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# SACRED MUSIC

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WINTER 2007

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VOLUME 134 No. 4





# SACRED MUSIC

Winter 2007

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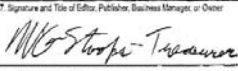
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## EDITORIAL

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### It's the Music

By William Mahrt



The Winter volume presents several articles pertaining to the aesthetics of sacred music. They represent a variety of points of view, and the discussion will surely go beyond the present articles. This ongoing discussion is crucial to our efforts, since of all the arts, music is most intimately linked with the sacred liturgy. Understanding the role of music in the liturgy requires not only knowledge of the principles of liturgy, but also an understanding of why the music, as an integral part of the liturgy, must be excellent, must be beautiful. There is thus a particularly important issue of practical musical aesthetics—judging the music itself.

The cause of judgments about music is mission territory. Most frequently, liturgy is judged by its texts, and whatever music happens to set the text is just accepted. My point is that the music itself must be judged as music, it must be suitable to the liturgy as music and the music itself must serve the purposes of the liturgy. Indeed, although the Subcommittee on Music of the Bishops' Committee on Liturgy is addressing the issue of principles for making a judgment about hymns to be approved, these principles will only pertain to the choice of texts, not the music. This may be a mercy, since it is difficult to conceive how an agreement might be reached on the music. Still, general principles for judging the music, I would insist, are as important as those for the text.

Emphasis upon the text alone has a long history. Over the centuries, there has been a shift from the understanding of liturgical actions, such as an introit, as an action for which there is an integral accompanying chant, to actions for which there is an appropriate text, paralleling a shift from an oral to a written conception. This in turn relates to a shift in the conception of what a liturgical action is.

There are at least two distinct levels at which one can speak of liturgical action. The liturgical action of the Mass as a whole is the action of Christ, making a sacrificial offering to the Father on our behalf. Its prime object of address is the Father: "*Te, igitur, clementissime Pater.*" Latin felicitously can place "*Te*" first for emphasis, while our present translation begins with "*We.*" A deep understanding of the direction of this basic action could bring about a shift from the prevailing anthropocentric emphasis in much practice of liturgy to a theocentric one. If this shift were agreed upon, the practice of music would be transformed.

A second level of speaking of liturgical action is to speak of the discrete liturgical actions—each individual part of the liturgy is an action: a procession, a reading, a litany, etc. In the high Mass sung in Gregorian chant—sanctioned by the council as the "normative" liturgy—each of these actions has its own musical shape. It is not just that each is accompanied by its own music, but the music is an integral part of each action and serves to differentiate that action from the others.

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Therefore, the “choice” of the music which sets these actions is crucial. A fundamental difficulty in *Musicam Sacram* is that it allowed *alius cantus aptus*, other suitable music, to replace the proper chants of the Mass, and in practice, this has driven out the propers of the Mass. It must be acknowledged that this kind of substitution had been prepared by a common practice before the council—the requirement of singing the texts proper to the Mass was minimally fulfilled by singing each proper part to psalm tones. This is very useful: since the melodies of the psalm tones are well known and very simple, the entire proper of the Mass can be rehearsed in a matter of a few minutes, the requirement of singing the texts is fulfilled, and the singing creates a generally sacred atmosphere—since psalm tones have no place in secular music, all can easily be identified as sacred. Yet something essential is missing—they are all the same; an introit is sung in exactly the same way as an alleluia, despite the remarkable difference in liturgical function, a difference which the music of Gregorian melodies makes clear.

The same could be said of the pieces of the *Graduale simplex*, whether they are sung in Latin or in English (as from, for example, *By Flowing Waters*). These melodies are borrowed from the Divine Office, where their musical shape is suited to their function there: antiphons whose simple style serves as a melodic complement to the efficient chanting of an entire psalm on a simple psalm tone, short responsories whose scope is to provide a complement to a short lesson of one verse from the scripture. In the singing of the Mass, their brevity keeps them from projecting the solemnity required, and their similar styles keeps them from showing much differentiation between very different parts of the Mass. Thus they do not quite come up to the tasks that the genuine Gregorian Mass propers really fulfill.

A similar argument applies even more emphatically in the case of “songs” sung at Mass from the common hymnals currently in use. Take a specific case in point. A question and answer column in a national Catholic weekly recently addressed a question: Is it suitable to sing “Let There Be Peace on Earth” at Mass? Since it was first sung at the United Nations, it is a patriotic song, and therefore might not be suitable to the liturgy. The answer was that since the text speaks of peace on earth, and this is something we pray for at Mass, it must be appropriate. No mention of its music. In fact, the melody is not in the style of a patriotic song, but rather of a Broadway musical—a show tune! There is nothing wrong with it in its own place, but it is sheer entertainment music, participating in stereotyped and clichéd formulae, representing limited emotions suited to limited dramatic situations, stroking the listener with a tune that does little more than confirm his own unreflective response to that part of the show. Curiously, this is functional music, but the function does not transcend the limits of the genre, does not lift the listener’s awareness to any higher purpose. I am saying this about the *music* and not the text, and this is precisely my point; even when music sets a significant text, the music itself carries particular meaning and value. In the case of a song for Mass in the style of a Broadway tune, and in the case of setting all the propers of the Mass to the same psalm tone or a brief office chant, the music has contributed only a modicum of real value. True, the congregation participates in the peace song and enjoys it; true, the psalm tone propers convey an overall sense of the sacred in the action as a whole. Admittedly, the chants from the *Graduale simplex* are a distinct improvement over the psalm-tone propers. Under particular circumstances, these might well be the best available choice, a relative good, particularly for choirs or scholas just beginning to work on the propers of the Mass. Still, it should be a reluctant choice, since it is only “singing at Mass,” but not “singing the Mass.”

The columnist’s answer should have been, even though there are laudable sentiments in the text, the music is in the style of entertainment music and not entirely appropriate. Rather, a higher purpose should be the goal—to sing the Mass in a way that makes it unambiguous that each of its parts serves its own distinct role and contributes to a multi-layered sacred action, an integral part of the transcendent action of Christ himself. ❧

## ARTICLES

## The “Salve” Motive in Spanish Polyphony

By Lorenzo Candelaria



The *Salve regina* (Hail, Holy Queen), like the *Ave Maria* (Hail Mary) and *Pater noster* (Our Father), is a popular and beloved prayer in the Catholic world. The chant for the eleventh-century antiphon is surely one of the most recognizable.<sup>1</sup> Like the famous “L’homme armé” (The Armed Man) tune that captivated the musical imaginations of composers from Guillaume Du Fay (1397–1474) to Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525–1594), the *Salve regina* opens with a sharply defined, leaping melody—a bold, unobtrusive stroke not lost on even the passive listener (see Ex. 1).<sup>2</sup>

Example 1: “Salve” motive



## Translation:

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! You are our life, our sweetness, and our hope. Hail to you! To you we cry—we the banished, we the children of Eve. To you we sigh, mourning and weeping, in this valley of tears. Therefore, our advocate, turn your eyes of mercy toward us. And show us Jesus—the fruit of your womb—after we leave this exile of ours. O kind, O merciful, O sweet Mary, ever Virgin.

Just as the martial ascending fourth etches “L’homme armé” into our memory from the outset, the descending fifth on “Salve” makes an indelible impression on the ear. From the very beginning of this chant, the listener is cast downward—indeed, *plunged*—into the “valley of tears.”

Composers of sacred music made good use of the well defined plunging motive that begins “Salve regina.” A preliminary conspectus by Michele Fromson identifies fourteen bona fide

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<sup>1</sup>On the history of this chant see *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Encyclopedia Press, 1912), s.v. “Salve regina.”

<sup>2</sup>Lorenzo Candelaria, “Ornamented Chant in Spain,” *Sacred Music*, 134, no. 2 (Summer 2007), 26–7, provides a modern transcription of the “L’homme armé” melody and a translation of the song’s text.

quotations of the chant in works by European composers including Nicolas Gombert, Adrian Willaert, and Palestrina.<sup>3</sup> But there were more. Among those Fromson does not cite is a fascinating example by the Spanish composer Francisco de Peñalosa (ca. 1470–1528), a canon at Seville Cathedral and a contemporary of Josquin Des Prez (ca. 1450–1521) who had a comparable bent toward expressing symbolism through intertextual references and musical processes.<sup>4</sup>

The Agnus Dei of Peñalosa's *Missa Ave Maria Peregrina* is a compositional tour de force that concludes his Mass in honor of Mary "The Pilgrim."<sup>5</sup> The Gospel records the life of Mary as a series of peregrinations—the journey to visit her cousin Elizabeth (Luke 1:39–56) then to Bethlehem for Christ's Nativity (Luke 2:1–5); the flight from Herod into Egypt (Matthew 2:13–15) followed by the return to Nazareth (Matthew 2:19–23). The Virgin Mary was always in motion, embarking on another leg of a journey rooted in faith. Mary's greatest peregrination, however, was a figurative one. For it was through the birth of Jesus—the "Lamb of God who takes away

*Peñalosa's Missa Ave Maria  
Peregrina is a compositional  
tour de force.*

the sins of the world" (Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi)—that Mary reversed the fall of man precipitated by Eve (Genesis 3:1–24). This "great reversal" was reflected by a poetic conceit of the Middle Ages in which AVE, Gabriel's salutation to Mary at the Annunciation (Luke 1:28) was read as the retrograde, the reverse, of EVA—Eve, in Latin.<sup>6</sup>

Peñalosa captures Mary's "great reversal" in an extraordinary way. In the tenor of his Agnus Dei, Peñalosa quotes the tenor voice of a widely popular rondeau, "De tous biens plaine" by Hayne van Ghizeghem (b. ca. 1445; d. ca. 1476–97). A Franco-Flemish chanson would seem an odd choice for quotation in a Marian Mass, but the text of Hayne's rondeau is entirely appropriate.<sup>7</sup> "De tous biens plaine" addresses a mistress with "every virtue," and "possessed of worth as was ever any goddess." In the context of Peñalosa's Mass, that virtuous woman is Mary "The Pilgrim." The intertextual reference is clever enough, but Peñalosa goes one step further. He portrays Mary's "great reversal" in music by having the tenor of "De tous biens plaine" unfold in retrograde.<sup>8</sup> That is, the tune begins with the last note of the melody and proceeds backwards until it reaches the first. By having all of this

<sup>3</sup>Michele Fromson, "Melodic Citation in the Sixteenth-Century Motet," in *Early Musical Borrowing*, ed. Honey Meconi (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 197–99.

<sup>4</sup>Tess Knighton, "Francisco de Peñalosa," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), 19: 302–3.

<sup>5</sup>For a modern performing edition, see Francisco de Peñalosa, *Missa Ave Maria: for SATB*, transcribed and edited by Martyn Imbric (London: Vanderbeek & Imrie, 1993). A recording of Peñalosa's *Missa Ave Maria Peregrina* by James O'Donnell and the Choir of Westminster Cathedral (1993) is available on the Hyperion label (CDA66629 Hyperion).

<sup>6</sup>Craig Wright, *The Maze and the Warrior: Symbols in Architecture, Theology, and Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 162–63. The poetic conceit plays out most explicitly in the cantiga "Entre Av' e Eva" attributed to King Alfonso X ("The Wise," 1221–1284). The cantiga is performed by Brigitte Lesne on *Ave Eva: Chansons de femmes des XIIIe et XIIIe siècles*, recorded on the OPUS 111 label (OPS 30–134).

<sup>7</sup>"My mistress has every virtue, / everyone owes her honorable tribute, / for she is as possessed of worth / as was ever any goddess. // On seeing her, I am so happy / that my heart turns into paradise. // My mistress has every virtue, / everyone owes her honorable tribute, / for she is as possessed of worth / as was ever any goddess. // I desire no other riches / except to be her servant; / and since there is no better choice, / my motto will always be: // My mistress has every virtue, / everyone owes her honorable tribute, / for she is as possessed of worth / as was ever any goddess." As translated in Allan W. Atlas, ed., *Anthology of Renaissance Music: Music in Western Europe, 1400–1600* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1998), p. 491.

<sup>8</sup>The full score of "De tous biens plaine" is given in Atlas, *Anthology*, 142–43.

occur in the Agnus Dei of the Mass, Peñalosa expressed in music a fundamental belief of the Christian faith: the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world was born through Mary who reversed the fall of Eve.

The intertextual reference and the symbolic musical process that unfold in the Agnus Dei of Peñalosa's *Missa Ave Maria Peregrina* were probably not picked up by most listeners. But given the enormous popularity of the *Salve regina*, one moment was surely not lost on them. For just as the tenor introduces "De tous biens plaine" in retrograde at m. 58, the uppermost voice presents the sharply defined and clearly audible "Salve" motive (see Ex. 2, see page 8). Peñalosa then proceeds to paraphrase the entire chant in counterpoint with the tenor.

With this virtuosic Mass movement, Peñalosa shrewdly planned for any and every audience. As discriminating ears (probably those of the performers) contemplated the meaning of "De tous biens plaine" in retrograde, the less erudite listener could latch onto the well known *Salve regina* as it played out in the *discantus*. Through such means, Peñalosa infused his polyphonic Mass Ordinary with a more specific meaning. This was not just another setting of the quotidian *Agnus Dei* text. Through references to *Salve regina*, "De tous biens plaine," and the musical process of retrograde, Peñalosa memorialized not just Mary, but also her profoundly meaningful wanderings.

Francisco Guerrero (1528–99), another composer working in Seville, incorporated the "Salve" motive into his most famous work, the five-voice motet *Ave virgo sanctissima*, which sets the following text.<sup>9</sup>

Ave virgo sanctissima  
 Dei mater piissima  
 Maris stella clarissima  
 Salve semper gloriosa  
 Margarita pretiosa  
 Sicut lilium formosa  
 Nitens olens velut rosa

Translation:

Hail, most Holy Virgin! Purest Mother of God, brightest Star of the Sea. Hail ever-glorious one, precious pearl, as fair as the lily, shining and fragrant as the rose.

Contemporary accounts reflect that *Ave virgo sanctissima* was the Hispanic world's best-regarded Marian motet during the last half of the sixteenth century. It was certainly one of Guerrero's most widely distributed works. First published in Paris in 1566, subsequent editions were issued by Venetian presses in 1570 and 1597. In Mexico, where Guerrero's works were more popular than those of Cristóbal de Morales or Tomás Luis de Victoria, *Ave virgo sanctissima* was known through the edition of Guerrero's motets published by Gardano in 1570. In Madrid, Spain, it served as the model for a parody Mass published in 1598 by Géry de Ghersem (b. ca. 1573–75; d. 1630), a singer in the Flemish chapel of King Philip II. If Guerrero had written nothing else, *Ave virgo sanctissima* would be sufficient for modern historians to remember him as the writer Francisco Pacheco did in 1599: as the composer of the perfect Marian motet.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup>On Guerrero, see Robert Stevenson, *Spanish Cathedral Music in the Golden Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961; reprint, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), pp. 135–238.

<sup>10</sup>For background on this motet, see Robert Stevenson, "Francisco Guerrero," *New Grove Dictionary*, 10: 500–503; Stevenson, *Spanish Cathedral Music*, 136–37, 204–07; and Herminio González Barrionuevo, *Francisco Guerrero (1528–1599): Vida y Obra. La música en la catedral de Sevilla a finales del siglo XVI* (Sevilla: Cabildo Metropolitano de la Catedral de Sevilla, 2000), 313–17.





Example 3: Guerrero, *Ave virgo sanctissima*, 22–35

Cantus I  
ri - si - ma: Sal - - - -

Cantus II  
ma - ris stel - la cla - ris - si - ma:

Altus  
ma - ris stel - la cla - ris - - - si - ma, cla - - - ris - - - si - ma: Sal -

Tenor  
si - ma ma - ris stel - la cla - ris - si - ma: Sal - - - - ve, sal -

Bassus  
stel - la cla - ris - si - ma: Sal - - - - ve, sal -

26  
C I  
ve, sal - - - - ve, sal - - - -

C II  
Sal - - - - ve, Sal - - - - ve,

A  
- - - - ve, sal - - - - ve, sal - - - - ve, Sal -

T  
ve semm - per glo - ri - o - - - sa sal - - - - ve, sal - - - -

B  
- - - - ve, sal - - - - ve, sal - - - - ve, sal - ve sem - per glo - ri - o -

35  
C I  
- - - - ve sem - per glo - ri - o - - - - sa,

C II  
Sal - - - - - - - ve sem - per glo - ri - o - - - - sa,

A  
- - - - - sem - per glo - - - - ri - o - - - - sa, mar - ga

T  
ve, sal - ve sem - per glo - ri - o - - - - sa, sal - ve sem - per glo - ri - o - sa,

B  
sa, glo - ri - o - sa, sal - ve sem - per glo - ri - o - sa,

## SALVE REGINA

Solemn Tone

LU 276

1

**S** Al-ve, \* Re-gí- na, mater mi- se-ricórdi- æ:  
 Vi- ta, dulcé- do, et spes nostra, sal- ve. Ad te  
 clamá-mus, éxsu-les, fí-li- i He-væ. Ad te suspi-rá-  
 mus, geméntes et flen- tes in hac lacrimá- rum valle.  
 E- ia ergo, Advocá- ta nostra, illos tu- os mi-se-ri-  
 córdes ócu-los ad nos convér- te. Et Jesum, benedí-  
 ctúm fructum ventris tu- i, no-bis post hoc exsí- li- um  
 os-ténde. O cle-mens: O pi- a: O dulcis  
 \* Virgò Ma-rí- a.

∇. Ora pro nobis sancta Dei Génitrix.

℞. Ut digni efficiámur promissionibus Christi.

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, O most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! ∇. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God. ℞. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

## SALVE REGINA

*Solemn Tone, Divine Office*

AM 176

**S** Al-ve, \* Re-gí- na, ma-ter mi-se-ri-córdi- æ:  
 Vi- ta, dulcé- do, et spes nostra, sal- ve. Ad te  
 clamá-mus, éxsu-les, fí-li- i He-væ. Ad te suspi-rá-  
 mus, geméntes et flentes in hac lacrimá- rum val-le.  
 E- ia ergo, Advo-cá- ta nostra, il-los tu- os mi-se-  
 ri-cór-des ócu-los ad nos convér- te. Et Je-sum, be-  
 ne-dí- ctum fructum ventris tu- i, no- bis post hoc exsí-  
 li- um osténde: O cle-mens: O pi- a: O  
 dulcis \* Virgo Ma- rí- a.

∿. Ora pro nobis sancta Dei Génitrix.

℞. Ut digni efficiámur promissionibus Christi.

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, O most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! ∿. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God. ℞. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Analyzed from a liturgical point of view, however, the chant *Ave virgo sanctissima* was not performed on a Marian feast during the sixteenth century. Saturated as the text may be with Marian references—"Mother of God," "Star of the Sea," the fair lily, the fragrant rose—Spanish sources, including the *Liber processionarius* (Alcalá de Henares, 1526), present *Ave virgo sanctissima* as a processional antiphon for the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (June 24).<sup>11</sup> Guerrero side-stepped this liturgical restriction, in part, by embracing only the text and composing his motet free of any reference to the liturgical chant for June 24. He underscored the Marian association, moreover, by incorporating an intertextual reference to the most well known of the Marian antiphons, the *Salve regina*. The quotation happens at the very midpoint of this short motet, and—appropriately enough—on the word "Salve" in mm. 22–35 (see Ex. 3; see page 9).

Guerrero was not content with a single illustration of the word. Instead, the sharply defined "Salve" motive permeates the entire five-voice texture to create the most memorable part of this motet. It is adumbrated in the bassus beginning at m. 22, then brought to full flower by the tenor (mm. 23–25), cantus I (mm. 24–26), and the altus (mm. 25–27). The "Salve" motive is heard most prominently alternating between the two upper voices (cantus I and cantus II) in mm. 24–35. Meanwhile, as it passes from cantus I to cantus II in longer note values, the same clear-cut motive unfolds in diminution in the bassus (mm. 25–26), in points of imitation between the bassus and altus in mm. 27–29, then between the bassus and tenor in mm. 28–31. The altus joins in briefly at mm. 32–33 before cantus II brings the statements to a close (mm. 33–35). More so than any other feature, the resounding "Salve" motives indelibly mark this work as Marian in nature.

*Ave virgo sanctissima* established Guerrero as the composer of the "quintessentially perfect Marian motet" not only because of his masterful handling of notes, but also because of the glorious "Salve moment" at the work's climax. That climax left no doubt regarding the subject of this piece—the Virgin Mary. Whether a listener was proficient in Latin or not scarcely mattered. Because of Guerrero's use of the "Salve" motive, anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of the prayers and songs of the Catholic faith would have understood the meaning of this motet. Thus, in one of the most lauded works of the late sixteenth century, Guerrero struck a rare balance between composer and listener. He communicated meaningfully without compromising his artistic integrity.

The works discussed here are from the period historians like to call the Renaissance—literally, "rebirth"—a period marked by a new awareness and appreciation of the arts and letters of antiquity. Chronologically, the works of Peñalosa and Guerrero would seem quite distant. Yet, in the spirit of "rebirth," they have never been closer as modern liturgical music is on the cusp of its own "modern Renaissance" of sorts. On June 24, 2006, following a concert of sacred music by the much-revered Msgr. Domenico Bartolucci that featured his own works along with those of Palestrina—that perennial master of the "Roman style"—Pope Benedict XVI confirmed that "an authentic updating of sacred music cannot take place except in the wake of the great tradition of the past, of Gregorian chant and sacred polyphony."<sup>12</sup> The statement lent clarity to the church's generally ambiguous stance on the issue of sacred music following Vatican II, and one will hope for compositions in that hallowed tradition. As modern composers mine the church's treasure of sacred music for extraordinarily effective ideas from the past, Peñalosa and Guerrero are two artists from the Hispanic world whose works should not escape notice. ♪

<sup>11</sup>Stevenson, *Spanish Cathedral Music*, 204.

<sup>12</sup>Cindy Wooden, "Pope Says New Liturgical Music Need Not Ignore Older Church Music," *Catholic News Service*, June 27, 2006, <<http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0603692.htm>> (accessed October 25, 2007).

# Beauty as a Road to God

By Eleonore Stump



In his article on music and the liturgy in the Fall 2006 issue of *Sacred Music*, Jeffrey Tucker singled out the music of the Saint Louis Jesuits for attack, and I read what he wrote with pain. I honor and admire the music of the Saint Louis Jesuits. It is true that, like Tucker, I find consolation in chant; for that matter, I am at home with classical sacred music, from the two settings of the Passion by Bach, for example, to the complex contemporary setting by Osvaldo Golijov. But the music of the Saint Louis Jesuits is special to me. At Mass, or anywhere, it mediates to me the power and the tenderness of Christ's grace. In very dark times, it has sustained me. At all times, it is deeply moving to me. I find it beautiful. And so I was grieved

by Tucker's attack on this music, so dear to me.

Subsequent correspondence with Tucker has shown me that he and I have much more in common than I would have supposed. I share not only Tucker's evident care for Catholic liturgy and the importance of music in the Mass; but I find that I also share with him a concern with beauty, in music at Mass and also in general. Of course, the role of music in liturgy is hardly limited to the sharing of beauty; in liturgy, music also elicits worship, gives voice to prayer, joins people in communion, and many other liturgically important things besides.<sup>1</sup> But, in this paper, I want to explore the role of beauty, especially beauty in music, as a road to God. Tucker and I are both committed, I have come to see, to the belief that beauty is a road to God. And I expect that in this we are each representative of the opposed camps currently embattled over liturgical music. It is my hope that reflection on this shared commitment—to belief in beauty as a road to God—might be the basis on which to build a more irenic understanding, and perhaps even caritas, between the different camps.

## Introduction

How do people come to God? What draws people who are already believers nearer to God? What moves people toward God when they are unbelievers? When philosophers think about the decision to believe in God or not to believe in God, they tend to talk about truth or even about proofs for God's existence. But, in fact, very few people, maybe hardly any people, come to God because they are convinced by a proof. As far as I can see, people come to God because of something else entirely, not because of some convincing argument for God's existence but rather

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<sup>1</sup>The relation between liturgy and music, even sacred music, is complicated, and there are some people who suppose that the only sort of sacred music permissible in liturgy is music which serves somehow to ennoble prayer. (For some early discussion of these issues, see, for example, Karl Gustav Fellerer, *The History of Catholic Church Music*, tr. Francis A. Brunner, C.S.s.R. [Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961].) In this short paper, I do not have space to address these issues. But for present purposes, what I would say is that music can ennoble prayer only in virtue of bathing prayer in beauty of one sort or another. How else would we make sense of the notion of music's ennobling prayer, which is in its own nature as noble as anything human could be? And so, even for those who want to restrict the use of sacred music in liturgy in so radical a way, the issue of beauty as a road to God remains relevant.

because of some desire or yearning in them. Sometimes, maybe often, beauty is a good name for what it is which draws many people to God. And so it has become proverbial that *beauty*, as well as truth, is a road to God. I do not say that beauty is *the* road to God. There are many roads to God, and different roads are appropriate for different people. But beauty is one of those roads; it is a road to God.

Because the music of the Saint Louis Jesuits is at issue for me, in this paper I am going to focus on beauty only in art, and then almost exclusively on music. I will also be thinking about beauty only as it moves the audience for music or art and not as it moves the musician or the creator of art.

*Is there an objective standard of value for beauty? Or is beauty in art only subjective?*

(Father John Foley, who is one of the founders of the Saint Louis Jesuits and who is also an accomplished theologian, has himself written insightfully about beauty as it moves the artist.<sup>2</sup>) I need to say, too, at the outset, that I am a philosopher, not a musician. But in the course of many years, I have learned from dealing with my friends who are musicians and theologians. What I have to say in this paper is what I have learned with them and because of them, filtered through the mind of a philosopher with a love of music.

If we think of beauty—especially beauty in the arts—as a road to God, there are some questions and perplexities which come to mind immediately. What is beauty? And what is beauty in art? Different people find very different things in art moving. What some people find movingly beautiful, in poetry or music, for example, other people find trite and sentimental, or even off-putting and repulsive. I am generally swept away by Auden, but most of Yeats leaves me cold. For someone else, however, it might be just the other way around. I love Rossini's *Stabat Mater*; but I have a musically sophisticated Dominican friend who rolls his eyes in disbelief when I tell him so. Is there an objective standard of value for beauty? Or is beauty in art only subjective? And what about beauty as a road to God? Is it objective or not? Is there only one beauty which is a road to God? Or could anything which anyone found subjectively beautiful be a road to God for that person? If I found the music for TV beer commercials movingly beautiful, could that music be a road to God for me? And what is it for beauty to be a road to God? How could something beautiful in art, in music, something either objectively or something just subjectively beautiful, be a means of drawing someone further along the road to God? For that matter, what is a road to God? And what is it to come to God? Coming to God is not like coming to town. So what sort of drawing near is coming to God?

*The Objective and Subjective Elements in Beauty as a Road to God*

We can begin with the concept of a road. What is a road? A road is a means of getting more easily from one place to another. A road enables you to go from where you are to some other place where you want to be; a road facilitates your travel to a place which is your destination. A road to Oxford is a means for you to get to Oxford; a road to God is a means for a person to get to God.

Now insofar as the destination for a road is fixed and determinate—a road to *Oxford*, a road to *God*—that road has an objectively determinable end. There is one definite place which is Oxford; and if you wind up in the Outer Hebrides and believe that you are in Oxford, well, then, you are just mistaken. It is the same way with a road to God. It has one definite, objective destination. And since this is so, if beauty is going to count as a road to God, there has to be something about beauty which really does move us, in an objective way, to that one destination. If

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<sup>2</sup>John Foley, *Creativity and the Roots of Liturgy* (Portland, Oregon: Pastoral Press, 1994).

Rossini's *Stabat Mater* strikes me as movingly beautiful, but if in fact it moves me only to self-absorption and not to God, then that piece of music does not count as a road to God for me, no matter how beautiful I think it is.

Does this mean that there is nothing subjective about beauty? If I find Rossini's *Stabat Mater* beautiful and my Dominican friend thinks it is just kitsch, does that mean I am wrong to like Rossini? Is beauty a road to God only for the sophisticated, highly trained aesthetes? Here I think we want to look again at the nature of roads.

A road to Oxford has one and only one objective destination. But insofar as differing people begin in differing places, there will be many different roads to that one objective place. If I want to go to Oxford, I will need to begin my trip in St. Louis, where I live. But if you live in Waco, Texas, you can get to Oxford only by beginning your trip in Waco. Something is a road for *you* only if it helps you get to your destination from the place where you yourself are. As things stand, a plane ticket on a flight from Waco, Texas to England would not now get me to Oxford, because I am not now in Texas.

The same thing holds also for a road to God. Something will be a road to God for a person only in case it goes from the spiritual or psychological or moral place where that person is to the one objective destination which is God. And so although a road to God will have one fixed ending point, it will have as many different beginning points as there are people engaged in the process of coming to God.

Insofar as *beauty* is a road to God, it will have these same features. The road which is beauty will have one objective destination, namely, God, but many differing beginning points. So beauty as a way to God is not just one road but more nearly something like a network of roads which come from all over and converge at the same point.

This is an important insight about the nature of beauty as a road to God. It provides for a subjective element in what counts as the beauty which draws us to the one objective destination that is God. It explains why the thing which one person takes as beautiful may really move that person closer to God even if some other person finds the same thing only trivial or boring or repellent. A road to God has to start where the person traveling that road is. So only what *you* find beautiful can be the beauty which is a road to God for you. Even if my Dominican friend does not find Rossini's music beautiful, so that it cannot serve *him* as a road to God in any way, Rossini's music might still serve that purpose for me.

And yet this fact does not mean that there is a completely subjective standard for beauty. It does not mean that just anything whatsoever can count as the beauty which is a road to God as long as someone thinks that that thing is beautiful. That is because it will be an objective fact of the matter whether or not what someone takes as beautiful does in fact lead that person to God. If Rossini's music just leaves me focused self-indulgently on my own emotions, then, however beautiful I think it is, that music will not be beauty which is for me a road to God.

So that is the first thing to see about beauty as a road to God. And here is the second thing. Insofar as God is a person—in *our* sense of the word "person," namely, something able to know and will—the destination of the road of beauty will be not a place but a relationship with a person.

Now, as we all know, there are degrees of relationship with a person. The same wonderful woman has been cutting my hair for the past fourteen years, and we have become friends in that time. But I don't know her nearly so well as I know the out-of-town friends of mine who come to my house for Thanksgiving; my relationship to them is much closer than my relationship to

*The destination of the road of beauty will be not a place but a relationship.*



my hairdresser. And I know my children and my husband even better than I know those out-of-town friends; my relationship to my family is closer still. So closeness to a person admits of degrees. Insofar as beauty is a road to God, then, beauty can be more or less successful. It can draw a person more or less close to God. Consequently, what one person takes as beautiful and

*Beauty as a road to God will have both an objective and a subjective component.*

what does in fact lead that person to God may connect her less deeply to God than something more really, objectively beautiful would do. And this too will be an objective fact of the matter. If what I pick as beautiful really is shallow or trite, then maybe it will still draw me to God but not so near to God nor so intimately close to him as something which is objectively more beautiful. In other words, for

some person even truly bad art may be a road to God, but it is not likely to be as successful at drawing a person very close to God as, say, Milton's poetry and Bach cantatas could be.

So beauty as a road to God will have both an objective and a subjective component. It will be a subjective matter what a particular person finds beautiful. But it will be an objective fact of the matter whether what is taken as beautiful does actually lead to God and how close to God it brings that person.

#### *Closeness to and Distance from God*

I have been talking here about coming close to God, but what does this mean? What does closeness with God consist in? For that matter, what does distance from God consist in? And how is that distance overcome?

On traditional Christian doctrine, as Christians have understood the matter from the Patristic period onward, what keeps people at a distance from God is something that has gone wrong in the will. In this world, a human person tends to prefer his own power and pleasure over greater goods. The tradition has typically called this problem in the human will "original sin." Some wit once remarked that the doctrine of original sin is the only theological doctrine overwhelmingly supported by empirical evidence. Certainly, every period and every place on the planet makes it abundantly clear that human beings do not will what a perfectly good God would will. Post-fall human beings have soaked the crust of the earth with the tears of those suffering from poverty, exploitation, degradation, war, and all the other horrendous evils human beings perpetrate on one another. It is a jarring understatement to say that our wills are not fixed on what is perfectly good.

To the extent that they are not, however, our wills are alienated from God's will, which is perfectly good. Unless this alienation can be overcome, we are at a distance from God. You cannot get personal relationship with another person just by being in the same place as that person. You need also to have some meeting of minds and hearts, and there cannot be any such harmony of wills between a perfectly good God and a person whose will is not fixed in righteousness. It is in this way that there is distance between a human person and God.

How, then, are we to come to God across this distance? How is the problem in the human will to be fixed? This is, of course, an enormously complicated theological question, which cannot be dealt with adequately just in passing here. It has to do with justification by faith and the atonement of Christ, as well as myriad other theological topics none of which, I am happy to say, is on the agenda for me in this paper.<sup>3</sup> For my purposes here, it is enough just to sketch the general tenor of the idea at the heart of all that theological complexity.

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<sup>3</sup>I have, however, dealt with all of them in great detail in my book *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003).

The traditional Christian idea, shared by Christians across all the divisions which separate us from each other, is that the problem of the evil in the human will is solved when a person surrenders to God. Aquinas says that the process of coming to union with God begins with faith which justifies a person. For Aquinas, a person's coming to faith is a matter of her hating the sinfulness in herself and longing for the goodness she perceives in God. That longing prompts her progressively to give up her resistance to God and to entrust herself to God for salvation from her own evil.<sup>4</sup>

This understanding of what is needed to remove the distance which separates a person from God is helpful for thinking about beauty as a road to God. Sometimes beauty wakes in us a desire, a great yearning, an inchoate longing for something. Augustine says to God, "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in you."<sup>5</sup> There is a strong connection between beauty and the desire which makes a heart restless until it surrenders to God. "Beauty" is a good name for what draws us when we feel such desire, when we feel restless in Augustine's sense.

*What constitutes beauty in art,  
and who is empowered to judge  
whether a particular piece of art,  
of music, is beautiful or not?*

When we are in the grip of that Augustinian sort of desire, we often do not know what we are yearning for. But Augustine (as well as many others in the Christian tradition) thought that if both the beauty and the desire for it are real and great, then in effect the desire is a desire which will lead to God. If the desire for that beauty grows in a person, it will in the end bring a person to surrender to God in faith, in the process which culminates in the human will's being united to the goodness of God's will.

And here we are in a position to understand the limits of the metaphor of beauty as a road to God, too. Because the destination of this road is a person, or union with a person, a road to God is different in important respects from a road to Oxford. While you are on a road to Oxford, you are simply not in Oxford; and once you are in Oxford, you are no longer on a road to Oxford. But things are very different if your destination is God. While you are on a road to God, you may find yourself powerfully in God's presence even while you are still on the road. Beauty can mediate this presence to us also, insofar as it helps us open to God's love and grace. And so, even while it is a road *to* God, the beauty of music, sacred music, music of the liturgy, can also be an occasion for a moment of encounter with God, not only in yearning, but also in gratitude, peace, and joy.

#### *The Connection between Religion and Beauty: Questions*

This insight into the way beauty works is helpful, but still vague. How does beauty have this effect on us? And why should we be concerned about beauty *in art*? Would we lose anything if we banned all beauty in art from our worship? What would we lose if there were *no* music in the Mass? And what makes a piece of music beautiful in a way which raises desire in us and draws us towards a surrender to God? What constitutes beauty in art, and who is empowered to judge whether a particular piece of art, of music, is beautiful or not?

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<sup>4</sup>I have presented and defended these views of Aquinas in the chapters on faith, grace, and atonement in my *Aquinas*.

<sup>5</sup>*Confessions*, I.1.

Connected to these questions is also a twinned worry which is currently exercising many serious people concerned in practical ways with the connection between religion and the arts. On the one hand, we might wonder whether there is something elitist about the arts. If we admit the beauty in music, for example, as part of our worship, will that beauty be only an obstacle on the road to God for ordinary people who are not trained in the arts? On the other hand, if we privilege just that art which is accessible to people who are aesthetically untrained, if we fill the Mass, for example, only with so-called praise choruses, if our hymns are written by the local eighteen-year old who has just taught himself to play the guitar, will the result be something merely shallow or sentimental which does not draw us closer to God? How are we to find our way between Scylla and Charybdis here?

If we think of good taste as a responsiveness to great and sophisticated beauty in the arts and bad taste as untrained responsiveness to art, then we can think of this worry as a puzzle about taste. Are we going to say that good taste is important in the Mass or in religious life generally? Or are we going to say that any taste, however bad, can still serve as a means to God provided that the person who has bad taste is sufficiently moved by what he thinks is beautiful?

### *Responses to Beauty in Art*

In thinking about these questions, it is helpful to look more closely at human reactions to art, at good and bad taste. I have learned a great deal about this subject from my friend Frank Burch Brown, whose books on these topics have been influential on my own thinking as well as that of many other people; and, as the preceding paragraphs should have made clear already, I am especially indebted to his recent book, *Good Taste, Bad Taste, and Christian Taste*.<sup>6</sup>

To begin with, when we read a poem or listen to a piece of music, we exercise what Burch Brown calls "aesthetic perception." Like visual perception, or any other kind of sensory perception, the ability to engage in aesthetic perception varies from person to person. That ability can also be trained. As far as that goes, even ordinary sensory perception can be trained. When my daughter was little, we took horseback riding lessons together, and the instructor tried to teach us how to tell what lead a horse is on. The lead a horse is on depends on the horse's leading forward foot. A horse can have either its right or its left foot as the leading forward foot; depending on which foot is the leading forward foot, the horse is on either the right lead or the left. The problem, of course, is that when a horse is cantering around a riding ring, all its feet are in continual motion. How on earth, you might say, is anyone supposed to be able to tell what counts as "the leading forward foot" in the horse's movement of its feet? I had a very hard time learning to see which lead a horse is on, but the riding instructor just looked at the horse and saw it.<sup>7</sup>

*The ability to engage in aesthetic perception can be trained.*

So "seeing" is something that is trainable in us. Aesthetic perception is too. When the blessing of wealth and the other gifts of good fortune combine to make it possible, then experience and education can train our ability to perceive beauty in art. As a Westerner's first experience of Peking opera will quickly convince him, without certain sorts of training, none of us could see

<sup>6</sup>Frank Burch Brown, *Good Taste, Bad Taste, and Christian Taste: Aesthetics in Religious Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>7</sup>Michael De Paul has called to my attention his use of this very example in a different context. He is an equestrian as well as an epistemologist, so his use of the example is more detailed and analytical than mine. See his "Argument and Perception: The Role of Literature in Moral Inquiry," *Journal of Philosophy*, 85 (1988), 552-65.

or hear any of the beauty in music or any other art. In our contemporary culture, some people who have had little training in music cannot hear much of any beauty in Bach cantatas. I myself had to have a lot of help in hearing what is beautiful about Lutoslawski's Cello Concerto. And so the perception of beauty in art will vary from one person to another, depending on the gifts they have been given, of talent, opportunity, health, leisure, wealth, and other things of this sort. The responsiveness to beauty in the arts which goes into good taste is a result of training, and this training is not possible without the kind of good fortune which is definitely not accessible to everyone.

In addition, however, it is important to understand that, even for those who are trained, there are actually two ways in which to respond to beauty in the arts. Another well-known writer in the area of religion and the arts, Albert Blackwell, has labeled these two ways "the Pythagorean approach" and "the incarnational approach."<sup>8</sup>

He names the first of these two approaches after Pythagoras, because Pythagoras taught the Western world about the mathematics of music. Music is constructed out of mathematical ratios of vibrations which produce certain sorts of harmonies, and mathematicians and many musicians delight in seeing the patterns of these ratios.

We can see what Blackwell has in mind with a Pythagorean approach if we use an analogous intellectual analysis on poetry. Ben Jonson's poem about the death of his baby daughter begins with these lines:

"Here lies to each her parents' ruth,  
Mary, the daughter of their youth"

and it ends with these lines:

"This grave partakes the fleshly birth;  
Which cover lightly, gentle earth."

If we reflect on this poem with Blackwell's Pythagorean approach, then we will notice that the poem consists of rhymed couplets. We might go on to wonder whether we should read the last line as a series of trochaic phrases or as iambic units. We could also point to the use of rhythm to provide emphasis of one kind or another. And so on. We might well feel moved by such artistry, but it would be the abstract beauty of the patterns which would prompt our reactions.

But, of course, if you approached poetry—or music—only in this Pythagorean way, you would be a machine, not a person. To be humanly responsive to beauty, you need to experience something more than the as-it-were mathematical patterns, in a way very hard to explain but easy to illustrate. For example, the pain of the last couplet of Ben Jonson's poem is evident; and it is brought home to us by Jonson's ability to make words sing, so that the combination of the lilting melodiousness of the final line and its pathos bring the shaft of his pain right into us. Hearing the poem in this manner is what Blackwell calls "the incarnational way" of approaching art.

The incarnational approach is a matter of emotion or feeling prompted by more than just the patterned character of the beautiful thing. It is very difficult to explain what sort of feelings these are or how we learn from them. Perhaps there are lots of feelings which are not really full-fledged emotions, or perhaps there are feelings for which we cannot give names or adequate verbal descriptions. But no one doubts that there is something here to explain.

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<sup>8</sup>Albert Blackwell, *The Sacred in Music* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1999).

And so we can approach beauty in art largely through analytical intellect, in the Pythagorean way, or largely through non-analytical feelings, in the incarnational way, or through some combination of the two.

### *Enjoyment and Evaluation*

Seeing this shows us that there are in fact two sorts of appraisal which we can make of beauty in art. There is the experiential engagement with art—the enjoyment of art—on the one hand; and there is the judgment of art, on the other. Burch Brown points out that we can judge a work of art good without enjoying it, and it is also true that we can enjoy a work of art without judging it good. So, for example, we are sometimes abashed at the things we enjoy in art. I enjoy Verdi's *Requiem*, but I know that admitting this is a little like saying I really like hot dogs. I know that professional musicians value Mozart's *Requiem* much more than Verdi's—and so do I, really. But I love Verdi's *Requiem* anyway. On the other hand, there are things I judge superb

*Beauty which is a road to  
God has to meet people  
where they are and move  
them forward.*

works of art, in the sense that I can see how marvelously made they are—but I still don't find much enjoyment in them. I am sure that Duruflé's *Requiem* is one of the great musical settings of the Requiem text, but I still don't enjoy it in the way I enjoy Verdi's. I judge Duruflé's *Requiem* better than Verdi's, and I enjoy Verdi's more than Duruflé's.

Blackwell's distinction between the Pythagorean and the incarnational approaches to music explains how our responses to the same piece of music can be distinct in this way. When I judge Duruflé's *Requiem* better than Verdi's, I am approaching the music in the Pythagorean way. When I enjoy Verdi's *Requiem* more than Duruflé's, I am approaching the music incarnationally. And so, even for one and the same person, there can be a difference between the way in which beauty in art is judged and the affective response which the experience of that art produces. A person's intellect and affect may go their separate ways as regards responsiveness to art. Judging and enjoying can come apart.

### *Good Taste and Bad Taste*

These ways of thinking about our responsiveness to beauty in art are helpful for thinking about the connection between beauty and our relationship to God. Insofar as beauty is a road to God for a person, it will begin where that person is and move him forward. So the poetry or the music which are suitable to be used in liturgy have to reflect the degree to which the aesthetic perceptions of the people involved in that liturgy have been trained. But it is not enough for them to judge art good in order for its beauty to serve them as a road to God. They need also to be moved by it. Beauty which is a road to God has to meet people where they are and move them forward. And for this, they need to be able to respond to the beauty in that art with experiential engagement, that is, with enjoyment.

For this reason, we can recognize that the art or beauty which reaches a person where he is might not be the most superlative of art or the best of beauty. Because enjoyment and judgment of beauty are not the same, a person might enjoy more what is in fact a lesser piece of art, a smaller beauty. But because a greater beauty has more power to move a person once that person is able to perceive it, there is some real point in a person's learning to perceive, and so learning to enjoy, the greater beauty, if the gifts of wealth, leisure, opportunity, and talent make such training possible.

Consequently, on this way of thinking about beauty as a road to God, considerations of good taste should not dictate the way in which we come to beauty in art. Enjoyment should. But learning to perceive the real beauty in art and to enjoy it—good taste, for short—should be a goal for us, to the extent that that goal is available to us. Insofar as beauty is a road to God, greater beauty will be a better road.

So if we start where we are, letting enjoyment and desire draw us, and training our aesthetic perception and learning to discern true beauty better if this option is available to us, we will grow in our responsiveness to beauty.

There are also ways to be or become less responsive to beauty, and I want to say a few cautionary words about those here. If we go wrong with regard to beauty in these ways, beauty will not be for us a road to God.

Sometimes people love beauty and rejoice in it in such a way that beauty ceases to function as a road to God for them. For such people, the aesthetic delight in beauty is an end in itself, and so beauty does not move them further towards God. What is wrong with such people is *not* that they take *beauty* as an end in itself.

Taking beauty as an end in itself can be a means to God, in a paradoxical sort of way, just as having final ends can be a means to a good life. It is a mistake to suppose that beauty is one *species* of goodness, on a par with the moral and the useful. Rather, as I will explain below, beauty is a *mode* of goodness; and so, to take it as an end in itself is another way to love what God is. Nonetheless, there are some people who have good taste, but not a taste which allows them to taste and see that the Lord is good. It is common to call such people “aesthetes.”

What has gone wrong in an aesthete is apparent in the description I just gave. An aesthete does not enjoy the beauty in a piece of music. He enjoys his aesthetically sophisticated ability to take in that beauty. What is the difference in these two reactions? The difference lies in the object of the pleasure. In the one case, the object of the pleasure is the beauty in the music. In the other case, the case of the aesthete, the object is the aesthete’s own excellence in accessing the beauty of the music. The primary object of the aesthete’s pleasure, then, is just his own sophisticated access to complicated beauty not available to the untrained.

You can see the difference at issue here vividly if you remember the portrayal of Mozart and Salieri in the movie *Amadeus*. I am not saying that that movie had the biography of either Mozart or Salieri right. I want to call attention to the movie’s portrayal of these composers only because the movie’s characterization of them gives us a vivid portrayal of the difference I am trying to elucidate here. In the movie, when Salieri is portrayed as praying fervently to God for his greatest heart’s desire, what he says to God is, “Please let me be a famous composer.” What Salieri (the Salieri of the movie) wants is that he be famous and that that fame be for musical expertise. In the movie, what Mozart wants is just the music itself. What distinguishes Salieri’s desire from Mozart’s is that Salieri’s desire is in some sense reflexive or higher-order; it is a desire about *himself* primarily and about music only secondarily. And so it has a certain self-regarding character about it, as Mozart’s desire does not.

I do not know how to characterize Salieri-like attitudes precisely, but it seems clear that there are lots of Salieri-like attitudes, which are not hard to recognize. You can want to understand the nature of light, or you can want to write an excellent paper on the nature of light. These are not the same desire. The first one is a Mozart-like desire, and the second one is a Salieri-like desire. It is a Salieri-like desire because the object of the desire is the relative standing of your

*By training our aesthetic perception and learning to discern true beauty better we will grow in our responsiveness to beauty.*

own writing on this subject by comparison with that of others. It is also possible to have Salieri-like attitudes about people. A man can want a particular woman, or he can want to be the husband of that woman. In the latter case, the object of his desire is not the woman but his being her husband, so that something about himself is the primary object of his desire. She herself is not the primary object of his desire.

The difference between Salieri-like desires and Mozart-like desires gives us a way to think about an aesthete. An aesthete, we might say, is someone whose attitudes towards the beautiful are Salieri-like attitudes. The primary object of the aesthete's pleasure is not the beautiful thing itself but rather his own aesthetic ability to access that thing's beauty. And now it is not so hard to see what is wrong with the attitude of the aesthete. The aesthete is focused primarily on himself, and only secondarily on beauty or beautiful things. That is why for the aesthete beauty is not a road to God. You cannot be moved closer to another person if you are focused primarily on yourself.

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Furthermore, insofar as the aesthete is concerned largely with his own highly trained aesthetic sensibilities, he will be indifferent to or even snobbishly disdainful of those others whose sensibilities are less trained than his own. And so the aesthete will be an especial menace when it comes to liturgical music, because in his focus on his own aesthetic reactions, he will tend to suppose (if he thinks about the matter at all) that the few aesthetic elite are the only persons whose worship matters to the Lord of the liturgy.

On the other hand, of course, the same distinction, between Salieri-like attitudes and Mozart-like attitudes, also helps us understand sentimentality, which is another way of going wrong with regard to beauty. Unlike the aesthete, the sentimental person does not care about good taste, provided only that he is able to enjoy what he feels is beautiful.

Sentimentality is not harmless either. In fact, the Nazis have given us some of our most appalling examples of sentimentality. Johann Paul Kremer was the Nazi doctor in charge of Auschwitz,<sup>9</sup> and we have the diaries he wrote while he was at Auschwitz. In his diaries, he describes his own horrific torture and murder of Jewish men, women, and children. But Kremer was also a sentimental man. In his diaries, sometimes on the same page as his entries about torture and murder, he records his own reactions to beautiful or moving things, and in such places he tends to devote diary space to his evaluation of himself as a man of great sensitivity, as a humane and civilized person. You can see clearly how moved he is at the way in which he is moved by beauty in things.

And that fact helps us understand what has gone wrong with the sentimental person. The primary object of the sentimental person's reaction is just his own being moved by something. He becomes emotional over his own emotions. Sentimentality is thus also a Salieri-like attitude in virtue of having as its primary object not something external to the sentimental person but rather only that person's own emotional states. For the sentimental person, beauty is not a road to God either, because, like the aesthete, the sentimental person is focused largely on himself.

Furthermore, there is a special problem with sentimentality because it is so often self-righteous in its insistence on being allowed to emote, however bad the art or however untrained the taste which produces the emotion.

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<sup>9</sup>KL Auschwitz Seen by the SS. Rudolf Höss, Pery Broad, Johann Paul Kremer (Auschwitz: The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 1998).

So not just every response to beauty will let us appropriate beauty as a road to God. Beauty will draw us nearer to God only if what moves us is the beauty itself, not something about our own reactions to that beauty.

*Beauty as Mediator*

But when we are moved by beauty, in enjoyment of what is rightly judged to be beautiful, how is it that beauty moves us closer to God? I said at the outset that our drawing near to God is a matter of surrendering to him. How does beauty mediate that surrender?

Sometimes a poem or a piece of music will wake in us an ill-defined yearning for we-know-not-what. Such yearning often comes to us with pain and confusion. We have no clear object for the yearning and no explanation for the pain, except that it is somehow the pain of unfulfilled hungriness. It can come to us also as loneliness, even loneliness which is an old, familiar part of our lives. For many people, Schubert's masterpiece, the F-Minor Fantasy, raises feelings of this sort. This music arouses an exquisite delicacy of pain, as if the pain and yearning were fragile and precious. That delicacy alternates with an almost frenetic attempt in the music to escape pain, as if something in the music were rattling the bars of its cage, desperate to get out and away. But that franticness soon subsides into another round of delicate, intimate, fragile intimacy with pain, which is intensely quiet. In those parts of the music, it is almost as if the pain in the music were a deep sea place for the heart, full of rich purples and greens, where one can swim in hidden harmony with pain, away from all that is crude in the world. The more urgent and frenetic parts of the music serve to throw into sharp relief the sweetness of the quieter parts. Something about this piece of music always strikes me as if it were, you might say, liquid pain.

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When art affects us in this sort of way, as I have been trying to describe the effects of Schubert's Fantasy, then we have one sort of explanation for the way beauty draws us closer to God. A person moved as this music moves people will be restless, as Augustine says; and the only thing which will ultimately fill the hunger of this restlessness is the intimate presence of God himself.

Painful longing is thus one way in which beauty in art can be a road to God, but it is not the only way. Bach's *St. John Passion* is an example of beauty in music which draws us in a different manner. The music tells the story of Christ's passion as that story is found in the Gospel of John, but it tells the story meditatively, with pauses for reflection. The scene involving the flogging of Christ is typical. It begins with Pilate's trying to get the crowd to call for the release of Jesus. Instead, the crowd cries for Barrabas, until Pilate gives up and turns Jesus over to be flogged. The music in this part of the work builds to a kind of frenzy, making us feel the mob violence and the hysteria leading up to the whipping. But at that point the frenzied pace of the music stops suddenly, and there is a meditation in music on the thought that the Savior of the world is flogged for the sins of those whom he loves. Bach uses only a single voice and quietly plucked strings for this part of the music. The intensity of the mystical quiet, the inwardness, in this part of the music makes us want to hold our breath so that nothing at all can disturb the stillness.

There is poignant pain in the music at this point, but there is also peace. It is the peace of a newly-weaned child at his mother's side, you might say. The pain is not taken away by the stillness in the music, but it is engulfed in a great sense of being at rest with Christ in this pain. And



so although pain is present in this part of the music, it is present in a completely different way from the way it is in Schubert's Fantasy. In Bach's musical meditation, the pain is not forcing its way out into yearning. Rather the music gives us a sense of peace even in pain. It is, as it were, a redeemed pain. The whole effect is a stillness which is willing to trust God even in pain.

This music thus mediates to us an acceptance of the pain in our innermost psyches. Those griefs, those failures, which might have bent us away from God in shame or anger lose some of their power to do so, in the quiet of the beauty of that music.

But this is not the only way in which beauty can transform pain into something more peaceful and compatible with trust in God. The beauty of Russian Orthodox hymns does so in a very different way. Slavonic hymns from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries are surpassingly beautiful, and there is great peacefulness in them, too. The beauty in that music, however, produces a kind of peacefulness in which pain is present only as transcended. In this respect, the music shares some features with the beauty of Orthodox icons. In this beauty, it is as if we are being taught to feel the sufferings of our lives as transcended in the coming peace and order of the heavenly kingdom. It is not hard to see how this sort of beauty draws us nearer to God in trust and patience.

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Finally, it is important not to forget the way in which beauty in art can be just joyful. The choral part at the end of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, for example, is a great overflowing of exuberance, of gratitude, hope, and joy. Here pain is simply absent, and there is a rush of gladness that lets us forget sorrow and trouble for a time. Gladness and joy in beauty also strengthen us for the road to God and draw us further on it.

#### *Beauty as a Transcendental*

And so beauty is a road to God for us because when we approach it in what Blackwell called "the incarnational way," it arouses feelings in us which make us long for God's presence or produce in us peace even in a fallen world or render us joyful in the good we find around us. We are built—our brains are built—to be able to detect the mathematical patterns in the vibrations of air which strike our ears when we hear music. But we are also built in such a way as to be powerfully moved by these patterns of vibrations. Somehow the process of evolution and God's design of us has made us such that we apprehend beauty through our senses; and, having apprehended beauty in this way, we long for an incorporeal God and rejoice in him. It is amazing that there is such a connection. Why should it work this way?

Here it helps to ask what beauty is. Thomas Aquinas had an answer which seems to me brilliant. In his view, beauty is one of the modes of goodness—of goodness which is itself a transcendental, encompassing not just moral goodness but all goodness correlated with *being*. For Aquinas, beauty is goodness perceptible to the senses.<sup>10</sup> This description does not imply that there is no beauty in mathematics, or in the work of art in the imagination of the artist, or in the heart and soul of a person we love. We often say, "I see!" where our corporeal eyes have nothing to do with it. There is also the vision of the mind. When Aquinas takes beauty to be perceptible to the senses, the sense of interior vision is included.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. *Summa theologiae*, I, q.5, a.4, ad 1. For a contemporary study of the transcendentals in Aquinas, see Jan Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals. The Case of Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1996).

Aquinas's idea helps to draw together the ideas we have been exploring in this paper. In God, there is true, objective goodness. If beauty is goodness as it is perceptible to the senses, as Aquinas supposes, then there really is something to perceive, the true beauty which reflects the real goodness of God.

I do not mean to say that the idea of beauty as a transcendental solves all the puzzles generated by the notion of beauty as a road to God. For example, we might want to know what accounts for the sense that the beauty in some music acquaints us somehow with holiness, while the apparently equally great beauty in other music does not. The songs of desolation in Handel's *Ariodante* are beautiful but vastly different in character from the sublime beauty of Monteverdi's *Vespers*; and the difference is not just the difference between the secular and the sacred. The difference among the words sung is not sufficient to explain the differing effects of the music. So there are things hard to understand which are not explainable solely by the idea of beauty as a transcendental.

Nonetheless, the notion that beauty is goodness perceptible to the senses is illuminating in many respects. To begin with, it is clear that perceptual capacities can vary. We don't all see or hear the same thing. The idea that beauty is perceptible goodness helps explain the fact that people are able to find beauty to a greater or lesser extent. And that is why the road to the one thing that God is has to have different starting points for different people. The starting point depends on where people are and what they perceive as beautiful. What they perceive as beautiful, as distinct from what they *ought* to perceive as beautiful, is where the road begins for them.

On the other hand, because the beauty which is goodness perceptible to the senses is an objective matter, it is important for us to train our aesthetic perception, if this is a possibility for us, so that we become better able to connect to the real beauty which is really there. We should not just pander to tastes we already have, but we should educate our aesthetic perception, to the extent allowed us by our condition in life, so that we can find enjoyment in what is truly judged superbly beautiful.

Finally, Aquinas's notion of beauty as perceptible goodness helps us to understand the way in which beauty constitutes a road to God for us. We have built into us a kind of hunger for goodness, as Augustine says. Insofar as beauty is goodness as it is available to the senses, the perception of beauty stimulates us to want the goodness beauty lets us perceive. And there is a great advantage for us in having the hunger for goodness be stimulated by goodness which is perceptible to the senses (including intellectual vision), as distinct from goodness which is perceptible to the discursive reason of the intellect.

In our post-fall condition, even with a built-in hunger for goodness, our minds are often enough alienated from goodness, too. We are divided against ourselves in this respect as so many others, like a person so grief-stricken at the thought of his dreadful drinking habit that he has to comfort himself with a whisky. Some people are resistant to the whole idea of the existence of God and the standard of values that go with Christian commitment to the goodness of God. Some people who are religious believers are angry at God. Some are in despair over their sins. Some are shamed at what they have made of themselves and their lives. In these and many other ways, we can cut ourselves off from the very goodness we hunger for. If goodness were presented directly to a person divided against himself, through preaching or philosophical

*The notion that beauty is goodness perceptible to the senses is illuminating in many respects.*

argument, in the form of exhortation of any kind, that person might well just turn away in disbelief or despondency. But goodness presented to the senses is a kind of stealth bomber. It flies in under the radar of the reason to have its effect on desire, without a preemptive strike on the part of reason to stop it. By prompting pain in us, even pain of a redeemed or transcended sort, or by giving us the kind of love of goodness which is joy, beauty perceptible to the senses moves us to the goodness of God, who is himself beautiful, if we only have heart to see it.

### Conclusion

I am neither licensed nor inclined to preach, and so perhaps the lesson of these reflections can be left to emerge of its own accord. But this much, at any rate, ought to be said. We need to

*Liturgy is, as the word itself implies, it is to serve the Lord, in worship.*

keep clearly in mind what the end of liturgy is. As the word itself implies, it is to serve the Lord, in worship. If we block out of the liturgy music which mediates to some people the power and the tenderness of Christ's grace, as the music of the Saint Louis Jesuits does for me, then we are prohibiting for some people the purpose of the liturgy, as if the Lord of the liturgy cared about the worship of only some of his people and not all of them.

It is true that it is difficult for liturgical music to serve equally well everyone in the mixed multitude of the Church. But it is opposed to the spirit of Christianity for those few privileged enough to have had excellent musical training to put their own needs and tastes first. We need to remember that the Lord served in the liturgy said, "Inasmuch as you have not done it unto one of the least of my brethren, you have not done it unto me." (Matt.25:45) He did not say, "Inasmuch as you have not done it unto one of the most privileged of my brethren, you have not done it unto me." Whatever sacrifices *caritas necessitates* as regards taste are more incumbent on the few who are musically trained than on those many who have not shared their opportunities for musical education.

Finally, it is good to remember that, in Proverbs, sowing discord has pride of place among the seven things God is said to hate.<sup>11</sup> The Lord of the liturgy is the God of love. And so there is also a service of the Lord in patience exercised toward others who desire to draw near to the Lord through the beauty of that music which each himself enjoys.<sup>12</sup> ❧



<sup>11</sup>Proverbs 6:16–19. Sowing discord is the last in a building list.

<sup>12</sup>I am grateful to my friends John Foley and Frank Burch Brown for comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

# Changing Hearts and Minds in the Pews

By Mary Jane Ballou



If your pews are filled with devout, prayerful, singing Catholics, you don't need to read any further. On the other hand, if you look out from the organ bench to see an ocean of empty faces, stay with me.

Don't say you haven't seen them. Listless, holding the closed hymnal in one hand, or perhaps leaning back in the pew, arms folded, waiting for things to end. Their "full, active, and conscious participation" consists of not being unconscious. Occasionally, extravagant humor from a visiting priest can make them laugh. Maybe. Neither traditional music nor contemporary pop ballads incite them to sing. While the vast majority receives Communion, there is no reverence and no joy in the gift. At the end of the liturgy, they are like third-graders waiting for the bell to ring. Next week you will find them in the pews, ready to endure this process again. The parish may be filled with activities and ministries; picnics and school festivities, thriving families and prayer groups. And still the worship is so lacking in vitality. Why?

From *Sacrosanctum Concilium* to the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, the dreams of liturgists and composers such as Lucien Deiss, envisioning a celebrating assembly, remain unrealized. There are exceptions, of course. All choir directors read jealously of cathedrals (and the occasional university parish) with choirs, scholas, and a plethora of brass players who can transpose at sight, surrounded by a full-voiced assembly. The reality for most of us is different—a landscape of limited resources, willing but undertrained singers, and a middle-school trumpet player. At the same time, it's not about the money or the resources. Many of the most moving liturgies I've attended were in humble circumstances with modest musical equipment. It was the unity of focus of the worshipping congregation and the priest that seemed to place that particular time and space in contact with heaven. Why was this experience the exception?

The intention of this essay is not to rehearse the sorry situation in which many parishes find themselves when it comes to worship. Instead, the reader will find some thoughts about causes and possible cures.

## *Why Are They There, Anyway?*

This is the question that first comes to mind when considering the seemingly unhappy people in the pews. Market research organizations survey the church-going population of the United States on a regular basis. In March 2007, the Gallup Poll contacted 1,006 American adults over the age of eighteen with the open-ended question, "What is the most important reason why you attend church or synagogue?" Here are the Catholic responses.

Keeps me grounded/inspired	28%
It's my faith	21%
For spiritual growth/guidance	17%
Brought up that way/Tradition/A family value	15%
To worship God	13%
Believe in God/religion	11%
Fellowship of other members/The community	3%

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While one would never apply results such as these to an “intentional” parish, such as a community centered on the Extraordinary Rite or members of an ecclesial movement, they have some value for considering the “it’s the closest to my house and the parking lot is good” parish. While the comments that follow are unscientific, they combine the survey results with years of informal conversations with church-goers.

*“Worshipping God” was in fifth place in the survey, a rather discouraging result for those who believe that the conscious worship of God is the highest activity of humankind.*

All the hand-shaking during the sign of peace aside, it does not appear that the surveyed Catholics were over enamored of each other with only three percent of respondents interested in fellowship.

The “it’s my faith” and “brought up that way” fall into a category I will call “force of habit.” These are the people who are there because they have always been there. They have ridden out liturgical

and pastoral changes. When the felt banners were replaced with fabric and when the three-chord guitar players were replaced by a grand piano and a synthesizer, they just blinked and continued not singing. They sat through “If I Had a Hammer” and “Here I Am, Lord” and they will wait out the Gregorian revival as well.

“Keeps me grounded/inspired” and “spiritual growth and guidance” respondents probably focus on the reception of Holy Communion and the quality of the homilies. They come to Mass to get their batteries charged and they are happy if the music contributes to the process. Bear in mind, however, that the music must help them have an experience or feeling. Members of this group have a fondness for highly personal hymns and upbeat tunes.

“Worshipping God” was in fifth place in the survey, a rather discouraging result for those who believe that the conscious worship of God is the highest activity of humankind. At the same time, there is a core that at least identifies that purpose. However, we would need to know more about individual definitions of worship before we became too hopeful.

The last group who “believe in God and/or religion” may actually be members of other groups who didn’t state their reasons too clearly. On the other hand, we may be looking at “Pascal’s wager” at work and their Mass attendance is just to be on the safe side.

All these results aside, I believe there are other unarticulated reasons people come back week after week. The first is that they are drawn by the grace of God. The second is the longing of the human heart, made for God and constantly seeking him. The social philosopher Eugene Rosenstock-Huussy commented once that the human heart is made for love and if it cannot find love, it will fall sick and do dreadful things. Our pews have in them hearts longing to love God and be loved by him. Worship is honor and adoration given to what we love.

For those of us who direct, play, and sing, our worship is very conscious and we all hope that our music will be acceptable to God. Musicians are by nature very responsive to music and enjoy the “doing” of music. Not everyone shares our experience. Let us consider the sonic world our would-be worshippers know, whose sounds are still ringing in their ears as they enter the church on Sunday morning.

#### *The World in Which They Live*

Do our would-be worshippers come into the church after a stroll through the countryside or a meditative walk down a cloister?

When they get up, the noise begins. If there are children, the house erupts in the chaos, accompanied by a television morning show, of assembling outfits and sulking teenagers, wiping strained apricots off the baby and stuffing everyone into the minivan. Even calmer houses are full of morning e-mail, bad news on the radio, and lost keys. Children and teenagers have been with us for centuries. It's the electronics that up the ante.

Folks are wired for sound and speech all the time. In offices and stores, there is an unbroken stream of music and announcements rattling in the background. The radio and CD player (not to mention the DVD and the isolating Ipod in the back seat) play continuously in the car. How often do any of us sit in our homes with absolutely nothing on but the refrigerator?

We demand to be entertained and engaged immediately. The ubiquitous remote control gives broadcasters five seconds to grab the attention of viewers. Otherwise, they click on by. Slouched on the couch, tired eyes watch home decorating, reality shows, Geraldo Rivera, earthquakes and incipient hurricanes, sitcoms and dramas, sports, and Mother Angelica pass by. Like a day laborer on a street corner, each program shouts, "Watch me, watch me!" After a few rounds on the cable cycle, the viewer settles down and gazes at the best thing in the line-up.

*The "entertainment culture"  
is about passive reception.*

In the production of a single 30-second broadcast commercial, developers may spend in excess of \$1,000,000. There is not one moment of that commercial that has not been crafted and polished perfectly. In the studio music industry, voices can be passed through digital processors to correct pitch. A single missed note can be re-recorded and plugged in; the possibility for retakes is limited only by the finances of the producers. Live performances outside the shrinking classical music arena are increasingly multimedia extravaganzas with laser lights, fireworks, and singers chosen for looks and personality over talent.

In schools, students are enticed into learning with computer games and simulations that break down material into tiny bits of text surrounded by images that reproduce the visuals of television and cinema. Maybe a minute for each item, maybe less, lest boredom set in. The production values of these tidbits are usually excellent because the designers know that students will judge them according to the standards set by other media. Hokey graphics and silence or mere speech are turn-offs, so the "life of the molecule" program had better look and sound good.

Lastly, the internet has brought everything else home. Sites need to be fast-loading and eye-grabbing or the mouse-wielding user will click away. Designers labor to develop "sticky" pages that will hold visitors for at least minimal communication. Everything is there for the taking—music, texts, art, video—for every taste imaginable. You can range from the Sistine Chapel ceiling to the rankest pornography and rap on a medium that is completely neutral. "Freshness" is all, with the average life expectancy for a major web site being three to four months before a major overhaul is required to keep the visitors coming back.

This "entertainment culture" is about passive reception. The most movement that is demanded is a thumb on a remote or an index finger on a mouse. The head rarely swivels, while gravity rules. Someone else, somewhere else designs and delivers. The greatest demand made on the potential audience is "stay tuned." Content becomes secondary to delivery. Marshall McLuhan's prediction that the "medium becomes the message" is a pervasive truth. The goal is to keep that viewer/listener entranced with something, anything. Nothing more.

This sonically and visually saturated population staggers into your churches on Sunday morning (or Saturday afternoon if they have Sunday plans). They are fatigued from workplace power plays and family squabbles. Perhaps they wish they had a job and a family to argue with

and their main companionship is the shopping channel. One way or another, their tired minds and souls are now in the pews and we ask them (often in a chirpy emcee voice) to “join in the celebration and lift your hearts and voices in song and prayer.” These are individuals who are used to consuming music and spectacle, not creating it. The response is close to nil and most refuse to even touch the hymnal. Forty years of preaching “full, conscious, and active participation” seems only to have immunized them to our pleas.

#### *What’s Been Tried*

The churches have tried it all.

In parishes with ample financial resources, you’ll find the best sound equipment on the market and a taste for glitz (within some limits, of course). The music choices will increasingly mimic the harmonies and phrasing of popular music and a personable cantor is always an asset. Youth Masses may travel even further down this road and go for a full combo. For those with more “high-brow” tastes, publishers offer streamlined arrangements of polyphony or suggest

*For those working toward a rediscovery of liturgical music, the most resistant group is not “the young people,” it is often the elders of the parish.*

ways to soup up the old favorites from the 1980s with instrumental obbligatos and brass quartets at Easter. For want of another term, let’s call this the “we’ll beat them at their own game” model.

In the plush parish, the assembly looks for a nice balance of snappy and sentimental accompaniments with some great riffs, and all their favorites at Christmas and Easter. Music is expected to uplift, inspire, energize, soothe, or provoke some emotional reaction from the listeners. They might sing along on a few of their favorite numbers, but who can compete with the

professional singers and the choir with the back-up combo or the fantastic pipe organ. It is better to go along for the ride. High quality music is something the parishioners have paid for.

In smaller or more financially straitened parishes, we often find another response. This is “since we can’t beat them, we’ll just give up.” Obviously, no one is going to make that announcement in the Sunday bulletin, but you can see (and hear) the results. The minimal choir will walk a treadmill of a dozen hymns and a single Mass setting throughout the year. Rehearsals will be limited to thirty minutes before the liturgy and one or two evenings before Christmas and Easter. The sincerity of heart of the musicians becomes the selling point of the parish’s music program. And very few buyers will appear. Choir membership will stagnate, despite repeated pleas. The weary keyboard player and the singers will soldier on.

In this “parish of despair,” the expectations have sunk. Many small parishes had meager music before the liturgical changes of the 1970s. In the intervening years, parishioners count themselves lucky to have survived “Blowin’ in the Wind,” played by teenagers. In fact, many believe that poorly executed music is the sign of a “truly sincere” heart and somehow mandated by Vatican II, along with newsprint missalettes.

For those working toward a rediscovery of liturgical music (versus “music at the liturgy”), coping with either of these models is difficult. Take away the snazzy arrangements or try to shove the congregation out of their hymnic rut and the pastor’s telephone will begin to ring. Surprisingly, the most resistant group is not “the young people” to whom your aging guitarist is always referring. It is often the elders of the parish.

On bad days one is tempted to think that Frank Sinatra was replaced by “On Eagle’s Wings,” because the fans of that school of ballad hymnody are often in their sixties or older. They are also

in many instances the first to complain about the reappearance of chant and Latin, even though their generation was carefully taught the *Missa de Angelis* and the Eucharistic hymns. Forty years ago, the powers that be told them that Latin was bad and chant was passé. In fact, the impression was given that everything prior to 1965 was one big mistake and it was time to move on. Now we're telling them that what we told them *then* was a *bigger* mistake. Quite honestly, the skepticism is understandable. They probably believe it is just a matter of time before the current line of thinking will be rejected, so they'll stand pat with the Greatest Hits of the 1980s.

Every parish has a mixture of people and opinions. On the same Sunday, notes can appear on the music stand complaining that "the music is too boring" and that "the music is too bouncy." Leave the extremes aside and look back again at that large group in the middle that cannot be bothered to complain. They don't complain; they tolerate. Physically present, they are still mentally in the office, fixing lunch, or just way far away. Do they even know what worship is? Do we?

### *Worship Considered*

First, what is "worship" anyway and what is its purpose? The dictionary definition of worship is "the honor and adoration accorded a deity." How is that honor and adoration to be rendered? In the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the focus is on the divine action believed to take place in the Eucharist.

In an interview with Zenit News Service published January 25, 2005, Fr. Richard John Neuhaus gave a succinct summary of the purpose of worship: "The worship of God has no purpose other than the worship of God. While worship has many benefits, we do not worship in order to attain those benefits. The simple and radical truth is that we worship God because God is to be worshiped."<sup>1</sup>

Wait! We're going to tell people that it's not about their "being grounded" or working on spiritual growth. For many Catholics, the concept of worship that is not self-improvement or self-actualization is unknown. In the interview quoted above, Fr. Neuhaus complained about "the ascendancy of an instrumental view of worship. Liturgy was subjected to psychological and sociological criteria alien to the very meaning of worship." Whatever our own understanding about the practice of worship may be, this instrumental view (also known as "what's in it for me") is the governing principle out in the pews.

*What is "worship" anyway  
and what is its purpose?*

We can help the congregation recognize the critical difference between that entertainment culture outside and a worshipping community of believers. While appeals from the lectern and bulletin inserts have their place in this process, most of us know that bulletins are sketchily read and announcements are half-heard while the congregation prepares for the race to the parking lot or the donuts. This is not a novel idea and many churches make a conscious effort in this direction. Since I am a musician, I will speak from that perspective, leaving aside short-comings of the architectural and focusing on the "soundscape" an arriving worshipper finds. Let us consider how we can create an environment that encourages that transition from secular to sacred.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.zenit.org/article-12054?l=english> (accessed October 25, 2007).



The first step should be a tranquil environment that reflects a sacred space. Big churches with multiple services often feature folks dashing frantically around the altar and the pews, straightening up, setting up, and cleaning up. Sometimes there is a genuine press of time. Other times this can happen because those involved don't think to do this earlier. The result can be commotion going on at the same time the parishioners are expected to prepare for worship. Working to eliminate or minimize "pre-liturgical frenzy" will serve all those involved as well as those arriving.

In addition, there is another obstacle to the congregation's recollection and I am as guilty as many other musicians. You guessed it: rehearsing right before the service in the church. There are two causes for this. The first is the truth that weekday choir rehearsals often lose in the competition for choir members' time. In churches committed to having some vestige of a choir at every service, a sizable percentage of the singers will see the music for the first time one hour before the liturgy begins. The second is the loss of dedicated rehearsal space. Older churches had often had choir rooms where warm-ups could take place and last-minute rough spots could be ironed out. Now there is often only one piano or organ and it is right up front. Early birds are treated to the rocky run-throughs of responsorial psalms and occasional seating squabbles. The choir members themselves are often in a flutter. The draconian solution is mandatory weeknight rehearsal attendance. A more realistic solution is a keyboard set up in a room for the warm-up/touch-up. Insisting that the congregation use this time to learn something new is even more objectionable. If the new setting of the ordinary or an unfamiliar hymn cannot be assimilated from the choir's modeling of it, then it is not meant to be. Remember, if people wanted a rehearsal, they would have joined the choir!

The nave and sanctuary of the church are special places. For many of us who work in churches, it is easy to get too comfortable in that space. This is not an office or just any public place. When musicians and others who spend time there act like it's nothing special, we really cannot blame the congregation for acting the same way. This is not an argument for exaggerated tiptoes and whispers—just a little *gravitas* and a lower speaking voice. Model the behavior you want to see and chances are better of getting it. This is the only time and place for many people to have an undistracted moment in an over-booked, over-loud world.

In the Orthodox Church, a cantor is generally chanting the "Third Hour" before the Liturgy begins. At the same time, the faithful are arranging for their offerings of altar breads to commemorate their living and dead and reverencing the icons around the church. There are sound and movement, but they are sound and movement that serve as "liturgical warm-up exercises." They are directly focused on the upcoming liturgy.

In the western churches, practices vary. "Doing nothing" is a poor option. Murmuring can develop into outright chatting across the aisles. Recitation of the rosary can yield mixed results. Quiet recitation is one thing. A leader reading elaborate introductions to each mystery in a loud voice is another. Parishioners also may resent the imposition of a group devotion into a time they want for private prayer.

Organ preludes can help with recollection if the organist is willing to forego getting everyone's attention with strange chords. As an organist, I have to confess that it is often hard to remember that many people find twentieth-century French organ music annoying and the period before Mass is not the time to change their opinion.

Parishes with stronger vocal resources may find the period before the Mass an excellent time to reintroduce the congregation to Gregorian chant. In some places, a small group will sing the introit from the *Graduale Romanum* in Latin. Others might find one of the English versions of the *Graduale Simplex* more appropriate. The point is not a performance. Instead, the singing should be recollected and unstrained. This is not the moment to take a chance on an uncertain work.

If chant isn't a desirable option, a choir with three or four competent parts might present a simple arrangement from the Russian Orthodox musical repertoire. These antiphons are generally understated in their style and singable by most ensembles. Again, the focus should be on helping the waiting congregation (and the singers) make the transition from the outside environment of public transportation or car radios, of getting the children ready and locking the dog out of the living room, to attentiveness and readiness to worship God as a community of believers.

These "sacred sounds," so to speak, could assist the people in shifting from outside to inside, both physically and psychologically. In *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger observes:

We are realizing more and more clearly that silence is part of the liturgy. We respond, by singing and praying, to the God who addresses us, but the greater mystery, surpassing all words, summons us to silence. It must, of course, be a silence with content, not just the absence of speech and action. We should expect the liturgy to give us a positive stillness that will restore us.<sup>2</sup>

A calm environment and music that defines the space as sacred will make that transition easier. The instrumental or vocal prelude should end with enough time for the silence to grow out of it. That silence in turn will naturally end with the opening of the introit or the organ's introduction to the processional hymn.

If we give the congregation those moments of music and silence, our chances of engaging them in a corporate act of honor and adoration are greatly improved. Forced activity and sulky withholding may be replaced with prayer, attention, and the amazed recognition that God comes among us. Let us cooperate with the grace of God that draws people into our churches and help them prepare their hearts to worship. ❧

### Communion Antiphon

VI

I N splendó- ri-bus sanctó- rum, \* ex ú- te- ro

an- te lu- cí- fe- rum gé- nu- i te. *v. 1a, 1b, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7*

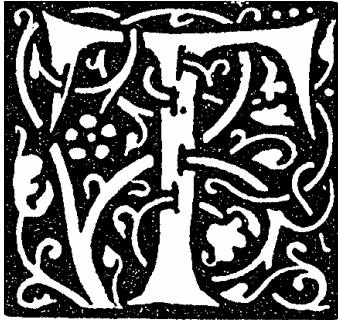
1. Dí- xit Dómi- nus Dómi- no me- o: Se- de a dextris

me- is. In splendóribus.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), p. 209.

# Chant as Beautiful Art

By Dylan Schrader



here is in our time an attitude of “aesthetic relativism,” which considers the question of what is beautiful as addressing something merely subjective. “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder” has become the axiom by which even liturgical questions are often evaluated. After all, is it not true that while someone may find a certain type of music to be prayerful and sacred another may find quite a different type to be the same? Does it follow from this that what is most suited to the liturgy of the church is reduced to what is “most effective” for the greatest number of people present in a particular congregation?

To begin to understand these questions, let us consider the nature of *art* in general. A common-sense definition of art might be “a human expression in a sensible medium.” This means that art comes from human nature and human experience and that it is perceptible by the senses. The question of what beauty is, then, has an immediate reference to something objective. This beauty is not something which man is free to define but something which he is compelled to seek by the very fact that he is human: “Late have I loved you, O beauty so ancient and so new: late have I loved you!”<sup>1</sup> Christians know that beauty is not *something* but *someone*: the Triune God, who first seeks man. With this in mind, let us consider art in terms of human nature and human experience.

Since it comes from human nature, art is directed in some way to the truth and the good. These are the proper objects of man’s spiritual faculties of intellect and will. Man is made to know the truth and to love the good. Man is not, however, a pure spirit. His song is not in the manner of the angels’. Indeed, for man, the body cannot be disregarded in knowing the truth and loving the good: “My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.” (Psalm 84:2). Therefore, an essential part of what makes art to be *art* is that the expression is in some way *sensible*. When the visible is in harmony with the invisible, as two distinct but not separate realities, then the expression may be said to be *fully human* even as man has by nature a material body informed by a spiritual soul. In art, therefore, man’s encounter with beauty is bodily.

Because of his materiality, man’s *experience* as well must be considered to play a role in the human expression that is art. This is to say that because men live at different times and at different places, there will naturally develop different ways of expressing certain aspects of what it means to be human, different ways of expressing what is true and what is good. Such variances in expression, however, must not be understood as *radically* different from one another, for indeed, the root of each man’s experience as a man is his human nature. It is proper, therefore, to consider that there is not only a universal attraction to the truth and the good but that there are even ways of expressing this condition that are common to all men. Consequently, we must avoid speaking of art in a postmodern sense, as if man were wholly capable of assigning an arbitrary meaning to his life, or even of assigning an arbitrary meaning to every particular symbol.

We must recognize, then, that just as man did not make himself—did not create human nature and did not give himself this nature—man cannot through any act of the will change what

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<sup>1</sup>Augustine, *Confessions*, X, xxvii, 38 (CSEL 33, 255).

is true and what is good for himself. The example of water easily comes to mind. By his nature, man needs water to live, and water will thus always have a certain significance, despite a man's particular experiences and his particular culture. It is certain that his experiences—e.g., nearly drowning—and his particular culture have a bearing on what water means to him, but these particularities cannot destroy for *man* the fundamental significance of water.

We have been speaking of human nature as directed toward the truth and the good, including a bodily relationship with these. In this way, we can understand how all art—because it is human—has a certain orientation toward the Lord. In fact, to the degree that art tells the truth about what man is and what is good for man, it can be said to be—at least implicitly—Christian.<sup>2</sup> The connection between art and Christ must exist because of the fundamental relationship between humanity and Christ. To speak of man's faculties for knowing the truth and loving the good is to recall that man was created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:26). The church Fathers understood this image as *Christological*; man was made in the image of Jesus Christ.

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In his divine nature, the Word of God is the perfect Image of the Father.<sup>3</sup> He images the Father so completely, that he is consubstantial with him, not "made in the image of God" but eternally begotten as the Image of God. Thus, Christ himself is the truth and the good eternally in a perfect relationship with the Father, who is the truth and the good.

At the Incarnation, the Word of God took on a human nature and "tabernacled among us" (John 1:14). Christ, also in his human nature, is the perfect image of God because he is without sin and perfectly subject to God. As Jesus Christ, in his divine nature, is in a perfect and divine relationship with the truth and the good, so, in his human nature, he is in a perfect and *human* relationship with the truth and the good. In his person, humanity and divinity are intimately united such that Christ himself is the perfect expression of what it means to be human, the perfect human image of God.

Indeed, not only by his human nature but by his human experience, Christ has hallowed man and the things of man in a way that can never be undone. Art is not only an effort of mere men longing for the divine; art is now the love which the eternal Son of God has for his heavenly Father with a human heart, expressed through human words and symbols.

We must never imagine the Incarnation as mythical or purely ideal. It was not "once upon a time" that the Son of God came down from heaven and became man. No, it was "in the days of Herod, King of Judea" (Luke 1:5) that this holy event took place. The impact of the Incarnation, then, is not limited to the fact that Christ hallowed all humanity, but in a special way he hallowed particular places and particular people.<sup>4</sup> We would deprive the Incarnation of the full

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<sup>2</sup>This is not to say that art must always depict explicitly and exclusively virtue. Art often—sometimes more effectively—presents something evil *precisely as evil* such that in seeing the disease, we desire the cure—Jesus Christ—all the more.

<sup>3</sup>Scripture, in fact, often uses the language of art to express divine realities. Cf. John Paul II, *Letter to Artists* (1999), ¶5.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), p. 104.

manifestation of the significance of its historical character if we were to disregard the actual words which our Lord spoke, the places where he walked, and the culture in which he lived.<sup>5</sup> The Lord transcends every culture, but he also lived in a particular culture and made it his own.

The Lord, in fact, came not only to live among men “in the days of Herod, King of Judea” but to establish his own kingdom, present seminally on earth. Christ entrusted to the church, “the kingdom of God already present in mystery,”<sup>6</sup> sensible works of his own which would keep her in a relationship with the divine: the sacraments.

More than any work of mere men, the sacraments—most especially the Holy Eucharist—can be considered art, because in them is Christ. The sacraments *are* man’s visible, bodily, human encounter with Christ, who is the truth and the good. He is present and active in them, and he is their author. The elements of the sacraments—e.g., water, oil, etc.—were chosen by Christ based on human nature and on his own Jewish culture.<sup>7</sup>

*More than any work of mere men, the sacraments—most especially the Holy Eucharist—can be considered art, because in them is Christ.*

Because Christ is man’s end and also a perfect man himself, these sacraments instituted by him are a more authentic expression of true human nature and true human experience than anything sinful man could devise. Our sins injure our human nature and deprive us of the ability to express fully what it means to be human. Christ, then, is not only perfect art but the perfect artist, and by the very works which he himself authored—the sacraments—he reveals man to himself.<sup>8</sup>

The sacraments are not simply pedagogical as are merely human works of art; Christ does not only teach the truth about man because he is not only a teacher. Rather, the sacraments *bring about grace in us*. By our very reception of them, the sacraments help us to achieve our end; they help perfect our human nature in its knowledge and love of God. The sacraments, therefore, are art *par excellence* since they actually make us more human, actually direct us to the true, the good, and beauty by sensible means. Only God made man could craft such masterpieces.

It is apparent at the outset of a consideration of the church’s liturgy that there are elements of immediate divine institution—most notably the sacraments—and also elements which have developed organically in the church throughout the ages in various times and places. How must we consider those traditional elements of the church’s liturgy which were not instituted immediately by Christ? Do these elements have any real merit over and above newly developed elements? Is how they ought to be employed reduced merely to being a matter of taste?

<sup>5</sup>Though it cannot be said here, much ought to be said in this regard about the special role of the Blessed Mother. She not only became the source of Christ’s human nature but also the source of his human experience, his human culture. She, in whose womb the Lord himself was “knit together,” taught him a particular language, a particular way of life, and a particular culture.

<sup>6</sup>Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*, ¶3.

<sup>7</sup>We must also note that many of the elements of Jewish culture, especially as they relate to the worship of God, were instituted by God through revelation in the Old Testament. Thus, the culture into which Christ was born and whose liturgical elements he perfected was not one of merely human expression but one which God had prepared from the beginning for the Christian dispensation. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), ¶1145–52.

<sup>8</sup>Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, ¶22.

As a way of addressing this question, let us examine the case of Gregorian chant in the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church. The church considers Gregorian chant “specially suited to the Roman liturgy.”<sup>9</sup> That one type of music is more suitable than others for the liturgy of the Roman Rite comes as a shock to our contemporary ears since it contradicts our notion of aesthetic relativism. Is the question of what type of music is most suitable for the liturgy really different from the question of what type of music seems most effective for a given congregation? The answer comes from considering Gregorian chant—and all music proposed for liturgical use—according to a proper notion of art. Therefore, we must examine Gregorian chant in light of its nature and the church’s long experience of its usage.

The nature of Gregorian chant includes several elements which make it most suitable for the church’s liturgical use, that make it sacred in an objective sense.<sup>10</sup> One is that its instrument, properly speaking, is the human voice. The instrument of Gregorian chant was thus devised immediately by God and not made by man. This voice, too, has been hallowed by the Son of God, who himself sang to God the Father with a human voice (cf. Mark 14:26).

The form of Gregorian chant, too, is such that it cannot be considered merely as one type of music among many. Rather, it possesses in the highest degree that “sanctity and goodness of form” which gives it “the final quality of universality.”<sup>11</sup> Gregorian chant is by its nature the most sacred, the most suitable for liturgical use in the Roman Rite. This was so well understood by Pope St. Pius X that he laid down the following rule:

The more closely a composition for church approaches in its movement, inspiration, and savor the Gregorian form, the more sacred and liturgical it becomes; and the more out of harmony it is with that supreme model, the less worthy it is of the temple.<sup>12</sup>

The form of Gregorian chant supports the text so effectively that the text and its musical expression do not strike one as separate or at all opposed but rather as unified. Since the primary text of Gregorian is sacred scripture, this musical form which serves the scriptural text so well is truly a “vesture of gold”<sup>13</sup> in which the Word of God is wrapped. God is the author of sacred scripture; Gregorian chant is the translation into musical form of his work.

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form of his work.*

Despite the qualities which Gregorian chant has by its nature, we must also recognize that the church has “inherited [it] from the ancient fathers.”<sup>14</sup> By the simple fact that it has been used for so long in the liturgy, Gregorian chant has become an essential part of the culture of the Roman Rite. Therefore, the chant is not merely one

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<sup>9</sup>Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, ¶116.

<sup>10</sup>For a good presentation of sacredness as an objective quality, cf. James T. Benzmilller, “What’s so Sacred about Sacred Music?” *Adoremus Bulletin*, 9, no. 4 (June 2003), 3, 5.

<sup>11</sup>Pius X, *Tra le sollecitudini* (1903), ¶2-3.

<sup>12</sup>Pius X, *Tra le sollecitudini*, ¶3.

<sup>13</sup>John XXIII aptly uses this phrase in reference to the Latin language, which is the natural language of Gregorian chant. Cf. John XXIII, *Veterum sapientia* (1962).

<sup>14</sup>Pius X, *Tra le sollecitudini*, ¶3.

option among many. Rather, Gregorian chant *does* have “pride of place”<sup>15</sup> not only, so to speak, because of its aptitude but also because of its seniority.

Why is the simple fact that Gregorian chant has been in long use so significant? We remember that we are considering Gregorian chant precisely as *art*, which comes partly from human experience. The church’s long experience of Gregorian chant renders it all the more significant; it would even be appropriate to say that the expressiveness and the significance of the chant increases in every age. Gregorian chant means so much more today because of what it has meant in the past. The foundational events of the church are called to mind as are those great saints of every age with whom we literally join in singing the same hymns. Nothing but Gregorian chant allows us to sing the hymns of St. Ambrose or to adore the Blessed Sacrament with the words of St. Thomas Aquinas.

The Incarnation is a historical event, not something which is repeated in many times and places and under different circumstances. We consider, then, not what the Incarnation *might* have been like at another time or another place, but we marvel that God was born to us at *that* time and in *that* place. In the same way, we receive the tradition of Gregorian chant from the church, not with the attitude that it is a mere historical accident which may no longer suit our purposes. Rather, we accept most gratefully what the church gives us because *she* gives it to us.

*The artistic expressions  
employed in the liturgy find  
their source in human nature  
and the experience of the  
church.*

Even if we were able to consider other types of music more sacred in their forms, we could never change the fact that Gregorian chant is what the church has actually employed in her liturgy throughout the ages. Every other type of music must necessarily be deficient in this regard.<sup>16</sup>

In speaking of the church’s experience of worshiping God throughout the ages, we must not consider the liturgical forms which developed organically and which come down to our own age through the tradition as merely the works of men. If we look to the foundation of the

church, we see how the Lord gave her the Holy Spirit to continue his presence in the world. The Incarnation is thus extended, so to speak, to all times and all nations through the church. The church, then, has historical elements. She is still a pilgrim on this earth, and on her journey to heaven many elements have developed which make up what we might call the culture of the People of God.

We examined earlier the sacraments which Christ gave as gifts to his church. These elements of the church’s liturgy were immediately instituted by Christ. Above all other gifts, however, Christ gave to the church the Gift of God himself—the Holy Spirit. Since the church is guided on her journey by the Holy Spirit, we may consider those enduring elements of the church’s liturgy which developed over the ages as *mediately* instituted by the Holy Spirit. Among these elements, Gregorian chant undoubtedly holds a place of honor.

The church’s worship of the Father is therefore “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23), that is, in the Holy Spirit and the Son, partly because the principal elements of her worship were instituted by Christ on earth and the secondary elements by the authority of the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit throughout the ages.

<sup>15</sup>*Sacrosanctum concilium*, ¶116.

<sup>16</sup>Certainly there are forms of sacred music which are developments of chant or have characteristics in common with chant. The most notable example is polyphony.

Given that we understand the liturgy as the prayer of the *church* and not as the property of individual bishops, priests, or congregations, we necessarily understand how the artistic expressions employed in the liturgy find their source not primarily in our own personal experiences but in human nature and the experience of the church called together by Christ and guided continuously by the Holy Spirit. How is it, then, that the traditional forms employed by the church become our own authentic expression, genuine and personal prayer?

We cannot imagine the liturgy as purely external or we will be led to perceive it as a burden on our own relationship with God rather than as the source and the summit of our life in Christ. It is true that we do not abandon the—sometimes seemingly foreign—forms which developed in former ages and now must be recognized as traditional. In fact, these forms can never be foreign to us because the church is catholic. There is thus a very real and concrete diachronic bond among our age and all ages since the time of the apostles. This bond is manifest *par excellence* in the apostolic succession under the providence of the Holy Spirit, but it is also recognizable in the traditional elements of the church's worship, including Gregorian chant, such that, "What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too."<sup>17</sup>

We are the children of the church, our mother. She teaches us the "language of faith"<sup>18</sup> and teaches us to pray to God with the best of what God has given her: the sacraments and the traditional liturgical forms that have developed through the ages. While certain forms of art from our own age—including musical forms—may be admitted for liturgical use provided that they are suitable for the sanctity of the action, these enrich the traditional forms, which are foundational, and do not replace them.

In this way, we avoid both archaeologism and reckless innovation such that there is an organic continuity in the church's liturgy from age to age. This organic continuity is necessary because "the church is without question a living organism,"<sup>19</sup> vivified by the Holy Spirit. By preserving the traditional elements of the liturgy—including Gregorian chant in the Roman Rite—we prevent, as it were, the "sudden death" of the church's organic liturgy while allowing for growth. For the changeable elements of the liturgy considered as art, this is most significant. If the liturgy lost its organic character, it would not be *art* but rather an artificial construct; it would no longer be *human*. We must never ignore the church's great treasury of experience under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, from which the changeable elements of her liturgy partly derive, so that the church's expression might be most effective in the worship of God and the sanctification of man. ❧



<sup>17</sup>Benedict XVI, *Letter to the Bishops of the World, accompanying the Apostolic Letter 'Summorum Pontificum' issued Motu Proprio* (2007).

<sup>18</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, ¶171.

<sup>19</sup>Pius XII, *Mediator Dei* (1947), ¶59.



# God and Meaning in Music: Messiaen, Deleuze, and the Musico-Theological Critique of Modernism and Postmodernism

By Catherine Pickstock



The following article is an attempt to explore a seeming anomaly of modern music. In ways which will be described below, it has remained more obviously close to religious sensibility, practice, and even belief than other modern art forms or cultural tendencies. To fully understand this phenomenon, it will be argued, it is not sufficient to see musical composition, performance, and reflection as simply reflecting wider cultural and philosophical tendencies, nor as contributing to them in its own idiom. Instead, we need to see musical composition and theory as itself, at least in the modern era, a prime mode of philosophical reflection which possesses resources which allow it both to take to an

extreme and yet to criticize the most fundamental intellectual tendencies of our times. This criticism tends to take the form of a religious transcendence of the secular, despite the fact that it is in no way shielded from the most *avant-garde* influences. This is exhibited, I shall argue, in the Catholicism of Olivier Messiaen and his legacy, since Messiaen was arguably the central composer of the previous century and the one who has perhaps most directly influenced philosophical understanding.

I shall begin four “movements” by stating the theme of the relationship between music and modernity. Then, in a first “development,” I shall describe Messiaen’s musical and religious modernism. In a second development I shall consider and criticize Gilles Deleuze’s appropriation of Messiaen, which is surprisingly central to his thought. In the fourth section I will conclude with a problematic recapitulation which will discuss the way in which Messiaen’s theological critique of musical modernisms demands elements of the postmodern which themselves, however, stand in need of a religious critique which certain recent composers may have already realized.

## 1. Initial Statement of Theme

One can detect an ambivalence concerning the relationship of music to the process of secularization.<sup>1</sup> Amongst the arts, music appears to be perhaps especially related to religion; many of its forms are liturgical in nature, and its ordered expression of joy has been connected with the offering of praise. While music is also associated with the work of mourning, the very conversion of sorrow into song can seem to tilt away from the tragic towards resignation, consolation, and eschatological hope. It would seem that the inherent bias of at least western music is

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<sup>1</sup>Music has often been regarded ambivalently by theologians. Augustine, Aquinas, and many others have indicated that while music is a suitable vehicle for the worship of God, because it reflects a divine order and harmony, it should remain subordinate to word and doctrine which articulate this order with greater exactitude. For example, see Thomas Aquinas *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 91, art. 2, ad 3; Edward Booth, “Thomas Aquinas,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), I: 512.

towards synchronic harmony and diachronic resolution. Nevertheless, the wordless character of music and its relative freedom from representation can suggest also a certain urging towards a mystical, non-dogmatic religion, or even a cult of music that would substitute for a cult of faith. It can be argued that the historical periods that have seen a gradual decline in the importance of church attendance have also seen the emergence of the public concert, opera, and ballet as quasi-sacral rites which are neither sacral liturgical music nor occasional music, such as *Tafelmusik* and music for dancing, nor music for private performance.

Music in the twentieth century seems to sustain this double-facing. Modernism in music stems in part from the later romanticism of Richard Wagner who had already distanced himself from the structures of fixed keys, and with the invention of the leitmotif which allowed romantic expressivism to drift further away from the dominance of harmonic relation and melodic development. In Wagner's operas, the inter-communication of the internal discourses of the leitmotifs constitutes a non-dramatic subplot which is the esoteric aspect of these works. Closely allied with this esoteric aspect is Wagner's deliberate attempt to create a new secular sacrality; a celebration of the possibility of absolute sacrificial self-commitment in erotic love: this enterprise reaches its consummation in his opera *Tristan and Isolde*.<sup>2</sup> In general, Wagner's music tends to reflect Schopenhauer's notion of a pure unteleological fated process undergirding reality, and this allows a liberation of modulation from the constraints of proportionate concordance and repeatable tune. But the leitmotif superimposes upon this the use of a super-essential intermezzo in the form of ritornelli, little melodic and rhythmic folds which are then placed in juxtaposition with one another. This seems to anticipate the modernist literary interest in the "stream of consciousness" and a world made up not simply of a shared daytime plot, but also of multiple and only obscurely intercommunicating nights of inchoate desire and dreaming.

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As Roger Scruton has argued, artistic modernism as a whole continued and radicalized the Wagnerian enterprise.<sup>3</sup> On the whole, formal religion was eschewed; yet equally disdained was the modern totalized and desacralized world. The desire was to make of art a refuge and enclave for the hyper-specific symbol, form, or expression, whose secrecy and difficulty ensured that it could not be made banal or functional by an all-devouring marketplace. In the case of music, this process has perhaps been carried to its furthest extent; music especially permits an extreme degree of abstraction and formalization. But the result of this, particularly with the rise of total serialism after the Second World War, has been to give the world of classical music the ethos of a small, diminishing sect, claiming to be able to hear beauties to which the public ear has remained tone-deaf.

In modern times, one could argue, music has tended to become a substitute for religion. If, on hearing music, one is bound in some sense to intimate cosmic harmonies, then it seems nonetheless possible to halt at a certain mystical agnosticism which will not countenance doctrinal formulae or metaphysical explanations. In accordance with this, many modern composers, perhaps especially British composers, have remained close to religious practices and attitudes

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<sup>2</sup>Roger Scruton, *Death-Devoted Heart: Sex and the Sacred in Wagner's Tristan and Isolde* (New York: O.U.P., 2004); Nick Nesbitt, "Deleuze, Adorno and the Composition of Musical Multiplicity," *Deleuze and Music*, Ian Buchanan and Marcel Swiboda, eds. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp. 54–76.

<sup>3</sup>Scruton, *Death-Devoted Heart*, passim.

without espousing formal belief: Vaughan Williams, Howells, Britten, Tippett, Maxwell Davies all spring to mind.

Yet, at the same time, music remains a vehicle for the persistence of explicit belief and of organized religion. This is not surprising because, to the reflective person, as the composer James MacMillan has pointed out, music presents a mystery: how is it that mathematically organized patterns of sound are capable of inspiring such great emotion, and also, as Hungarian education

*Music is itself an organized language.*

has tended to prove, of stimulating intellectual inquiry?<sup>4</sup> We are still confronted with the Pythagorean truth that music seems to link soul and body, reason and the passions, the individual with society and the cosmos.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, any given musical tradition contains implicitly certain views about time, space, and eternity, or the emotional and the rational, and the individual and the general. Although music is without words and indeed *verbis defectis, musica incipit*, according to the Renaissance tag, it is itself an organized language capable of a degree of translation into other aesthetic idioms and other dis-

courses. Asked whether he was a "mystical composer," Olivier Messiaen denied this and replied that, no, he was a theological composer. This comment is elucidated by Messiaen's other statement that for him, music provides a more rather than less exacting means of saying things than the words of language.<sup>6</sup>

For these reasons, many musicians, including many popular musicians, have asked what the ground of the possibility for music is, and their answer is often an explicitly religious one. I have already cited British composers whom one might describe as "mystical agnostics," yet it is striking that these (with the arguable exceptions of Vaughan Williams and Benjamin Britten) are scarcely to be counted amongst the major innovators in twentieth century music. By contrast, it is still more striking that amongst the major innovators one finds perhaps a greater instance of continued adherence to some mode of Christianity or Judaism than in the case of any of the other arts: one can think here of Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Messiaen, Schnittke, and Ustvolskaya, and of Arvo Pärt. Perhaps this is because the more self-conscious innovators (who are not necessarily of course thereby the best composers) are also those likely to enquire after the "ground of possibility" of music.

But this observation immediately raises the question of the relation between musical modernism and religion. As I have suggested, the former is a secular movement, or rather one which is, in the long-term wake of Wagner, seeking to discover an immanent musical cult which will substitute for formal religion. So how can the composer of *The Rite of Spring*, so replete with the use of rhythm to establish "personality," also be a loyal communicant of the Russian Orthodox Church? There is surely no easy answer to that question, but the example immediately indicates two sites for rendering the question a more general one: and these are sacrifice and tempo. To a wild, frenzied beat, the peasant girl dances herself to death.

<sup>4</sup>James MacMillan has made this point in several unpublished and broadcast talks.

<sup>5</sup>See Catherine Pickstock, "Music: Soul, City and Cosmos after Augustine," in *Radical Orthodoxy*, John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds. (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 243–277.

<sup>6</sup>Ian Darbyshire, "Messiaen and the Representation of the Theological Illusion of Time," *Messiaen's Language of Mystical Love*, Siglind Bruhn, ed. (New York: Garland, 1998), pp. 33–55; see also Roberto Fabbi, "Theological Implications of Restrictions in Messiaen's Compositional Processes," *Messiaen's Language*, 55–84, and Theo Hirschbaum, "Magic and Enchantment in Messiaen's *Catalogue d'Oiseaux*," *Messiaen's Language*, 195–224.

After Wagner, modernism was concerned with sacrifice: with sacrifice as the primitive essence of religion in the wake of modern anthropological discoveries, and with the possibility of a purified, immanent sacrifice towards the human other, or the human community, or even to the void. These thematics could be re-integrated quite easily into the framework of Christian typology, looking toward Christ's passion. The ecstasy of music can convey the going beyond oneself that such a notion requires, including its strange fusion of the ethical demand with an extra-ethical obsession. To lose oneself in the absolute is to lose oneself in that which exceeds the ethical, especially if the absolute is an immanent law, or totality or process. The lure of eros is for the modern artist just a given, as is the succession of time or the social totality. To lose oneself in these things is to surrender to an extra-human rhythm, which pulses through the subconscious but expresses the natural in an aleatory mode which is more fundamental than anything that can be explored by natural science.

With respect to both sacrifice and tempo, music reveals itself to be perhaps the most central modernist art. It is best able to express self-abandonment to immanent mystery, and to a time that is more fundamental than the time which we can measure. Most of modernism was in one way or another influenced by Henri Bergson's philosophy which hinged upon this distinction. For Bergson, a creative and spontaneous *élan vital* sustains nature at a level prior to the emergence of the regular and spatialized processes which science can formulate as law. For the human being, this more fundamental process rises to the surface of full consciousness and allows a super-rational experience of time as properly *durée*, in which past, present, and future are intensively fused, with a bias towards future creative action, rather than laid out as externally separate moments, according to a spatial model.<sup>7</sup> It is obvious that music would seem to be the art which can most naturally express pure "duration."

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And something like the attempt to do just that was present in musical modernism after Schoenberg, Berg, and others. Traditional diatonic music was seen as "spatialized" music; musical flow was subordinate to vertical harmonies, to fixed harmonic ratios, static scalar relations, and formal regular metric patternings and predictable continua of speed and dynamic. Beyond Wagner, the modernist revolutionaries undertook to set free a process of "continuous variation" for which there are no fixed tones and no fixed relations, but instead a pure becoming that is never for a single instant self-identical. With explicit reference or not, this was seen as akin to the absolute heterogeneity of Bergson's *durée* and Husserl's expression of ecstatic temporality, radicalized by Heidegger (probably in Bergson's wake) into an identity with being as such. In the latter case, one is removed both from punctuality and from relation; a singular but self-differentiating process. The radical subjectivity of this process indicates also a development of romanticism, but in the direction of subjective forces which exceed us from within. This lineage is relevant to the musical world also.

The new interest in technique was subordinate to expressivist aims. One can see this above all with the idea of the twelve-tone scale, or "tone row." The goal here is to complete the work of equal-tempering by producing a scale taken from the traditional octave (itself the child of the

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<sup>7</sup>See especially Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, Arthur Mitchell, tr. (New York: University Press of America, 1983), pp. 186–272.

yoking-together of two Greek tetrachords comprising two whole tones and one semitone interval), but purged of any inequalities or supposed colorings of different keys. This results in twelve equal semitones with no tonics or dominants: no home-base, no middle, and no upper note which recapitulates the original base. This allows the composer to impose his own unique expressive hierarchy and also ideally permits an escape from all-too-totalizing notions of thematic development and final resolution. Beyond the modalism of Debussy and Ravel (historicized and re-romanticized by Vaughan Williams and so “re-emplotted” with a great originality which now seems more “postmodern” than nostalgic), music could now become impressionistic, but, beyond Debussy, impressioned of itself and not anything else, and wandering in its own virtual space without either development or return.

*The endeavor of modernism to remove theme, development, measurable meter, and harmony is an impossible one.*

One can observe two paradoxes. Despite the Bergsonian aim to liberate music from spatialization, time as narrative here disappears. In the first place, continuous variation, for which the variation of the original is in the condition of “always already,” is a kind of simultaneity, and so seemingly “spatial” after all. Secondly, time as memory also disappears, as Pierre Boulez indicates: in a piece without development of a theme but only ceaseless juxtaposition and surprise, both the composer and the listener must continuously forget what has come before.<sup>8</sup> Yet both are strictly impossible: one has to hear music in laid-out measured time, and indeed music is, as Messiaen put it, a kind of “geometry of time.” The most extreme modernist experimenters after the Second World War, such as Iannis Xenakis, sought to deploy the *glissando* in place of isolatable notes, yet even here one has to hear to some degree a “first” and then “what succeeds it.” The *glissando* has a narrative aspect. What comes later may be in some sense the same as what came earlier, yet for our hearing, it is also different and so is “in relation” to a precedent.<sup>9</sup> Pure self-differentiation is simply not hearable, just as pure juxtaposition would be merely noise and not music. In this way, the endeavor to remove theme, development, measurable meter, and harmony is an impossible one. The modernist enterprise was often self-consciously stochastic: gesturing negatively towards the sublimity of *durée* beyond the bounds of musical reason. The twelve-tone scale was in this respect like the boundary of musical finitude; although it held out the prospect of release from the diatonic octave, it also bound one back within it, since it is the abstraction of the purest degree of chromaticism which the octave pre-contains. For this reason, an in some ways “postmodern” philosopher such as Gilles Deleuze argued that tonic experimenters such as Béla Bartók were more successful in creating something drastically new which genuinely broke with the bounds of previous convention.<sup>10</sup>

Does this mean that musical modernism was inherently secular and immanentist? Not necessarily. Schoenberg came to see the tone-row in a neo-Pythagorean or Cabbalistic way, as the

Does this mean that musical modernism was inherently secular and immanentist? Not necessarily. Schoenberg came to see the tone-row in a neo-Pythagorean or Cabbalistic way, as the

<sup>8</sup>Pierre Boulez, “Style ou idée? Éloge de l’amnésie,” *Musique en Jeu*, no. 4 (1974), 5–14 and “J’ai horreur de souvenir,” in Roger Desormière et son temps, D. Mayer and P. Souvchinsky, eds. (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 1966), pp. 134–58.

<sup>9</sup>For Xenakis’ use of glissando, Iannis Xenakis, *Metastasis*, etc., CD: Ensemble Instrumental de Musique Contemporain de Paris, Konstantin Simonovic; Orchestre National de l’O. R. T. F., Maurice le Roux (Paris: Le Chant du Monde, 2001) and *Anastenaria*, etc., CD: Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Christoph Adty; Symphonie Orchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Charles Zacharie Bornstein (Munich: Musica Viva, Bayerischen Rundfunk, 2001).

<sup>10</sup>Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaux*, Brian Massumi, tr. (London: Athlone, 1987), pp. 349–50.

natural, divinely ordained grammar of music and the cosmos. Nevertheless, one could see this as a characteristically modern Jewish embrace of a “Kantian” position, following my interpretation of the tone-row just enunciated. The supposed finally identified bounds of finitude are identified with the laws of God. They gesture, negatively, to the unrepresentable infinite and even intimate it as a glimpsed chasm, yet they are unable to mediate this infinite to us.

Nevertheless, the example of Schoenberg, like that of Stravinsky (whose innovations were more percussive in character), shows that the modernist re-invention of the sacred in art as secret, subjective, temporal, and sacrificial could readily be deployed as a new means to safeguard and convey more traditional religious belief: examples of this in the literary field would include T. S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, and David Jones. For the latter, one finds a fusion of modernism with elements of Thomism. And a similar fusion applies also in the case of the composer Olivier Messiaen.

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Messiaen is central to the topic of musical modernism, because it was his compositional and theoretical work which foreshadowed the “total serialism” of the post-war period, when the serial principle of de-hierarchization was applied not just to pitch, but to the other elements of musical composition: rhythm, dynamic, color, intensity, attack, duration, polytonality, and so forth. And yet, Messiaen himself developed a musical theology which was by no means “Kantian” in character, and arguably dealt with the stochastic yearning in a different fashion, just as his music was never predominantly atonal. Moreover, while he helped to found the “Darmstadt” group along with Stockhausen and his own pupils Boulez and Xenakis in the 1950s, he eventually broke with its total serialism, in a way that perhaps has some connection with musical “postmodernism.”<sup>11</sup>

If Messiaen is the pivotal figure in twentieth century music and also the most explicitly theological, then his work merits some examination, before we ask: what is musical postmodernism, and how does it relate to modernism and to religion?

## 2. Development I

For Messiaen, the relation of musical modernism to Bergson is clearly set forth at the outset of his multi-volume musical notebooks. Music is to do with *durée*, the dimension of continuous variation which is primordially heterogeneous and subjective. Rhythm, as opposed to measured meter, is defined by just these properties; it is “la succession de mêmes qui sont toujours autres [ . . . ] et d’autres qui ont toujours quelques parentés avec la même: c’est la variation perpétuelle.”<sup>12</sup> This, according to Messiaen, is better recognized in Oriental than Western music. Hindu rhythm is more complex than classical Western rhythm, while Chinese composers have attended to another factor outside the melodic and the harmonic: resonance or intensity, as shown in their use of the clangor and lingering of sounded bells. Properly speaking, Messiaen alleges, horizontal melody reduces to rhythmic interval in such a way that pitch and tone should be considered to be less essentially musical elements of added “color.” They belong inherently to the vertical scale of harmony, which melody simply runs through in temporal sequence.

<sup>11</sup>See Siglind Bruhn, *Messiaen’s Language*; also Iain G. Matheson, ed., *The Messiaen Companion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995).

<sup>12</sup>Olivier Messiaen, *Traité de Rythme, de Couleur et d’Ornithologie*, Tome I (Paris: Leduc, 1994), p. 39.

<sup>13</sup>*Traité de Rythme, de Couleur et d’Ornithologie*, pp. 7–52. See further Robert Scholl, “The Shock of the Positive: Olivier Messiaen, St. Francis and Redemption Through Modernity,” forthcoming in Jeremy Begbie, ed., *Musical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

(Here, one might ask, can there also be rhythms of space?).<sup>13</sup> In attributing pitch more to the harmonic side, Messiaen sounds as if he were within the French tradition of Rameau rather than Rousseau, but, on the other hand, he gives a Rousseau-like priority to monodic melody re-constructed as rhythm, just as, modifying Rameau, the “classical” composers Haydn and Mozart gave a new role to the horizontal temporal line of music by a newly complex interest in the percussive.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, there are at least two significant ways in which Messiaen departs from this orientalist-Bergsonianism, both of them suggestive of a specifically Catholic theological perspective.

First, Messiaen denies that *durée* can, as Bergson supposed, be an “immediate given” of consciousness and the object of a pure intuition. Rather, duration or “perpetual variation” is something that we only have access to through bodily and sensory experience and through sound itself. But sound, which mediates to us duration, is also and equally the point where duration is interwoven with measured and spatialized time. In this way, in effect, Messiaen was able to accept a post-Einsteinian time-space relativity which Bergson sought to refuse or at least to transcend. The composer, therefore, was less dualistic than the philosopher.<sup>15</sup> This connects directly with the composer’s belief in a transcendent creator God. For Messiaen, even mundane measured time remotely echoes eternity, while duration echoes eternity to a still higher degree. How-

ever, it does not fully attain to its pure simultaneity, and duration as subjective memory still properly refers to a real external past and future even though it re-imagines the former and actively anticipates the latter.

### *Messiaen was able to accept a post-Einsteinian time-space relativity.*

Messiaen grasps this in terms of a musical angle upon the Thomistic real distinction between being and essence which suggests that his musical composition and theoretical reflection sit easily

within the central twentieth century philosophical debate concerning being, life, time, and symbolic expression which concerned not just Bergson and Heidegger, but also the Thomists, Étienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain.

Just as, in ontological terms, for Thomas, *esse* and *essentia* are distinguished for human beings but coincide in God, so also, as Messiaen points out, for Thomas, creatures are in time, and yet do not coincide with time, whereas God simply is his own eternity.<sup>16</sup> The vanishing-away of external time reveals that creatures entangled in time “are” also something else which points toward the eternal, while the subjective human being remains in excess of memory and projection. Even angels live in a non-passing duration or *aeuum*; and even with this they do not perfectly coincide. Their personality escapes their created “remaining,” and here one has an analogical refutation of Bergson’s impersonalism for which the self is lost in ineffable heterogeneity. All this is expressed in Messiaen’s music: the cosmic time of rocks; the biological time of birds; the human time of memory, contemplation, and eschatological expectation; the pure remaining of the angels. And all these things, by analogy, build up to the impossible expression of an eternal music which would represent only itself, as at the end of *Éclairs sur l’Au Delà*.<sup>17</sup> This latter would seem to be an aim of all musical modernism, but it is notable that Messiaen, endearingly the

<sup>14</sup>See Pickstock, “Music: Soul, City and Cosmos.”

<sup>15</sup>Messiaen, *Traité*, 9.

<sup>16</sup>Messiaen, *Traité*, 7ff.

<sup>17</sup>Olivier Messiaen, *Eclairs sur l’Au Delà*, CD: Orchestre de l’Opéra Bastille, Myung-Whun Chung (Hamburg: Deutsche Grammophon, 1994).

Couperin of the cosmic farmyard, seems always to insist that finite music is programmatic, inevitably and properly evocative, for reasons that we shall presently see.

In the second place, Messiaen does not really subordinate the harmonic to the melodic, taken as primarily rhythm, which he defines as “continuous variation.” In the end, as later in the case of Boulez, he is concerned with the mysterious “diagonal” which one hears between the horizontal and vertical coordinates.<sup>18</sup> Exploration of this diagonal or transversal is really proper to Western music alone, in the traditions of polyphony, counterpoint, use of the ostinato bass, and so forth. And such free-floating obliquity was only permitted by the stress upon punctual notes, pauses, and strict selection of modes or scales. This abstract simplification, as compared with certain Eastern traditions, was the necessary precondition of a new complexification (and the same sequence holds good for serialism).<sup>19</sup>



Olivier Messiaen 1908–1992

Nevertheless, Messiaen thought about the diagonal in a peculiar way, influenced by his possession of a physiological condition which permitted a constant experience of synaesthesia: he heard sounds as colors. Or rather, it is more proper to say that he heard sequences of sounds as equivalent to a kaleidoscopic or cinematic transmutation of color. The mere seeing of an isolated sound as an isolated color is characteristic rather of a drug-induced psychedelic experience.<sup>20</sup>

While, for Messiaen, horizontal rhythm in time is the properly musical factor, nevertheless the “extra” of coloration is not extrinsic and this suggests that music always invokes the spatial domain; hence the dizzying geographical expansiveness of Messiaen’s music, as well as its exotic and varied coloration. Nevertheless, just as Messiaen peculiarly sees melody as rhythm, so also he peculiarly sees harmony as arising from color and intensity.<sup>21</sup>

For this reason, Messiaen undertook to extend further the Western rationalization of music, in order to permit a new complexity and operation of creative spontaneity. Alongside scales of pitches, he created scales of duration (not simply tempi but scales of variation of tempi), of color, of intensity, dynamic, and attack. This allowed him to add to his music polyrhythm and polychromaticity as well as polyphony. For example, Messiaen’s music often involves the co-ordination of several different speeds and volumes running alongside one another.

Beyond this, however, Messiaen’s commitment to original heterogeneity (or perpetual variation, akin to Derrida’s *différance*) encouraged him to accentuate tendencies within Baroque music in developing simultaneous and concurrent polyphonies, where it seemed as if disparate

<sup>18</sup>See Roberto Fabbi, “Theological Implications of Restrictions.” Fabbi mentions Messiaen’s *Modes de Valeurs et intensités* for piano where “entities appear as suspended in an oblique and fluctuating space-time dimension,” p. 66. See also Pierre Boulez, *Notes of an Apprenticeship*, R. Weinstock, tr. (New York: Knopf, 1968), pp. 231–2, 295–301, 382–3 and *Boulez on Music Today*, S. Bradshaw and R. Bennett, tr. (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 55–9. See also Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaux*, 297; Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Tom Conley, tr. (London: Athlone, 1993), pp. 121–37.

<sup>19</sup>See Pickstock, “Music: Soul, City and Cosmos.” Here it is argued that Augustine in *De Musica* theorized the grounds of polyphony in advance of the practise with his stress on the pause as linked with the notion of the inherent “nothingness” of created realities, as well as on the simultaneity of Pythagorean intervals.

<sup>20</sup>Claude Samuel, *Entretiens avec Olivier Messiaen* (Paris: Editions Pierre Belfond, 1967), pp. 41–56. On Messiaen’s synaesthesia and the implications for his music, see further Scholl, “The Shock of the Positive.”

<sup>21</sup>Messiaen, *Traité*, I, 7–52.



pieces of music were running at the same time; a “polyphony of polyphonies,” as Boulez put it, and polyrhythm of polyrhythms, and so forth.

Messiaen was a “radical composer” in the most literal sense. He sought to conjugate the most disparate and newly invented forces. Like all Bergsonian modernists, he saw his art as a kind of higher scientific experiment which captured and exhibited through original exemplification the ultimate vital cosmic forces. However, for Messiaen, the possibility of this surprising holding-together lay in the co-incidence of beauty with eternity and infinity in God. Because this is reflected in the created order, the cosmic hymn can be revealed and created ever-again.

But how does this stand in relation to musical modernism in general? For Messiaen, the release of a flattened chromaticism was not the crucial thing. Rather, as for Igor Stravinsky, it was the insistence upon rhythm as non-identical repetition. Yet, whereas the other modernists tended to gesture towards the impossibility of pure heterogeneity, Messiaen saw that it was always mediated through, and not contradicted by, selected regular formal patterns (“identical repetitions”) of various sorts. Surprising variations on these could then point towards the Triune God in whom variation is absolute and yet self-identical. Messiaen was a supreme innovator in

*Messiaen was a supreme innovator in that he sought to give an enhanced role to neglected musical elements.*

that he sought to give an enhanced role to neglected musical elements, which he nonetheless subjected, in a craftsmanlike and indeed scholastic manner, to the sort of rules and norms which had earlier in Western musical history been applied to melody and harmony.

transposition, similar to, but not coincident with, those of Gregorian chant. This can be seen as relatively conservative; although there is a complicating factor. Serialism in a sense only further extends the rationalization carried out by equal temperament in the eighteenth century.<sup>22</sup> Its release of random chromatic slides further excludes the sense of intrinsic mood or color proper to modal music which still survived somewhat in the Baroque era, even in Bach, who probably favored “well” rather than “equal” tempering. By comparison with other modernists, Messiaen returned rather to the predilections of Gregorian chant which—prior to the Cistercian reform which took Western music on the road to strictly related “keys” by forbidding modal transpositions—not only embraced modes of different prevailing mood, but also allowed complex slides from one mode/mood to another under certain rules.<sup>23</sup>

In parallel with this approach, Messiaen held back from serialism with regard to pitch. He broke with the diatonic scale, but did so through a selection of certain modes and fixed rules for modal

In this way, Messiaen’s Thomistic modifications of Bergson’s approach to time concur with his conservative revolutionism in music, his “radical orthodoxy.” (Curiously, it might seem, he did not invoke Augustine, but this was not unusual for French Catholic thought during this epoch).

And yet it was Messiaen who paved the way for the most drastic serialism of all. This was because his pupils, Boulez and Xenakis, along with Stockhausen and Berio, undertook to apply serial principles to all aspects of music, including those which Messiaen had newly brought to the fore. If Messiaen resisted this, then this was because, in the case of every variable, as with pitch, he did not choose to adopt serial parameters, but rather modal or quasi-modal ones. What was really at issue here?

<sup>22</sup>Stuart Isacoff, *Temperament* (New York: Vintage, 2003).

<sup>23</sup>Nesbitt, “Deleuze, Adorno and Musical Multiplicity,” 60.

Messiaen's pupils sought a purely self-referential, entirely musical music. The criteria for what was to be selected had to be internal to musical considerations rather than programmatic, representative and social, or even emotional and subjective. A series simply offered a neutral repertoire or *mathesis* from which one could select a way or ways of organizing this series, as in mathematical set theory. But what dictates the choice? Purely formal considerations? Why go one way rather than another? Even mathematicians have to start talking about "intrinsic beauty" at this point and in Xenakis's thesis defense, Messiaen asked where "love" entered into the business of selection? Xenakis was interestingly prepared to talk about "revelation" here, but the question for Messiaen seemed to be whether there can be, as for Xenakis, a clear distinction between pure mathematical technique, on the one hand, and the mysterious intervention of "revelation," on the other. This is the point at which John Cage was only prepared to talk about pure "chance." But for Messiaen there is no such technique/love duality; rather, it would seem, Messiaen saw his selection of formal rules and the creative operation of these rules as guided by "love" or by "revelation."<sup>24</sup>

And this fits with his preference for mode over series. Messiaen's base is not a flat smooth nomadic space but rather a pre-selection of something with a certain color, a certain mood, tendency, hierarchical bias, or tilt. Is this then a preference for the striated, fixed, and arboreal to the labyrinthine vegetation of the rhizomatic in Deleuze's reworked Bergsonian terms? Not entirely, because for Messiaen each modal "tree" is constantly being qualified by intertwining with other modal "trees." By contrast, Xenakis is prepared to release total "dissonance" in every musical domain, in such a way that there are no more hierarchical biases towards base notes, themes, developments, resolutions, harmonies, and so forth. However, he can only do this by beginning with the arbitrary decision to prefer the Cartesian space of serial regularity which is picked out just because it accords with a mood of cold neutrality. In fact, a more iron rule has been selected here than those which apply to the diatonic scale, and, as Deleuze himself indicates, this premature attempt to seize absolute de-territorialization can result in a spiraling down a black hole of complete non-musicality, following a failed premature "line of flight" which seeks to escape all determination once and for all.

*Messiaen saw his selection of formal rules as guided by "love" or by "revelation."*

Any actual surviving music will always somewhat gesture towards the various idioms of hierarchization. Xenakis can only avoid a black hole by admitting to the moment of revelation. But if in composing together disparate elements, one sees the way one should go, then this is tantamount to glimpsing a new and unexpected moment of harmony. And there is indeed nothing wrong with deployment of the serial principle (as sometimes undertaken by Messiaen himself, implicitly) in order to permit a freer sort of chromatic transition. Yet if one permits revelation to supervene upon seriality in the process of composition, why should it not intervene in the form of a prior selection of modes and favored sorts of transposition that are more intrinsically colored (as the word "chromatic" indicates)? The latter allows one to see that creativity has a social and traditional dimension, which is indeed another aspect of modernism as such (in the case of Pound and Eliot, for example).

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<sup>24</sup> *Arts/Sciences Alloys: the Thesis Defence of Iannis Xenakis before Olivier Messiaen et al.*, Sharon Kanach, tr. (New York: Pendragon Press, 1985), pp. 27–47; "Dialogue with Olivier Messiaen," pp. 61–79; and *passim*.

It was said above that musical modernism tends to suppress development, resolution, and memory. In the case of Boulez' work *Pli selon Pli*, this means that the music endlessly unfolds towards further and further horizons in such a way that the music advances no closer to an arrival and does not return upon itself. And yet in reality, in listening to this (very beautiful) piece of music, one cannot help hearing endless semi-arrivals and endless semi-returns.<sup>25</sup> The constant frustration of these, and revelation of yet another turn in the non-plot is indeed delightful, and yet the constant drive to undo, not to arrive and not to return, means that one feels that

*Messiaen's music intimates  
an infinite order rather  
than infinite chaos.*

anti-music has the last word. Irony triumphs: there may be music within non-music, but the whole piece seems not to be music. In which case it falls apart and its elements seem arbitrary and non-revealed or non-loved. Despite all the beauty, it is ultimately more barrage than beauty, even allowing for a trained ear—and I am not arguing against formal complexity here: modernist music is far more listenable to than is usually allowed and denial of this is somewhat to the disgrace of populist culture, not to that of skillful composers. But if, all the same, more barrage than beauty,

why *this* barrage? There seems no reason to compose what is not a composition. But if there is more beauty than barrage, as with Messiaen, then one has an affirmation that beauty must be infinite.<sup>26</sup>

To go on composing outside the rules *requires* one to be theological. And this becomes much more evident when one considers avant-garde music, such as that of Messiaen and his pupils, than it does when one considers more strictly modernist music that remains within the compass of rules. In the latter case one can, as it were, nostalgically feign faith.

Exactly how does Messiaen's music endlessly expand toward the cosmos and yet also intimate an infinite order rather than infinite chaos? One important consideration here is that order in some sense implies circularity; it implies that one can "return" on a course taken because there is a perceptible sequence. If the sequence is not yet complete, one can only know that there is a final order because this incomplete sequence intimates an infinite and complete one. To favor non-return, like Boulez, is perhaps too arbitrary a choice for a meaningless cosmos, a denial that patterns which *one can* intimate betoken a final patterning. Hence to resist memory, recapitulation, harmony (even of the discordant), and reversal, is in effect to resist, for no musical or other reason, the lure of God, and to resist music as such.

Messiaen, by contrast, deploys three devices which intimate return, and so order.<sup>27</sup> The first of these has already been discussed: it is "modes of limited transposition." The second is "non-retrogradable rhythm." This concerns the following paradox. If one takes the series 1,2,3,4, and reverses it as 4,3,2,1, then the reversal has made it symmetrically different: a mirror image. Such a series is subject to retrogression, and it is easy to envisage musical equivalents. But take instead

<sup>25</sup>Pierre Boulez, CD: *Pli selon Pli*, Christine Schafer, Soprano, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Pierre Boulez (Hamburg: Deutsche Grammophon, 2002).

<sup>26</sup>See David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), passim. Hart's fundamental argument is that Christian theology uniquely envisages the infinite itself not as disordered but as beautiful. A concomitant of this would seem to be that a Christian aesthetic can be aligned with aesthetic experimentation.

<sup>27</sup>For the discussion concerning the three crucial devices, see Darbyshire, "Messiaen and the Representation"; Fabbi, "Theological Implications"; Messiaen, *Traité*, III, 352–3; Claude Samuel, *Entretiens*, passim.

the series 1,2,1. Reversed, this is still 1,2,1 and therefore it is said to be “non-retrogradable,” despite its perfect symmetrical reversibility.

Messiaen makes use of such non-retrogradable rhythms, which can also be described as palindromes; for example: quarter, dotted quarter, quarter. For him, the significance of such a rhythm is that its reversible symmetry, which could be seen as its *absolute* retrogradability, is an example of time collapsing inwards towards eternity. For where memory makes projection precisely equivalent to memory, one has an image of time as “present” itself sandwiched between the same eternity coming “before” and “after” time. Yet because the palindrome is non-retrogradable, it cannot really be reversed, and therefore stands also for the pure forward-moving event. So here, time as *durée*, time in its most intimate fusion of past, present, and future, remains at once the creative forward-pressing pure event and yet as such the very thing which points to timelessness. But, in contrast to Bergson, as we have seen, Messiaen saw the rhythmic patterning of time as music as crucial to the realization of *durée* as such.

Messiaen deployed this device also with a further twist. If one reverses a retrogradable series as follows: 1,2,3,4, 4,3,2,1, then the entire unit of eight elements is itself non-retrogradable, palindromic. In *Les Corps Glorieux*, Messiaen uses this device to suggest the raising up of temporal bodies to the “winged” character of angels in the resurrection. Here and elsewhere he also employs this device to represent the substantive relations of the Trinity: the Son in receiving all of the Father “reverses” him to form one symmetrical and non-reversible event which the Holy Spirit can only affirm and offer.

In this way, Messiaen’s music hopes to fulfill the prayer *enfoncez votre image dans la durée de mes jours*.<sup>28</sup>

His third technique is another way of trying to achieve this same goal. This is symmetrical permutation or “intersion.” Whereas the first technique is applied to pitch and the second to rhythm, this third technique becomes a parameter for all the musical variables, although especially for the unit Messiaen called “neume,” which means something like a melody of indeterminate rhythm. Using this technique, one modulates from one sequence to another and then to the next one, by way of a strictly proportionate analogy that folds the first sequence “inside out” and then the second sequence likewise, and so forth. It is like a constant emerging of butterflies from their chrysalises, and can be numerically exemplified thus:

$$\begin{array}{l}
 1 \longrightarrow 2 \longrightarrow 3 \longrightarrow 4 \\
 \qquad \qquad \qquad 3 \longrightarrow 2 \longrightarrow 4 \longrightarrow 1 \\
 \qquad \qquad \qquad 4 \longrightarrow 2 \longrightarrow 1 \longrightarrow 3 \\
 1 \longrightarrow 2 \longrightarrow 3 \longrightarrow 4
 \end{array}$$

In every case, one follows the rule: commence the next sequence with the third element of the first; then take the second element, then the fourth, and then the first. Finally, though, the inside becomes the original outside again, and once more the whole four-element unit constitutes a pure event that, in its circularity, nonetheless ascends with symmetrical wings towards eternity. Messiaen described this way of transposing as like the constant opening and shutting again of fans by a woman.

It should be mentioned that Messiaen was by no means the first Christian composer to deploy modes of retrograde motion for theological purposes. In medieval music such involutions were

<sup>28</sup>Cited by Fabbi, “Theological Implications,” 80.

used to convey a sense of the world as a labyrinth into which the warrior Christ enters, constantly going back upon the traces of human sin in order harmonically to redeem them. This amounted to a musical presentation of the Irenaeian notion of "recapitulation."<sup>29</sup> Moreover, for Messiaen and the tradition, these palindromic devices were associated with magical conjuring formulae and Messiaen spoke of a "good magic" that concerns the ability of music to invoke the cosmos in a new way and to evoke and alter human emotion. His free deployment of technical devices to these ends can indeed be seen, in the proper sense that is not mechanical, manipulatory, or sinister, as "theurgic" in character.<sup>30</sup>

Messiaen achieved "magical" effects by deploying all three of the fundamental formal techniques in conjunction and particularly by blending harmonic vertical palindromic sequences with "neumatic" horizontal ones, often in such a way that a relative emphasis on one or the other itself took the form of an alternation between "opening the fan" on the melodic plane and "shutting the fan" on the harmonic plane. In the "between" of the motion of this four-dimensional fan (operating in space-time) one hears or sometimes "almost hears,"

on the diagonal, something that is impossible mathematically to formulate, but yet something not simply stochastically reached out for; rather, it is as if something miraculously descends into time as an echo of the Incarnation, which Messiaen ceaselessly sought to present in his music.

### *Messiaen was more postmodern than the postmodernists.*

In this way, Messiaen's Thomistic Bergsonism overcame the purist "Kantianism" of musical modernism which operated within the boundaries of strict musical parameters and to this degree anticipated the postmodern, as indicated also by his non-abandonment of a dominant modal tonality and the finality of at least a relative harmony. In affirming by faith the infinite beauty and so "compose-ability" of the cosmos, Messiaen had to deny that being is the violence of forgetting, or constant leaving-behind of that which cannot be blended with what is to come. On the contrary, if there is beauty and order, then even the non-identically repeated must be beautiful in reverse, thereby constituting the palindromic sequence which can only happen "once" (1, 2, 1) and in moving backwards still moves forwards, but just in this respect as pure event is also reversible and so intimates eternity beyond time.

Messiaen's blending of the thematic of "difference" or continuous permutation with a Thomistic metaphysics of eternity and time which doubles the ontology of the real distinction, also suggests a "postmodern" element in his Catholic reflection that is absent from Gilson and Maritain (except for the latter's reflections on the sign). Although this thematic was Bergsonist and therefore in reality lay at the heart of modernism itself, Messiaen already gave it a postmodern twist by insisting that *durée* is mediated through spatial placement. Later officially "postmodern" philosophy and art, however, have tended to view such mediation as an aporetic obscuration of that *durée* which it nonetheless discloses in its own inevitable self-deconstruction. In this way, the sublimity of Bergsonist duration is newly sustained as continuous tensional violence. By contrast, Messiaen's musical presentation of difference as beauty through the deployment of devices of return is an argument for the harmony between eternity and time that distances itself more emphatically from the stochastic negativity of the pure modernists. In a certain

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<sup>29</sup>Craig Wright, *The Maze and the Warrior: Symbols in Architecture, Theology, and Music* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>30</sup>See Samuel, *Entretiens*, 44: "there exists a good magic . . ."

sense, Messiaen was already more postmodern than the postmodernists, even if this verdict is somewhat problematic, as we shall later see.

### 3. *Development II*

In *A Thousand Plateaux* by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Olivier Messiaen is alluded to at a crucial juncture, "On the Refrain," the *ritournelle*.<sup>31</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari are concerned with Messiaen's deployment of birdsong. They agree with the composer that some birds are musicians: their music exceeds any possible functional purpose. Art, it seems, begins in the animal kingdom and even religion likewise: turtles go on mysterious pilgrimages back to ancestral sources; birds in Africa arrive for periodic solemn assemblages; many animals see the "center" of their terrain as lying totemically outside the functional terrain itself. Deleuze and Guattari explain these curious practices ontologically, in terms of the character of "assembling" or "territorializing" that is peculiar to life as such and even to a "vital" urging that precedes what we take to be the organic domain. Besides genetic coding, biologists observe the duplication of genes and chromosomes whose genetic redundancy offers a "free matter for variation." In interaction with the environment, this allows a certain decoding to arise, or the relative separation of an individual component from the coded sequence of the genetic stratum. This occurs at every level, micro and macro, but at the macro level it occurs as the emergence of animal territoriality for certain species. So territoriality begins with free creative expression: although territory of course serves functions, this is secondary to the original expressive assertion of individual identity; thus many species are contentedly nomadic, and while territory secures food, this is just one possible way of finding nourishment, just as some human beings are farmers while others are nomads and hunter-gatherers. Animals have different cultures, and territorial animals develop cultured settlement more intensely.

*In classical Western music,  
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From this perspective, the bird's *ritournelle* (*ritornello*) not only defends a terrain, it also establishes continuously the terrain by encircling it with song. It is the bird's "song of the earth," linking place and color with sound, weaving together ornamented terrain (patterns of leaves, etc.) with ornamented rhythm. The *ritournelle* is simultaneously pure expression and a returning "fold" that wards off death and other threats and becomes also a song of courtship, already functioning like the leitmotifs of Tristan and Isolde (who remained important, together with the natural realm and the Catholic Church, for Messiaen). For Deleuze, human music also begins fundamentally as the *ritournelle*, the "little theme" or "intermezzo" which is the folk-song linked to territory or the song children and women (especially) hum to themselves to ward off adult and male danger. It is a fragile charmed protective enclosure, a folding back upon itself of a fragment of melody.

In connection with this "refrain," Deleuze and Guattari, and Deleuze alone elsewhere, offer a typological history of music. The classical legacy of Western music is characterized by a kind of disdain for the folk territory and is instead aligned with the coded strata of physical reality where, in Aristotelian terms, form is imposed on matter to produce regular substances and

<sup>31</sup>Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaux*, 296–350 (this includes an important section on music in the chapter prior to "On the Refrain").

essences, subject to fixed codes. Thus in classical Western music, regular modes and keys are favored and harmony dominates melodic flow, even if the music is monodic. It is true that polyphony starts to introduce a “diagonal” which potentially allows escape from the arboreal square marked out by the coordinates of melody and harmony. However, polyphony works by constantly forming knots as in a kind of weaving, charting the exact points where vertical and horizontal lines intersect. By contrast, it is Baroque music which really liberates the diagonal, and for Deleuze, as for other thinkers, the Baroque era retains a kind of exemplarity in the history of music.

The reason for this is that Baroque music exhibits a delicate balance: after Monteverdi, it tries to set free monody with the use of broken chords and increasingly simultaneous ones in a proto-classical manner, yet it also places a new stress on pure simultaneous harmony. The effect of

### *Deleuze sees a Baroque anticipation of modernism.*

doing this is not, especially in slightly archaic seventeenth- and eighteenth-century practitioners such as Purcell, Biber, Zelenka, and J. S. Bach, to lose the diagonal, but, on the contrary, to accentuate it. For polyphony, the “weaving” tends to produce a diagonal which simply co-ordinates the horizontal and the vertical, or fuses them into a regular “staircase” that climbs at once along and upwards, leaving one less aware of independent horizontal and vertical lines. It is like the case of a relation becoming substantialized because it totally embodies the poles of the *relata*. In Baroque music, by contrast, a kind of positive dialectic is at work: because monody and pure harmony receive relatively greater emphasis, the diagonal dimension itself becomes more elusive, flowing, and mysterious, and its diagonal tends to break free from its containing vertical plus horizontal frame, so ecstatically aspiring both forwards and upwards. The “staircase” becomes an “escalator,” one might say, or a flowing fountain which one can miraculously ascend; what Messiaen called “the rainbow ladder of the truth.”<sup>32</sup> A similar thing applies to Baroque visual art: the painting overflows the frame and curves round to shape the interior of a building or even the building itself.<sup>33</sup>

An enhanced diagonal dimension is ensured in Baroque music by the use of the ground bass rather than equal contrapuntal lines. This allows the melody to float freely above the ground and yet still to be diagonally co-ordinated with it. Above the ground, a continued deployment of counterpoint and fugal themes plus broken chords has a similar effect. In both cases, a simple Renaissance “weaving” is avoided through the use of syncopated delay, complex (and freely improvised) appoggiaturas and strettos (where subject and answer in a fugue are made to sound together). One result of this is a continuous sounding of the slightly discordant. And sometimes, as in the Bohemian composer Jan Dismas Zelenka, one line will return to itself in a movement of resolution, while another line continues to spiral away, with the effect that the resolution sounds somewhat obsessive, temporary, and unachieved.<sup>34</sup> In these sorts of phenomena, Deleuze sees a Baroque anticipation of modernism.

Use of delay, broken chords, and appoggiaturas means that one no longer has a Gothic polyphonic music of tracked and coincident relations. Instead, one has the sense of a continuous complex flow which constantly redoubles in multiple *ritornelli* and *semi-glissandi*. There appears to

<sup>32</sup>Cited by Fabbi, “Theological Implications,” 80.

<sup>33</sup>J. A. Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque: Analysis of an Historical Structure*, Terry Cochran, tr. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), *passim*.

<sup>34</sup>Jan Dismas Zelenka, CD: *Orchestral Works/Trio Sonatas*, Camerata Bern, Alexander van Wijnkoop (Hamburg: Deutsche Grammophon, 1973/78).

be one dynamic movement which at once moves forwards and triumphantly ascends. Yet, equally, the diverse components—vertical, horizontal, diagonal, plus the contrast of the continuo group and the main body of players, or the use of double choirs on either side of an altar or platform—have a tendency to form monadic blocks where the folds contain “windowless” units which go their own ways. If they do co-ordinate with other blocks, then this seems to be the result of a “pre-established” composed harmony, a hidden transcendent controlling movement. This allows Deleuze to argue that Baroque music is “Leibnizian.” He argues that the basso continuo plays the role of the Leibnizian *vinculum*, where small local groups of monads are bound together “on the surface” and not simply behind the scenes.<sup>35</sup>

According to this view, Baroque music prefigures Bergsonian immanentism for which there are no relations, only a single self-differentiating process and the various spatialized effects it throws off. The latter only appear to exhibit relations and inter-representations. In reality, the spatial units do not communicate with one another and are only secondary effects of self-differentiation. In his book on Leibniz, *The Fold*, Deleuze argues (with reference to Whitehead) that while, for modernism, monads are no longer discrete, but indeterminately fold into each other through “prehension,” they nonetheless remain windowless.<sup>36</sup> It follows that for Deleuze’s Bergsonism, there is still a pre-established harmony or perhaps disharmony: entirely disparate units of music, or of “musical being” (for this is a musical ontology), including—as for Messiaen and Boulez—units of self-contained polyphony, are conjoined by virtual life, and not through their own inherently negotiated affinities.

*Modernist music is the  
music of the liberated  
Baroque.*

In Deleuze’s musical meta-narrative, the Baroque can always lapse into classicism, where it loses the diagonal “line of flight,” but starts re-accentuating the rhythmic (as in the subtly percussive Haydn, Mozart, and the Brazilian mulatto classical composer, José Mauricio Nunes Garcia, who looks back to the Renaissance and the Baroque and forwards to jazz, arguably a Latin derivation, with long-term Baroque roots).<sup>37</sup> Then it can reappear again, as with Berlioz, who is as much neo-Baroque as he is romantic. But the new accentuation of the horizontal leads to the Romantic stress upon the expressive power of the melodic which sings the dark song of the earth, of terrain, and later of “a people” so intensively that it threatens to become de-territorialized—since the decoding aspect of terrain means, for Deleuze, that it paradoxically depends upon the virtual force of de-territorialization.

Classical music is, for Deleuze, the music of formally organized strata which had started to dissolve towards ecstasy with the Baroque. Romantic music is that of the decoded terrain. Modernist music is the music of the liberated Baroque which leaves both strata and terrain for the non-home of the cosmos, whether we are concerned with experimental tonality or atonality; this suggests that we are perhaps concerned with the postmodern as well as the modern. In this music, all multiplicity and dissonance are released. Yet, at the same time, for Deleuze, the possibility of “composition” (and this relates to the Xenakis problematic mentioned earlier) requires that one not desert strata and terrain altogether. This includes a certain embrace of the still-Baroque programmatic element which one finds in Messiaen: not so much a “representation” of

<sup>35</sup>Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold*, 121–137.

<sup>36</sup>Deleuze, *The Fold*, 121–137 and 76–82.

<sup>37</sup>José Mauricio Nunes Garcia, CD: *Missa Pastor il para Noite de Natal*, Ensemble Turicum, Luis Alves da Silva and Mathias Weibel (Strasbourg: Les Chemins du Baroque de la Terre au Feu, 1999).



canyons, birds, the infant Jesus, and so forth, but a certain “becoming” of these things, as Deleuze puts it, in a way that might be considered consonant (even if Deleuze did not see it this way) with the Thomistic idea that to know a thing is not to mirror its form but further to “develop” and realize that form in one’s mind. Deleuze is aware that the possibility of such a programmatic element concerns the “synaesthetic” dimension and the mysterious passing of one mode of sensation into another which exhibits their shared mediation of vital forces.

So whereas modernist Bergsonism aspired towards an impossible regulative pure self-differentiation of the *élan vital*, Deleuze’s postmodern twist suggests that the “absolute,” which he sometimes terms “a life” or “the plane of immanence,” is only “there” in its folded back involvement in various modes of re-territorialization.<sup>38</sup>

But is this really music? Is it what one hears in Messiaen? Not according to Messiaen’s own self-theorization, and not necessarily in hearing his music for oneself either. On Deleuze’s view,

### *But is this really music?*

the “composition of diverse forces” which he admirably upholds as an ideal, can only in fact mean a continuous uncomposed and imminently dissolving tension between the pull towards territory, on the one hand, and the urge towards pure self-differentiation, the *glissando* of continuous variation, on the other. Modernist Kantian regulation by the unachievable sublime is still present, as I indicated above, but in the

mode of a constant unstable achievement of this non-achievement. So the holding-together, the composition, cannot be a genuine balance even to any degree. It cannot be music, even if it trans-verses musical moments. Deleuze’s “chaosmos” cannot amount to a musical cosmos even though he wishes it to do so. This is because it contains no finality of relation, but only a tension between the pure One (of self-differentiation), which is not “there” of itself, and territorial differences which both express and deny this Unity. For the same reason, there is no analogy between these disparate musical units, in the sense of an obscure affinity that is “revealed” to the composer or the listener.

And what justified Deleuze’s view that the more extreme Baroque of modernism is really beyond the Baroque? Nothing at all, since Messiaen’s cosmic affirmation of transcendence and extreme programmaticism is perhaps to be seen as a kind of hyper-Baroque (though also hyper-classical, as complexly percussive, and hyper-romantic, as freely expressive of nature). To go beyond the Baroque, one has to deny that the musical process amounts to “return” and to claim that the *ritornello* is left behind, or rather that one should gesture towards such an impossible escape. However, one can only do so by contradictorily proposing a nihilistic version of return after Nietzsche as the identical return of the aleatory, even if this is the return of the non-reactive (as in Deleuze’s debatable rendering). Hence, for Deleuze, the line of flight will vanish into a “fascistic” black hole if it does not constantly “return” to its ground bass in territory: final escape always proves to be premature. Inversely, territory must constantly re-embark on the diagonal line of flight. In this way nihilistic piety is still, in Messiaen’s terms, confined within retrograde motion. Moreover, Deleuze’s Bergsonist idea of the ultimate “virtual” (before the actual/possible doublet) comprises the idea that this is only realized through the “double articulation” of material content, on the one hand, and “mental” expression, on the other. The emptiness of the absolute is confirmed by the inherent emptiness of consciousness which doubles and expressively folds back upon the realized content of the virtual.

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<sup>38</sup>Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*, Anne Boyman, tr. (New York: Zone, 2001), pp. 25–33.

But this means that Deleuze's diagonal "line of flight" can never ascend or reach further, but always returns to the sway of the vertical and horizontal co-ordinates. It is not really post-Baroque, but pre-Baroque, since it achieves only a nihilistic version of polyphonic exact plotting of intersections. An immanent diagonal can only sink with a vertical collapse back into the earth or vanish in a horizontal temporal swoon which leaves historical time altogether. It is not a true transversal at all.

By contrast, a genuinely dominant diagonal is just what one naturally thinks it is: it is Jacob's colored rainbow ladder for ascending and descending singing angelic beings. We also ascend, with our own, other music. The ladder is a staircase, else it would be a slide and no real hierarchy. It has steps which move along as well as upwards. Just for this reason, it is a diagonal, for a diagonal must tend as much to transcendence as to immanence, else it would be a mere travelator. And to be an escaping diagonal, it must in the end favor transcendence, even though this bears full immanence in its wake.

The only possible line of flight is consequently the ascent to heaven. This returns upon itself without self-collapse since it partially reflects an infinity of beauty which is an infinity of retrograde motion without self-contradiction.

*The only possible line of flight is consequently the ascent to heaven.*

And the ultimacy of the diagonal, or of "hierarchy," in the strictly Dionysian sense (the Neoplatonic series, which Deleuze tries to immanentize), means also the non-reducibility of relation. Relation remains relation because the relata do not collapse into the diagonal. The vertical and the horizontal persist and are enabled by the diagonal; this is not intrinsic agonism, unlike Deleuze's model. And yet the diagonal coordination is not pre-determined (G.E. Moore's "internal" relation) since this would monistically collapse relations; nor is it only accidental or "external," in a Humean fashion, since the path and the ascent of the horizontal and vertical musical lines, respectively, are guided by the diagonal interaction.

But if relation is ultimate, then it is reducible neither to territorial substance, nor to deterritorialized flux. It has, therefore, no immanent ground. If relation is ultimate, it must be grounded only in itself. And that means that the diagonal is itself diagonalized, crossed from the outset by another diagonal free from all coordinates. This is the diagonal of creation as such: relations go all the way down because they exist by being related, by being posited by God, given as gifts to themselves as gifts.

The diagonal gift of music lies on the created diagonal; the "letting down" of music by the heavenly choir spoken of by Dryden and hymned by John Blow in their laments for the death of Henry Purcell.<sup>39</sup>

It can in this respect be questioned whether the Baroque is Leibnizian in its entirety. More plausibly, much Baroque music is linked with Jesuit humanism (especially in Latin America) and with the mystical Thomism, more like Thomas himself, of the French Oratorians, beginning with Pierre Bérulle (and those influenced by them, such as Charles de Caussade), who themselves gave rise to the supreme Baroque musical form of the "oratorio."<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup>John Blow, CD: *Ode on the Death of Mr. Henry Purcell*, Walter Bergmann with Alfred Deller and John Whitworth, countertenors (London: Vanguard, 1995) [re-release of 1950s Stour Music Festival live recording]. Blow's music aspires to express the "matchless" character of his pupil's music and in doing so here equals its genius. Although the piece should probably be sung by a high tenor and not a counter-tenor, this cannot detract from the ethereal revelation of Bergmann, Deller, and Whitworth's performance.

<sup>40</sup>See Hans Urs von Balthasar, "The Metaphysics of the Oratory," in *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics V: The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age*, Oliver Davies et al., tr. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1991), pp.

Neither of these metaphysical sources offers either occasionalism or pre-established harmony; instead one finds what is in effect an ontology of the diagonal, or an attempt to see the classification of being in terms of *états*, and supremely the “states” of Christ’s life, in which a vertical and performative liturgical adoration of God mysteriously intersects with a horizontal series of events lived in time. Here the ontological is self-exceeded as doxological, as praise of the divine, because it is inversely exceeded by the divine descent into time: our aspiration upwards is enabled by the divine reaching downwards and restoring, in Christ, of a true temporal ontological sequence as a life of worship. Co-ordination does not happen here “behind the scenes,” but through a real communication of simultaneous and successive “states” of being. As Charles de Condren put it, because all things are created by God and all is sacramental, there is a “*communion de tous les instants*,” a continuous possible composing of meaning “between” things, just because they are all self-exceeded in their inwardness by the divine depth. Although this depth is the ground of co-ordination, it is mediated by the surface interaction in space and time of all the “instants.” Liturgy and history coincide on a transversal plane which composes

finite being. Hence for Bérulle, in the interaction between Jesus and Mary Magdalene, a new ontological “order” of love commences in time and is only “later” to be communicated also to the angels, since the Incarnation has established a new ontological reality.<sup>41</sup>

*Bach offers a Baroque-Gothic fusion of process and structure that is strictly theological.*

It seems just as, or even more, plausible, to link the new operatic expressivism and historicity extraordinarily combined with a continuing use

of counterpoint and liturgical abasement and aspiration in Baroque music, with this Oratorian metaphysical legacy, as with the perspective of Leibniz. The former, after all, was nearer to the orbit of actual musical practice. It was to a considerable degree Oratorian (and also Ignatian) spirituality which encouraged music to veer away from the polyphonic towards the more monodic, expressive, and dramatic. Probably the first fully sung stage work (regarded as imitating classically antique musical recitation—the Oratorians were very humanist) was the *Rappresentatione di Anima e di Corpo* by Emilio Cavaliere in 1600.

It is true that some Baroque music may show a tendency to promote the propagandistic grandeur of a dominant folding line, in collusion with a pretended autonomy of separated units. This could be seen to reveal the hidden collusion of private rights with the *mathesis* of absolutism.<sup>42</sup> And yet the Oratorians and the Jesuits (again especially in Latin America, with the democratization of the Baroque deploying Indian singers and musicians, as in the work of the Italian Bolivian, Domenico Zipoli),<sup>43</sup> to a degree strove for a new mode of ecclesial generosity and harmonious association that resisted this politics, as it resisted this perversion of music. In

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119–41. For Caussade, see p. 137. For the Oratory and music, see Arnaldo Morelli, “The Chiesa Nuova in Rome around 1600: Music for the Church, Music for the Oratory,” in *Journal of Seventeenth Century Music*, Vol. 9, no. 1 (2003, accessed October 25, 2007) <<http://sscm-jscm.press.uiuc.edu/v9/no1/morelli.html>>.

<sup>41</sup>Pierre de Bérulle, “Elevation to Jesus Christ our Lord Concerning his Conduct and Grace towards Mary Magdalene,” *Bérulle and the French School: Selected Writings*, I, 5, Lowell M. Glendon, tr. (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), pp. 173–5.

<sup>42</sup>See Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 81–95.

<sup>43</sup>Messiaen, *Traité*, 1, 752. Zipoli worked in a Jesuit context in Bolivia, but had been in part trained at the Oratorian church in Florence. Also relevant here is the CD and DVD *Fiesta Criolla* (Strasbourg: Les Chemins du Baroque de la Terre au Feu, 2002), reconstructing a 1718 Bolivian festival for the virgin of Guadalupe.

the work of the Mexican Ignacio de Jérusalem (especially his polychoral *Mass in D Major*),<sup>44</sup> in Zipoli, Purcell, Zelenka, Bach, Handel's *concerti grossi*, or Telemann's Paris Quartets, a surviving element of strong counterpoint and freed-up polyphony ensures a true dominance of the diagonal over horizontal massification or vertical breakdown into successive musical facades.

Indeed, for there to be a diagonal in the Baroque, for reasons we have seen, the pre-established musical harmony must be resisted. Rather, despite the release of the melodic and the harmonic, the use of delay, syncopation, and semi-structural ornamentation, the musical diagonal must still emerge from free relating and not the pre-arranged mathematical coincidence of apparently discrete units. As is often noted, there is a "Gothicism" in J. S. Bach; elements have integrity and real juxtaposition, like a Gothic window and arch, despite the Baroque element of continuous overflow. Where there is no true diagonal, the latter is in the end spurious; apparent flow is only by the grace of frozen elements, the dead vegetation and frozen water of Baroque fountains. But where there is real relation and diagonality, there is true dynamism just because the discrete elements are not secretly negated and not seen as inhibiting process—as in the way that Bergson thought that matter negatively "arrested" life, even though the virtuality of life had to divide itself into the actual virtuality of matter in order to propagate itself at all. Bach offers a Baroque-Gothic fusion of process and structure that is strictly theological.

*Like much modernism, there  
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#### 4. Recapitulation

For all his modalism, refusal of serialism, and final commitment to harmony in music, and for all his practical and theoretical commitment to a non-violent non-identical repetition, one cannot entirely describe Messiaen as "postmodern." He was rather a typical Thomistic modernist; he refused romantic historicism and subjectivism in favor of formal technique and *claritas*, and was concerned to reflect permanent natural order via a reflection of eternity rather than engage in a reflection upon history in a narrative idiom. Significantly, Messiaen composed almost no exclusively liturgical, as opposed to contemplative, music. Plainchant, he felt, was the only appropriate musical liturgical language. And apart from the Tristan myth, his music is not concerned in any way with temporal emplotment. Still less, then, does it seek to integrate worldly with divine drama in the fashion of much Baroque and post-Baroque liturgical music.

One can link this observation with another one. For all his criticism of Bergson and espousal of the idea that continuous variation must be mediated by fixed patterns, Messiaen still favored complex patterns and the mixture of such patterns because he was haunted by the notion of a stochastic yearning for continuous variation, even if this was for him the eternal music of the Trinity. To be sure, one should not push this observation too far, because Messiaen grasped the essential difficulty of this conception. He realized that non-identical repetition is not pure except in God; for human beings it has always to be mixed with deployment of identically repeated patterns. Or, one could say, that the mysterious one compared to one invoked in analogy of attribution has to be combined with measurable analogy of proportion when one is conjugating the relations of this world, even if attribution is more fundamental and becomes still more so in the yearning toward the eternal.

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<sup>44</sup>On CD: *Mexican Baroque*, Chanticleer, Chanticleer Sinfonia, Joseph Jennings (Germany: Teldec, 1994).

Nevertheless, Messiaen seemed somewhat to scorn the deployment of simple repeated proportions, affirming that Bach and jazz swing rhythm with meter and so are “unrhythmical.”<sup>45</sup> Yet in contrast to this perspective, it could be claimed that just the use of perpetual identical repetition allows one to spring surprises and exhibit continuous variation, and moreover to do so in a readily hearable and popular manner.

These two observations come together with respect to anthropocentrism: the regularly repeated, as in the case of a more regular tonal or modal range, lies nearer to the capacities of the human voice and untrained ear. For this reason, it is well-adapted to *narrative*. Like much modernism, there is something apolitical about Messiaen’s music.

At the same time, one would not want to lose the range of Messiaen’s new cosmic effects; one could argue that the aim of postmodern music should be to integrate the cosmic and the human, the spatially expansive with the narratively temporal, and the tonal and the repeated with dissonance and continuous variation.

*One could argue that the aim of postmodern music should be to integrate the cosmic and the human.*

This would mean, though, that some usual characterizations of the postmodern would not hold good of music. It would actually be more humanistic, historicist, and political than the modern. Moreover, in its aim to compose harmoniously, it would be religious and not nihilistic.

But such in fact is arguably the case. John Adams’s minimalist use of repetition is often geared to music that boldly confronts the politics of our time: Nixon in China, the Palestinian problem in *Harmonium*. Other minimalists, such as John Tavener and Arvo Pärt (whose work partially develops the trajectory of Britten), are clearly concerned with the religious realm.

Do they, however, qualify as postmodern? Not really, in the sense of seeking to integrate modernist with premodernist techniques, since modernist techniques are so largely abandoned; sometimes, in Taverner’s case, along with all the dramatic, conflictual elements of post-medieval music.

The music that better qualifies did *not* emerge from the neo-liberal West, normally associated with the postmodern. Rather it emerged from the old communist East in the compositions of Alfred Schnittke, Galina Ustvolskaya, and Sofia Gubaidulina. In Ustvolskaya’s music, one has a wedding of dissonance with constant variation of liturgical themes. Indeed, all these composers push musical anguish, stridence, and ugliness to a new level, and yet they contrast this with the arrival of musical grace. Ustvolskaya makes “Dona nobis pacem” sound forth as peace through a terrible musical screeching.<sup>46</sup> One is reminded here, as James MacMillan has noted, that before Cecilia became the patron saint of music, it was represented by Job on account of his patience. For, as he likewise says, it is in fact religious faith which exposes the greatest depth of suffering. If there is no ultimate meaning, then suffering is finally meaningless and so is not suffering at all. Suffering and evil are only terrible because there is good, which, to be good, must be more final than evil. Messiaen made a similar point, citing Ernest Hello: “The abyss of death must show death so that the abyss of height can show above itself as life.”<sup>47</sup> Yet the sense of a dramatic passage through death and evil on this earth is not strongly present in the French composer.

<sup>45</sup>Claude Samuel, *Entretiens*, 65ff.

<sup>46</sup>Galina Ustvolskaya, CD: *Preludes and Compositions*, Oleg Malov, The St Petersburg Soloists, (Ghent: Megadisc, 1994).

<sup>47</sup>Samuel, *Entretiens*, p. 140.

By contrast, the retrieval of a more tonal, regular (sometimes minimalist) narrative element in these composers permits this expression of suffering and its dramatic resolution or problematic semi-resolution. In the case of the German-Russian Schnittke, this is paradigmatically shown in his piece for violin and orchestra *Quasi una Sonata*.<sup>48</sup> Here the development and recapitulation radically break down, but in such a way as to show that any such things are only gestures toward an impossibly complete development and recapitulation (like praying in order to pray).<sup>49</sup> Yet in making such a gesture, somehow the reconciliation is all the more real, even if more anguished and temporary.

In his other works, especially the *concerti grossi*, Schnittke offers a neo-Baroque that runs into frenzied Faustian extremes and mixes tonality with atonality and the banality of popular music, which for Schnittke is both demonically seductive and yet somehow beautiful and redeemable.<sup>50</sup> His music always deals (after Thomas Mann) with the appeal of the Faustian lure for absolute musical control and easy aesthetic wealth: it squarely confronts the demonic in order to overcome it and redeem what must remain good in it, if it is to be at all. Unsurprisingly, for the listener, one gathers that Schnittke became a Catholic in order to rescue himself from abysses opened up by involvement in the occult.<sup>51</sup> And his music reflects with constant irony, pain, and nostalgia upon the course of human history from the early modern Baroque era to the present Faustian age.

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Sometimes the blend of tonal and atonal in Schnittke seems too constantly ironic and merely juxtaposed, as also in the nonetheless very fine work of the Finnish composer Einojuhani Rautavaara.<sup>52</sup> But not always and certainly not so in Ustvolskaya, although in her case the development is of essentially atonal elements. The work of Sofia Gubaidulina also exceeds mere juxtaposition, and moreover develops a complicated theological integration of tonal with atonal elements. Like Messiaen (who continued the French tradition of the deliberately “non-Germanic” referential “symphonic poem,” beginning with Saint-Saens and César Franck), Gubaidulina refuses the “absolute” music of modernism and her work is replete with the programmatic, from the representation of a tight-rope walker to the use of number symbolism and liturgical allusion. She sees musical rhythmic strategies—*legato*, *pizzicato*, *glissando*, *vibrato*, *col legno*, and so forth—as representing diverse spiritual states and above all she contrasts the uneven and obscure *staccato* of the quotidian with the *legato* of the liturgical. The latter, however, only emerges in her music from a complex tensional interplay of different moods: the sensual, the anxious, the mournful, the courageous in particular, which all offer their own partial “beatitude” and yet require a fusion in a co-incident of opposites which lies at the heart of religion.

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<sup>48</sup> Alfred Schnittke CD: ‘Quasi una Sonata’ on *Concerti Grossi nos 1 and 5*, The Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Gidon Kremer (Hamburg: Deutsche Grammophon, 1990/3).

<sup>49</sup> See Pickstock, *After Writing*, 167–267.

<sup>50</sup> Alfred Schnittke, CD already cited; also *Symphony no 6/Concerto Grosso no. 2*, Russian State Symphony Orchestra, Valeri Polyanski (Colchester: Chandos, 2004).

<sup>51</sup> Alexander Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke* (London: Phaidon, 1996). See also, for discussion of music and magic, Jonathan Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit: Thoughts on Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) esp. pp. 171–6 regarding the spell of the palindrome.

<sup>52</sup> Einojuhani Rautavaara, CD: *Piano Concertos nos 2 and 3*, Laura Mikkola, Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra, Eri Klass (Finland: Warner Chappell, 2002).

In her piano concerto *Introitus*, referring to the introductory chant of the Mass in the Roman Catholic liturgy, she conveys this interaction of moods by use of a complex polytonality in alternated succession and combination. The wind instruments play in a microchromatic idiom, often accompanied by *pizzicato*, to represent the natural restless state of humanity; the strings in a chromatic range to represent existential awareness of the human condition of loneliness and longing. Both these ranges develop essentially horizontal melodic and rhythmic themes, since they are concerned with human life in time. The piano, by contrast, plays in an austere pentatonic mode which conveys ascetic striving to overcome egotism and is concerned with the vertically chordal, expressed by an “iconic” deployment of fifths and major and minor thirds. Finally, all the instruments in combination at times play in a diatonic range which suggests an integration of all these elements of human life within a contrapuntal and surging diagonal, which still exhibits some of the early influence of Shostakovich upon this composer.

However, the diatonic attempts at integration, sometimes heralded by a dramatic flurry of ultra-tonal diminished sevenths, keep musically breaking down, and in a rising spiral of intensity, it is the pentatonic piano which has continuously to renew the reconciliatory impulse. There is a continuous liturgical process of lapsing, starting again and rising once more to a new but provisional state of peace. In the end, a brightly flickering diatonic resolution dominated by the strings passes over into a prolonged pentatonic piano trill which gradually diminishes and concludes the work.<sup>53</sup>

Likewise, in some pieces by James MacMillan, for example *Veni, Veni Emmanuel*, one hears a seamless fusion of the tonal, atonal, and the percussive. In his case, there is an integration of Messiaen’s use of complex polyrhythm, polydynamics, and polysonority, plus a complex sense of retrogression, and non-retrogression.<sup>54</sup> His music is Catholic in a way that makes his espoused Catholicism seem almost incidental.

Thus we live in an era of musical hope. Time and space, narrative and simultaneous complex sonority are coming together with the human and the cosmic. A richer diagonal is being composed; it newly descends. ♪

### Communion Antiphon

The image shows a musical score for a Communion Antiphon. It consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line starting with a large 'R' and the lyrics 'E- ve- lá- bi- tur \* gló- ri- a Dó- mi- ni:'. The middle staff is a piano accompaniment. The bottom staff continues the vocal line with the lyrics 'et vi- dé- bit om- nis ca- ro sa- lu- tá- re De- i no- stri.' The music is written in a complex, polytonal style with many accidentals and a non-standard key signature.

<sup>53</sup>Sofia Gubaidulina, “Introitus” on CD: *In the Mirror*, Béatrice Rauchs, Vladimir Kozhukhar, Kyiv Chamber Players (Akersberga: BIS Records, 2002).

<sup>54</sup>James MacMillan, CD: *Veni, Veni Emmanuel/ Tryst*, Colin Currie, Ulster Orchestra, Takuo Yuasa (London: Naxos, 1997).

## INTERVIEW

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### More than Immanent

An Interview with Catherine Pickstock



At first glance, Catherine Pickstock's book *After Writing: On The Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998), which develops her doctoral dissertation, is an abstract and extremely difficult work of politico-literary criticism, intended for specialists. But what actually emerges is a defense of liturgy as a language that offers a poetically powerful analysis of the Roman Rite and its place in culture. Her thesis is that outside liturgy, as embodied in the Mass, there can be no meaning. The first half of her book examines the crucial role of praise of the divine, or "doxology," in the philosophy and culture of the ancient world. The second subjects the entire Mass text to a close, phrase-by-phrase, philosophical and theological analysis that turns the method of postmodern literary criticism in on itself. She concludes that the Christian liturgy is the "culmination" of philosophy, art, literature, and life itself. She was interviewed from her offices in Cambridge by Jeffrey Tucker in 1999 and a portion of that interview appeared in the *Latin Mass* magazine. Here is the full interview.

**TUCKER:** What do you mean that the Second Vatican Council's liturgical reformers were not thinking radically enough?

**PICKSTOCK:** The characteristic forms of language in contemporary discourse are distinguished by their abstractness, elision of temporal markers, and other modalities. For example, we see the increased use of "nominalizations," that is, nouns formed from verbs, as well as "asyndetic" or listlike syntax. These forms tend to encourage the sense that the reality they describe comprises atemporal changeless units of simplified matter.

These forms of language are useful to politicians and bureaucracies, and it is no accident that political speeches and other jargon make frequent use of these characteristically "modern" parts of speech. These forms were also adopted by the liturgical revisers in the name of up-to-dateness and transparency. But the hidden assumptions of these language-forms are wholly hostile to liturgical purpose, let alone ethically- and aesthetically-speaking.

It is for this reason that I claim that far from the revisers being too radical, or making changes that were too progressive, they were not being radical enough. For they failed to challenge the assumptions of the modern secular world, for example, the separation of the liturgical from the everyday world and much more.

**TUCKER:** What is the practical consequence for liturgy?

**PICKSTOCK:** One is immediately recognizable. The contemporary language-forms in the new Mass depict time as a linear succession of discrete present moments, and of the self as

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Catherine Pickstock  
(photo by Howard Guest)

enclosed and in command of his actions and all that he surveys (not least the task of procession to the altar). In relation to the divine, the self is portrayed as purely passive. This contrasts with the complex temporal repetitions and figurae of the mediaeval liturgy which seem mysteriously to outwit the dichotomy of active and passive. In the old Mass it becomes unclear what is our own "initiative" and what is the mediation of divine by human action.

For this reason, the medieval liturgy conveys the crossing over of eternity and time (as Kierkegaard says, "eternity is the true repetition"). But its constant repetitions and strange digressions present this liturgical "crossing over" as a supremely difficult task for the worshipper to encompass. One might say that this task is cast in the mysterious "middle voice" between heaven and earth. Of course, the liturgical movement certainly had no intention

to silence that voice but that was the unfortunate result of their attempt to acculturate the liturgy into the forms of contemporary thought and language.

**TUCKER:** But the new Mass was supposed to involve the faithful more, not less.

**PICKSTOCK:** The irony is that the alleged "people-centered" liturgies of the last two decades are in fact rather alienating. It's rather like the emperor's new clothes, where nobody seems prepared to admit that the new liturgy is naked. One of the principles followed by the liturgical revisers (and this is true in Catholic, Episcopal, and Reformed churches) was to remove concrete language and complexity, features which tend to give the text specificity or attachment to certain localities. In this way, the reformers reinforced centralization and uniformity.

The point of the new liturgy was to forge the bonds of worshippers' allegiances and affinities by increasing its "accessibility," but one does not necessarily make something more accessible by universalizing it or making it more abstract in the fear of excluding someone who cannot interpret a particular resonance. In the new Mass, there is no lure of the particular, no curious metaphor which people always remember and love, no idiosyncratic repetition, or "redundancy" as modern linguists would call it. It's true that such curiosities might seem strange to some, but the difficulties and complexities of the old Mass engage the spiritual and cultural imagination like no other medium.

**TUCKER:** Do you find it useful to separate the "intentions" of those who called for liturgical reform from what eventually emerged?

**PICKSTOCK:** Absolutely. The work of such theologians as Chenu, de Lubac, Congar, Bouyer, Jungmann, Klauser, and others is commendable, and I actually do think that many of the Second Vatican Council's attempts to return to earlier practices were important. But there is little continuity between the great "Corpus Mysticum" of de Lubac and the revised Roman Missal.

For example, a tendency to separate form and content encouraged the revisers to misinterpret the many oral features of the text (such as repetitions) as grandiose rhetorical additions, or even as messy nuisances. They failed to see them as part of an overall apophatic theology thoroughly medieval in character.

**TUCKER:** Does the extraordinary detail of your treatise reflect requirements of a dissertation or your love for the Roman Rite itself?

**PICKSTOCK:** Very much the latter. One of the examiners worried that I "over-egged the pudding," by which he meant that I had taken the analysis of the Mass too far and dragged each phrase through too much. I suppose my view is that it would be just as, or more, arbitrary to

assign a limit to such a task. Nobody can possibly know the reach of language, whether liturgical or otherwise, so one should just keep going until one is too exhausted to go any further.

**TUCKER:** What led you to this topic and what did you hope to achieve?

**PICKSTOCK:** I inherited a strong politico-ethical concern from my grandparents, and this foundation led me to see liturgy as the site of maximum mediation of theological reflection in the practical realm. There is no other place where abstruse metaphysical realities which concern our being and the whole of creation are more incorporated into bodily practice and the everyday and where these realities are encountered and disseminated by and to other human beings.

*Liturgy occupies a unique mediating position between art and politics.*

Liturgy is probably the central place in which the most important things are mediated to us: body and soul, community, family and individual, truth, meaning, being, beauty. In the high Middle Ages, this fact was reflected in the way in which all aspects of the civic realm, even very mundane sorts of things, were underpinned by the protocols and assumptions of liturgical offering and para-liturgical practices.

**TUCKER:** Yet your interest in the cultural implications of liturgy, especially the Mass, is highly unusual in academia.

**PICKSTOCK:** It's true that the issue of what liturgy means for the civic realm has received virtually no attention from philosophers. And, in fact, it has received relatively little attention from actual theologians. Liturgiology has tended to concentrate on the intricacies of historical transmission of early manuscripts, and focused on their provenance, various omissions, and other curiosities.

Yet the rite of the Mass deals with concerns that relate directly to the themes of theology and philosophy. These include ontology, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and the soul. Therefore, it seemed to me a matter of some urgency to start off an attempt at a more philosophical negotiation of the liturgy. My own background is more literary than philosophical, and I believe that there is a very great deal more work to be done by those more philosophically astute than I.

**TUCKER:** What makes liturgy different from art, politics, conversation, or other modes of communication?

**PICKSTOCK:** There are obvious pragmatic differences. Liturgy is a kind of human disposition or activity, as a sub-category of ritual. It is a bodily practice which is at once formed by traditions and yet variant. It is both metaphysical and physical. It is both determined beforehand and spontaneous to an extreme degree. Liturgy occupies a unique mediating position between art and politics which, in theory at least, could ensure that the political can transcend its own immediate ends. It goes beyond mere "art" since it is part of life, and so does not lapse into a magic circle of compensatory realities. This might at first seem a rather extreme claim, but I think it can be defended in several ways.

Let me provide an example from Plato's dialogue, *The Laws*. In the city of the Magnesians, participation in the unity of the cosmos is mediated to each citizen in a collective fashion via the ceaseless performance of liturgy. Every day of the year has its own specific festival; thus the everyday reaches perpetually beyond itself in worship. The city is bound together by an extraordinary rhythmic pattern. It is said that "the whole city can utter one and the same word" and all the citizens of the city "are strung together on a thread of song and dance." At the same time, this continuously present rhythm leads the city at every moment to refer beyond itself to nature and to the eternal.

This contains an important clue about liturgy as a politico-aesthetic category. The liturgical fuses the most realistic with the most ideal, for here the most ordinary activities are referred beyond themselves to the transcendent and cosmological realm from which they are suspended. This "suspension" is reflected in the protocols of ritual behavior with its ideal or repetitive aspects.

**TUCKER:** Ritual and liturgy, then, are inescapable foundations of a social order.

**PICKSTOCK:** Certain repeated rhythms and patterns we associate with ritual make possible all our reasoning, even though they are themselves without rational universal foundations. It immediately follows that this reality which everything else assumes has also an ideal aspect, for these original patterns privilege certain formations, certain shapes, sounds, or whatever, over others.

The ideal aspect of human life is not a kind of optional extra, but is essential to specifically human action. To say that human life has a fundamentally ritual character is a way of recognizing this. It is a way of indicating that the most realistic actions, even those with a pragmatic and functional character, also exceed themselves by indicating the unquestioned and transcendent, which is the horizon within which they operate.

Human existence must be ritual in character by the same token it is linguistic and social. All cultures begin in ritual, which fuses the repetition of ideal value, with physical inscription upon bodies, places, times, and motions. As Franz Rosenzweig has argued, it is the festivals of the liturgical year that prevent time, and even epochs, from passing before they can be noticed. Festivals allow temporal moments to signify something, and no moment is completely without significance. Liturgy allows every moment to become a gateway to transcendence.

*The liturgical fuses the most realistic with the most ideal, for here the most ordinary activities are referred beyond themselves.*

**TUCKER:** What is your distinction between ritual and liturgy?

**PICKSTOCK:** Liturgy is a specific mode of ritual behavior. A ritual may refer to an ultimate reality which is merely immanent in character. Where this applies, the social and natural components of the ritual cannot be regarded as gifts arriving from a transcendent source. The gifts of ritual cannot be received with gratitude and praise. Instead they are merely the parts or aspects of the ultimate impersonal reality. With ritual, the ultimate has always already fully arrived in the inherited given ritual patterns, which are therefore identically repeated. On its own, ritual can become coterminous with a kind of legalism or formalism.

Liturgy, however, involves not just ritual repetition, but also the reception and praise of gifts from above. In consequence it sustains a distance which permits a non-identical repetition and a possibility of internal critique. Liturgy refers a society in its very heart to something beyond itself. Liturgy makes it possible to carry out a re-assessment of that society. It allows for the disclosing of something altogether new from the transcendent dimension while excluding the wholly extraneous.

**TUCKER:** With the march of secular culture, and with manufactured liturgies providing no resistance, have we lost this capacity?

**PICKSTOCK:** In many ways it is very much more difficult for liturgy to enter into the heart of our everyday lives, for so much around us conspires to cancel its message. And it is impossible to enculturate Christianity in a modernity overwhelmingly Promethean and nihilistic. For this reason our situation is perhaps far worse than that of missionaries confronted by paganism. Nevertheless, I would not want to say that we have “lost” our capacity to speak in the face of these hostile transmissions. There always remain some “leads” for Christianity to pick up. It’s just that these are fewer or else just less easily apprehensible nowadays. One must look all the harder for them.

*The separation of the person from meaningful public ritual works consolidates the power of the state by relegating religion to a sphere of innocuous irrelevance.*

One of the places in which people have recently sought resistance to the modern homogenization of reality is through art. But I wonder whether that is a plausible solution, for there has been a strong tendency to assume a dichotomy between “real life” and “art” or “fiction.” This dichotomy, one could say, is a result of the wreckage of the liturgical, a wreckage which has been intensified the more art has become a sealed domain of “fine art” cut off from craft. Making useful things has become increasingly reduced to the merely technical. Also, the separation of the person from meaningful public

ritual works consolidates the power of the state by relegating religion to a sphere of innocuous irrelevance.

**TUCKER:** And it is through liturgy that faith can most strongly impact culture.

**PICKSTOCK:** Let me use the example of music, drawing again on the work of Rosenzweig. Music can be a narcotic phenomenon which causes one to forget the world and oneself. Music can be dangerous, for it extracts a sequence of time from the public time of shared events, and even from the ordinary sequence of private time, such as the ordering of a person’s day. It can transport one into a virtual imaginary time which has no connection with the things that one does, nor even with anything that happens to one’s body.

Liturgical music is different. It integrates music back into the order of public time as well as privately significant time because it now relates to publicly recognized points of transition. It captures the processes of personal commitment such as the movements of repentance and receiving divine grace and so forth. This blunts music’s dangerous aspect, and it confers a positive role upon music and upon art in general. Liturgy allows art and music to pre-tune the individual soul for community. In a liturgical context, every ordinary moment points beyond itself to the eternal

**TUCKER:** What significance do you attach to the etymology of the word “liturgy”?

**PICKSTOCK:** As we are often told, it means the “work of the people.” But what does that mean? In a fully liturgical culture, all activities are to a degree brought within the scope of liturgical enactment. This ensures in theory that nothing is merely instrumental, and that every act exceeds itself, since every act becomes an ecstatic celebratory offering. Enjoyment is interpersonal and measured; it results neither in private disaffection, nor in disillusioned disappointment once rapture has expended itself.

Liturgical enjoyment is sustainable enjoyment, and even one that has to be worked at because it involves certain efforts, certain disciplines, and renunciations. In our society, by contrast, work

and enjoyment have been truly separated from each other in such a way that, very often, work is not a sphere of self-fulfillment, and the latter is sought instead in an arena of escape or of essentially uncontrolled and unmediated self-expression. Only the liturgical offers a vision of an alternative of a pleasure that we might work for in the heart of our lives.

Another way of putting this would be to say that only the liturgical holds the ethical and the aesthetic together. In the modern world, the domain of work is not at all one of spontaneous expression, and it is increasingly drained of beauty. On the other hand, the world of private free time which should, from a liturgical perspective, be the world most governed by duty to acknowledge the divine, sinks into a world of sham irresponsibility, of voyeuristic enjoyment of crime and violence, drugtaking, and virtual transgression of boundaries.

A liturgical understanding of art integrates it much more closely with mundane and everyday reality. Yet it invokes a transcendent not defined through reason as a future possibility, but registered existentially as an infinite actuality that is "impossible" in any purely human terms.

*A liturgical understanding of art integrates it much more closely with mundane and everyday reality.*

The transcendent "impossible" actually arrives in some measure in the everyday for the liturgical vision. Liturgy is not at all like secular art a kind of drug, since of its own nature it belongs to the flow of life. Art only truly fulfills itself when it is offered as praise. Eric Gill often reminds his readers that the true meaning of the word "art" is a "thing made well."

**TUCKER:** The word "impossible" figures strongly in your book.

**PICKSTOCK:** I do not mean to suggest a realm of pristine inaccessibility or unreality. When liturgy imagines something in excess of everyday life, this is not an imaginary sphere which we enter into, like a dramatic performance which is placed ironically in brackets. Within the logic of old Catholic liturgy, the celebrant goes to the altar, which prefigures the altar set in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem, and at the same time he really does go up to the heavenly Jerusalem. In the liturgical tradition, there is a meaningful presence in everything, but without a reduction of presence to "the graspable."

Think of the words "Hoc est enim corpus meum." "For this is my body." They are shockingly indeterminate words which might seem to dislocate us from the realm of familiar connections between words and meanings which we ordinarily inhabit. Yet the greatest dereliction of meaning is here read as the promise of the greatest plenitude of meaning, a plenitude which could be seen to undergird meaning as such. And not simply the local compliant meanings which might allow a person to identify as "body" something which is manifestly bread.

Nor are we necessarily meant to see this "impossible" realm as wholly other from our ordinarily "possible" lives. If we do trust these words, "This is my Body," in their certain circumstances, if we trust them at all, then we do not simply trust them on their own, that is, on the mere grounds of a tolerated language-game or magic circle of conventional tokens. By trusting these Eucharistic signs, we perforce see them as more than a miraculous exception.

Indeed, as Aquinas insists in Part Three of the *Summa*, the signs of bread and wine were themselves chosen because they are the most common elements of human culture, including within them the mediations of labor, transport, and trade. If these become the signs of promise, they pull all of human culture, all of our common signs, along with them.

And not just the whole of culture; also the whole of history. These words and events surrounding them only occur in the Church. And we only accept real presence and transubstantiation because the giving of body and Blood in the Eucharist gives also the body of the church. The

Eucharist both occurs within the church and gives rise to the church in a circular fashion. A trust in the Eucharistic event inevitably involves trusting also the past and the future of the church.

In receiving the Eucharist, we are receiving an entire historical transmission which comprises the traditions of the church and then those of Greece and Israel. Trust in the Eucharist draws all historical processes and then every physical thing along with it. One could even say that just as the accidents of bread and wine remain, so the supreme event of the Eucharist, which other things anticipate, is only present in a kind of dispersal back into those very things. One of the most striking characteristics of the Eucharist is that the most mysterious and divine presence is here manifest not in an alienated magical circle, but in the most common elements and contrivances of human manufacturing.

**TUCKER:** How does “impossibility” of liturgy figure into the language of the Mass?

**PICKSTOCK:** Think of the way the worshiper is led through a series of stammering repetitions and recommencements of his task. Just when one thinks that he has arrived at the altar of God, it seems he must once again re-begin his journey by confessing his sins and beseeching divine mercy and assistance. In fact, it often seems that the medieval liturgy is a prayer (or liturgy) that there might be a liturgy, which of course can only be truly fulfilled eschatologically.

*In receiving the Eucharist, we are receiving an entire historical transmission which comprises the traditions of the church and then those of Greece and Israel.*

I relate this liturgical “stammer” to the demur of prophetic speech in the Old Testament, where Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Job, for example, all suffer from a kind of vocal crisis in the face of the sublime. By the way, this phenomenon has been brilliantly discussed in an essay by Herbert Marks.<sup>1</sup> Of course, even though our task is impossible in purely human terms, it is not a futile task, for as we know, God comes to meet us on our way. We do not face this journey alone.

But there is another aspect to this discussion of “impossibility” in relation to Christian liturgy. It has to do with the transcendent. This is closely linked again with the idea we have already mentioned of the crossing-over of eternity and time, and we can see that from a liturgical perspective, this occurs throughout the world and throughout history, and is not simply confined to a particular liturgical rite.

This invocation of “the impossible” is not one of a pristine arena of isolated truth. In some ways, one here speaks of everything there is. For example, in acknowledging the gift of the bread and wine, we are referred back to a primitive trust in the gifts of creation. For all peoples, these things have enabled a beginning of trust in the divine, even if it is only the Incarnation, the Passion and the gift of the Eucharist, which ensure that this trust does not run into an ultimate nihilistic crisis.

The Eucharistic fulfillment of prophecy turns one back towards the origin of all prophecies and ennobles them, just as for Aquinas reception of the gifts does not cancel desire, just as the accidents remain; just as the ordinary is always extraordinary.

**TUCKER:** You have dealt with this paradox by reference to medieval allegories.

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<sup>1</sup>Herbert Marks, “On Prophetic Stammering,” in Regina Schwartz, ed., *The Book and the Text* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 60–80.

**PICKSTOCK:** In particular, the text *The Quest of the Holy Grail*. It reflects a Cistercian spirituality for which desire, searching, striving, are central, and which reads devotion to the Eucharist as a difficult quest, just as Aquinas said that we are “wayfarers” who can only discern the Body of Christ through faith

On their way to the Grail castle, the knights in the story are led to a mysterious ship which has been voyaging since the time of King Solomon. This ship has a mast made of the Tree of Life from the Garden of Eden and other insignia which foreshadow Christ. It had been constructed by Solomon’s wife, who was concerned that future generations should know that Solomon had prophesied Christ’s coming.

*I agree with the premise that much of what is written about the liturgy is emotive and often rather unhelpful.*

The ostensible concern in the story is that we should recognize the prophetic power of our ancestors. But there is a deeper point. If there were no record of the anticipation of Jesus and the Eucharist, we would not recognize them as significant at all, nor discern them, for they are only meaningful as fulfillment; without the record of Israel, there could be no manifest Incarnation.

It follows that Jesus and the Eucharist are in some way a ship, just as the Tree of Life was read allegorically in terms of the God-man. The ship is already the church and the Eucharist, as a tentative human construction, whereas the fulfilled Eucharist is perfect human and yet divine art. One can say also that the Eucharist remains the ship because it persists as quest despite fulfillment, just as we continue to contrive the elements of bread and wine, and continue to desire the Body and Blood of Christ even the very moment we have received them into our bodies.

The ship, then, also prefigures our liturgy, for its message is traced not only in its crafted emblems of promise, but also in its perpetual path. This allows us to link the notion of a liturgy which strives constantly to be a liturgy with the idea that trust in the Eucharist points us back towards a trust in everything, and especially the ordinary and the everyday. For if we are to go on questing for the liturgical, and yet we only know to look for it because we have already received it in signs which arrive to meet us on our way, then it would seem that all these signs retain their mystery without cancellation.

We are still knights looking for the Grail, just as we are still Israel on pilgrimage, sustained through the mysterious mediations of human constructions, through things made beautiful by the ineffable capacities of art. In this way, not only the negative reserve of the Catholic Rite provides a link between its specificity and liturgy in general; the very mode of presence it invokes does so as well. For here, we only offer a received divine offering by recapitulating all that active human strivings have to offer.

**TUCKER:** Why does so much liturgical discussion these days focus on style and preference, not form and structure?

**PICKSTOCK:** I agree with the premise that much of what is written about the liturgy is emotive and often rather unhelpful, even if it is true. It tends to create opposing camps, neither of which listens to each other. And yes, there is a dichotomy between form and content which is thoroughly modern and thoroughly sinister. In a way, the revisers of the traditional rite were guilty of it too, by thinking that a few changes to the language wouldn’t affect the basic theological center, or that if one bit of the theology were changed slightly, it would be for the better and would leave the rest unaffected. This dichotomy of form and content is a thoroughly unliturgical one.

The reason people have tended to focus on preference and style with regard to the liturgy is a tendency encouraged from the early modern period onwards, when religion and liturgy became the reserve of the "private sphere" for the individual on his own to decide upon, while important matters are for politicians and media figures, as William Cavanaugh<sup>2</sup> has argued. The liturgy is not at all a matter of mere adornment of ordinariness. It goes to the heart of the matter, quite literally.

**TUCKER:** How should people who seek broader availability of the old missal approach the matter?

**PICKSTOCK:** I would suggest avoiding secular and modern gestures towards beauty and art without a broader sense of its meaning of the liturgy itself. We must never forget that liturgy is part of life, and the moment it occupies a locus of aesthetic purity, it ceases to be liturgy, and becomes an empty artform.

Also, I would suggest avoiding melancholic gestures which somehow refuse the forward-moving flow of life. Kierkegaard saw the problem here in his essay, "Repetition," where he warned against retrospection, and noted that truly "to remember" the past, one must make sure one is facing forward. This might seem an oxymoron, but I think that in practice it makes sense. If one is to be true to the past, one should not seek to stop the flow of time.

The old liturgy, with its subtle repetitions and complex movements and quite abstruse metaphysical "progress," emerged from a world full of liturgical assumptions and insignia which in some ways continued the rite, affirmed its mysteries, and perhaps helped to communicate them.

These para-liturgical ciphers no longer exist today, which would mean that a restoration of the old missal would enter our world as an isolated island of perfection, but lacking in the mysterious continuities in the everyday realm. I'm not sure that I can work out the full implications of all this, except to say that because of the cultural differences which today pertain, the old missal would not be the same, even if it were restored identically. It would have and does have a different meaning today.

In any case, as an Anglican (of a Catholic persuasion) my relationship to the medieval liturgy is complicated. In many ways the Anglo-Catholic liturgical practices which I am used to are far closer to medieval liturgy and practice than the Roman Catholic liturgy today. My own admiration for the Tridentine Missal emerges from a love of its theological, philosophical, and literary magnificence and radicalness.

But the important point for me is that I am not against the new liturgies because they are "new." I am against them if they are ill-conceived. For example, I would rejoice if there were a new liturgy composed in such a way as to express mystery, apostrophic invocations, and the various other features of language, content, and structure which I have identified in the medieval

*My admiration for the Tridentine Missal emerges from a love of its theological, philosophical, and literary magnificence and radicalness.*

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<sup>2</sup>William T. Cavanaugh, "A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House: The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State," *Modern Theology*, 11 (1995), 397-420.



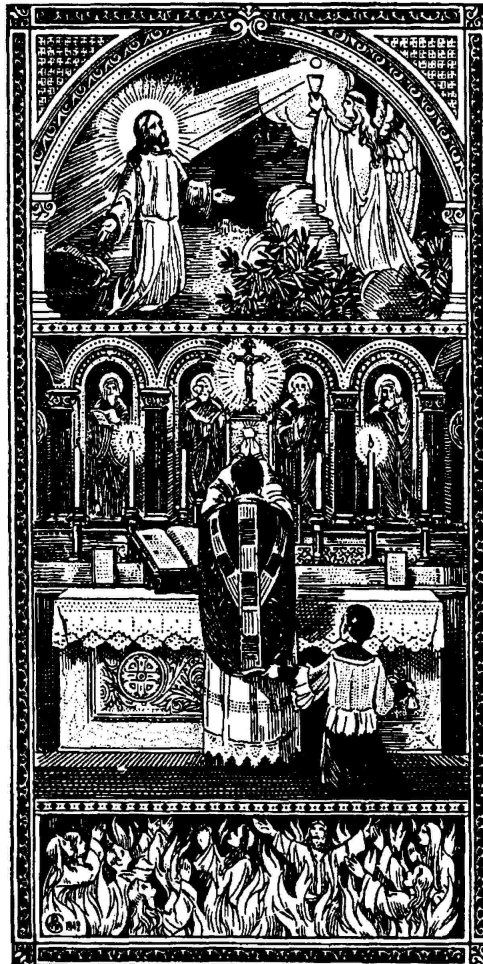
liturgies, but which would at the same time take account of the different cultural context and threats in which we are now situated, and challenge them liturgically.

**TUCKER:** This suggests how important your treatise is in promoting a greater scholarly understanding of the meaning of the Roman Rite.

**PICKSTOCK:** I hope my work has helped to underscore how crucial liturgy, and especially medieval liturgy, is to our most important metaphysical concerns, and thereby loosen the boundary around the realm of “religion” that separates it from the “everyday” and from the “real.” I also hope to address philosophers who believe the theological sphere is trivial, and liturgists who see liturgy as the reserve of learned historiography rather than as crucial to aesthetics, ethics, politics, faith, and civilization itself.

**TUCKER:** Did the reception of *After Writing* please you?

**PICKSTOCK:** Very, very much. I am delighted and astonished by the welcome it has received, and especially the warm response in the United States, as well as France. I had absolutely no idea when I was writing my grim doctoral thesis that it would turn into a book that would be the subject of an interview. ☞



## REPERTORY

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# A Joyful Commemoration Cristóbal de Morales (ca. 1500–1553): *Andreas Christi famulus*<sup>1</sup>

by Joseph Sargent

Andreas Christi famulus  
Dignus Dei Apostolus  
germanus Petri  
et in passione socius

Videns Andreas crucem,  
cum gaudio dicebat:  
Salve, crux preciosa,  
quae in corpore Christi dedicata es.  
O bona crux.

Sancte Andrea, Ora pro nobis.

Now this Andrew was a worthy Apostle of God,  
for being a servant of Christ and a brother to Peter,  
he was in death made like unto them both.

When holy Andrew saw the cross, he said with joy:  
Hail, O precious Cross,  
Sacred to the body of Christ.  
O gracious cross.

Saint Andrew, pray for us.



he five-voice motet *Andreas Christi famulus* is one of Morales's most animated compositions. Its text derives from the Feast of St. Andrew (Nov. 30), commemorating the apostle who was crucified for spreading Christ's gospel throughout Greece. The text of the *prima pars* appears at several points within the feast day. It is the antiphon to the third psalm for both First and Second Vespers (Psalm 111, *Beatus vir* and Psalm 115, *Credidi*, respectively) as well as the antiphon for the third psalm (Psalm 62, *Deus, Deus meus*) at Lauds and the antiphon at the opening of Sext. The *secunda pars* text is more freely adapted from the Office of Matins, where portions of the text appear in the first antiphon as well as the third responsory within the third nocturne. Of special note is the ostinato *Sancte Andrea, Ora pro nobis* in the soprano II voice, with both text and melody drawn from the Litany of the Saints.

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<sup>1</sup>The score of the motet is available at [www.cpdl.org](http://www.cpdl.org).

A version of the motet is preserved at Toledo cathedral, where Morales served as chapel master from 1545 to 1547, in the manuscript, Toledo, Biblioteca Catalonia, 17. By the mid-sixteenth century, Toledo was firmly established as the center of Spanish Catholicism, its stunning cathedral a grand monument to the faith and its diocese the most influential in Spain. A period of systematic manuscript copying at the cathedral, beginning in the mid-1540s, produced a number of sumptuous choirbooks and offers ample testimony to Toledo's thriving musical establishment. Manuscript 17, lavishly decorated with illuminated miniatures and borders, bears dates of 1550–51 and thus falls squarely within this period of manuscript production. This manuscript date, combined with Morales's presence at Toledo shortly prior to the motet's copying, suggests that the motet was likely composed during Morales's tenure there.

*The uplifting nature of Morales's music is immediately noticeable.*

An additional contrafactum copy of *Andreas Christi famulus* is found at the Parroquia de Santiago in Valladolid, in a composite manuscript dated 1616 but containing several earlier gatherings from the later sixteenth century. For this contrafact the entire *secunda pars* is eliminated and the *prima pars* text replaced with the scriptural text *Hoc est praeceptum meum* (John 15:12–14).<sup>2</sup> The ostinato voice is altered as well, with "Andreas" removed to allow for the insertion of other names. Evidently, Morales's motet was regarded highly enough that later musicians sought to adapt it for greater variety of occasions.<sup>3</sup>

The uplifting nature of Morales's music is immediately noticeable and corresponds closely with the text, which emphasizes the joyful aspect of Andrew's martyrdom even as it aligns him, via its emphasis on the cross, with Christ and Peter through their common suffering of death by crucifixion. The high voicing (doubling the soprano part) and high original clefs reflect this animated sensibility, while the rhythmically active melodies and occasional large leaps give the melodic writing a sense of jubilation.

The soprano II ostinato provides a structural foundation for the motet. The repeating pattern consists of three measures of rest, followed by four measures of music in which the text "Sancte Andrea, ora pro nobis" is set to the plainsong litany melody. The melody appears alternately at its original pitch and in transposition up a fifth from the original pitch.

Such ostinati, a characteristic feature which Morales employed in several other motets, can serve dramatic as well as structural purposes. In Morales's motet for Ash Wednesday *Emendemus in melius*, the ostinato text "Memento homo quia pulvis est, et in pulverem reverteris" (Remember man that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return), beats an ominous cast, a stark warning juxtaposed alongside a more beseeching text. In *Andreas Christi famulus* the effect is not quite so powerful, but the ostinato's persistent call for prayer does carry dramatic implications. In its many repetitions the melody recalls the reiterated chant statements of the Litany of the Saints, closely connecting the motet with this liturgical moment. The repeated litany also

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<sup>2</sup>The new text reads "Hoc est praeceptum meum ut diligatis invicem sicut dilexi vos. Maiorem charitatem nemo habet ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis. Vos amici mei estis si feceritis quae praecipio vobis, dicit Dominus. (This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do the things that I command you, said the Lord.)

<sup>3</sup>In fact, the first modern edition of *Andreas Christi famulus* appeared in this adapted form based on the Valladolid manuscript, rather than the original Toledo version. See Juan B. de Elústiza y Gonzalo Castrillo Hernández, ed., *Antología Musical, Siglo de Oro de la Música Litúrgica de España: Polifonía Vocal Siglos XV y XVI* (Barcelona: Rafael Casulleras, 1933), pp. 41–44.

adds a layer of rhetorical complexity, complementing the otherwise buoyant musical expression with a more insistent call for prayer.

Aside from the ostinato, several additional chant references permeate the motet. The opening melodic motive, with its ascending GC motion, recalls the opening interval of the antiphonal chant melody and supplies the first point of imitation among the four non-ostinato voices. A more striking chant reference arises during the *secunda pars* on the word "Salve," where the soprano I quotes the opening motive of the Marian antiphon *Salve Regina* in sustained tones. Additional chant fragments are woven into the texture in more subtle ways, keeping the polyphony rooted in this foundational material.

In its overall stylistic profile, the motet follows many general trends of mid-sixteenth century international style. Pervasive imitative polyphony among the non-ostinato voices is standard, with several motives developed throughout each half of the piece. Occasional accented dissonances at non-cadential points (e.g., m. 8 between soprano I and tenor, m. 19 between soprano I and bass) enliven the motet's harmonic character with pungent sonorities. The pitches G and C play an important structural role throughout the piece; in addition to being the final and reciting tone, respectively, for mode 8 (the original mode of the chant), they represent the only cadential pitches used in the entire motet.

Morales incorporates numerous texture reductions in this piece, adding an element of variety to the imitative polyphonic fabric. These reductions are particularly noticeable when the ostinato is being sung on its higher pitch, for in most of these cases the soprano I rests or else is pitched lower than the soprano II. This allows the ostinato to be clearly heard as the highest-sounding melody and further highlights its importance within the motet.

The *secunda pars* in particular captures the sense of wonder inherent in Andrew's vision of the cross. Several melodic entrances on upper notes of the vocal range, particularly in the soprano I, supply musical moments of high intensity, and the lengthier rhythmic values throughout all voices on the text "O bone crux" vividly invoke the awesome spectacle of beholding the cross. As the piece approaches its climax, a series of sustained whole notes in the lower voices (particularly alto and bass) breaks with the prevailing imitative structure and gives the motet's final measures a distinct sense of grandeur.

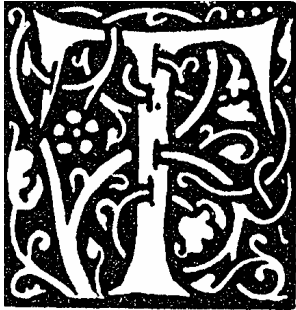
While many of Morales's best-known motets (*Emendemus in melius*, *Lamentabatur Jacob*) are of a somber nature, *Andreas Christi famulus* is composed in a more optimistic vein, emphasizing the wondrous holiness that Andrew achieved through his martyrdom. Morales crafts both text and music to accentuate the ennobled aspects of Andrew's sacrifice, an uplifting representation of this saint's final moments on earth.

#### Practical Notes:

- *Andreas Christi famulus* appears in modern critical edition in vol. 13 of Higinio Anglés, *Monumentos de la Música Española* (Rome: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1953), pp. 157–165.
- Recordings of this motet have been issued by the Westminster Cathedral Choir (*Morales, Missa Queramus cum pastoribus*, Hyperion, 1992) and Capella and Escoliano Montserrat (*El siglo de oro*, Harmonia Mundi, 1972).
- Ranges: soprano I: e'–g'', soprano II: e'–e'', alto: a–c'', tenor: g–a', bass: c–d'. Choirs may find it helpful to sing the piece down a step, given the generally high tessituras.
- Approximate duration of the piece: 5 minutes, 30 seconds. ♪

# How the Chabanel Psalms Came to Be

By Jeffrey Ostrowski



he summer of 2007, which will be forever blessed in my memory, was spent contemplating the Psalms of David, which are so beautiful that I have not fitting words with which to praise them. These prayers are not only the *sine qua non* of the Catholic Church's liturgical life, but were sanctified by Christ himself, who prayed them with his sacred lips 2,000 years ago.

The psalm, when sung, should be one of the most musically beautiful parts of the Mass. However, since the promulgation of the 1970 *Missale*, which allowed for several methods of singing the psalm that occurs between the first and second readings, the psalm has suffered greatly and confusion has reigned, to the extent that the psalm is not infrequently the least beautiful part of the Mass: often a musical travesty and (unbelievably) too often a fragmented textual paraphrase.

Currently, I am a music director who works within the "ordinary form" of the Mass. However, for many years prior, I was privileged to be the music director at a parish where the "extraordinary form" of Mass was offered. The psalm issue in the old form was uncomplicated. However, the responsorial psalm option that has become the standard choice in the "ordinary form" (the Mass that continues to be celebrated in the overwhelming number of parishes) presented me with a real puzzle.

In my experience, every responsorial psalm I had ever heard sung in parishes was seriously defective. Most often, they are musically trite, awkward, and, in short, unworthy of the House of God. Some reek of Broadway tunes, some of rhythmically-driven pop music, but all are emotional settings in some way, and make it very hard for the congregation to meditate on the word of God.

Therefore, since I felt embarrassed by the tunes, I simply did not sing them, and quietly prayed in my pew. It was not the fault of the cantor, who tried his best to proclaim these holy texts in a dignified manner. Rather, it was the fault of the composer. As a music theorist, my training screamed to me that the composers simply had no idea how to handle text that was not in meter and did not have rhyming verses. They certainly had no concept of the words of our pope (June 24, 2006), "It is possible to modernize sacred music. But it should not happen outside of the traditional path of Gregorian chant and sacred polyphonic choral music."

For someone not familiar with the "ordinary form," the texts and translations themselves can be confusing, especially since each feast has multiple options. For my part, I had difficulty finding a readily available resource that clearly showed which texts are prescribed for each Mass during the different liturgical years. Even in popular books by "mainstream" Catholic publishers, the divergence from the official, prescribed text was often the norm rather than the exception. Sometimes, the books made no pretense at following a psalm format at all: one of the "mainstream" hymnals I was looking at (one of the most widely used) recommended as a "Seasonal Psalm" for use on any Lenten Sunday "On Eagle's Wings" by Michael Joncas. I could

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understand a little confusion, perhaps, immediately after the promulgation of the 1970 *Missale*, but how is it possible that such things are done more than three decades later?<sup>1</sup>

Calling on friends for advice in this area, I was glad to learn that more and more musicians are looking for modal responsorial psalms that treat the verses in a manner similar to a Gregorian psalm tone (following formulas). They will no longer tolerate composers' paraphrases of the official texts.

For my own purposes, I did what many competent musicians around the country do: I took it upon myself to write every responsorial psalm that I ever used (even for Spanish Masses), which really did get me familiar with this part of the Mass. In the "extraordinary form" of Mass, we often used a "psalm tone" for a gradual, tract, or alleluia verse, so I saw no reason why the responsorial psalm verses could not be set to a beautiful Gregorian psalm tone—with a dignified, simple, beautiful modal refrain.

It is a delight to see the congregation lift their voices to God in the psalms using the melodies that I composed, and the extent to which people joined in singing taught me a lot about what works in a parish setting. A great church musician once said, "You have to know what the butter costs." In other words, it is one thing to sit back and think about what might work in a parish setting, and another to actually test these ideas. When provided with a dignified yet simple setting of the holy text, the entire congregation sings with joy.

My composition model was the *Nova Organi Harmonia* (NOH), a collection of Gregorian organ accompaniments done by the Lemmens Institute in Belgium during the 1940s. The main contributors to this 2,500 page work were Monsignor Jules Van Nuffel and Flor Peeters (who later published his *Method of Gregorian Accompaniment* to explain the principles followed by him and his peers in their creation of the NOH).

If I had to name the three most important aspects of this eight volume collection, these would be: (1) every note and chord is gorgeously modal; (2) the entire work is done in a unified style; and (3) the creators of the NOH, following the lead of their predecessors, perfected the notation of chant accompaniments in a truly marvelous way. My study of the NOH over a period of years was indispensable to creating what became the Chabanel Psalms.

The next question was what to do with what I had done. Electronic media presents a wonderful opportunity for Catholic musicians to reach other parishes besides their own, and it was obvious to me that there was a real need for psalms that were free of charge and easy to access. So, with the help of Corpus Christi Watershed (a Catholic artists' institute in Texas), we decided to take a tip from the Church Music Association of America and provide them for free to the world. You need only print, play, and sing.

Some of the slots on the Chabanel website seem to have multiple entries. For example, on the Feast of the Epiphany, there are three different melodies: one in honor of St. Casimir, one for St. Dominic, and one for St. Cyprian. With these multiple refrain melodies, I tried to take into consideration individual taste, giving people as many options as possible. Let's say that you don't care for the refrain melody in honor of St. Casimir, but you still want to use the Chabanel Psalms

*More and more musicians  
will no longer tolerate  
composers' paraphrases of  
the official texts.*

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<sup>1</sup>The 2003 *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* clearly states in article 61: "Songs or hymns may not be used in place of the responsorial psalm."

on Epiphany. Well, you can try the St. Dominic melody. Or, perhaps you feel that the St. Cyprian melody would be the easiest for your congregation to pick up. Incidentally, I named the various refrain melodies after Catholic Saints to avoid any confusion (if the singers go to the website to print off their scores).

The layout of the music is different for the singers and organist. The singers' scores are formatted so that they fit on a single page, which saves time copying when an entire choir sings the Chabanel Psalms. The organists' scores are formatted to minimize page turns, yet be as legible as possible. Formatting the scores this way was the most time-consuming part of all, but musicians will love it. Both singers and organists will appreciate that each word of every single psalm verse and refrain is placed directly above the corresponding note. As Vladimir Horowitz once said, "Music is already hard: why make it harder? Better to make it easier."

*My initial fears of mixing a Gregorian psalm tone with a rhythmic refrain turned out to be unfounded.*

They are almost exclusively modal, and were individually written to fit the texts like a glove—rather than forcing the texts to fit the melody. That truly was my *modus operandi*. I tried to set the sacred text to eminently dignified melodies, worthy of the Church's public worship of God.

If I were to name an unusual element, it would be the different harmonizations I provide for the Chabanel Refrains. I did this to address a problem. By its very nature, the usual method of singing the responsorial psalm lowers the standard of music. The liturgical calendar has three cycles of readings: for years A, B, and C. Thus, a different responsorial psalm refrain appears every week.

The organist normally plays the melody once, the cantor sings it once, and then the congregation has to repeat it. The congregation ordinarily has to learn a new tune every week, and they only hear it twice before they have to repeat it. So this method, by its very nature, lowers the standard of music, because the refrain melody must be very simple for a congregation to sing it at all.

I decided to compose most of the refrains in rhythm rather than free Gregorian rhythm, to make it easier for parishioners to learn them. My initial fears of mixing a Gregorian psalm tone with a rhythmic refrain turned out to be unfounded.<sup>2</sup> Before doing this, I reflected on a particular Mass of Cristóbal de Morales, based on the *Mille Regretz* melody. I noticed that this great Renaissance Spanish master was not content with the settings of this tune that already existed, so he based an entire Mass on the *Mille Regretz* tune, which repeats over and over in various voices (especially the high voices). Morales later composed alternate versions of the *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei* (still based completely on the *Mille Regretz* melody), using ingenious compositional prowess that defies description.

If Morales could make masterpiece after masterpiece setting the same tune over and over, I reasoned, why could not this be done with the responsorial psalm idiom? Hence, organists who employ the Chabanel Psalms will notice numerous harmonizations of the same refrain tune—sometimes as many as ten different harmonizations (clearly labeled with large letters of the alphabet for the organist's ease in choosing).

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<sup>2</sup>Renaissance polyphonic composers who set psalms, Magnificats, and hymns alternately with chant verses and polyphonic verses could doubtless have told me that in advance.

The organist can choose harmonizations based on the singers, the acoustics of the room, the size and type of the organ, the congregation's musical skill, etc. He can also decide which harmonization would be appropriate as an introduction, as well as which one would be subtle enough for when the cantor sings the refrain the first time. Then, too, depending on how well the congregation does repeating the refrain and how many times the refrain is repeated on a particular Sunday, the organist is encouraged to use "more interesting" harmonizations with each repeat.

Many organists have the skill to "reharmonize" instantly, which they often do with hymns. However, I know of no published responsorial psalm collection which prints different harmonizations for organists who lack either the training or the time to do this. (Incidentally, the NOH editors did this as well, never harmonizing the same melody—even repeated verses of a Gregorian hymn—the same way twice.)

My hope is that these psalms bring people to appreciate the beauty of Gregorian chant (even a simple Gregorian psalm tone). Ultimately, it would be wonderful if Catholic churches could get back to singing the gradual, instead of the responsorial psalm, because this is the best way to foster meditation on the word of God—which, after all, is what the church says this part of the Mass should do.

However, there is also such a thing as taking people where they are, and the responsorial psalm has become the ordinary option. After all, the graduals can be very difficult to sing. Most people are not aware that the Pontifical Commission appointed by Pius X to produce the *Editio Vaticana* considered this same question more than a century ago. I was astounded to learn that the great master of Gregorian chant and member of the Pontifical Commission, Dr. Peter Wagner, suggested that the gradual and alleluia be omitted entirely in churches which could not easily prepare them.

Most people also do not realize that the rubrics for the extraordinary form of the Mass always allowed the gradual's responsory to be repeated after the verse is sung, this being called the "responsorial method"; though I think very few choirs in the last century have ever sung the gradual this way—that is, when the gradual was sung at all.

Thus did the Chabanel Psalms come to be written as an imperfect solution to a very real problem. I have completed and posted more than five hundred scores, but have not yet finished all three liturgical years. Most of the missing feasts will not even occur until 2009. However, even if I were to die tomorrow and never completed the missing Psalms, one could still "get by" using the seasonal psalms, which are allowed by the church "in order that the people may be able to join in the responsorial psalm more readily."

Organists and composers are encouraged to e-mail me their own responsorial psalms, and (if they are similar in style) I would like to post them on the Chabanel Psalms site as additional options. This is in keeping with the mission of Corpus Christi Watershed, which is to promote the work of Catholic artists. The site is [www.chabanelpsalms.org](http://www.chabanelpsalms.org).

The project is dedicated to Saint Noël Chabanel, one of the Jesuit Martyrs of North America. Under his patronage, may the project help spread the love of Gregorian chant in our Catholic parishes, even as he did so much to spread the love of Christ in America. ❧

*Organists and composers are encouraged to e-mail me their own responsorial psalms, and I would like to post them on the Chabanel Psalms site.*



## DOCUMENT

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# Address Of His Holiness Benedict XVI

## Visit To The Pontifical Institute For Sacred Music

Via di Torre Rossa, Rome; Saturday, 13 October 2007

*Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,  
Dear Professors and Students of the Pontifical Institute for Sacred Music,*

On the memorable day of 21 November 1985 my beloved Predecessor, Pope John Paul II, went to visit this "*aedes Sancti Hieronymi de Urbe*" where, since its foundation by Pope Pius XI in 1932, a privileged community of Benedictine monks has worked enthusiastically on the revision of the *Vulgate Bible*. It was then that the Pontifical Institute for Sacred Music moved here, complying with the Holy See's wishes, although it retained at its former headquarters in Palazzo dell'Apollinare, the Institute's historic Gregory XIII Hall, the Academic Hall or *Aula Magna* which still is, so to speak, the "sanctuary" where solemn academic events and concerts are held. The great organ which Madame Justine Ward gave Pius XI in 1932 has now been totally restored with the generous contribution of the Government of the "Generalitat de Catalunya." I am pleased to greet the Representatives of that Government who are present here.

I have come with joy to the didactic center of the Pontifical Institute for Sacred Music, which has been totally renovated. With my Visit I inaugurate and bless the impressive restoration work carried out in recent years at the initiative of the Holy See with the significant contribution of various benefactors, among whom stand out the "Fondazione Pro Musica e Arte Sacra," which has overseen the total restoration of the Library. My intention is also to inaugurate and bless the restoration work done in the Academic Hall, in which a magnificent piano has been set on the dais next to the above-mentioned great organ. It was a gift from Telecom Italia Mobile to beloved Pope John Paul II for "his" Institute for Sacred Music.

I would now like to express my gratitude to Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski, Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education and your Grand Chancellor, for expressing his courteous good wishes to me also on your behalf. On this occasion, I gladly confirm my esteem and pleasure in the work that the Academic Board, gathered closely around the Principal, is carrying out with a sense of responsibility and appreciated professionalism. My greetings go to everyone present: the relatives, with their children, and the friends accompanying them, the officials, staff, students and residents, as well as the representatives of the *Consociatio Internationalis Musicae Sacrae* and the *Foederatio Internationalis Pueri Cantores*.

Your Pontifical Institute is rapidly approaching the centenary of its foundation by the Holy Father Pius X, who established with the Brief *Expleverunt Desiderii*, the "Scuola Superiore di Musica Sacra" in 1911. Later, after subsequent interventions by Benedict XV and Pius XI, with the Apostolic Constitution *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*, once again promulgated by Pius XI, it became the Pontifical Institute for Sacred Music, and is still today committed actively to fulfilling its original mission at the service of the universal Church. Numerous students who have met here from every region of the world to train in the disciplines of sacred music become in their turn teachers in the respective local Churches. And how many of them there have been in the span of almost a century! I am pleased here to address an affectionate greeting to the man who,

one might say, represents with his splendid longevity the “historical memory” of the Institute and personifies so many others who have worked here: the Maestro, Mons. Domenico Bartolucci.

I am pleased in this context to recall what the Second Vatican Council established with regard to sacred music. In line with an age-old tradition, the Council said it “is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art. The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as a combination of sacred music and words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 112). How often does the rich biblical and patristic tradition stress the effectiveness of song and sacred music in moving and uplifting hearts to penetrate, so to speak, the intimate depths of God’s life itself! Well aware of this, John Paul II observed that today as always, three traits distinguish sacred music: “holiness,” “true art” and “universality” or the possibility that it can be proposed to any people or type of assembly (cf. Chirograph *Tra le Sollecitudini*, 22 November 2003; *ORE*, 28 January 2004, p. 6). Precisely in view of this, the ecclesiastical Authority must work to guide wisely the development of such a demanding type of music, not “freezing” its treasure but by seeking to integrate the valid innovations of the present into the heritage of the past in order to achieve a synthesis worthy of the lofty mission reserved to it in divine service. I am certain that the Pontifical Institute for Sacred Music, in harmony with the Congregation for Divine Worship, will not fail to make its contribution to “updating” for our times the precious traditions that abound in sacred music.

*I am certain that the Pontifical Institute for Sacred Music, in harmony with the Congregation for Divine Worship, will not fail to make its contribution to “updating” for our times the precious traditions that abound in sacred music.*

As I invoke upon you the motherly protection of Our Lady of the Magnificat and the intercession of St Gregory the Great and of St Cecilia, I assure you on my part of a constant remembrance in prayer. As I hope that the new academic year about to begin will be filled with every grace, I cordially impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you all. ☩



## COMMENTARY

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### The Chant Experience

By Jeffrey Tucker

Musicians are a tender-hearted lot. We can receive a thousand compliments for our work but we chafe at one raised eyebrow. Liturgical musicians find themselves with added problems. We are not performing and we know that we should not seek praise and we do not seek it—and we try not to feel a sense of gratification when we do receive it.

And yet, we too are musicians with tender hearts. Parishioners who comment negatively about what we do can get under our skin like no one else. This is why a conversation that occurred in early Fall at my parish had me spinning for days.

A woman and her husband, visiting from another town down south, came up after Mass and said: “Where was the music today? I heard lots of singing but no music.”

Of course this view that singing is not music is common, a view Peter Phillips addressed in the Fall 2007 issue of *Sacred Music*. The voice is the primary musical instrument of Mass, I quickly explained to this person. But the conversation did not end. She went further:

“Yesterday at the football game, a 300-piece band played at halftime. It was great! Why can’t we get music like that here?”

Now, here we have a serious problem at work. It isn’t just about taste or about whether the voice is really an instrument or anything like this. What was at issue was the very meaning and purpose of music and the Mass. I gathered my thoughts and said:

“At this Mass, we sing Gregorian chant, which is the music that the Second Vatican Council says is of inestimable value. This music is integral to the Roman Rite, and yet we’ve lost touch with it. We are working to recapture its beauty and prayerfulness in this parish. Is your parish singing chant?”

“Yes, more and more of it all the time.”

“That’s wonderful. Be sure to congratulate your director of music. It is difficult music, but it makes a great contribution to the solemnity of Mass.”

By now, the husband was nodding his head vigorously, which gave me encouragement to go on, which I did, and at probably greater length than was necessary—but as with all chant enthusiasts, we are thrilled to have the opportunity to explain. By the end of the conversation, they both seemed happy and they thank me for doing the music at Mass that morning, and off they went.

I’ve thought a lot about this conversation, because it illustrates a point about the “people” and the extent to which liturgy should be constituted in a way that pleases particular tastes. The “people” are not some amorphous blob that needs to be accommodated in every respect, whose judgment on aesthetics is infallible, whose expectations ought to be catered to in all ways. The people need to have their musical consciences informed by Catholic teaching, just as with doctrine and morals.

It would be absurd to say that the morals taught during the homily should be taught in a way that makes people most happy, and that any objection to what is being taught should be a

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signal that the moral doctrine needs to change. Yes, there is an urgency to teach in a way that reaches people in the most effective way, but that is different from saying that the teaching itself must change.

The same is true for liturgy. People need instruction, direction, information, and they need to be given guidance in how to appreciate chant in a way that assists their prayer life and draws them more deeply into the sacraments. People should be active participants in the liturgy, but not one of their own creation and not one that meets the expectations of the secular world; rather liturgy should offer something completely different.

When complaints about sacred music appear, pastors must be prepared to come to the defense of chant. After all, it is the pastor who is primarily responsible for the look, sound, and feel of liturgy at a parish. There are pastors who are ever more willing to be so, as one generation gives way to the next. In many parishes, the windows to tradition are being opened, so we can see and come to love our heritage. Aggiornamento!

And yet in most parishes today, the reigning pastors came of age long before *Summorum Pontificum* was contemplated. They were part of an infamous generation that attempted to ban the past and never doubted that the future was theirs. The only way forward for them was away from tradition. There would never be any looking back, or so they thought. If Catholicism is no longer to be what it was, what is it hoping to become? This was never really clear in their minds, and so they remain the purist kind of reactionaries: the time that they want to preserve forever is already three decades in the past.

Getting this generation to look outside the window can be frustrating. Many younger Catholics long for the decorum and solemnity and seriousness of a past they can only imagine, and how is this addressed? Mostly with leftover boilerplate that is far more difficult to answer than most complaints.

Recently, I've received notes from musicians at parishes who were confronted by older pastors who told them some variation of the following:

- This is a caring and sharing community of the people of God, and your tastes are just too cold and medieval for us.
- People want music that helps them feel the love of Jesus and each other, not this high art performance material that feels so alienating.
- The Church today has moved beyond all that chant in Latin, a language that no one understands anymore.
- The organ might have been fine before Vatican II but it's not for today's Churches that are filled with people who want to participate more fully in the liturgy as a community project.

Statements like the above are always presented as if the points had never occurred to the person being clubbed over the head with them. It's not as if anyone is going to hear these arguments and respond: "Wow, I had never thought of it like that before! Here I was stuck in the Middle Ages but now I suddenly feel called to Build the City of God and Sing a New Church into Being!"

What first strikes me about the points above is not how misguided they are, which they truly are, but how intellectually amorphous they are. They are lacking in anything resembling intellectual substance. They are little more than empty verbiage of the day.

*Getting this generation to look outside the window can be frustrating.*

How is it that self-styled progressives so reliably yet unwittingly live up to caricatures of themselves? I don't know the answer, but they do, and have done for decades, and will continue to do. It seems never to occur to them that we've heard it all before and rejected it, that their utopia has not been achieved (there are very few gatherings as grim as a modern Catholic liturgy dominated by aging guitarists and praise singers), that their views are not held by most anyone ordained within the last 10 years, so they are not the future but a holdover from an age of confusion.

What I find most mysterious about a certain type of Catholic who came of age immediately following the Council is an incomprehension of the most basic elements of what liturgy means. It is not just the work of people who just happen to be gathering together to celebrate themselves. Washing cars, picnics, baseball games—these are the work of people. Liturgy is the means by which the church prolongs the priestly mission of Jesus Christ; it is the prayerful action of a people toward the end of touching eternity by means of sacramental grace, and so, therefore, liturgy is also the work of God.

*The signs and symbols by which people are brought together at sports events or picnics are not suitable for liturgical uses.*

Competent pastoral leadership begins with the insight that the liturgical aesthetic should be incomparable to what we find at purely secular occasions. The usual signs and symbols by which people are brought together at sports events or picnics are not suitable for liturgical uses; liturgy has its own and higher standard of beauty.

This music and this beauty is not so easy to make appear as pushing a button on a CD player. There are countless hours of study and practice involved. Why do people make the sacrifice?

Because in parishes where the music is beautiful, the choir has something important to do and thereby takes its responsibilities seriously—the director as well as the members. The choir is not there to merely support the singing of the people, or to be a musical proxy of the people of God. It has its own role—exclusive to the schola—to play in the great drama.

More than sheer will is involved. There has to be a talent pool available, and here is where parishes today are seriously lacking. Even those who want to start scholas find that there are only a tiny number of parishioners who can read music or match a pitch. This should come as no surprise to us. For decades, the role of the schola has been depreciated to the point that there is nothing much for them to do. What needs to be done can be done by a cantor alone. So why cultivate excellence more broadly?

Think of it this way. Let's say that we announce that scientists as such are really quite pointless, and that science really belongs to all the people at once, and that the true role of the scientist, if there is one, should consist in doing nothing but supporting the intrinsic expertise of the whole population, and that any attempt to do science apart from the people is really a kind of pompous power grab or an intolerable attempt to merely show off. If we did that, who would be surprised to find that scientists would vanish and that the quality of just about everything would decline?

Well, this is precisely what Catholics have done to scholas and to musical specialization in general. And today we look around and wonder why the music in our parishes is so awful and we wonder why no one is available to fix it.

For this reason, the effort to restore sacred music is a Herculean exercise that requires great sacrifice. Those who consider making such a sacrifice need to know that when we sing chant, we

are doing more than merely singing a beautiful melody. In a real sense we are singing a song that has been part of a faith for many centuries, possibly from the earliest years of the church, through the modern period, all the way through our own time.

As prosperity grew, as the Catholicism spread, as new countries were born and old countries died, as revolutions came and went, as the world population doubled and doubled again and increased a thousand and ten thousand fold, as technological miracles dazzled every generation, this song was there, a song that moved from place to place, sung age after age—a song as peaceful, beautiful, and stable as the faith itself.

And in our own parishes, these songs can be sung again, and with our voices and ears, we can participate in a piece of that history. In school we were learn about kings, wars, and empires, but what do we really know about what regular people did hundreds of years ago? Do we know what prayers they said, what songs they sang, what melodies rang in their ears in the day and night? We can know a very important part of this, because we have the chant. It is ever old and ever knew. It is timeless in a way in which kings, wars, and empires are not. It is a tangible thread—a thread made of small sounds—that connects us back to our heritage, ultimately back to the very beginning of our faith.

*The music of liturgy has a special quality because it can be conjured up anywhere and by anyone.*

The whole structure of the liturgy can be said to do the same, but the music of liturgy has a special quality because it can be conjured up anywhere and by anyone. You can hum it while shopping, when you wake in the morning, or you can sing it to a child, and the little one can understand before the child can understand words. Those little ears will hear what people for many centuries have heard. Those notes are a key that open up the history of private life, and link us to those who came before and will follow after we die, in a way that no history book can. And, remarkably, they can give us a foretaste of heaven, so they give us a bridge to all time but also into eternity. ☩



## REVIEW

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### Music in the Extraordinary Form

By Robert Skeris

Are you or will you be responsible for *musica sacra* at Masses in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite? If so, I have a valuable hint for you. See the “motu proprio resources” now available from Preserving Christian Publications in Boonville, New York. John Parrot and Brian Pouliot have now reprinted classic titles such as J. B. O’Connell’s *Celebration of Mass* and Fortescue’s *The Mass* as well as Fr. Weller’s classic translation of the complete Roman Ritual in three volumes, *The Roman Martyrology*, the 1962 rubrics of missal and breviary and Connelly’s *Hymns of the Roman Liturgy* in Latin and English.

A high-quality reprint of the 1962 Benziger *Missale Romanum* in altar size with US diocesan supplement is on the way. The legitimate liturgist warmly recommends all of these volumes.

The competent Kapellmeister greets even more enthusiastically the musical reprints now available: the 1962 Desclée *Liber Usualis* and two very useful organ accompaniments by Achille P. Bragers of the old Pius X School in New York: low-key accompaniment for the complete Vatican *Kyriale* (including all the ad libitum ordinary chants, the Requiem, the High Mass responses, etc.) and the two volumes (bound in one) of the *organum comitans* to the *Proprium de Tempore*, the seasonal propers for Sundays and great feasts of the entire church year. The appearance of these volumes is indeed cause for rejoicing! To P. C. P., *tante grazie!* Phone: 315/942-6338, info@pcp-books.com; www.pcpbooks.com. ♪

## NEWS

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### Workshop, Salinas, California

By Kathy Reinheimer

The two best days this year to have held a workshop in Gregorian Chant had to have been on September 14, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, and September 15, the Feast of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And the timing couldn’t have been better with the effective date of *Summorum Pontificum* falling the first day of the workshop.

Thirty-five highly enthusiastic people attended this event and soaked up knowledge beyond anyone’s wildest dreams. They came from Los Angeles, Santa Maria, and Watsonville (in addition

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to Salinas). With three short hours for Friday's session and a scant four and one half hours on Saturday, here is what this group was able to accomplish singing at the 4 PM Anticipated Mass on September 15:

Introit: *Da pacem, Domine*  
 Mass XI  
 Offertory: *Precatus est Moyses*  
 Communio and verses: *Dico vobis*

This was in addition to singing *Veni Creator Spiritus* and the Sequence *Stabat Mater* to open Friday's and Saturday's sessions respectively. Only one participant had ever sung Mass XI before!

Enormous credit goes to Greg and Wendy Plese, who had the event so highly organized that all I had to do was to walk in and do my part. The hospitality they provided was amazing. They even had T-shirts with the "Kyrie" from Mass XI on the back!

*Hard work and strong desire  
to learn dominated this  
workshop.*

My long time friend and associate, Bill Costa, came in from Dallas, Texas, to assist with the workshop and provided the finest presentation of the neumes I have ever seen. (I asked for his notes, too!)

Hard work and strong desire to learn dominated this workshop, perhaps only equaled by the laughter we shared. This was an extraordinary group of people and it was my honor to work with them for this special event. ❧

## The Woodstock Workshop

St. Michael's the Archangel Catholic Church, in Woodstock, Georgia, held a sacred music workshop on November 15–16, 2007. It was attended by 70–80 singers, who came to learn the basics of Gregorian chant and polyphonic music, and prepare a special liturgy for the vigil Mass on Saturday night.

It was organized by choral director Bridget Scott and organist Mike Ostro, and directed by Arlene Oost-Zinner, who taught chant, and Jeffrey Tucker, who taught polyphony. Oost-Zinner and Tucker, from Auburn, Alabama, both lectured on the topic of sacred music and took questions on the subject of a parish music program.

This parish was a bit different from other workshops in that there is already a schola in place that had been learning neumes and singing some ordinary chants. This was a help in permitting the directors to move more quickly through the material for the remaining three-quarters of the participants who had no previous exposure. These people came from outside the parish and around the diocese of Atlanta.

The music packet had been distributed in advance. It is what set the boundaries of what was to be taught over a day and a half. All goals were achieved. The workshop schola sang ordinary



chants from the Kyriale without the aid of accompaniment. The women's schola sang the introit and the men's schola sang the communion. The entire choir sang a motet (*O Esca Viatorum*, music by Isaac) for prelude, and two additional motets for offertory and communion (*O Bone Jesu* by Palestrina, and *O Salutaris* by Josquin), as well as the chant hymn *Anima Christi*. The Mass ended with a recessional in English that everyone sang with vigor.

The organizers of the event were struck by the dramatic change of behavior on the part of the people, who have been habituated to casual visiting before and after Mass. But with the prelude choral music, the worship space became solemn and quiet in preparation for the introit, which took on a special solemn tone.

Among those who came to the workshop were other scholas in the area that are just getting started in singing the propers and ordinary chants. The participants left with a renewed desire to work hard for sacred music and take their responsibilities for singing very seriously. The directors of the workshop were especially complimentary toward the role of the pastor, Fr. Larry Niese, who has provided support to the parish schola and has encouraged progress toward the sacred in the life of this parish. ❧

## Chant Workshop in McLean, Virginia

On November 9th and 10th, just over 100 singers participated in a chant workshop at the Church of St. John the Beloved in McLean, Virginia. Scott Turkington of Stamford, Connecticut, acclaimed Gregorian chant expert and teacher, provided a thorough introduction to chant performance according to the classic Solesmes method—the workshop's primary focus. First, Turkington taught the group to sing a Kyrie from memory, then he introduced the basics of singing and reading square notes and clefs, the names and functions of neums, chant rhythm, the church modes, and psalm tones. He also provided an overview of the material contained in the *Liber Cantualis*, which served as the workshop's primary textbook.

On Friday evening, David Lang, Master of Music at St. John the Beloved, gave an organ recital of works based on chant melodies, drawn exclusively from the twentieth century repertoire. The pieces covered a wide range of the liturgical year and chant modes, and demonstrated a variety of organ colors and moods. A schola drawn from workshop participants introduced the chant on which each piece was based, and, for Maurice Duruflé's *Prelude, Adagio and Choral Variations on 'Veni Creator Spiritus,'* sang verses in alternation with the organ.

On Saturday, Fr. Franklyn McAfee, Pastor of St. John the Beloved, gave a lecture entitled, "To Sing Is the Mark of a Lover," in which he compared those who sing chant to people who have fallen in love. Mere words are not sufficient to express their love, which must be exalted by the addition of music.

The workshop concluded on Saturday with the participants singing the full chant Mass ordinary and other chants as part of the parish's Sunday Vigil Mass. The Mass propers were sung by the schola.

Response was enthusiastic, and St. John's plans to make the workshop an annual event. Readers in the northern Virginia area should watch the Arlington diocesan newspaper and the CMAA website for an announcement of next year's program. ❧



William Mahrt directs the St. Ann Choir. He is also editor of *Sacred Music*.

## The St. Ann Choir

The St. Ann Choir, under the direction of CMAA president William Mahrt, celebrated its forty-fourth anniversary in September. This choir of Palo Alto, California, has been a model of excellence in the past and remains so.

They sing propers and Latin ordinary every week, and always have, within the ordinary form. This includes even the gradual instead of the responsorial psalm. Each week, too, there is a beautiful program available to parishioners with all words and translations.

The choir's repertoire is vast (for a listing of the repertory of motets sung, see [www.stann-choir.org](http://www.stann-choir.org)). And yet this is not a professional choir but a group of singers from the area who just love what they are doing. This kind of accomplishment is the fruit of decades of work.

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Too often in Catholic circles people think of the music as a week-to-week task. Pick a few hymns, maybe a jazzy number for offertory, and see who shows up and with what instruments. But the St. Ann choir does something different. It cultivates a sense of mission and demands dedication from all members. If they can't be at rehearsal, they must let the director know. If they are going to be out of town for liturgy, there is a sheet that they must sign. But it isn't merely a matter of imposing internal discipline. It is a matter of inspiration that can only come from within.

In any case, the St. Ann choir has shown us another way for all these decades. Today, they celebrate and rightly so. At the anniversary party, there was a special cake with the inscription: *Schola Sanctae Annae, Anno quadragésimo quarto, Ad multos Annos!* ☩

## LAST WORD

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### Liturgy, Seafood, and Thirty-One Flavors

By Kurt Poterack

Recently, a friend of mine came to Mass one Sunday at the collegiate chapel where I am the music director. He normally goes to the parish church. Afterwards he commented, "My, you do a lot of Gregorian chant! Is that really necessary? Isn't that too much?" I felt like saying, "If you go to a seafood restaurant would you complain to the manager that there is too much fish on the menu?" I didn't say this for three reasons: (1) it was one of those great comeback lines that one thinks of only hours later, (2) as a true friend I preferred an explanation to a comeback, and (3) while it makes sense to me and most of the readers of this journal, it probably would have absolutely confused him. Instead I said, "I'm being obedient to Vatican II, article 116 of the Liturgy Constitution"—to which he replied, "Really, I don't know too much about such things. I suppose I have a lot to learn."

Now this person is not a liberal Catholic by any stretch of the imagination. He is quite orthodox in matters of doctrine, faith, and morals—and quite devout—but simply does not have much of a liturgical culture. My *entrée* with him was an argument from the Church's magisterium. (We were interrupted, but I intend to continue the conversation at some point in the future.)

*Someone said to me a while back, "High Mass, low Mass, charismatic Mass, Latin Mass, how can someone say that one Mass is better than another?"*

I know of a number of good Catholics like this. Someone similar said to me a while back, "High Mass, low Mass, charismatic Mass, Latin Mass, how can someone say that one Mass is better than another?" Again, I said, "Oh, but the church herself says that the sung High Mass is the more noble form of worship, Article 113 of Vatican II's Liturgy Constitution." I then proceeded to explain that, though a low Mass celebrated on the hood of a jeep by a military chaplain in time of war is objectively the same as a Pontifical High Mass celebrated in St. John Lateran, there is a reason why the church has many times practiced (and recommends) the latter, while the former is only practiced in emergency situations.

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What I am finding, in this era of the New Liturgical Movement, is that the liturgical culture of most Catholics has been absolutely decimated—and I am talking about good practicing Catholics. What such Catholics have been left with is a kind of a neo-Thomistic focus on the validity of the consecration and then, lacking a liturgical culture, they fill the void with an American consumerist mentality—a kind of a Baskin-Robbins' 31 flavors mentality. In other words, "I like Chocolate, he likes Vanilla, she likes Butter Scotch Rum, as long as we eat the same validly made ice cream, it doesn't matter. There is no normative flavor." It is totally a matter of subjective, individual choice.

One cannot appeal to such Catholics, at least initially, using aesthetic arguments or even cultural arguments—because there is no normative liturgical culture which they know. They do, however, respond to arguments from authority.

The thing is, though, that there is this objective liturgical *cultus* that has been the Roman Rite for centuries. Gregorian chant is the music that is normative, *proper* to the Roman Rite. It is the only music in the official liturgical books for this reason. The Church has continuously taught this throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Any other music is there by means of addition or substitution for the normative, official music—Gregorian chant.

This is not to deny that these valid "substitutions" can happen to varying degrees based upon pastoral prudence and even subjective choice. The problem is that these subjective choices have been allowed and practiced to such a great degree over the past forty years that the Roman Rite's very own music has been almost totally erased in the actual *experience* of probably a majority of Catholics.

The Roman Rite as an actual historical *cultus* with its own traditions, customs and music has been considerably dimmed. At least before Vatican II Catholics knew "what the score was" even if many of them would go to a more stripped down low Mass because it was quicker.

If I could continue with my restaurant analogy, too many Roman Rite Catholics have been going to seafood restaurants that have been serving little to no fish. They need to learn that, whatever their subjective preferences, fish will be a big part of the menu. ☞

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# EVENTS OF NOTE

- ☑ SACRED MUSIC: A WORKSHOP IN GREGORIAN CHANT, November 9–10, 2007, St. Michael's Catholic Church, Woodstock, Georgia, led by Arlene Oost-Zinner and Jeffrey Tucker
- ☑ GREGORIAN CHANT IN INDIANA, November 9–10, 2007, St. Patrick's, Kokomo, Indiana, led by Amy Zuberbueller
- ☑ SACRED MUSIC: A WORKSHOP IN GREGORIAN CHANT, November 9–10, 2007, St. John Beloved Parish, McLean, Virginia, led by Scott Turkington
- ☑ SACRED MUSIC SHREVEPORT, November 30–December 1, 2007, Cathedral of St. John Berchmans, Shreveport, Louisiana, led by Kurt Poterack
- ☑ GREGORIAN CHANT WORKSHOP, December 1, 2007, San Diego, Mission San Diego de Alcalá, led by Mary Ann Carr Wilson and Kathy Reinheimer
- ☑ ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION SACRED MUSIC WORKSHOP, January 18–19, 2008, St. Mary's Cathedral, Colorado Springs, Colorado
- ☑ SACRED MUSIC WORKSHOP, February 1–2, 2008, St. Michael's Catholic Church, Auburn, Alabama, sponsored by the St. Cecilia Schola and led by Wilko Brouwers
- ☑ SACRED MUSIC COLLOQUIUM, June 16–22, 2008, Loyola University, Chicago, sponsored by the Church Music Association of America
- ☑ CHANT STUDY TOUR, July 21–August 1, 2008, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, sponsored by Fr. Robert Skeris
- ☑ RENAISSANCE POLYPHONY WEEKEND, January 25–27, University of Dallas, led by William Mahrt