

ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Fall 2008

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Engaging Worshipers Through Music



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reflections

A Thank-You and a Welcome.

The Editorial Committee thanks Dr. Rebecca Fisher for her excellent work as Book Reviews editor.



We welcome the Rev. Dr. Paul Holtorf as the editor of Book Reviews.



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Now I understand what Mother was doing!

A favorite activity in the Friedrich home was gathering around the piano in the parsonage dining room and singing hymns Mother played. She loved to play. We loved to sing. Many a night of singing ended with *Onward Christian Soldiers* as we marched up the stairs to bed.

"The Church's Song" becomes our song of faith in numerous ways, at various times and in many ways through a myriad of texts and tunes. Mother was helping to develop within her children "both forms of language to [make us] fully human" (Sylwester) and engaging our mirror neurons so we might know *and* feel the love of God in Christ Jesus.

But that's not all Mother was doing!

She was sharing the Spirit-created faith dwelling deep within her. By playing hymns and songs, she was proclaiming to us "a song from the heart of the church to the heart of God, from the heart of the church to the heart of each believer, and from the heart of the church to the world" (Schalk). Her children were the significant part of "the world" God had given her to nurture and nourish. The hymns we sang helped etch in our minds and hearts "the story of how God had acted to save His people" (Schalk). Night after night as we headed to bed, we knew with confidence that if we died before we woke, the Lord, our precious Savior, would our souls take.

But that's not all Mother was doing!

She was engaging her children and preparing them to worship, to consider God's call through Christian vocation and to apply text and tune to "better understand the people and culture around them so that they might effectively convey the Gospel of Jesus" (Jordening). Mother had no crystal ball. She did not know the changes in culture, the obstacles to faith, the challenges in living a life with Christ "faithful unto death" her children would face. But she did know that "without meaningful utility our music becomes just another cultural consumer gimmick. It may attract and hold the worshiper's attention, but ask if it really connects them to something bigger, more meaningful like ... God" (Jordening).

Through music, through hymns and songs old and new, Mother was helping to connect us to someone bigger: to God, the heavenly Father, to Jesus Christ, the one and only Savior of the world, to the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life.

That's what Mother was doing and still is.

Brian L. Friedrich, President

Spectators or Participants?

A few months ago I walked into a venue draped with lamps and mirrors and mic cords. Expecting acoustic music, I settled into a mellow mood. Then I caught sight of sheet music on the stands—I'm talking pure, genuine, readable sheet music with notes on staves—and my heart jumped. Sure enough, in a few minutes horn players sidled up to the stage and a bass player bounced his major chords off the ska beats. I left the venue energized and inspired.

While living in London, England, for the year, my husband and I have indulged our passion for live music. We've listened to jazz, classical, acoustic rock and punk, and I made a discovery that, although seemingly obvious, has influenced my church music principles: the interaction that occurs between the musicians and the audience is what sparks the concert's energy. It's what gives meaning to the two or three hours that you spend in front of a stage. In other words, without communication between the musician and audience, there wouldn't be a show.

Recently we attended a band's final concert with their drummer. We expected an emotional night of best hits and bittersweet goodbyes, but our anticipation gradually deflated into confusion. The lead singer forgot the words to a ten-year-old song; technical difficulties arose and were never completely resolved; familiar melodies drowned in the shrill electric guitars. It seemed that the band had thrown an exclusive party on stage.

Contrast that experience with a live show in an old Victorian toilet facility under a park. With five acts and the setup time for each one, I expected a mildly good performance. I expected to be distracted. I was wrong. Although each performer played only about five songs, they had arranged their sets so that the audience could go on the journey with them. They took time to introduce themselves, and there was a logical order to their songs. The musicians' careful planning and authenticity demonstrated

their reliance on our participation. Because they entrusted their music to us, we could engage with it and respond to it.

I'm sure we've all attended worship services similar to both of the above concerts. An organist might get carried away in the interlude preceding verse four and confuse the congregation, or we may get stranded ten bars behind a chorus in a cloud of complicated guitar riffs. In these instances, we feel like spectators rather than participants, and most likely we're being led by church musicians who forget to look beyond their organ bench or choir loft. But our worship music should break the barrier between the platform and congregation. Music leaders shouldn't take center stage; the congregation's worship of the Triune God should be center stage. And musicians need to help congregations get there.

We can encourage communication by choosing music that takes the congregation on a journey that symbolizes the celebratory life cycle of our faith: meeting with other believers, asking God's forgiveness, resurrecting the freedom of absolution, and being equipped with God's Word. As Lutherans, we know the service order as we know our own hand. But I think we could do better to celebrate *life* in our services. As much as we profess grace, our worship only mildly represents the freedom of resurrection. The upbeat is missing. The fun is missing. Old Testament worship is full of joy. David danced in his underwear. The psalms tell us to *shout* and lift our hands—to worship all day long and proclaim God's love. When we sing and play energetic music, we liberate our hearts, minds and bodies to sacrifice our own immediate concerns and focus on Him. We relay the message to the congregation that we have a reason to live. Parties demand a congregation's attention.

It's also important that musicians play and sing well so that we don't distract the congregation but rather convey the immediacy of our relationship with Christ

and our worship of Him. C. S. Lewis said, "Let choirs sing well or not at all. Otherwise we merely confirm the majority in their conviction that the world of business, which does with such efficiency so much that never really needed doing, is the real, the adult, and the practical world; and that all this culture and religion (horrid words both) are essentially marginal, amateurish, and rather effeminate activities." In our busy world, we need to convince people that worship is not only essential, but also a privilege.

Regardless whether our worship music is led by organ, choir, orchestra or band, we should lead with servants' hearts. That means communicating to each other. That means being patient with the congregation's needs and preferences and inviting each other to the celebration. Then we can play with our all and return to God the gifts He gives us.

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Are We Following Luther or Arminius?

I am increasingly of the opinion that American Lutherans are Arminians at heart. According to Jacob Arminius, a Dutch theologian active around 1600, salvation works like this: Way back in the mists of eternity, God looked ahead to see which of His fallen creatures would, if they had free will, turn to Him and be saved. Based on this foreknowledge, God then marked, or predestined, these people for salvation through Christ. The teaching was current in various guises even before Arminius, and some 16th century Lutherans thought it sounded pretty good. Philip Melancthon, Luther's closest colleague, came close to asserting it. Luther, on the other hand, wouldn't touch it. He said that if our salvation depended on anything we do or might do, even deciding to believe in Christ, then it is no longer a free gift of God, but rather something we earn. Faith then becomes a good work, something we do to merit God's favor. It is Luther's view and not that of Arminius that became enshrined in the Lutheran Confessions.

But Luther's view has not held up well in today's church. The pitch goes something like this:

EVANGELISM GURU: "Would you give up your life to save your grandson from drowning?"

GRANDPA: "You bet."

EVANGELISM GURU: "Then would you give up your music to save your grandson from going to hell?"

GRANDPA: "Well, I ... uh ..."

The assumption here is that God is not fully responsible for a person's salvation. If He were, then He would find a way to save the grandson regardless of what style of music Grandpa's church employed. If the kind of music really makes a difference in who is ultimately saved, then salvation depends on our actions, and what we do or fail to do can affect not only our own salvation, but someone else's as well. That is flat-out Arminianism, and it is a terrible burden on the Church.

It is not the first time the Missouri Synod has been confronted with this. It happened in the 19th century when revivalists such as Charles Grandison Finney were trying to light a fire under people so they would turn from their sluggish depravity and obey God. Finney believed that if the Church just did things in the right way, in a way calculated to excite people, then the natural and inevitable result would be that people would turn to God in great numbers. For Finney, the mark of the Church's success was how many people came to know Christ. While Finney was best known for his "anxious bench," later revivalists such as Dwight L. Moody and Billy Sunday would make extensive use of music to draw people in and convince them to accept Christ. In 1890 Missouri Synod president H.C. Schwan took aim squarely at the revivalists when he wrote that the danger in moving to English as the language of worship was the American spirit, "that shallow, slick, indifferent, business-tainted spirit in which also spiritual matters are handled in this country; that sentiment which ... seeks salvation in sweet sensations and in a much busied workery of all kinds."

We see something similar a century earlier in German Lutheranism. In the 16th and 17th centuries, church music was considered good if it glorified God and carried an appropriate text. But in the 18th century, writers began to assign a more significant role to it: "to edify the audience, to arouse them to devotion, in order to awaken in them a quiet and holy fear toward the Divine Essence," in the words of Johann Adolph Scheibe, chapel master to the King of Denmark. Writer after writer presented similar ideas; namely, that the purpose of church music is to manipulate emotions in order to move people closer to God. As with the revivalists, the more people it brings to Christ, then the better the music.

In truth, music does not bring people to Christ. God does. God may use music as His vehicle; but we must not think that music,

by itself, has the power to save souls, nor that individuals moved by music are able to choose to be saved. That is all God's doing, working through His appointed means of grace. I am reminded of the U. S. senator who visited Mother Teresa's clinic and home for the dying in Calcutta. On seeing all the illness and poverty there, the senator asked her how she could possibly cope, how her work could possibly be successful. She replied, "I am not called to be successful; I am called to be faithful."

We too are called to be faithful. Do we select our music in church to be successful in moving people, in reaching them for Christ, in convincing them to become Christians? If so, welcome to Arminianism and the Law. Or do we choose music that glorifies God and conveys as well as possible through its texts and associations the fullness of Christian teaching? If so, welcome to Luther and the Gospel.

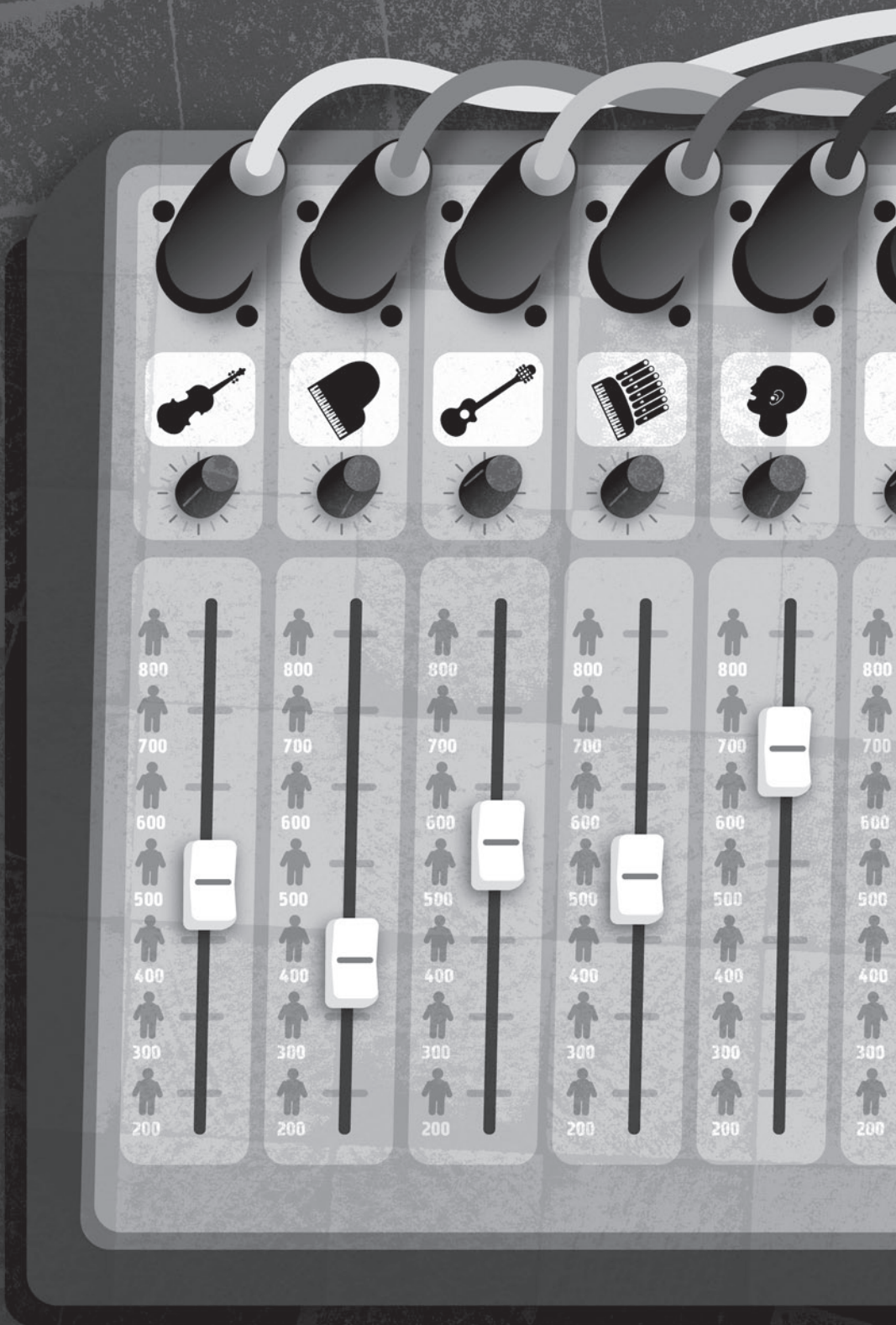
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JON D. JORDENING

Challenges in Engaging Worshipers Through Music



In reflecting on the challenges and opportunities for the church to engage people through music in a day of diversity, I began to believe more and more the words of Ecclesiastes:

Everything is meaningless. All things are wearisome, more than one can say ... What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.

Such cynicism! But wait, there's more! The writer goes on to say, "For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief." I don't know about you, but often the subject of the challenges in the landscape of our worship produces as much angst for me as it does joy. Of which music is only a small part! The more I read, and the more I try to understand all the different issues from the many and diverse points of view, the heavier it can become, at times, for my heart.

Why do I begin this article with such a lengthy dirge? To make this first foundational point: There is NO magic silver bullet—if we just do these four, five, six things then everything will turn out well. That's just not the case. To "engage" is to be pleasing in such a way that attracts and holds someone's attention. At a deeper level, it's to be "under a pledge." That's a tall order in our consumer culture. Engaging today's worshiper, like church ministry itself, is something with which to wrestle. It can be an inconvenient, even difficult, endeavor! But, like Solomon (presumably), I am also sure of this: There is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because that is his lot. So, from within that lot, I search for "meaningful" thoughts to help us overcome the challenges we face as we try to engage worshipers through music.

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Challenge #1

Making Music More Meaningful

Engaging for whom? Simply put, engaging for "the worshiper." However, a quick survey of worship-style labels generated over just the past 30+ years tells us that this target is not so simple. Take your pick: Liturgical, Convergent, Free-flow Praise, Alternative, Contemporary, Modern, Seeker, Blended, Seeker-sensitive, Purpose-driven, EPIC, GEN-X, Post-modern, Post-postmodern, Authentic, Organic, Emerging, Missional and other styles. Each of these labels was generated by Christians with a sincere desire to better understand the people and culture around them so that they might effectively convey the Gospel of Jesus. With all these labels spinning around us, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the thought of our music responding to needs as diverse as these labels suggest. But, while I believe that we should be culturally conciliatory, and that there is wisdom in diversity of methodology (1 Corinthians 9:20-23), I also consider that in every case, then, now and always, "the worshiper" is an emotional human being who searches for an intrinsic understanding of his or her own self. This description transcends the meaning behind all the labels, and while perhaps an over-simplification, it's at this basic level that these words of Luther make perfect sense:

Experience testifies that, after the Word of God, music alone deserves to be celebrated as mistress and queen of the emotions of the human heart. And by these emotions men are controlled and often swept away ... For if you want to revive the sad, startle the jovial, encourage the despairing, humble the conceited, pacify the raving, mollify the hate-filled—and who is able to enumerate all the lords of the human heart, I mean the emotions of the heart and the urges which incite a man to all virtue and vices?—what can you find that is more efficacious than music? (Plass, Ewald. *What Luther Says*. Vol. II. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959, p. 982.)

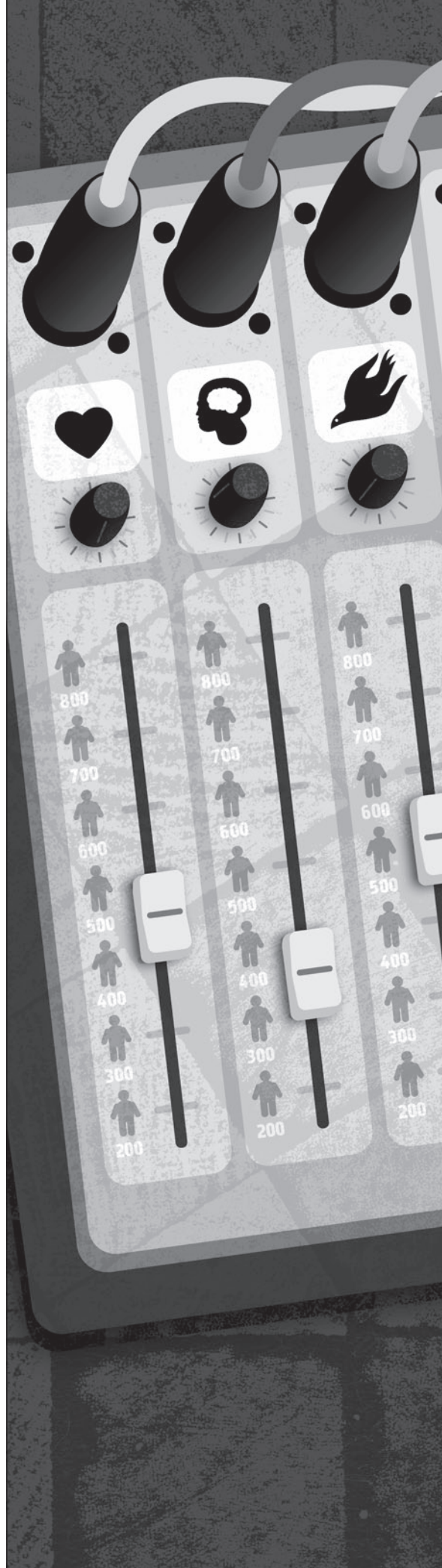
As musicians challenged to engage the often bored and uninspired worshiper, this perspective suggests that we would do well to redeem the meaning of words that have all but disappeared from the professional discourse of our churches—Emotion, Perform-ance, and (gasp!) Entertain-ment. **EMOTION.** If you doubt music as mistress and queen of the emotions of the human heart, just imagine how uninspiring your favorite movie would be without its musical score. The movie and television industry often underscore their work with varied pop and independent music selections that emote their storylines. Product advertising often uses top-forty pop culture music over jingle writing because they know there will be a more immediate emotional attachment to those songs. And, what's an iPod if it's not a way to create a moment-by-moment play list for our day, often based upon how we feel?

This relationship between music and emotion is certainly nothing new to the academic and scientific community. Though often marked by subjectivity, the relationship is nonetheless significant and worthy of our attention. Luther recognized this relationship when he said,

To such hearts (hearts burdened in fear of sin, the anguish of death, and other troubles) the Book of Psalms is a sweet, comforting, lovely song ... Nevertheless, the use of notes or music ... helps greatly to produce this effect, especially when the people sing along. (*Ibid*, p. 981)

A heart that is burdened, filled with anguish, and troubled by circumstance, indicates a great deal of emotion. Emotion that is transformed by the message of the Psalms is stirred through the use of music.

It's not hard for us to believe that the lives of people are riddled with sin, and we expect that their encounter with God's Word will cause sadness and disgust for that sin. We are confident that God's kindness and acceptance will lead them to remorse and repentance, and we are certain that the end



result will be joy, love, and thanksgiving for the surprise of such mercy. However, too many musicians doubt that we would (or should) actually experience all that emotion! And sadly, as a result, they make music that reflects their own doubt—music void of any of the emotions the worshiper may be feeling.

The challenge for musicians is not to simply accept that people are created with hearts filled with emotion, but to accept that music, if it engages the hearer, *should* draw these emotions out into the open. This isn't a manipulation of the worshiper's psyche (although this abuse of music is real in churches), but instead evidences that music, as Luther notes, "Has the natural power of stimulating and arousing the souls of men." (*Ibid*, p. 982)

PERFORM-ANCE. Restoring the positive attributes of this word and cultivating a healthy association between it and what we do in worship is paramount in our efforts to engage the worshiper. The negative attributes of *perform* in worship are obvious and troublesome. In our effort to expose and overcome the people-problem of *perform-ers* in worship (the person delivering the art), we inadvertently weaken our music when we fail in our *perform-ance* of it (the effective execution and presentation of the art itself).

In Barry Liesch's book, *The New Worship: Straight Talk on Music and the Church*, he devotes two entire chapters on the concepts and implications of performance and worship. Dealing primarily with definitions and the translation of the word *perform* in the New and Old Testaments, he notes how the words *minister*, *perform*, and *service* occur together in the single verse of Ezekiel 44:16 and asserts,

I believe these three words are practically interchangeable and that the idea of connecting service and ministering with performance is immensely helpful in clarifying the biblical attitude toward performance.

We *must* deal with the people-problem of *perform-ers* separately, injecting a healthy dose of service and ministry into their role

as *perform-ers*, as doers that perform without arrogance or shame, while redeeming the dynamic properties of *perform-ance*. The latter is about the state or condition of our art, about creating, shaping, and delivering our music with fresh expertise, skill, and passion (Psalm 33:3). Who could argue that God is not worthy of such an offering?

Music that is pleasing in such a way that attracts and holds the attention of the worshiper is music performed with excellence. It packs a quality that is meaningful and inspiring to us. Paul encourages the Philippians to think about things that are *true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy*. Our performance should move the hearer to describe our music, not us, in such terms!


In his book, *Shaping the Tradition*, Carl Schalk highlights common traits associated with the work of our early Lutheran composers. It's interesting that he includes these:

All were musicians highly trained in their art and craft ... each of these men sought out the finest training and continually honed their skills ... all were musicians involved in the secular musical life of their day and their duties required them to be up to date on the latest trends in composition.

How committed are we to our own craft? Are our skills suitable for contribution in the secular music world? Are we cognitively up to date with the music of our culture? Restoring the positive attributes of performance comes with discipline.

"We are unequally gifted and cannot equally achieve ... but all artists can be better than they once were." (Harold Best, *Music Through the Eyes of Faith*)

One is to evaluate the process for planning worship, choosing songs, practicing music, leading rehearsals, improving one's own musicianship, leading through one's role in worship, and studying God's Word. One needs to ask, "Are any changes needed?" All of these things are



interdependent and contribute to how music is prepared, executed, and performed in such a way that glorifies God and engages the worshiper.

ENTERTAIN. I'll just say it, "Music that engages, in essence, entertains." Wow! Now that it's out there we have to talk about it! As a transitive verb, "entertain" is defined as: 1) to engage a person or audience by providing amusing or interesting material; 2) to consider something, to turn something over in the mind, looking at it from various points of view; 3) to offer hospitality. The etymology of the word is "to take hold together, so as to convince." Within the transitive verb nature of our worship (*gottesdienst*, *kerygma*, *koinonia*, *leitourgia*, see blog article, Challenge #2 at web.mac.com/jdavidjorden), music serves as an agent that delivers the messages that we want people to consider and take hold of together.

Music that convinces someone of this life-changing message engages them with material that combines voices and instruments to produce beauty in form, harmony and rhythm in creative and interesting ways. In our culture, music entertains first, and then it engages. People engaged by music, entertain in return, which expresses its meaning! Regrettably, this word becomes associated only with self-indulgent diversion and mindless amusement because of the self-serving Entertain-er(s) delivering the music!

But surely this talk of entertainment can't be appropriate for church music! C. S. Lewis said, "Boiling an egg is the same process whether you are a Christian or a Pagan." The intrinsic qualities of music remain the same regardless of the context in which it is used or the intent of who is using it. A gift from God, music is a creative, artistic means through which all of mankind express their awareness of self, others, and the world around them, both seen and unseen. It's a language known by the entire world, and it entertains us by reflecting emotion and meaning, engaging us with the intent to convince us of its message.

There's More Music to be Made

Even with the re-sharpened tools of *emotion*, *performance* and *entertainment*, significant questions remain concerning musical diversity in our churches. The quick answer is: These questions exist because of the diversity of God's creation! The church's added challenges are evident: Can we make music that speaks to everyone? Should we? How do we get a diverse people to hear the message of Christ through our music?

These questions cause churches to scatter in their methodology. The labels mentioned at the beginning of this article reflect that diversity. Many leaders affirm what Dr. Liesch calls a "Pentecost of musical styles" based on Acts 2. He states:

Many languages inevitably means many musics. If a multilingual approach for propagating the gospel is revealed as normative, then multi-stylistic music languages must necessarily follow as inevitable.

Some advocate that church culture is distinctly counter-cultural; therefore its music should be as well. Other leaders insist that music is the most significant positioning factor of the church, and that your music defines whom you reach, such as gender and age groups. Still others believe that just about any music done in the context of meaningful relationships is what matters most, as long as it authentically reflects our faith story.

The common factor is that each method seeks to be relevant to a culture, whether it's the predominant culture or a sub-culture. You might say that these churches use the third definition of the transitive verb "entertain." Their language of culturally relevant music becomes the hospitable "greeting" or "hello" that begins any conversation. In that mindset the music, in essence, is saying, "Welcome! How are you?" "Are you comfortable?" And, most importantly, "Now I'd like to share with you something very important in my life—Jesus."

Churches that resonate with this attitude find it appropriate to import the music of

their culture into their worship life, careful to avoid the difficulties of a subtle form of acculturation. Some start alternative services onsite at different times, others offer alternative worship alongside their current worship services, while still others birth second sites or plant multiple sites in homes and marketplace venues that are culture-specific with indigenous music reflecting that culture. Regardless of which buzzword you relate to, it's clear that the diverse styles of music in our larger culture have had an undeniable impact on the church in its endeavor to build bridges of relevance to the world.

What Now?

Very few worshipers will say to us, "You had me at hello!" It *must* be deeper than these few surface-y things. I leave you with a thought from Part Two* of this discussion:

Without meaningful utility our music becomes just another cultural consumer gimmick. It may attract and hold the worshiper's attention, but ask if it really connects them to something bigger, more meaningful like ... God. I appreciate Don Miller's thoughts from his book, *Blue Like Jazz*. He writes:

A friend of mine, a young pastor who recently started a church, talks to me from time to time about the new face of church in America—about the postmodern church. He says the new church will be different from the old one, that we will be relevant to culture and the human struggle. I don't think any church has ever been relevant to culture, to the human struggle, unless it believed in Jesus and the power of His gospel. If the supposed new church believes in trendy music and cool Web pages, then it is not relevant to culture either. It is just another tool of Satan to get people to be passionate about nothing.

*For Part II, see the author's blog, web.mac.com/jdavidjorden



CARL SCHALK

The Church's Song: Getting to the Heart of the Matter



Why has the church's song sounded such a responsive note in the hearts of Christians throughout the ages? Why, at times of joy or thankfulness, do hymns seem such a natural expression of our faith? Why, at moments of crisis, do hymns remembered from childhood raise our spirits and help us through difficult times? Why do they touch our heart in their unique way?

The Song of the Church

The song of the church is a response of faith to what God has done in Jesus Christ. It is a song from the heart of the church to the heart of God, from the heart of the church to the heart of each believer, and from the heart of the church to the world.

As God's people, gathered around Word and Sacrament, we sing. But the song is not *our* song, but the *church's* song. Of course *we* sing it, but in worship we sing as part of the community of faith, joining together with angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven. It is a song sung by the faithful who have gone before us, and a song which will continue to be sung after we are gone. It is a song that we, in our own time and place, are privileged to join.

But what is the song about? What is its particular content? What is the story it recounts?

The Song of the Old Testament

The Old Testament provides the pattern. In the Old Testament God identifies Himself through his actions on behalf of His chosen people: God is the God who acts to save. The very first song recorded in the Old Testament, the Song of Miriam, celebrated God's saving act in rescuing the children of Israel from the armies of Pharaoh. "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider he has thrown into

the sea" (Exodus 15:20-21). Miriam and the women gave voice to their praise and thanks by singing from their heart of how God had acted in bringing them out of Egypt and freeing them from slavery. For ancient Israel the deeds of the Lord revealed God as the God who saves, who was, "glorious in power," "majestic in holiness, terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders."

When Israel offered their song of praise and thanks to God, they did so by rehearsing and singing what God had done to rescue them. What drove their praise and thanksgiving was the story of God's mighty acts on their behalf. *To sing God's praise meant, for ancient Israel, to tell again and again in song the story of how God had acted to save them, how God had brought them up out of Egypt, led them through the wilderness, and brought them to the Promised Land. That was their song.*

The constant refrain of the Book of Psalms, the "hymn book" of the Old Testament, is Israel's response of praise described by such phrases as declaring God's mighty acts (Psalm 145:4), making known God's mighty deeds (Psalm 105:1-2), calling to remembrance God's wonderful works (Psalm 105:5), recounting God's wondrous deeds (Psalm 75:1). *To sing and praise God in the Old Testament was to "sing and praise the God who ...,"* the ellipsis being filled with the particular story of God's delivering His people.

The exhortation of Psalm 98 to "Sing unto the Lord a new song" is incomplete unless it includes the second half of the phrase: "For he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory." Psalm 96:2-3 exhorts: "O sing unto the Lord ... Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples. For the psalmist "to declare his glory" was to declare his marvelous works."

It was in the telling, over and over, again and again, remembering and recalling God's promise and covenant that God was praised and thanked in song. Israel was to remember what God had done for them, to recount God's glorious deeds, and to speak and sing of them in the assembly. The "good news" for God's people in the Old Testament was

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not simply *who God was*, but *how God had acted* on their behalf to rescue them from their sin. And that was the content of their song.

The Song of the New Testament and Early Church

The songs of the New Testament continued to rehearse and celebrate the mighty acts of God. But it added to the song the good news celebrating God's ultimate revelation of His goodness revealed in His son Jesus Christ. The New Testament celebrates the good news that at a particular time and in a particular place God sent His Son to be born of a virgin, to fulfill the Law for us, to suffer death on a cross, who was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, ascended to heaven and now sits at the right hand of God, and who will come again at the end of time, in fulfillment of His promise, to judge the world.

It was this good news that was the heart and center of such beloved New Testament songs as the Lukan canticles. From Mary's young heart erupted the *Magnificat*, the *Benedictus* from the mouth of Zacharias, the *Nunc Dimittis* from the heart of the aged Simeon. Each song testifies to God's new act of deliverance in His son Jesus Christ. These songs of the heart the church continues to sing and treasure.

This story about Jesus the Christ and the hope He brings for the future is what Christians call the Gospel, the Good News, the *kerygma*. The Gospel is not a set of moral or ethical standards, not the "Golden Rule," not a set of rules for a successful life, nor a religious philosophy. It is a specific story which is both history and promise. It was the basic content of the songs of the New Testament and the church in succeeding centuries.

The Song of the Reformation

Martin Luther (1483-1546) saw the "telling of the story" as central to the role of the song of the church.

The gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know *that he should praise God with both words and music, namely, by proclaiming the Word of God through music* and by providing sweet melodies with words.¹ [Italics mine]

Johann Walter, Luther's friend and the first Lutheran cantor, suggested that the purpose of Christian song was that God's promise of free and unmerited grace "might be kept fresh in human memory" and to "move the heart to high delight in praising God both day and night."² It was in the telling and retelling of the story of God's salvation that God's promises were kept fresh in human memory and so delighted the heart.

The very first hymn in the earliest Lutheran collection of 1524, Luther's hymn, "Dear Christians, one and all, rejoice," makes this point clear.

Dear Christians, one and all, rejoice,
With exaltation springing,
And with united heart and voice
And holy rapture singing.
Proclaim the wonders God has done,
How His right arm the victory won.
What price our ransom cost Him.³

The succeeding stanzas tell the story in greater detail. Paul Speratus, Luther's contemporary and leader in the Reformation, echoed Luther's concern for proclaiming the good news.

Salvation unto us has come
By God's free grace and favor;
Good works cannot avert our doom,
They help and save us never.
Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,
Who did for all the world atone;
He is our one Redeemer.⁴

This is hymnody that speaks Law and Gospel and proclaims the good news in direct and unequivocal terms.

The expanding repertoire of Lutheran hymns in the 16th and 17th centuries centered on the proclaiming of the story of salvation.

Christopher Boyd Brown's description of how the new Reformation hymnody penetrated every facet of life of the early Lutherans (*Singing the Gospel: Lutheran Hymns and the Success of the Reformation*, Harvard University Press, 2005) is instructive. It describes how in a typical city in Germany ordinary people learned these songs from memory, singing them "by heart" at home, at school, in church. These hymns centered on the church year and hymns which taught the faith. Each hymn, in its own way, told the story of how God had acted to save His people, proclaiming what the faith taught and teaching what the faith proclaimed.

The Song of Paul Gerhardt

If there is one Lutheran hymn writer whose words have touched the hearts of more people, perhaps even more than Martin Luther, it is Paul Gerhardt (1607-76). Such familiar texts as "O Lord, how shall I meet you," "Evening and morning," "If God himself be for me," and his translation of a medieval Latin text which we know as "O sacred head, now wounded," have worked their way into the hearts and minds of Lutherans everywhere. These texts, both of the trials and tribulations of the Thirty Years War, and the personal, professional, and ecclesiastical difficulties which struck, affected Gerhardt's life as well as the people he served, sounding a responsive note in those who sang them. Gerhardt brought to his hymns the warmth and devotion of a slowly emerging pietism, bringing the comfort, solace, and hope of the good news of the Gospel while, at the same time, retaining a strong confessional stance.

"Awake, my heart, with gladness," Gerhardt's great Easter hymn, speaks the good news clearly and directly.

The foe in triumph shouted
When Christ lay in the tomb,
But, lo, he now is routed.
His boast is turned to gloom.
For Christ again is free;
In glorious victory

He who is strong to save Has triumphed
o'er the grave.⁵

Gerhardt's texts move us because they reach beneath the shallow surface of human emotion, reaching into the depths of the human condition, touching us at the root of our being with the good news of what Christ has done for us.

The Song of Pietism and the Enlightenment

Pietism sought to bring a deeper personal piety to a faith often seen as mired in abstract intellectualism, a religion of the head and not the heart. At its best, German Pietism maintained a strong tie with its confessional origins. However, as Pietism developed, its hymns, often written for personal, devotional purposes, became increasingly and more intensely personal, subjective, individualistic and less suited for corporate worship. Ultimately its lack of intellectual strength and vigor resulting from its strong emphasis on human feeling left the field open for a movement known as the Enlightenment or Rationalism. Both ultimately lost any connection with a Lutheran confessional foundation.

Yet even in the midst of a rationalistic culture, a few hymnists continued to sing the church's song. Among them Christian Gellert (1715-69) is remembered for his forthright declaration of the resurrection.

Jesus lives! The victory's won!
Death no longer can appall me!
Jesus lives! Death's reign is done!
From the grave Christ will recall me.
Brighter scenes will then commence;
This shall be my confidence!

Recovering the Song

The 19th century saw the beginnings of a confessional revival which saw the recovery of many earlier treasures of Greek, Latin, German, and Scandinavian hymnody

translated into English. Many found their way into the hearts and voices of Christians everywhere. Translations by John Mason Neale brought us "Of the Father's love begotten," "O wondrous type, O vision fair," "O come, O come, Emmanuel," "All glory, laud, and honor," and "Ye sons and daughters of the King." Catherine Winkworth's translations brought hymns like "Now thank we all our God," "All glory be to God on high," "Praise to the Lord, the almighty," and many others into common use. These, among many, have sung their way into the hearts of Christians everywhere.

Mid-20th century Lutheranism saw a significant revival of hymn writing. Among the more prominent hymns to achieve popularity have been Martin Franzmann's "In Adam we have all been one" and "Thy strong Word did cleave the darkness," Jaroslav J. Vajda's "Now the silence," "Before the marvel of this night," and "Go, my children, with my blessing," Susan Paola Cherwien's "O blessed spring" and "As the dark awaits the dawn," Stephen Starke's "In the shattered bliss of Eden" and "Light of Light, O sole-begotten," and Herbert Brokering's "Thine the amen, thine the praise" and "Earth and all stars." Each in its own way resonated with countless singers while exploring new images and poetic devices in telling the story of salvation.

One example will represent the significant and varied work by a host of newer hymn writers. The warmth of Jaroslav J. Vajda's texts has endeared them to Christians near and far. His marvelous "God of the sparrow" is a stunning example of the story of salvation told in a new and imaginative way. Centered in the cross and the empty grave, this text reflects the Law's demand of perfect love and the Gospel's coaxing of a willing response of love. It has struck a responsive chord wherever it is sung.

God of the sparrow
 God of the whale
 God of the swirling stars
 How does the creature say Awe
 How does the creature say Praise

God of the earthquake
 God of the storm
 God of the trumpet blast
 How does the creature cry Woe
 How does the Creature cry Save

God of the rainbow
 God of the cross
 God of the empty grave
 How does the creature say Grace
 How does the creature say Thanks

God of the hungry
 God of the sick
 God of the wayward child
 How does the creature say Care
 How does the creature say Life

God of the neighbor
 God of the foe
 God of the pruning hook
 How does the creature say Love
 How does the creature say Peace

God of the ages
 God near at hand
 God of the loving heart
 How do your children say Joy
 How do your children say Home

The song which touches the heart is ultimately the song that gets to the heart of the matter. Many songs skim the surface of religiosity. They may have religious, even scriptural, words; they may be thought of as "spiritual." Such songs come and go, attracting momentary interest, but fade away. Much in our culture, and sometimes in the church, tempts us to substitute for song which speaks the Gospel one that which simply peaks our curiosity or only superficially engages the emotions.

But the song which truly touches the heart and reaches to the depths of our human condition, offering the word of hope and comfort, is always the song that speaks the good news of the Gospel clearly and directly. It is the song that rehearses the story not of what we have done, but of what God has done, and of who we are as a redeemed community.

Such is the church's song, which we sing to God, to each other, and for the sake of the world.

One of the church's gifts to itself is its rich heritage of song. All talk of diversity and inclusiveness means little if we neglect to "include" and "welcome" the great gift of the church's song—old and new. Centered in God's saving act at the cross and at the empty tomb, it is the only song that truly touches the heart and moves it to genuine thanks and profound praise.

End Notes

1 *LW* 53:319-29.

2 From Johann Walter's "In Praise of the Noble Art of Music," quoted in Carl Schalk, *Music in Early Lutheranism* (Concordia, 2001), 188.

3 *Lutheran Service Book*, 556.

4 *Lutheran Service Book*, 555.

5 *Lutheran Service Book*, 467.



ROBERT SYLWESTER

Music in Our Brain: Music as a Central Cognitive Property



It is becoming increasingly apparent that the arts are central to the development and maintenance of our brain. Regulating movement in all of its physical, psychological, and communicative manifestations is a key cognitive task—and the arts encourage us to move with style and grace.

Communication is an obviously essential property of all social species. Many social species (including humans) use two basic forms of communication, (1) a personal intimate form called grooming or caressing that uses touch and body language to establish and maintain bonding and hierarchical relationships within the group, and (2) a more complex auditory signaling system that alerts others in the group to the nature, location, and importance of potential dangers and opportunities. In primate signal systems, a single cry carries all the pertinent information, and the system is innate. A baby monkey who has never heard the sound for *danger overhead* (such as a circling hawk) will thus look up in fear if you play a recording of that sound.

Human Communication

Human language is the most extensive and complex of all the communication systems. Although we use about the same number of phonemes that many primates use in their signaling systems, human language communicates much more information. We do this by taking the meaning out of the sounds, and inserting it into the sequence and length of a chain of sounds (such as in do, dog, God, good, goods). Thus, 44 meaningless phonemes (and their 26 alphabetic equivalents) can create an English

language of 500,000 meaningful words. Further, word sequences create sentences, and sentence sequences create narratives.

We can similarly create an infinite number of melodies out of the 5-12 tones of the various musical scales because a melody emerges out of the sequence and length of a chain of tones, and not out of the tones themselves. We can similarly create an infinite number system out of ten digits because 123 doesn't represent the same quantity as 321.

Genetics as Communication

What's even more amazing is that the 20 elements in genetic communication function via a similar sequential coding system. The nucleus of a plant or animal cell is composed principally of a long, ladder-shaped, twisted molecule called deoxyribonucleic acid, or DNA. In humans, some 30,000 DNA segments (called genes) regulate cellular processes and initiate the assembly of proteins, the basic building blocks of our body. A gene contains the coded directions for assembling a protein out of a unique sequential combination of the 20 different kinds of amino acids that cell bodies contain. Different amino acid sequences result in different proteins, just as different tone sequences result in different melodies.

So at conception parents combine their genetic sequences to inform their embryonic child how to develop its body (nose placement, skin color, gender, and so on)—in effect, how to *become* a human being. And then when the child is born, the parents use language and musical sequences to tell their child how to *behave* like a human being. It's an incredibly beautiful arrangement.

The Key Role of Musical Communication

Mastering one's native oral and written language is an extended major childhood task, and current school standards and assessment programs focus principally on the development of such skills.

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Unfortunately, we've tended to narrow our definition of language.

For example, most K-12 schools currently focus on mastering the sequence of letters that constitute a word but not also on the sequence of tones that constitute a melody, on the grammatical structure of language but not also on the structure of musical forms, on the ability to use writing and typing tools but not also on the ability to play a musical instrument.

It's not that music isn't ubiquitous in our culture—but it's become a one-sided message that emanates from stages, loudspeakers, and personal portable pods. We tend to listen to the music of others rather than to create our own. I suspect that most folks who sing at all during a given week do it only during religious services—and while liturgical singing is corporate, it typically isn't conversational.

Articulate speech compresses an extended thought into a stream of rapidly moving phonemic sounds that transmit information. The spoken message identifies key objects (nouns) and events (verbs) that are then clarified by adjectives and adverbs, and syntactically positioned by prepositions and conjunctions. Variations in volume and tone are typically reduced in order to increase the flow of information.

Conversely, song communicates how we feel about something. Song communicates a short but emotionally strong message of love or hate, of commitment or alienation, of opportunity or danger by slowing down the flow of the message (extending the vowels, repeating phrases). This permits the singer to use such musical properties as melody, rhythm, volume, timbre, and instrumental accompaniment to insert powerful emotional overtones into such primal messages as 'I love you' or 'I reject war' or 'Don't abandon me.' Such emotional overtones are much more difficult to insert into speech. Adjectives and adverbs are typically a poor substitute for musical properties.

It's intriguing that children spend much of the first 10 years of their life mastering the vocabulary and syntax of oral and written

language—the knowledge and skills they must develop in order to communicate effectively with others about complex personal and cultural phenomena.

Conversely, adolescence is probably the single decade in our life during which we're most fascinated by music. It's not surprising that this is also the time during which we develop our personal and social identity, our likes and dislikes.

We thus have two complementary languages. Speech helps us to rapidly and articulately communicate a lot of information to everyone. Song helps us to slowly and melodically communicate personal feelings, beliefs, and commitments to those who mean the most to us. Reading the Gospel account of Christ's life isn't the same experience as listening to Handel's *Messiah*.

It's important for young people to be grounded in the grammatical structures that enhance verbal communication, and it's equally important for them to become grounded in the *grammar* of music. Instructional programs that teach instrumental music and choral singing are examples of how to provide children with musical skills and a sense of the structure and aesthetics of music before they embark on their musically driven adolescent search for personal and social identity. Without such instruction, adolescent music becomes improvisational variations on an unknown theme. There's nothing wrong with musical noodling, but there's something right about helping young people to understand the underlying structure and dynamics of music.

Young people learn to communicate effortlessly via conversation and computers, but as suggested above, many schools seemingly don't consider music an integral element of language. The reduction (and even elimination) of school music instruction is an enigma, given its ancient human roots and current cultural ubiquity.

Scientists have discovered 50,000-year-old flutes made from bear bones—and a flute is an advanced musical instrument. Further, adults have long and universally interacted with infants via a musical form



called *motherese*—a high-pitched, exaggerated, repetitive, melodic format that engages the rapt attention and mimicked response of infants who can't understand the words. Music thus introduces infants to speech by preparing their brain to effectively process its complexities and improvisations.

Mirror Neurons

The remarkable recently discovered mirror neuron system enhances the developmental process. Most common actions are actually sequences of basic movements that are used in various actions. Think of the sequence of movements in which you reach out, open your hand, grasp a glass, and lift it to your mouth. Reaching, grasping, and lifting are used in many different actions, just as the letters D-O-G can be used in the words do, dog, God, and good. Our brain's memory networks thus store and retrieve common movement sequences just as they store and retrieve verbal and musical memory sequences.

Scientists discovered that mirror neurons that store, prime, and activate specific action sequences also activate when we observe someone else carry out that action. In effect, our brain activates the same neuronal pattern that's activating within the brain of the person we're observing. It thus *understands* what's going on in the mind of the observed person, and so can automatically activate a mimicked response (think of our tendency to yawn when we see another person yawn). Stick out your tongue at an observant infant who is only a few hours old and she'll reciprocate, even though she doesn't consciously know what a tongue is or how to project it.

Life would be chaotic if we mimicked every behavior we observed, so our brain's inhibitory system turns off inappropriate responses. We'll thus stifle a yawn but reciprocate the proffered handshake of a friend. Infants have a zillion actions to learn, however, so they tend to imitate everything they see. Smile and they'll smile; wave your hand and they'll wave their hand. It's baby see, baby do.

Learning to Speak and Sing

Mirror neurons thus help to explain how infants who interact with adults can easily learn movements they haven't made before, such as the complex facial and vocal movements that process song and speech.

We can observe arm/leg movements but not a speaker's hidden vocal apparatus. Our sensory/motor system is highly interconnected, so we can visualize a named but non-visible object, such as a banana. Similarly, hearing articulate speech or song activates the same vocal processes in the child's brain that the speaker used to sequence the sounds and words. Speech is a complex motor activity, so the infant initially *babbles* incoherently. The child will eventually begin to correctly utter simple phonemic combinations in a verbal environment, and finally smooth articulate speech and childhood songs emerge. The Suzuki violin program is also partially based on this observing and mimicking principle.

When we observe someone in the initial stages of a movement sequence, such as when a diner picks up a knife and fork, we can infer the subsequent actions because our brain is *mirroring* the entire movement sequence and so *infers* what will occur next. When a speaker stops mid-sentence, we can often complete the sentence. If someone begins a familiar song, we can easily continue it. Think of how your computer will complete a frequently used email or Web site address after you type the first few letters. Our brain similarly remembers entire sequences. The alphabet is one of the more remarkable memory sequences that young children easily master. The 26-letter sequence has no inherent logic to it—and yet young children easily master it when it's inserted into a more easily remembered melody.

Affective Mirror Neurons

Since our brain's hundreds of processing systems are highly interconnected, mirror neurons not only simulate the actions of others but also their related properties, such as the pain or pleasure that results from an action. We use the term empathy to

describe this human ability to internalize the emotional state of others by simply observing their facial expressions and body language.

Several frontal lobe systems collaboratively process pain—but mirror neurons in these systems copy and respond to the observed pain and other emotional states that people we observe are experiencing. Empathy can further emerge through third party reports, such as news reports of the victims of natural disasters or accidents. Listening to a highly emotional musical performance can similarly result in a mirrored emotional state.

Mirror neurons may also help to explain why so many of us enjoy observing and predicting the movements of virtuoso musicians, athletes, and dancers. Virtuoso performances allow our mirror neuron system to mentally model (and thus enjoy) actions that we can't physically mimic at that level. Note the related actively imitated body language of former athletes as they observe a game they once played, and their ability to see individual movements within the complexity of the action that the rest of us don't see. This is also true of the differences that trained musicians and naïve listeners exhibit in their ability to critique a musical performance. The naïve listener can only express feelings, but a musically trained person can analyze the subtle dynamics of the performance.

Improvisation: Going Beyond Mirror Neurons

We can think of reading narratives and musical notation as a symbolic extension of our mirror neuron system, in that we mentally and physically replicate the thoughts of the writer or composer. Musical improvisation is a different kind of activity.

Researchers have recently observed what occurs within the brain of a jazz musician during improvisation (Limb, 2008). They saw significant changes in activity in the prefrontal cortex (PFC) during improvisation as compared to when the musician played memorized music. The prefrontal cortex (directly behind our forehead) is where we process problem solving and develop our

sense of self. During improvisation, the section of the PFC that monitors one's behavior shuts down, and the section that processes self-initiated thoughts and behaviors increases its activity. The researchers suggested that just as over-thinking a jump shot can cause a basketball player to miss the shot, so suppressing our inhibitory self-monitoring brain system helps to promote the free flow of novel ideas and impulses. Our sensory and emotional systems also increase their activity during improvisation, so it seems to be a matter of our entire brain moving to a higher activation state. The result is creativity—either the creation of new musical forms in improvisation, or else in the creative expression of an existing musical form in a virtuoso performance.

A young adult recently said that he looked for two things in a church—that it would give him a welcoming hand, and a creative beat.

I'm thus left wondering how a supposedly enlightened culture like ours could consciously neglect the development of a definitive brain property. Spoken and written language are obviously superior to music in the transmission of information, but music trumps adjectives and adverbs in the transmission of qualities and feelings. Further, we began life with the music of motherese, and we often return to music when words alone fail us. The majority of a church service is devoted to activities that incorporate musical and gestural activities, and yet these are afterthoughts at best in most current K-12 school programs.

We truly need to develop both forms of language to be fully human. Do folks really believe that knowing how to harmonize or play an oboe or improvise jazz or analyze a symphony is innate? Do such folks also believe that language is only about knowing, and not also about feeling?

Recent Useful Resources

Iacoboni, M. (2008) *Mirroring People: The New Science of How We Connect With Others*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux.

Levitin, D. (2006) *This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession*. New York: Dutton.

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Various authors (Feb. 23, 2008) *New Scientist*. A special section: "The Music Enigma: Where Does It Come From, and Why Do We Love It So Much?" (pages 28-39).



JANET MUTH

Music Education That's Needed in the Church



When discussing education of any form, one must first decide what is meant by the word itself! Webster's unabridged dictionary gives us a starting place:

Ed`u*ca"tion\(?; 135), n. [L. educatio; cf. F. [e]ducation.] The act or process of educating; the result of educating, as determined by the knowledge, skill, or discipline of character, acquired; also, the act or process of training by a prescribed or customary course of study or discipline; as, an education for the bar or the pulpit; he has finished his education.

To prepare us for complete living is the function which education has to discharge.—H. Spenser.

Usage: Education, properly a drawing forth, implies not so much the communication of knowledge as *the discipline of the intellect, the establishment of the principles, and the regulation of the heart.*

Instruction is that part of education which furnishes the mind with knowledge. **Teaching** is the same, being simply more familiar. It is also applied to practice; as, teaching to speak a language; teaching a dog to do tricks. **Training** is a department of education in which the chief element is exercise or practice for the purpose of imparting facility in any physical or mental operation. Breeding commonly relates to the manners and outward conduct.¹ (*italics and emphasis mine*)

In this definition, the usage of the word "education" gives us some important points for our discussion of music education in the church. "Music education" often is understood to be what Webster presents as instruction, teaching, and training. Music educators are expected to produce students who have a certain skill level in

musical performance or an understanding of notation, theory or history. According to Webster, however, "education" involves disciplining of intellect, establishment of principles, and regulation of the heart. These are nebulous concepts, but worth struggling with as we examine the need for "music education" in our churches. In addition, Martin Luther famously stated, "I place music next to theology and give it the highest praise."² Any discussion of music education in our churches will be tied to the need for catechesis.

We have before us quite a challenge: discipline of intellect, establishment of principles, regulating the heart—all under the most important umbrella of catechesis. Is there any church music program that fulfills all of these criteria? Certainly training in music skills is needed, but also an understanding of music within the liturgy and within the "cloud of witnesses" that precedes us in the "race marked out for us." (Hebrews 12:1) This article will discuss the need for training in musical skills, but will focus on "music education" needed in our churches as the equipping of our fellow Christians to receive God's good gifts of Word and Sacrament through music in worship.

The Intellect

The state of music appreciation, education, and skills in the secular world impacts the state of music-making in the church. For many reasons, music education in America is becoming non-essential—it is seen as "enrichment" but not part of the core curriculum. Listening to music on the radio has taken the place of performing music ourselves. "Singing along" with pre-mixed, finished popular music has taken the place of generating our own musical sounds, and therefore negates the need for such skills. If music is performed, it is by "groups" that rehearse and present the "finished" product, such as pop stars, concert choirs, and praise bands, often electronically enhanced, mixed, etc. At most, we "sing along," and at worst, we

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relegate the music to the background of our conversations. In worship, this “use” of music does not recognize its value as next to theology.

Worship is a corporate activity. Personal devotion is essential, but “where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:20). A congregation singing together truly can experience something that is greater than the “sum of its parts.” Unfortunately, many music educators and commentators lament the fact that we are no longer a country that sings together. There are hundreds of radio stations from which to choose, and listening to music becomes an even more “individual experience” through iPods and the like. Music-making isolates us from one another, rather than bringing us together in a corporate experience. The absence of church music education, both in training of skills and in “music education” in the broader sense discussed previously, will leave us in this state of isolation. In order to successfully do something “together” with another person (or an assembly of people), an order must be agreed upon. Order comes from discipline. Here is the first component of the usage of “education” listed by Webster’s dictionary—disciplining of the intellect—that music education in the church can provide.

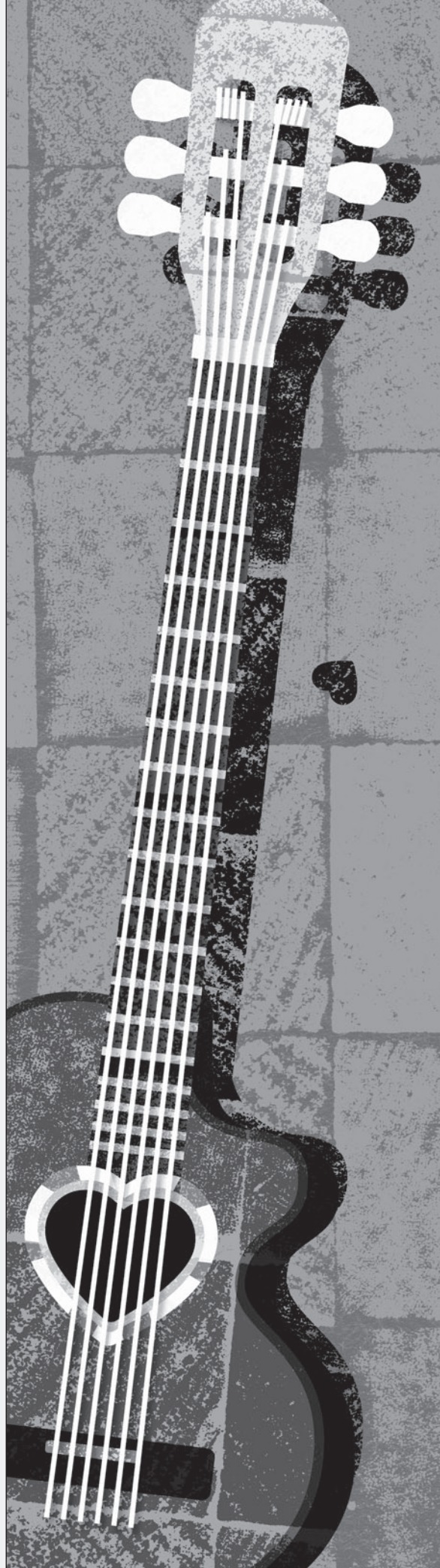
Principles

The discipline that is required to “do something together” begs the question, “What shall we do (sing)? How does a congregation decide what is of such value that we yield our own personal preferences for the corporate experience? Here “music education” that’s needed in our churches needs to be examined as the “establishment of principles” that Webster’s definition lists as part of “education.” Chapters 11 and 12 of the book of Hebrews set a wonderful paradigm for the church to follow when establishing our walk together (discipline).

In Chapter 12, the writer to the Hebrews expounds the value of discipline and the “harvest of righteousness and peace” that is its result (Hebrews 12:11). However, this “tough love” is preceded in Chapter 11 by a long list of saints who have gone before, enduring their own discipline, and who now surround and encourage us. The musical, liturgical heritage (history) of the church needs to be studied, valued, and incorporated precisely for the encouragement we gain from the saints who have gone before. In addition, the music and language of the church in prior generations that has been sifted through the sieve of time is a powerful tool for measuring the value of newer expressions. This is not to say that only music from the past is of value. Current compositions from all cultures and genres must take their place in the heritage of the church—and must be able to “keep up” with the “race marked out for us.”

This last point is important. In this world of individualism, relativism, and all the other “isms” that point us to ourselves, music can be seen as the least objective of the arts. Throughout history, music has been recognized as just the opposite! Richard Resch sums up the objective quality of music in the following statement:

As a servant of the church, music helps teach the timeless and universal truths of the faith. The problem in the church today is that music is seldom seen as a teacher of anything, good or bad. But whether the teacher is recognized or not, the teaching does go on; something is being taught. When church music serves the will of man, emphasis is placed on how the music is received instead of what is being taught. However, if the music of the church is seen as a divine method of catechizing the faithful, then saving truths are easily given to even the youngest saints. The difference between music as a slave of the flesh and music as a servant of the Spirit becomes evident to young and old by witness of the church’s practice.³



The Heart

This brings us to the third implication of education in Webster's usage of the word: regulating the heart. Words like this make us uncomfortable, but catechesis seems to address this very need. Catechesis is training, education, and reliance on God's Word to bring faith to the catechumen by the power of the Holy Spirit. Music in the church is a servant of this activity! The introduction to *Lutheran Worship* sums it up beautifully:

Our Lord speaks and we listen.
His Word bestows what it says.
Faith that is born from what is heard
acknowledges the gifts received with
eager thankfulness and praise. Music
is drawn into this thankfulness and
praise, enlarging and elevating the
adoration of our gracious giver God.⁴

The musical heritage of the church very clearly ties music to theology. Music is not an arbitrary, mood-making filler or entertainment vehicle, or even a recruitment device. It carries the Word of God. If this function of music in the church is ignored, we are robbing ourselves of a great delivery system for the Word. Music that is separated from words (Word) flies in the face of the power attributed to church music by Martin Luther (and, indeed, recognized throughout history). Children defending their choice of secular music to their disapproving parents say, "I don't listen to the words!" This practice is deadly in congregational song! Music in worship is tied to the Word, and the Word is not background noise for our earthly conversations. Since music carries the Word, the music we sing, play, and listen to must be appropriate to the task. It probably would not be appropriate to race a donkey in the Kentucky Derby, or a bicycle in the Indianapolis 500. Music from all cultures and eras can edify but must be evaluated as bearer of the Word. Furthermore, music in the church must not be evaluated simply on the basis of "do I like it?" Andrew Kern, a leader in the classical education movement, states:

The fact that I like a piece of music simply doesn't make it good. It can be wrong when it feels so right. That is precisely what bad taste is: to enjoy the feeling we get from lesser or lower or unhealthy or even morally bad things.⁵

Selecting Music

In selecting music for worship, pastors and musicians must first of all be astute theologians, and also humble servants. The music we sing and learn, listen to and digest, and—most of all—pray and proclaim affects the very faith given to us by our Lord. Music leaders must have “training” in musical skills, but also “education” that goes beyond mere performance. So often worship leaders say, “What’s needed is education!” The beginning of “education” starts with the educating of one’s self. Pastors, dear pastors, read those hymns! Pray them. Sing with your musicians, elders, and Bible classes. Musicians, dear musicians, work with your pastors. Pray with them and sing with them. Pastors and musicians, show your enthusiasm for hymns and liturgy. Listen to your congregation’s singing—and let them know you are listening! Envision your congregation in a timeline—the company of saints in Hebrews 11. Don’t neglect the heart of it all: read Hebrews 12:2–3 *every day* until you have it memorized!

Teaching—Learning to Sing

An article about music education must at least mention the training component of our task. There is a lot of music to be learned—from many cultures, eras, and styles. Very few musicians will be able to play or sing all styles and genres of music. It is essential to recognize and respect all styles of music—the teaching happens even if the teacher is not acknowledged—but also to develop the gifts that the Lord has given each individual. One must “train” to be able to present music in the church with integrity. This training involves “nuts and bolts” learning.

Introducing music liturgies, instruments, hymns, and songs to children is important for the same reason that it is important to introduce them to adults—the Word of God is sung into our hearts and minds through great church music. Children are the church of today as well as of tomorrow. Unfortunately, many adults are deprived of this spiritual nourishment, and therefore are unequipped to pass it on to young people! We must sing again, and reflect on the texts that are carried by the music. Once the texts are learned, then the music can benefit us “in reverse”—as a melody is played, the text comes to mind.

Where to Begin

It starts in the congregations. Start at the very beginning, a very good place to start. Bible. Catechism. Hymnal. Musicians—practice, please practice. Sing with your Sunday school. Sing, sing, sing! If your congregation does not use hymns or liturgy, take it upon *yourself* to explore these treasures. Likewise, if your congregation uses only the hymnal, you need to be aware of what is “out there.” It starts in the congregations, but district and synodical leaders have pastoral responsibility to encourage and provide a sieve through which to strain texts and music (such as *Text, Music, Context: A Resource for Reviewing Worship Materials*, published by Synod’s Commission on Worship) for musicians and pastors who may not have time or training to evaluate the massive amount of worship materials bombarding us. Delve into the new *Lutheran Service Book*, and appreciate the “oldies” that happily reside alongside the newer compositions. The parable of the Ten Talents (Matthew 25:14–30) exhorts us to be faithful with the things we have been given—to put these gifts to work (v. 16)! Finally, good and faithful servants, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).

Let Martin Luther have the last word ...

There is no doubt that there are many seeds of good qualities in the minds of those who are moved by music. Those, however, who are not moved [by music] I believe are definitely like stumps [of wood] and block of stone. For we know that music, too, is odious and unbearable to the demons. Indeed I plainly judge, and do not hesitate to affirm, that except for theology there is no art that could be put on the same level with music, since except for theology [music] alone produces what otherwise only theology can do, namely a calm and joyful disposition. Manifest proof [of this is the fact] that the devil, the creator of saddening cares and disquieting worries, takes flight at the sound of music almost as he takes flight at the word of theology. This is the reason why the prophets did not make use of any art except music; when setting forth their theology, they did it not as geometry, not as arithmetic, not as astronomy, but as music, so that they held theology and music most tightly connected, and proclaimed the truth through Psalms and songs. (Martin Luther: personal letter to Louis Senfl, October 4, 1530)

End Notes

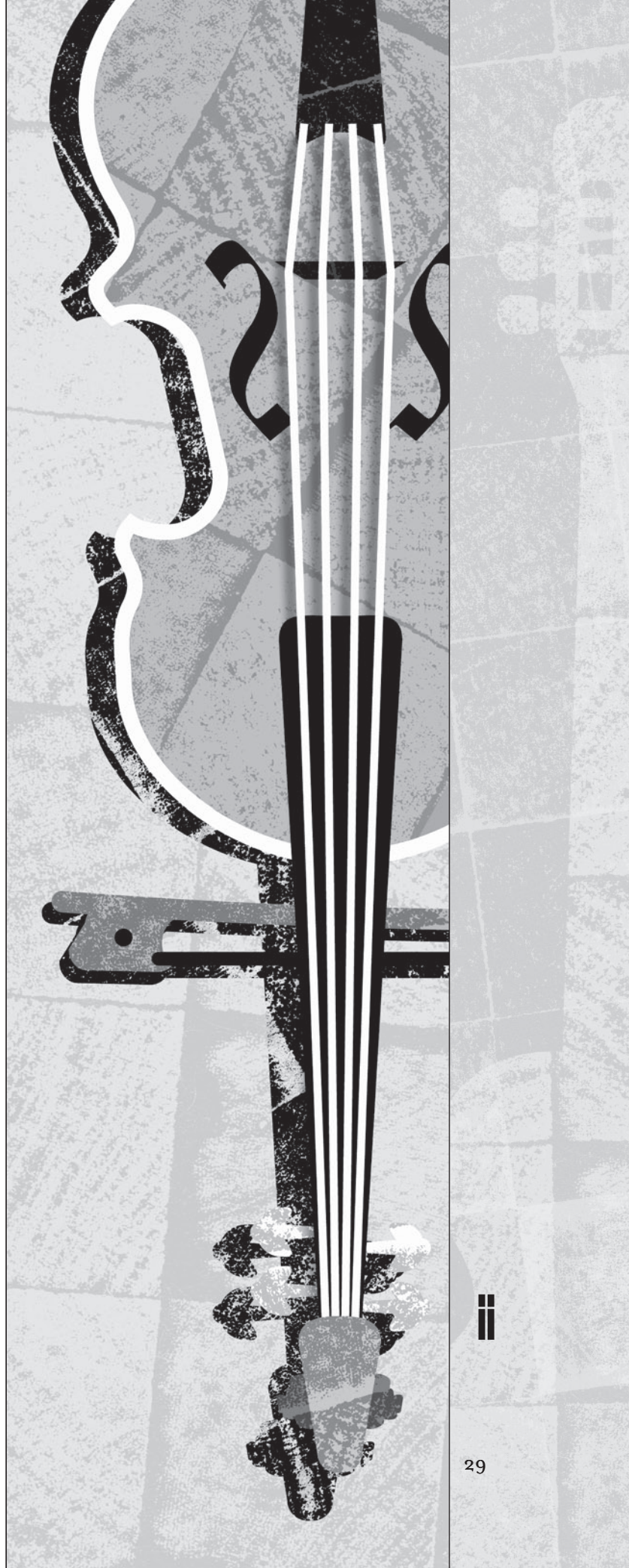
1 Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, 1996, 1998 MICRA, Inc.

2 Plass, Ewald M. (1959) *What Luther Says*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, p. 980.

3 Resch, Richard (1994) "Music: Gift of God or Tool of the Devil," *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology*. Northville: Luther Academy.

4 *Lutheran Worship* (1982). St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, p. 6.

5 Kern, Andrew. Online article: <http://memoriapress.com/blog/145/akern/music/>



book reviews

This Is Your Brain on Music.

Daniel J. Levitin. New York:
Penguin Books, 2006.

As one considers the relationship of music to an individual's experience and development, many questions come into play. Why is it that one person is able to sing easily while another has difficulty matching pitch? Why does the same composition elicit opposite reactions in people? (In one of my church choirs I had two tenors who sat next to each other. When a Bach chorale was being sung, one was ecstatic; the other detested the piece.) Why do some people like one style of music and others intensely dislike the same style of music? (In the church today, some people love sacred music used in praise and worship services being led by a praise band and praise choir; others love sacred music from the heritage of the church using an organ to lead the congregation.) Why is this so? Does the brain have anything to do with answering these questions?

Dr. Daniel J. Levitin attempts to answer such questions by examining extensively literature on this topic as well as research done by himself and others on the brain and its functioning. In the introduction, he states, "This book is about the science of music, from the perspective of cognitive neuroscience—the field that is at the intersection of psychology and neurology. I'll discuss some of the latest studies I and other researchers in our field have conducted on music, musical meaning, and musical pleasure." (p. 11)

He has written this book with the average reader in mind. In the first two chapters he patiently explains the elements of music. He then launches into explaining the brain and its incredibly complex functions. The average brain consists of one hundred billion (100,000,000,000) neurons with multiple connections among the neurons. (p. 87) Such a complex organism presents challenges in its study.

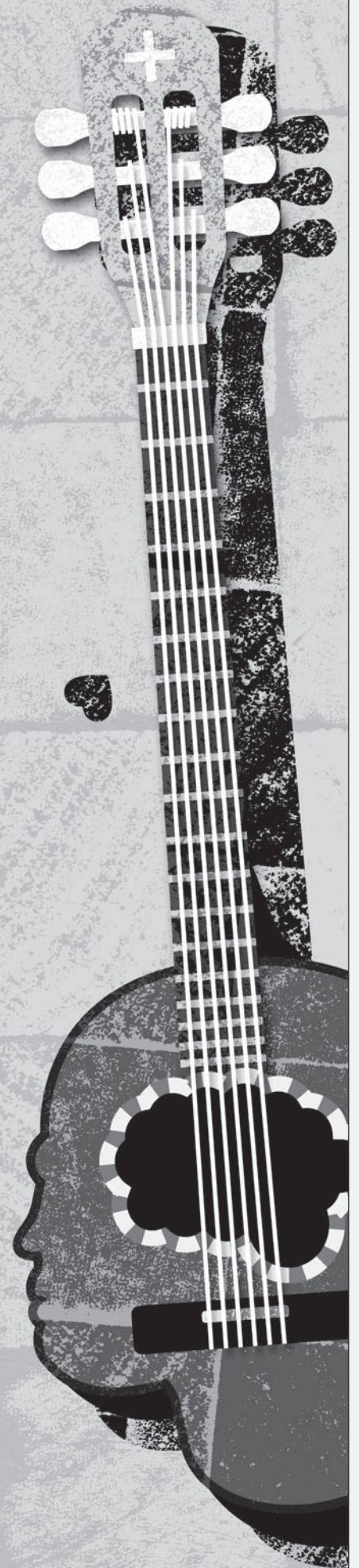
He points out that early experiences in music have a profound effect on a person's musical development. After birth, the brain undergoes a period of rapid neural development. In the first years of a child's life, new neural connections are being formed more rapidly than at any other time in our lives. Already during the mid-childhood years, the brain begins to prune these connections, retaining only the most important and most often used connections. According to Dr. Levitin, "This becomes the basis for our understanding of music, and ultimately the basis for what we like in music, what moves us, and how it moves us." (p. 109) Furthermore, in regard to musical tastes, he points out that "researchers point to the teen years as the turning point for musical preferences." (p. 231)

Throughout the book, Dr. Levitin carefully explains the conclusions he has reached about the brain and music. For example, he states that in one's musical accomplishment, the role of genes and the environment each is responsible for about 50 percent of a person's musical development. The ninth chapter, which needs to be viewed with some skepticism, discusses his opinion of the role of music in the evolution of humankind.

Will this book definitively answer questions such as those posed in the opening paragraph? Not completely. However, it certainly will give pause for a person to think more deeply about this topic.

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**Worship Wars
in Early Lutheranism.**
Joseph Herl. Oxford: Oxford
University Press, 2004.

Although this book overflows with an abundance of facts gleaned from numerous sources, this reviewer would like to commend Joseph Herl for refuting the false notion that Martin Luther set his hymns to the melodies of drinking songs. In fact, Dr. Herl points out that when Luther did set a hymn to a preexisting melody, he usually based it on Gregorian chant or popular religious songs. While this correction regarding Luther's songwriting is peripheral to Herl's main argument, it demonstrates the very conservative nature of the development of the Lutheran liturgy. For instance, significant amounts of various liturgical texts retained Latin well into the 17th century.

Herl examines broadly the development of the Lutheran liturgy in Germany from 1523 to 1780. Particularly, he traces the gradual shift during this period from choral to congregational singing in Lutheran worship. He accomplishes this study through the examination of a vast array of historical sources, including church orders, the records of ecclesiastical visitations, hymnals, sermons, the works of pastors and church musicians. In the first two chapters the reader learns that Luther's liturgy focused on choral singing, not congregational. In fact, where Luther did encourage congregational singing he seemed to only popularize already existing practices. According to Herl, the Lutheran congregation remained mostly observers in the 16th century. Most lay people heard the preaching and received the Lord's Supper but did little else during the divine service.

In the early 17th century choral and congregational singing coexisted in the

cantonal style that combined monophonic and polyphonic styles of singing. However, the introduction of a new, more complex style of choral singing from Italy led to a split between congregational and choral singing in the Lutheran church. Thus, the worship wars emerged in the 17th century between those who supported trained choirs with organ accompaniment and those who wanted simple congregational singing of the liturgy and German hymns. For example, in 1661 Theophilus Grossgebauer, a theologian from Rostock, identified the use of organs, instrumental music, and choral polyphony as a papal plot to distract from God's Word with ornate music that no one understood. Other critics attacked the continued use of Latin in the divine service. Numerous pastors and musicians defended these polyphonic music and instrumental accompaniments. In the early 18th century church musicians emphasized the traditional use of instruments in worship and the emotive quality of music that could direct the pious hearers' attention to God. By 1750 the author argues that the shift from choral to congregational singing of the liturgy had occurred. The choir sang more complex music to inspire the congregants to sing the liturgy.

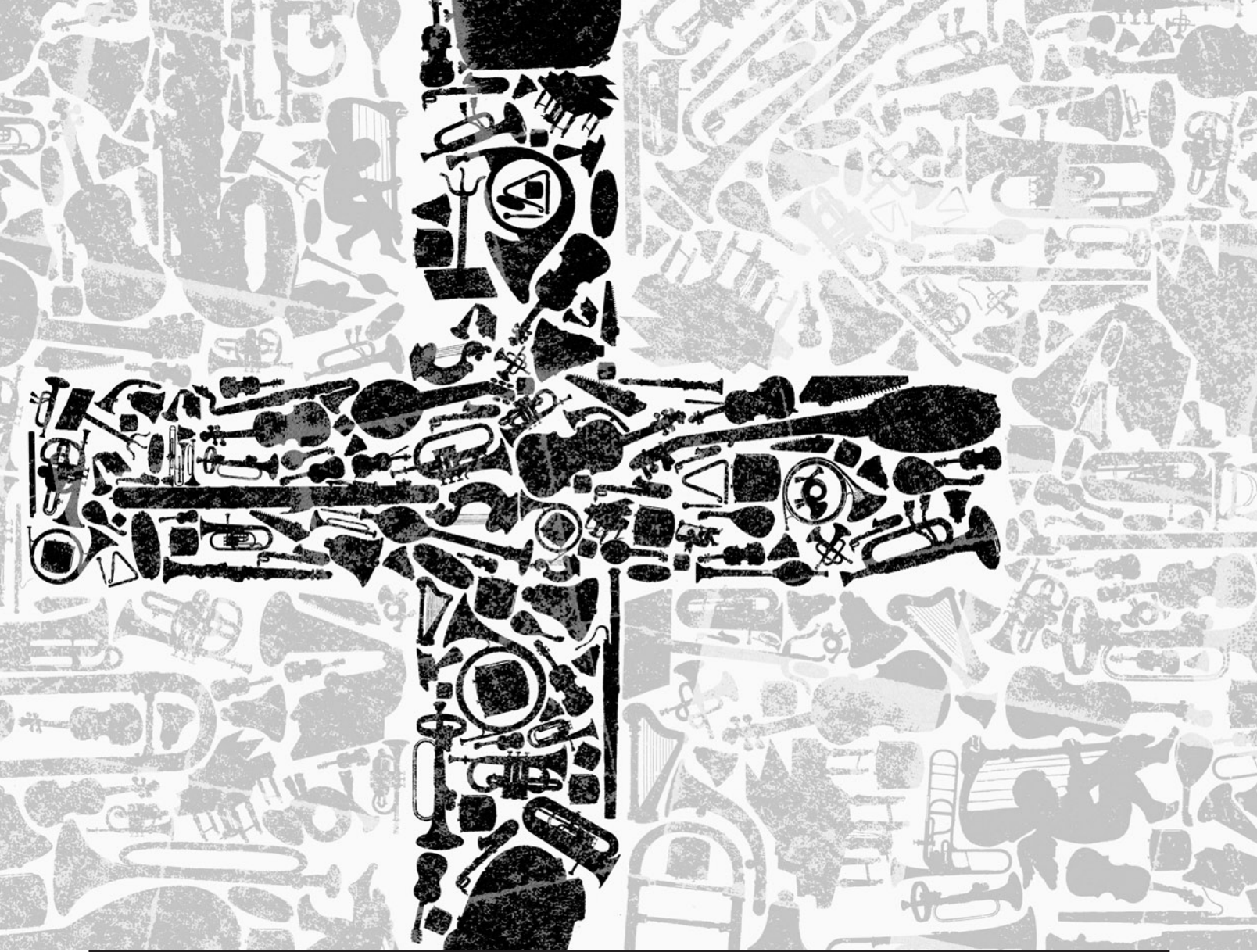
Herl identifies other significant factors that played a role in changes in the worship practice. These include the emergence of the use of personal hymnals in the 17th century and the Pietist and Rationalist movements of the 17th and 18th centuries. Pietist criticism of the choral music sounded similar to those of Grossgebauer mentioned above. Pietism most significantly influenced hymnody in

the 18th century. However, the Pietists did not try to change the basic format of the Lutheran liturgy. Indeed, Herl concludes that the late 18th century Rationalists sought to change drastically the liturgy or forsake it completely.

Joseph Herl has written a fascinating book based on a thorough analysis of a large number of sources. Historians, pastors, musicians and church workers could all benefit from reading this work. This review does not provide the space to describe in detail the numerous anecdotes of bad behavior contained in the records of ecclesiastical visitations. Herl's description of the poor attendance at catechetical instruction, the late arrival of parishioners to the divine service, and the general apathy of the laity should remind us of the power of the sinful nature.

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