers used the text of the liturgical antiphon, *Rex autem David*, for polyphonic motets. It is likely that these settings were used to replace the liturgical monophonic antiphons. In addition, other sixteenth-century composers wrote polyphonic motets using the texts from the Bible and other poetic interpretations of the biblical accounts depicting David's lamentations. Since these settings do not use a liturgical text, some scholars have suggested that their function was purely liturgical.
text, some scholars have suggested that their function was to mourn the death of the son of an important historical figure. The tradition of David's lamentations that developed during the sixteenth-century crossed political and religious boundaries in Europe. In fact, British composers in the early seventeenth-century also wrote musical settings of David's lamentations and scholars have linked the British settings to the death of Prince Henry in 1612. However the circumstances behind some of the settings (i.e., Thomas Tomkins's setting of When David Heard) suggest that there could also be other reasons why composers chose to set the texts of David's lamentations. The tradition of David's lamentations has persisted over twelve hundred years, from the ninth century into the twenty-first century, yielding over two hundred musical settings. In order to demonstrate that a composer could have many reasons to use the texts of David's lamentations, I have interviewed six living composers who wrote musical settings using the text of David's lament for Absalom: Eric Whitacre, Anna Gallos, Jennifer Fowler, Richard Mawby, Richard Burchard, and Paul Crabtree. The data from these interviews confirm that each composer had a unique reason for choosing to set the Absalom text. The endurance of this tradition suggests that these ancient biblical texts have continued to be relevant to people since they were uttered thousands of years ago by King David. There is a universal quality to these texts that has transcended their original religious connotation because they speak directly to the human condition, which is filled with grief, strife, mourning, and loss.
of Judah, temple archives, and traditions centring on certain major kings and prophets. The Deuteronomic historians wrote from the vantage points of the reign of King Josiah of Judah, who died in 609 BCE and was the ruler who accepted the Deuteronomic reform that began in 621 BCE, and of the Babylonian Exile, which traditionally lasted 70 years, though it began in 597 BCE, the temple was destroyed in 587/586, some exiles returned in 538. The Book of Kings may be divided into four sections: (1) the last years of David and Solomon’s succession to the throne (I Kings, chapter 1, to chapter 2, verse 11); (2) the reign of Solomon (I Kings, chapter 2, verse 12, to chapter 11, verse 43); (3) the beginning of the divided monarchy to the fall of. The City of David is both the oldest neighborhood in Jerusalem and an archaeological dig south of the Temple Mount. Traditionally believed to be the site of King David’s palace, it is a major tourist draw despite a paucity of evidence that he built there. Archaeology students examine Khirbat en Nahas, an ancient copper-smelting center south of the Dead Sea. According to carbon analysis, the site dates to the tenth century B.C., suggesting it could be the famed mines of King Solomon. Ethiopian Jews, also known as Beta Israel, celebrate a festival in Jerusalem. They believe themselves descends David Guzik commentary on Lamentations 1 describes the mourning over the conquest and fall of the city of Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah. "The author of Lamentations stood therefore in a long and respectable literary tradition when he bewailed the destruction of Jerusalem and the desolation of Judah in 587 BCE." (R.K. Harrison). Lamentations is a remarkable written work because the first four of the five poems are written as acrostics. The twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet are used in succession to begin the lines and sections of those songs. "The use of the alphabet symbolizes that the completeness—‘the A to Z’—of grief is being expressed." (H.L. Ellison).