

Reading music in liturgy
Ecclesiology in a music-making church

The Reverend A M Flipse

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Ecclesiology in a music-making church

Thesis submitted for the award of the Degree of
Master of Philosophy from Cardiff University
under the supervision of the Reverend Canon Dr Peter Sedgwick
and the Reverend Dr Stephen Roberts
by the Reverend Adriana Maria Flipse.

Cardiff, 30 June 2012

to my parents

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Introduction

This study suggests a way of reading liturgical music ecclesiology. It explores the methodology of a liturgical ecclesiology through the lens of music; or, in other words, the study of the church through the music in its liturgy. Liturgical ecclesiology is the study of the church's faith through its liturgical practice:

As liturgical theology investigates the Christian faith from the perspective of the liturgy, liturgical ecclesiology is the specification of this investigation in view of the church.¹

Its subject matter is the whole spectrum of the church's liturgical activities and their consequences; as Mattijs Ploeger goes on to say,

Liturgical ecclesiology investigates the ecclesial character of the liturgy which includes the gathering of the members of the church, prayer, song, baptism, the Word, the eucharist, its implications for daily life in and outside the church, and all those other 'juxtapositions' which make Christian liturgy what it is.²

Gordon Lathrop speaks of liturgical ecclesiology as that which 'occurs as people directly experience what church is while they are engaged in doing the liturgy' as well as the reflection on that experience and the use of such reflection to aid liturgical reform.³ Music has a particular place among the many liturgical actions through which people experience what church is.

It is clear that music as one of the church's liturgical activities has a place in liturgical ecclesiology; however, the relationship between liturgical music and ecclesiology is complex. The nature of both music and of ecclesiology resists making definite statements about the way they interact. It is regularly observed that the ways in which churches express themselves musically tell us something about the kind of churches they are, yet exactly how they do so is difficult to pinpoint. Frank Burch Brown observes:

¹Mattijs Ploeger, *Celebrating Church: Ecumenical Contributions to a Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Ridderkerk: Ridderprint, 2008), p. 21.

² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), p. 9.

Even those Christian groups most emphatic about creeds, confessions, or scriptural authority take their bearings, more than one might suppose, from their worship practices and musical traditions. Music gives voice to the heart of prayer and interprets the very meaning of doctrine. (...) The critical correlation between the “rule” or pattern of public worship (*lex orandi*) and the pattern of belief (*lex credendi*) has been long attested. What has not been recognized so clearly is the role of the arts in shaping prayer and interpreting belief, and indeed inspiring and guiding a community’s moral intentions and actions, its *lex agendi*.⁴

The way the church’s *lex agendi* is informed and shaped is exactly what liturgical ecclesiology seeks to understand. The contribution of music to this process is what I will concentrate on. Much of the literature on related subjects touches on the issue of liturgical ecclesiology and music tangentially or from a different angle, but rarely is it addressed directly.⁵ Sven-Erik Brodd, in an article that does enquire directly into the nature of the relationship between church music and ecclesiology, offers a tentative statement of an ecclesiology of church music when he writes:

It seems reasonable to suppose that both the presence and the absence of forms, styles and organizations of church music could be expressions of ecclesiological structure that influence the self-understanding of the Christian people and the ecclesial traditions they either share or dissociate themselves from, whether they are aware of this connection between ecclesiology and church music or not.⁶

Brodd explores this connection in some depth in his article and concludes that the possibilities of exploring church music from the perspective of ecclesiology and vice versa seem extensive, without further undertaking the task himself.⁷ My aim is to contribute to this exploration and approach this subject in a more detailed way.

Precisely because it seems difficult to pinpoint an exact answer to questions about the nature of the relationship between music and ecclesial identity, it is clear that they are questions

⁴ Frank Burch Brown, *Good Taste, Bad Taste, Christian Taste: Aesthetics in Religious Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2000), p. 183.

⁵ cf. for example Jeremy Begbie’s extensive work on music’s contribution to theology (Begbie 2000a, 2000b, 2007); Don Saliers’ writings on music and theology (Saliers and Saliers 2005; Saliers 2007) and worship (Saliers 1994); works on music and worship, e.g. Kroeker (Ed.) 2005, Leaver and Zimmermann (Eds.) 1998; works on theology and the arts, e.g. Viladesau 2000; the work of authors concerned with the practicalities and rationale of church music, such as those represented in Darlington and Kreider (Eds.) 2003.

⁶ Sven-Erik Brodd, ‘Ecclesiology and Church Music: Towards a Possible Relationship’, *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 6.2 (2006), 126-143 (p. 139).

⁷ Brodd, pp. 138f.

worth exploring. The fact that it is difficult to read a piece of liturgical music and explain clearly what it means in terms of ecclesiology reveals that there is room for exploration, both in the area of music and in the areas of theology and ecclesiology. In order to do justice to the complexity of both music and church, I have structured this research in such a way that it begins by seeking a precise understanding of the nature of liturgy, music and church in turn, before drawing these three subjects together. My main interest is in the research process, or methodology, that will facilitate the study of the ecclesiology of music in worship.

Engaging with music in worship is akin to the process of reading. Both are complex activities. There are many different aspects to focus on: that which is read, the way it has come about, the way it has evolved, the intentions behind it; how readers approach it emotionally and intellectually; the skills needed for interpreting and understanding what is read; the context in which it is read, e.g. time, place and occasion, tradition and convention. I break the process of ‘reading’ music in worship down into three parts.

In the first chapter I look at reading *worship*. Liturgical theology is an approach to worship that seeks to draw out the implicit theology of the worshipping community. David Fagerberg calls liturgical theology ‘faith’s grammar in action,’ stressing the fact that it is always a community’s encounter with God in worship which comes first, rather than scholarly reflection.⁸ The church may also be understood and identified through its worship; this is the task of liturgical ecclesiology, on which I focus towards the middle of the first chapter.

My particular interest within this field is music used in worship. My main objective is to find out how to know the church by the music it uses in its worship. In the second chapter, I therefore turn my attention to reading *music* in three ways: as music *per se*, as theology, and as worship.

⁸David W. Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima: What is Liturgical Theology?* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2004), p. 4. Fagerberg borrows the ‘grammar’ metaphor from Ludwig Wittgenstein and notes that Wittgenstein once called theology a grammar (Fagerberg 2004, p.2). Referring to Wittgenstein’s concept of ‘language games’, Fagerberg explains that there is an immediacy about liturgical action that is akin to the use of grammar: anyone who can speak a language can use its grammar to make words have meaning without being a professional grammarian, and likewise anyone who can ‘do’ liturgy can speak theologically without having to be an academic theologian. Therefore liturgical theology is primarily expressed in the liturgy itself, rather than in the academic reflection on it.

The final chapter suggests a way of reading the *church* as a community expressing its identity through the music that is used in worship. It integrates this way of reading the church with my observations about worship and of music in order to come to an understanding of the way music offers an insight into the church's identity.

Music is not so much one of the elements of liturgy as one of its 'languages'. Many elements of liturgy may or may not be performed through the medium of music. Nicholas Wolterstorff even claims that any action of the liturgy can be enhanced by the use of music – and he does not just mean background music, but the actual use of song and chant.⁹ This makes the question we will be asking in the first chapter, 'How can we know the church by the music it uses in its worship?', quite a complicated one. The disciplines of liturgical theology and liturgical ecclesiology tend to concentrate on the meaning of the liturgy as a whole, and on the Eucharistic liturgy in particular. Different *elements* of the church's liturgy can be studied within their liturgical and historical context to establish their meaning in the light of the whole of the liturgy. To look into the meaning of a liturgical '*language*' such as music is to go a step further. In the first chapter I will propose a methodology that will allow us to do justice to the place and nature of music within the whole of the liturgy.

Having established an initial methodology, I will look at the object of this study, namely music. Music in liturgy takes many forms and serves a variety of objectives. In the second chapter, I will be asking how music affects people and where it gets its meaning and its effectiveness from. I will investigate in particular whether it is music itself that conveys a certain message, or whether it is primarily its context that gives it meaning and significance. Next I will look at a theology of music and possibilities for theology through music. Finally I will look at how music can be a form of worship. Historically, music has caused animated discussions in the church. Thomas Long calls music

the nuclear reactor of congregational worship. It is where much of the radioactive material is stored, where a good bit of the energy is generated, and, alas, where congregational meltdown is most likely to occur.¹⁰

⁹ Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, 'Thinking about Church Music' in *Music in Christian Worship: At the Service of the Liturgy*, ed. by Charlotte Kroeker (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005), pp. 3-16 (pp. 11f.).

¹⁰ Thomas G. Long 2001, as quoted in Richard Geoffrey Leggett, 'When will you make an end?' in *Worship-shaped Life: Liturgical Formation and the People of God*, ed. by Ruth Meyers and Paul Gibson (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2010), pp. 88-105 (p. 99).

That must mean that the church's music and the dynamics involved in its practice affect people deeply and relatively universally. It is therefore important to try and understand what it is about music that makes people feel so strongly.

Once I have established a way to read music in worship and an understanding of the musical object itself, I will go on to show that music expresses the kind of church the church wants and needs to be *in* and *for* the world. Because musical expression of ecclesiology is necessarily elusive, it is a challenging topic for study, but also a rewarding one. In Jeremy Begbie's words,

Music has an *irreducible* role to play in coming to terms with the world, in exploring and negotiating the constraints of our environment and the networks of relationships with others, and thus in forming identity.¹¹

For churches, as well as for individuals and other communities, music is a way of establishing and negotiating identity. People intuitively know what a church is about when they hear, or take part in, its music – without necessarily being able to express this explicitly. To find a way of 'reading' the church's music so as to 'read' the church itself will be the aim of the final chapter.

This study is the result of reflection on literature rather than the practice of fieldwork. The ideal way to approach this subject would be a combination of both, but engaging with the work of Mary McGann, who has undertaken extensive fieldwork in this area, made me realise that I would be unable to do justice to the complexity of that type of research within the scope of an MPhil. McGann herself suggests that a two- or three-year period of intensive ethnographical study is necessary to study a community in depth.¹² Her method is interdisciplinary, drawing on the fields of liturgical studies, ethnomusicology and ritual studies, and uses as its two main tools ethnography of musical performance and event-centered analysis. These require the researcher's commitment to a particular community, active participation and continued observation over an extensive period of time.¹³ The results of McGann's method are valuable because one of the key insights of liturgical theology is that

¹¹Jeremy S. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000a), p. 20.

¹²Mary E. McGann, *Exploring Music as Worship and Theology: Research in Liturgical Practice* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2002), p. 39.

¹³ McGann describes her method at length in Mary E. McGann, *Exploring Music as Worship and Theology: Research in Liturgical Practice* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2002).

liturgy exists only as event, rooted in a particular community. It is through participation in that event that one shows what Lawrence Hoffman calls

a commitment to discover the identity of a praying community (...) through an analysis of its praying, rather than going the other way around, assuming that we know enough (relatively speaking) about the community's self-perception.¹⁴

However, I have chosen not to follow in McGann's footsteps because it seems to me just as important to reflect on what it is one seeks to gain from the experience of fieldwork. The fact that McGann presents her findings in two separate volumes, one concerned with method and one describing her actual experiences,¹⁵ shows clearly that in order to study a particular community's practice of music-making adequately, it is important to ask the right questions and to be aware of the rationale behind the research process.

Getting to know a religious community intimately is the best way to understand its personal engagement with music. It is also informative about the way people relate to music more generally. However, more than fieldwork is needed in order to gain a better understanding of the theological rationale behind the church's use of music, and both a deductive and an inductive argument are needed. That is why I have chosen to also reflect on different angles from which to approach the subject of music, as demonstrated for example in the work of Joseph Ratzinger, whose reasoning is deductive. My aim is to outline an appropriate methodology for this type of research, as well as suggesting potential opportunities and pitfalls one would expect to encounter in the process.

Although I have not purposefully set out to write this thesis from any particular personal perspective, religious or otherwise, it may be that my own experience of church life as an Anglican priest has at times influenced my emphases and my choice of examples and illustrations. The decision to focus on Roman Catholic worship at certain points was inspired by the available literature and the interests of some key authors. Similar lines of enquiry could equally apply to other denominations and church traditions and be just as interesting and rewarding.

¹⁴ Lawrence A. Hoffman, 'A Holistic View of Liturgy' in *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader*, ed. by Dwight W. Vogel (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), pp. 78-86 (p. 78).

¹⁵ McGann 2002 and Mary E. McGann, *A Precious Fountain: Music in the Worship of an African American Catholic Community* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004) respectively.

Chapter 1: Reading liturgy

Introduction: an icon of the church

In his book *Celebrating church*, Mattijs Ploeger beautifully describes a Chrism Eucharist at the cathedral of the Old Catholic diocese of Haarlem in the Netherlands. In this service he finds everything present that makes for church. Everything that belongs to the essence of what it is to be a church is represented in this particular liturgy. The community has gathered for the celebration of the Eucharist, the members of the three orders of clergy of the diocese – Bishops, Priests and Deacons – are all present. They gather around the word and the sacraments. The Bishop blesses the oil to receive people into the church at baptism and confirmation, the oil used to ordain new members of the clergy, and the oil used to anoint the sick and the dying. There is furthermore preaching, prayer and music; the service represents the dynamic between symbolism and the reality of everyday life - ethics, politics and mission. This liturgical celebration contains and represents all the elements that constitute the church. Ploeger calls it

[a]n icon of the church. The whole diocese is represented, all lay and ordained ministries are present and fulfil their particular charisms in the context of the community. All aspects of Christian living are represented. All that we are as a church is here.¹⁶

An icon of the church. ‘Icon’ is simply the Greek word for ‘image’; but at the same time it is more than that:

An icon is a surface: you can’t walk round it but only look at it, and, hopefully, through it. It insists that you don’t treat it as an object with which you share a bit of space. In the icon, what you see is human beings and situations as they are in the light of God’s action.¹⁷

One of the main principles of liturgical theology is that liturgy, too, is not to be treated as an object. As an icon of the church, liturgy allows us to look through itself at the worshipping community in which God is at work. Liturgy always points to far more than what we see on the surface. Just like an icon shows the viewer the face of Christ using mundane things like

¹⁶ Ploeger, p. 1.

¹⁷ Rowan Williams, *The Dwelling of the Light: Praying with Icons of Christ* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2003), p. xviii.

wood and paint, a community celebrating the liturgy uses ordinary things such as bread, wine, water, colour and sound to show each other something of the face of Christ, the face of God.

Moreover, the liturgy makes that deeper reality present. David Fagerberg writes:

The incarnation is the paradox of God present in the flesh, and the liturgy is the paradox of He who cannot be contained in thought or space or time or matter, presenting Himself to us in doctrine and temple and feast day and sacrament. Liturgy is icon, and “a place of meeting or joining [*sum-bole*] of different realities.”¹⁸

In a way, the liturgy is always an icon that is still unfinished. There is no such thing as a finished product in liturgy; the liturgy communicates to its participants a God who is always acting. Writing about the impact of the Liturgical Movement on the parish church, Alfred Shands writes:

Liturgy is the canvas on which the parish learns graphically what it means to be the Church.¹⁹

In and through the liturgy, a group of often very different people explores what it means to be the one body of Christ. It is a collaborative work in progress. In this chapter I will suggest that this learning process can be an aural (and oral) as well as a graphical one. My main concern will be where music finds its place on the canvas of the liturgy. Music, I am sure, helps the liturgy to be a window into the soul of the church, just as an icon is a window into the reality of God. To begin to explore the significance and unique contribution of music, one has to look at the way liturgy is theology. Only then can it become clear what iconic properties music possesses; that is, how music contributes to the way liturgy represents, illuminates and creates church.

A brief introduction and overview of the development of liturgical theology as a discipline will be necessary. I will also discuss liturgical ecclesiology, which focuses on the analysis of liturgy to gain insight into the nature of the church itself. Then, in order to be able to narrow the question down to the musical side of the liturgy, I will discuss different approaches to the relation between the church's liturgy and the way the church's identity is understood. I will follow the line Schmemmann takes when he describes the church's liturgy as the revelation of

¹⁸ Fagerberg, p. 15, quoting Alexander Golitzin, *Et Introibo Ad Altare Dei*, p. 219.

¹⁹ Alfred R. Shands, *The Liturgical Movement and the Local Church* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1959), p. 28.

her true nature, and ask what it means to say that the church's liturgy and music are for the sake of the church, rather than the church existing for its liturgy and music. Finally I can ask what a liturgical ecclesiology would look like which would enable us to study the place of music within the church's self-manifestation as liturgy.

Liturgical theology

If there is one place where we should look for living theology, it is worship. Not so much the church's credal statements, however artfully and carefully crafted, nor theologians' books on dogmatics. The place where theology really matters and comes into its own is in such a context as the gathering of people in response to God. Just as all theology is in one way or another a response to people's search for God, the whole of the liturgy can be seen as a response to the God who initiates the encounter. Liturgy is where theology meets everyday lives and where people respond to the invitation to become part of God's salvation history.²⁰

It is this meeting that forms the subject matter of the discipline called liturgical theology. Graham Hughes asks,

how shall modern worshippers *comprehend* ('grasp together' into a meaningful whole) the world of meanings irreducibly part of a worship service and the world in which these same worshippers must negotiate the joys and perils of being human (...)?²¹

To find ways of enabling the encounter between these two worlds is the task of liturgical theology.²²

In order to do this, one needs to discern the patterns and the underlying motives that can be identified in worship. Only then can be observed how the world is brought into God's presence in worship, and to what extent what happens in worship is taken out into the world and the outside world integrated with the worshipping community. These are not theoretical questions, but questions that are answered most readily and most practically in the very act of worship itself. Liturgical theology juggles the reflection on worship and its living reality.

²⁰ J.D. Crichton, 'A Theology of Worship' in *The Study of Liturgy*, ed. by Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright and Edward Yarnold (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 5-29 (p. 7).

²¹ Graham Hughes, *Worship as Meaning: A Liturgical Theology for Late Modernity* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), p. 221

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 221f.

Primary and secondary theology

The liturgy is theology's natural habitat, and taking part in worship is doing theology. According to David Fagerberg, liturgists – that is those who, in his words, 'commit liturgy' – are always theologians.²³ Fagerberg uses the word 'liturgist' in an unusual way. For him, a liturgist is not in the first place someone who studies liturgy or is in charge of preparing the liturgy. Fagerberg takes 'liturgist' to mean someone who does liturgy (for lack of a better phrase), in the same way as a wrestler is someone who wrestles.²⁴ Thus, the fact that 'liturgists' are 'theologians' does not mean that they are academics; rather, they are those who have immediate encounters with God. Fagerberg writes,

Being a theologian means being able to use the grammar learned in liturgy to speak about God. Even more, it means speaking of God. Yet even more, it means speaking with God.²⁵

Those who participate in the liturgy can speak about God in a direct way, for example by making a statement of faith and preaching. They also address God or speak of God indirectly in various ways, such as by speaking to God in prayer, and taking part in those ritual acts which show an acknowledgement of their relationship with God. Thus they create an environment (visual, auditory or otherwise) that is perceived to facilitate their encounter with God. People who participate in the liturgy are engaging in primary theology, that is to say, they are engaging in an act that is meaningful with respect to God and God's relation to them and their world.²⁶ As Fagerberg puts it,

Liturgical theology materializes upon the encounter with the Holy One, not upon the secondary analysis at the desk. God shapes the community in liturgical encounter, and the community makes theological adjustment to this encounter, which settles into ritual form. Only then can the analyst begin dusting the ritual for God's fingerprints.²⁷

The encounter with God in the liturgical event is primary liturgical theology. The 'dusting for God's fingerprints' is secondary liturgical theology.

²³ Fagerberg, pp. 7f.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 7f.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 5f.

²⁶ Cf. Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1984), p. 75.

²⁷ Fagerberg, p. 9.

Even the simplest liturgy is rich and multi-layered in meaning. There will not only be an element of immediate and real contemporary meaning and importance to it; it will also carry with it a tradition and a history that consists of layers upon layers of accumulated meaning. There is not always a need for people to find new, original ways of expressing themselves in worship; and where there is such a need, new words and symbols are often still rooted in tradition. H.A.J. Wegman gives the example of a funeral. The grief is fresh, the deceased was a unique person, but the traditional form of the service gives a sense of security. At the same time, the old words are given new meaning because of the particularity of the occasion, the memories people have of that particular person.²⁸ Each liturgical celebration is a cumulative event, because the old and the new meet. That which is experienced in worship shapes the participants in a very immediate way and makes them the subjects of primary liturgical theology.

But there is so much more to the symbols, customs and rituals encountered in worship, that after having been experienced they also invite deeper reflection. As Gordon Lathrop writes,

if the gathering is meaning-full, the people who participate in it will think about it. If the assembly is full of strong and primary symbols, those symbols will “give rise to thought.”²⁹

This reflection on worship, rather than its actual experiencing, is secondary liturgical theology. Those who engage in such reflection, whether for theoretical or practical purposes, seek to provide a deeper understanding and appreciation of liturgical performance and open up the rich world of meaning to be found in the liturgical event. Secondary liturgical theology recognises that liturgy is never static and that there is the constant need to engage with a changing world and new generations of worshippers. As such, secondary liturgical theology is not only digging for treasure, but also seeking ways to consolidate it and draw out its relevance in every new situation. Secondary liturgical theology

speaks of God as it speaks about the ways the assembly speaks of God. As such, it has a reforming intent: it means “to make the liturgical experience of the Church again one of the life-giving sources of the knowledge of God.”³⁰

²⁸H.A.J. Wegman, *Riten en Mythen: Liturgie in de Geschiedenis van het Christendom* (Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J.H. Kok, 1991), pp. 44f.

²⁹Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), p. 5 (quoting Paul Ricoeur).

³⁰Lathrop 1993, pp. 7f. (quoting Alexander Schmemmann).

Rather than it being a purely academic exercise, secondary liturgical theology can critically feed back into and contribute to the living reality of the liturgy.

There is always a double movement involved in participation in the liturgy. The nature of the liturgy is such that it invites us to reflect on it, alone and with others, and look for the meaning of what happens in it. Every time people participate in the liturgy, their primary experience of it will be changed by the memories they bring into the experience and the expectations formed by their reflection on them. They remember past services, occasions, places, people. An 'ordinary' Sunday Eucharist becomes richer in meaning when people remember that it is the same Eucharist as the first Eucharist of Easter and the same meal as the Last Supper. The same service can remind someone of a friend's wedding and a loved one's funeral. It is not just at the personal level that worship is influenced by secondary theology. As Christopher Ellis observes, what is done and said in an act of worship depends at least partly on the theological framework according to which the wider church orders its liturgy and the training of its ministers.³¹

Meanwhile, each new liturgical experience will teach its participants something new. Something suddenly clicks when a familiar hymn and a bible reading come together and shed light on each other, and their meaning will never be the same for them. Aidan Kavanagh writes:

It is the *adjustment* which is theological in all this. I hold that it is theology being born, theology in the first instance. It is what tradition has called *theologia prima*.³²

It is through primary liturgical theology – *theologia prima* – that the liturgy grows, and it is on the nature of that growth that secondary liturgical theology reflects. The two form a hermeneutical circle.³³ That is how primary and secondary liturgical theology mutually inform and enrich each other, not just on the personal level, but also on the level of the individual worshipping community as well as the wider church.

³¹ Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2004), p. 20.

³² Kavanagh, p. 74.

³³ Cf. Dwight W. Vogel, 'Liturgical Theology: A Conceptual Geography' in *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader*, ed. by Dwight W. Vogel (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), pp. 3-14 (p. 8).

Liturgical theology as a discipline

Although reflection on liturgy is as old as liturgy itself, liturgical theology as a discipline has properly developed and gained popularity only relatively recently. Its development began in earnest with the liturgical revival just after the First World War, which had its roots in the work of pioneering liturgical scholars of the 1830s and Pope Pius X's interest in liturgical renewal in the early 1900s. The traditional study of liturgy had either been concerned with technical questions about how to perform liturgy properly, or with the history and validity of the existing rites of the church. What the discipline mostly failed to ask, however, was what exactly it is that liturgy accomplishes. And more importantly, it failed to ask why the church has a liturgical tradition. Liturgy was seen as part of either canon law or church history rather than a discipline in its own right.³⁴ It was from the mid seventeenth century onwards that the study of liturgy started to develop into a more theological discipline, first of all through the revival of historical interest in worship. Yet the discipline's main focus was still textual criticism, geared towards its practical application. The reason for this was above all a general lack of interest in ecclesiology. The church itself, its nature and the nature of its worship, was not a subject that received a lot of attention, and was even less likely to be considered the very place where theology is born.³⁵

When the liturgical revival took off in the 1920s, it was at the same time an ecclesiological revival. Schemmann writes that it was 'a return through worship to the Church and through the Church to worship.'³⁶

This rediscovery of liturgy and movement towards liturgical ecclesiology, the study of worship as the life of the church, has been and still is an ongoing process since the First World War. It is interesting, for example, to see that *The Study of Liturgy* (1978) – now a standard work in liturgical studies – begins with a chapter dedicated to the theology of worship.³⁷ But it does so in quite a different spirit from its predecessor, *Liturgy and Worship* (1932), which begins by focusing on good practice.³⁸ In the passage in its introduction that talks about the theology of worship, the focus is very much on the vertical axis of the liturgy,

³⁴ Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (Leighton Buzzard: The Faith Press, 1966), pp. 9f.

³⁵ Kavanagh, pp. 74f.

³⁶ Schmemmann 1966, p. 12.

³⁷ Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright and Edward Yarnold (eds.), *The Study of Liturgy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

³⁸ William Kemp Lowther Clarke and Charles Harris (eds.), *Liturgy and Worship: A Companion to the Prayer Books of the Anglican Communion*, 2nd edn (London: SPCK, 1933).

on the way Christian worship is directed to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. It speaks little about where the worship comes from.³⁹

By contrast, the first chapter of *The Study of Liturgy* inverts that focus and first of all looks at Christian worship as a continuation of more primitive forms of human ritual. Worship is described as reaching out to the Transcendent while being embedded in human life, as is common in all forms of human ritual. Yet Christian worship is seen to be radically different in that it is a response to God's saving history with humanity. The purpose of Christian worship is to enter into unity with God through the actualisation of the encounter with Christ, by the power of the Spirit, in unity with the whole church in heaven and on earth. The author, J.D. Crichton, then goes on to discuss the horizontal movement of the liturgy by looking at the nature of the church as worshipping community centred upon Christ and locating the true praise of God not so much in the liturgy as in the lives of the worshippers. The liturgy facilitates this process. There is a definite move from liturgical theology to liturgical ecclesiology there.⁴⁰

By 1984, Aidan Kavanagh states that he sees liturgical tradition not as merely one source of theology among others, but as

the dynamic condition within which theological reflection is done, within which the Word of God is appropriately understood. This is because it is in the Church, of which the liturgy is the sustained expression and the life, that the various sources of theology function precisely as sources.⁴¹

The church is no longer an object of theology, but its subject; the object is not human ritual, but God. The liturgy is the playing field where it all happens. Liturgical theology has not only opened the way to liturgical ecclesiology, but has become embedded in it. It has become impossible to look at the theology of worship and not see the theology of the church.

Over these few decades, liturgical theology has been in the process of defining itself as a discipline in its own right. It has constantly been looking for the distinctive nature of that kind

³⁹William Kemp Lowther Clarke, 'Introduction' in *Liturgy and Worship: A Companion to the Prayer Books of the Anglican Communion*, ed. by W. K. Lowther Clarke and Charles Harris, 2nd edn (London: SPCK, 1933), pp. 1-11 (pp. 5ff.).

⁴⁰ Crichton, pp. 5-29.

⁴¹ Kavanagh, pp.7-8.

of theology that arises from and expresses itself in worship. Different strands of liturgical theology have each taken their own course, as we will see in the next section.

Generally, liturgical theology has given an increasing amount of attention to the human, earthly side of liturgy and the very basics of what liturgy is all about. Liturgical theology has increasingly reclaimed “the relationship between bread of life and daily bread”⁴² and reflected on the social implications and missionary aspects of the liturgy. Its emphasis is on the fact that the liturgy exists for the sake of the church, and the church exists for the sake of the world. As Schmemmann puts it,

worship – as the expression, creation and fulfilment of the Church – places the Church before the face of the world, manifests her purpose in the world, the purpose of the people of God, set in the world with a Gospel and a mission.⁴³

A taxonomy of liturgical theology

Of all the different things people have taken ‘liturgical theology’ to mean, Dwight Vogel’s description has to be the simplest yet the most effective. According to him, liturgical theology ‘must deal with the liturgy and it must be theological in nature.’⁴⁴ Thus his take on liturgical theology includes a broad range of approaches to liturgical theology, which he seeks to categorise. The approaches he discusses are

theology of worship,

liturgy as theology,

theology of liturgy,

theology in liturgy,

theology because liturgy, and

liturgy and life.⁴⁵

In the following, I will briefly introduce each of these approaches. I will then return to them later on to apply them to the study of music in liturgy.

Theology of worship in general sees worship as the underlying human need and duty of which liturgical action is an expression.⁴⁶ The need for people to worship is thus necessary in order

⁴² Ploeger, p. 1.

⁴³ Schmemmann 1966, p. 31.

⁴⁴ Vogel, p. 13.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 4-13.

to understand the phenomenon of liturgy in the first place. The question to ask therefore is what it is that liturgy seeks to express. Mary McGann's ethnographical approach to worship, which I will discuss at some length later, is an example of this type of liturgical theology.⁴⁷ Another approach is one that sees liturgy as theology in action.⁴⁸ One can approach the act of engaging in liturgy as primary theology, as 'theology being born.'⁴⁹ In that capacity, liturgy is also a fundamental source of liturgical theology, but never the whole story.

Furthermore there is the theology of liturgy, i.e. the theological reflection on liturgical action.⁵⁰ This reflection may aim to establish the place and meaning of liturgy in systematic theology. We will encounter an example of this form of liturgical theology later in Ratzinger's systematic approach to liturgy.⁵¹ Reflection on liturgy can also be done for the sake of catechesis, in order to introduce people to the church or deepen their understanding of it. It can also be part of liturgical studies. The theological reflection can have different kinds of focus, either the liturgy as a whole, certain aspects of it, or its underlying dynamics.

One can also concentrate on the theology that is intrinsic to the liturgy. In this approach theology is seen as essentially systematic or dogmatic, and the liturgy is seen as source for theological reflection. Liturgy can either have priority over theology (so that the task of theology is to understand the concepts expressed in liturgy), or be subordinate to it (so that theology is to judge the appropriateness of liturgical expressions of its content), or exist alongside it, with both liturgy and theology giving and taking.⁵²

Another approach to the relationship between theology and liturgy is to see theology as existing because of liturgy. This is also called 'doxological theology'.⁵³ On this view, the nature of theology is always oriented towards the praise of God. The liturgy is seen as that which by necessity inspires and creates theology, as the driving force behind it. Finally there is the approach which seeks to make explicit the relationship that exists between liturgy and life. According to this approach the value of liturgical theology is not to be found in the

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 5ff. Vogel mentions the work of Brunner, Hoon, Saliers, Underhill and Schmemmann in this respect.

⁴⁷ V.i. chapter 3.

⁴⁸ Vogel, pp. 7f. Kavanagh and Fagerberg, among others, stress this side of liturgical theology.

⁴⁹ Kavanagh, p. 74.

⁵⁰ Vogel, pp. 8f. This is a wide and varied field; key figures are Casel, Dalmais; Irwin, Zimmerman; Lathrop, Ramshaw and Saliers, and, on the critical edge, Collins, Duck and Häussling.

⁵¹ V.i. chapters 2 and 3.

⁵² Vogel, pp. 10f. Congar, for example, describes this method.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 11f. Wainwright's *Doxology* is a good example of this.

discipline itself or even in its benefit to the church, but in its benefit through the church to the world.⁵⁴ The world is seen as the reason and goal of the church's existence, and a deeper understanding of liturgy ultimately serves the world.

Vogel makes an important contribution by distinguishing and including all these different forms of liturgical theology in his broad definition of liturgical theology. He takes issue with those who seek to limit the task of liturgical theology to one particular approach, and asserts that in reality all these approaches constitute one big movement in which none can exist without the others.⁵⁵ No liturgical theology that is not firmly rooted in a theology of worship will understand even the basics of what it is about. Likewise a liturgical theology that is not doxological will have great difficulty explaining why its goals are worth pursuing in the first place. A theology of liturgy will have to be based on a certain view on where theology is to be found in liturgy, and no liturgical theology that stops with the life of the church *per se* and does not give any thought to its relation to the rest of the world can be complete. Liturgical theology is a discipline that always finds itself trying to balance experience and reflection, dogma and action, church and world, continuity and change, respect and criticism, holiness and humanness.

Not all liturgical theologians agree with such a taxonomical view of their subject. For David Fagerberg, for example, to speak of a relationship between theology and liturgy in any form is futile. Liturgy is theology, and liturgical theology is one single method:

Put colorfully, liturgical theology is not yellow liturgy marbles mixed with blue theology marbles to make a jar full of yellow and blue marbles: Liturgical theology is green marbles. (...) It is no more appropriate to speak of bridging liturgy with theology or asceticism than it is appropriate to speak of bridging soul and body, when the human being cannot be understood apart from soul or apart from body.⁵⁶

Fagerberg does not discredit approaches to liturgy such as the ones Vogel describes; what he is trying to emphasise is that theologies concerned with liturgy are not necessarily liturgical theology. He gives examples of what he calls a theology *of* worship and a theology *from* worship, and states that they differ from liturgical theology in that these methods imply an

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 12 Schmemmann notably stresses the importance of this, as do Lathrop (*Holy Things*, 1993) and others.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 8 and 13. Vogel counts himself among what he calls 'liturgical theologians of an evangelical apostolate', as opposed to 'liturgical theologians of the strict observance' – Fagerberg in particular. See for a similar argument Ploeger pp. 10ff.

⁵⁶ Fagerberg, p. 7.

underlying dichotomy between theological content and liturgical embodiment. Liturgical theology, according to Fagerberg, is concerned with what he calls ‘thick’ liturgy:

I propose that liturgy in its thin sense is an expression of how we see God; liturgy in its thick sense is an expression of how God sees us. (...) Liturgy is more than rubric, like music is more than score. Just as the word *music* can name either the notes or the act of making music, so the word *liturgy* (thin) can name the ritual score or a supernatural dynamic (thick).⁵⁷

It is perfectly possible to study liturgy in its thin sense for the purposes of all sorts of different disciplines; but for the liturgical theologian, liturgy in its thick sense is more than an object of study. It cannot be studied in general or abstract terms, but only be understood as a living reality, because it is both subject and object, as is the one who studies it.

The aim of liturgical theology

Given the nature of liturgical theology as a discipline, one could ask what its purpose is, and who benefits from its findings. Although liturgical theology emerged from a liturgical revival that was very much happening at the practical level and continues to have its practical implications and its critical edge, it is also a systematic theological discipline. Liturgical theology in its academic form aims to draw out the theological meaning of worship first, and only after careful reflection can its findings seep through into actual worship. It stands between actual worship and dogmatics, connecting liturgical data into a consistent whole to explain what the church’s nature is and how this nature is expressed in worship. The basis for this is still a historical approach, with particular attention to the extent to which changes in practice can be said to be a continuation of tradition and the possibility of finding a pattern to those changes. As Lathrop puts it concisely, ‘[a]uthentic continuity requires responsible change.’⁵⁸

We need to ask the question what ‘responsible change’ means. Liturgical theology, then, takes this question further: apart from mapping the structures of liturgical change it seeks their theological meaning and the ecclesiological vision behind it. At the same time though, liturgical theology is committed to working the other way round – from dogmatics back to the actual worshipping community. The work of those undertaking the task of reflecting on the

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 9f.

⁵⁸ Lathrop 1993, p. 5.

nature of the assembly of the faithful and the nature of their God will have to be applied to liturgical practice. It is about ‘imagining the meaning of assembly in order to enable its practice.’⁵⁹

A key insight of liturgical theology is provided by John Robinson when he writes that ‘the place to begin with is with bringing out the meaning of what is done rather than with changing what is said,’⁶⁰ and far from this being a conservative point of view, it is ‘because liturgy is at its heart social action.’⁶¹

If liturgy is to be more than just any other club or gathering and really influence people’s lives, it will have to be recognised not as the service of a minister or a group of ministers to those who attend, but as all the participants’ active service to God, to each other and ultimately to God’s world. And beyond the reflection on liturgy itself, liturgical theology is in fact the reflection on the nature of God, and the question what kind of God people understand it to be who deserves their praise and compels them to worship.

Similarly, Gordon Lathrop writes:

We urgently need liturgical theology as we seek bearings for both public thought and personal hope. That is, we need it if its explanations of the assembly intend to make life-orienting symbols newly available to us and to the circumstances of our time.⁶²

Liturgical theology recognises the true potential and relevance of liturgy in our time in that it stresses the transformative power of old symbols made new. Its fresh reflections on liturgical practice aim to unite liturgy and life, because essentially they are inseparable, even if sometimes the connection seems to have been lost.

⁵⁹ Lathrop 1999, p. 98.

⁶⁰ John A.T. Robinson, *Liturgy Coming to Life*, 2nd edn (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd., 1963), p. v.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶² Lathrop 1993, p. 4.

Methodology

Different views on the aim and purpose of liturgical theology are closely linked with different views on what its methodology should look like. The following three examples illustrate this.

Alexander Schmemmann has a vivid interest in the historical study of liturgy, yet combines this with a deep conviction that liturgy is there ‘for life’, that is, to be realized in the world. For him, writing as he does from an Orthodox perspective, the primary task of liturgical theology is to clarify the content and significance of the Ordo, the definite and established regulations according to which Orthodox liturgy is conducted.⁶³ He teaches us three important things about his methodology.⁶⁴ The first is the crucial role of the historical analysis of the basic structures of worship. One needs to find out where there is truth in those structures and which elements have distorted the original meaning of the liturgy over the centuries. Secondly, the data gathered and analyzed by historical study have to be given theological meaning. They have to be, as it were, translated into the language of theology and dogmatics. By doing that, one can begin to make explicit what it is that is experienced in the liturgy. Then finally the liturgical experience has to be presented as a ‘rule of prayer’ which underlies and determines the church’s ‘rule of faith’. The relation between that which happens in the liturgy on the one hand and the lives of individual people on the other hand has to be explored in the light of the fact that each individual act of worship is done in and through the whole church. Thus every act of worship points beyond itself and cannot be experienced in isolation.

A rather bold take on the study of liturgy comes from Angelus Häussling. For him, liturgiology is an enormously wide area that has to draw on many different theological disciplines, especially the study of the Old Testament. This is because he sees it as liturgiology’s task to be the one discipline that is able to scrutinize the whole of contemporary theology to see if it is ‘capable of liturgy’; that is, to see if its main goal is to make the praise of God possible and necessary in our world today. Such a task obviously asks for an all-encompassing methodology that in comparison to Schmemmann’s operates quite the other way round: it does not start with historical analysis, but with analysis of contemporary society and the way it challenges the expression of the very being of what we call ‘God’. Its method, then, is twofold. Firstly, there has to be a critique of the form of liturgy, to establish whether the

⁶³ Schmemmann 1966, p. 33. Schmemmann introduces what he calls ‘the problem of the Ordo’ on pp. 33-47.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 16- 27.

liturgy is a true expression of the experience of God in our time or rather gets in the way of worship. Secondly, since liturgy is the true source and goal of theology, the study of liturgy must be theology in a wider sense than just a theology confined to the structures of the liturgy. It must question the very right of liturgy to exist – a right which depends on the kind of God we take God to be. It is the (rather daunting) task of liturgical theology to assess the doxological quality of the whole of our theology.⁶⁵

There certainly are more down-to-earth approaches to the methodology of liturgical theology, mainly the ones that work from an anthropological or sociological perspective. Such approaches ground liturgical action in people's need to gather around the mystery they seek to be drawn into – as we see in Lathrop's work - or in the act of prayer which defines a community's identity – as does Lawrence Hoffman. Hoffman perceives prayer as a hermeneutical circle between the actual texts and their history, each shedding light on the other but never entirely exposing its meaning. He finds that it is possible to get to know and understand a community through its prayer rather than to get an understanding of the prayer out of the assumption that one knows what the praying community is about. However, the object of liturgical theology is not the text of the prayer, but what he calls

the liturgical field, the holistic network of interrelationships that binds together discrete things, acts, people, and events into the activity we call worship – or better still, ritual.⁶⁶

The key thing liturgical theology has to do is to find the world behind the ritual. There is a shared reality behind the liturgy that is not made explicit anywhere but which is nevertheless very real to those who take part in the liturgy. Studying the liturgy is discovering the structures of meaning-making, shared by the participants, that make it come alive.⁶⁷

These three approaches show how one's outlook on liturgy as a whole determines one's methodological priorities. If the liturgy is seen as theology, the movement is from a detailed historical analysis of liturgical data to their theological synthesis. If theology is seen as essentially doxological, the study of liturgy takes precedence over all other theological disciplines and collates their findings into its own critical assessment of the whole of

⁶⁵ Angelus A. Häussling, 'The Critical Function of Liturgiology within Theology and in Ecclesial Life' in *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader*, ed. by Dwight W. Vogel (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), pp. 66-75.

⁶⁶ Hoffman, p. 79.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-86.

theology. An approach which focuses on liturgy's origins in the world will first of all seek to understand the world and its people through the medium of their worship.

I share the concerns of Vogel and Ploeger who warn against too narrow a definition of the field of liturgical theology. All these approaches are valid and valuable. Häussling's in particular is a very important, yet ambitious effort to go right back to the theological basics and establish what forms of liturgical expression have the right to exist in today's world. However, as will become clear, a combination of the other two approaches is what I am looking for with respect to the study of music in liturgy. On the one hand, with Hoffmann and Lathrop, I believe that understanding a community through its prayer is doing things the right way round. Liturgy is something which happens in real life; as Fagerberg puts it, 'Liturgy is more than rubric, like music is more than score.'⁶⁸ But on the other hand, to avoid the obvious trap of excessive introspection, this needs to be balanced by an approach such as Schmemmann's, which stresses that liturgical action is never an isolated occurrence and we need to understand its history and its purpose.

Liturgical ecclesiology

In the 1920s a liturgical movement developed that was relatively universal – that is, not limited to a particular country, denomination, or level of church organisation - and dramatic in its implications.⁶⁹ It did not just mean a renewed interest in the liturgy as such, but an appreciation of worship in all its complexity, and most importantly, of the church as the place where it all comes together. As a result of this liturgical movement it became usual to talk about liturgy as the expression and very essence of the church, and liturgy came to be seen to communicate and embody a particular way of being church. The ontology of the church is a foundation from which contemporary liturgical theologians work towards a theology of worship, or rather a theology through worship.⁷⁰ So, for example, Simon Chan begins his *Liturgical Theology* with the fundamental question of where the church stands in relation to the whole of creation: does the church exist as God's instrument to fulfil God's purpose in the

⁶⁸ Fagerberg, p. 10.

⁶⁹ A concise overview of the emergence, development and implications of this movement is given e.g. by John R. K. Fenwick and Bryan D. Spinks, *Worship in Transition: The Twentieth Century Liturgical Movement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1995).

⁷⁰ Examples of this are Lathrop in *Holy People and Holy Things* and Wainwright who discusses first the Trinity and then immediately the church as the basis of his doxological theology in Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology, A Systematic Theology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (London: Epworth Press, 1980).

rest of creation, or is God's purpose best expressed in the church itself, so that the calling of the church is to be itself? Whether we find either of these positions satisfactory or not, what matters is that he recognizes that it is necessary for him to make up his mind as to the nature of the church before he can begin to make sense of its liturgy at all. The need to take the church as one's starting point shows that all liturgical theology is in fact, or leads to, liturgical ecclesiology.⁷¹

Between the church and its liturgy there exists, of course, a two-way traffic. We need to establish the identity of the church before we can understand the church's practice. The liturgy then in turn challenges our views on the church's identity by adding all the rich and varied images of the church that emerge from liturgical practice. The nature of the church, whatever one chooses to imagine it to be, is presented infinitely more meaningfully and in more complex ways by its liturgy. The reflection on this process is called liturgical ecclesiology. It fundamentally means letting worship speak about the church, handing us symbols, images and practices in confusing and enriching juxtapositions. J.J. von Allmen expresses it succinctly:

Worship is indeed for the Church, while it waits for the Kingdom, the time and place *par excellence* at which it finds its own deep identity; the time and place at which the Church becomes what it is.⁷²

One of the obvious things about liturgy is that it is done corporately by an assembly; a group of people gathered together to worship. What is equally obvious, but easily overlooked, is that it is the nature of this gathering itself that forms the basis for that act of worship. There are many ways for people to gather in formal and less formal settings and with varying purposes, but there is something special about the gathering that is church. The key practices and symbols around which the church meets are God's word, the shared meal, prayers and the baptismal bath.⁷³ As Gordon Lathrop writes,

a gathering together of persons in which each of those gathered has a participatory role, in which the central matters of worship are at the heart of this shared participation[,] constitutes the most basic symbol of Christian worship.⁷⁴

⁷¹Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2006), pp. 21ff.

⁷²J.J. von Allmen as quoted in Wainwright, p. 122.

⁷³Lathrop 1999, p. 22.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 23.

The way this group of people gathered together goes about engaging with those central matters of worship is, to recall Mattijs Ploeger's phrase, an 'icon of the church'.⁷⁵ Liturgical ecclesiology seeks to 'read' that icon.

Any gathering of people inevitably involves issues around unity and diversity. These are underlying concerns of liturgical ecclesiology too. There is always a fine balance between allowing the church to be true to its cultural context and preserving its unity. Issues around liturgy may be some of the most divisive aspects of church life and form the basis of some of the most profound ecclesial disputes. But liturgy is also one of the most deeply unifying aspects of church. The whole of the liturgy is celebrated in the plural and arises from and assumes a community. On a wider scale, the one worshipping community is in communion with all other communities that form the whole worldwide church. And this church extends both across space and across time. Not only is the worldwide church, past, present and future, in essence one and the same church; its unity is also expressed in the sharing of liturgical forms that have been handed down over the centuries and spread across the globe.

The assemblies in many different places are *one* because they are gathered into the life of the one triune God by the use of one Baptism, the hearing of one Word, the celebration of one table.⁷⁶

Finally, the church on earth does not only know itself indebted to previous generations, but it knows itself to be in communion with the church in heaven.

Often, liturgical ecclesiology in turn needs to find images and models to describe what it reads about the church in liturgy. These images may be taken from scripture, but also from other sources, such as hymnody. Lathrop lists a few: city, nation, camp, army, people of God, holy people, bride, body (of Christ), family, colony, exiles, vineyard, olive tree, ark, temple, priests, the elect.⁷⁷ The church is most often metaphorically described in terms of a group of individuals, a gathering, such as a nation or an army, because that is the most fundamental part of the identity of the church. But other images, for example that of the bride or the vineyard, are of a different nature and may be useful in drawing out other aspects of the church's identity. Using metaphors to explore the nature of the church in terms of something

⁷⁵ Ploeger, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Lathrop 1999, p. 56.

⁷⁷ Lathrop 1999, p.86.

else or describing the church in the light of one of its aspects may be called meta-ecclesiology. Sven-Erik Brodd suggests that it may be helpful to use meta-ecclesiologies when reflecting on music in the church. They are a way of making explicit the ecclesiologies that are implied in the church's practices.⁷⁸ So, for example, if one wants to argue that

it is true that an important criterion of good church music is that it edifies the Church, the Church is usually presented *as* a spiritual house or *as* a temple.⁷⁹

Likewise, if one wanted to tease out different ways in which music reveals the church's ecclesiology, one could look at the role of music in the church as worshipping community or the church as communicative communion.⁸⁰

Because liturgical ecclesiology seeks to read the whole of the liturgy to form a realistic picture of what it says about the church, ideally all elements of the liturgy are taken into account and at every level; from the individual hymn chosen for this particular Sunday to the general shape of the liturgy as it has developed over many centuries. Every liturgical text, shape or action can be read to such an extent as it contributes to the whole of the liturgy, but never in isolation.

Were parts of the liturgy – the liturgical action or the music, for example – to be isolated and taken out of context, it would arguably be impossible to draw reasonable conclusions about operative ecclesiologies exclusively from them. However, each may offer some ecclesiological categories that function operatively and contribute to the whole.⁸¹

The task of 'reading' these 'texts' is not an easy one as each of them requires its own hermeneutical tools for a correct interpretation and the various texts are always interlinked in many different ways.

The text we will look at specifically, music, is notorious for being impossible to translate into what would appear to be a more manageable medium, such as language. '[L]anguage and music are vastly different systems;' they may work together and have a lot in common in terms of their reception, but do not translate into one another.⁸² The study of music brings

⁷⁸ Brodd, p. 126.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 130.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 131-134.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 127.

⁸² Mihailo Antović, *Linguistic Semantics as a Vehicle for a Semantics of Music*, <gewi.uni-graz.at/~cim04/CIM04_paper_pdf/Antovic_CIM04_paper.pdf>, [accessed 1 March 2004].

with it a wealth of philosophical, musicological and anthropological issues.⁸³ It is, however, possible to interpret music on several levels, and as part of the task of liturgical ecclesiology it seems particularly worthwhile to do so. Music can have many and complex functions in liturgy, many of which rely on and shape the nature of the community and the nature of worship itself. In the following, we will look at both the importance of reading music as a text in liturgical ecclesiology and the difficulties it involves.

Music as music-in-liturgy

At this point it is important first of all to clarify the use of some key concepts in this discussion. In the following, when I talk about the relationship between music and liturgy, I will take ‘music’ to mean music in liturgy. Why talk about music in liturgy, rather than music in worship or liturgical music? Choosing to explore music in Christian worship with its liturgical function as my starting point is an important choice. This choice has two benefits. The first is that it allows the inclusion of *any type* of music as long as it functions in a liturgical context. The second is that it limits the music to be studied to music which features in a *liturgical* context. Liturgical music in non-liturgical contexts, such as concerts, could be left to one side. It would be interesting from a musical, sociological and theological point of view to take these types of musical performance into account as well, but it would be of less relevance to ecclesiology.

By ‘liturgical context’ I mean a particular kind of worship context. The defining characteristic of a liturgical context is its corporate nature. ‘Corporate’ in this context means three things: not individual, not private, and done by the church. Vogel sums up the difference between worship and liturgy when he writes:

Worship as a human activity appears in both individual and social expressions. It does not have to be corporate in nature. Liturgy is corporate by definition; worship is not. Liturgy involves ritual action; worship may or may not.⁸⁴

When something amazing happens in someone’s life and causes that person to fall on their knees and praise God (maybe even in song), that person worships, and that worship is very

⁸³ See for example Peter Kivy, *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002); Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956); Anthony Storr, *Music and the Mind* (London: Harper Collins, 1992).

⁸⁴ Vogel, p. 6

likely to be inspired by the worship of the assembly to which the person belongs – but it is only the latter form of worship that I will be interested in here. Like all worship, liturgy is intimately linked with everyday life, emerging from and spilling over into ordinary life. As Fagerberg would say, it is ‘thick liturgy’.⁸⁵ But it is also a time set apart, dedicated to corporate participation in worship – ‘thin’ liturgy. Gregory Dix writes:

‘Liturgy’ is the name given ever since the days of the apostles to the act of taking part in the solemn corporate worship of God by the ‘priestly’ society of Christians, who are ‘the Body of Christ, the church’. ‘The Liturgy’ is the term which covers generally all that worship which is officially organised by the church, and which is open to and offered by, or in the name of, all who are members of the church.⁸⁶

Liturgy is done by and for the church and emerges from the church’s corporate nature. Not only is liturgy organised worship, it is also in some way and to some extent ordered worship. Every element in liturgy is there for a reason, and gains in meaning because of that. It is this contextual meaning that makes it possible to understand music within the liturgy. I stated before that one needs both inductive and deductive reasoning to fully understand the dynamics of the liturgy.⁸⁷ The corporate nature of the liturgy offers a valuable structure within which a community’s practices are tried and tested, so that it is fair to say, with Hoffmann and Lathrop and others who approach liturgy from an anthropological point of view, that it is possible to get to know a community by its corporate prayer.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, this process of ‘corporate discernment’ calls for a historical and systematic understanding of its nature (along the lines of Schmemann and Ratzinger), so that a critique of liturgical practice also becomes possible.

I have chosen to talk about music in Christian liturgy rather than ‘Christian music’, which would be a problematic term to use. One could ask what would make a piece of music Christian. The obvious thing which then comes to mind is its content in terms of lyrics. Such lyrics could be parts of scripture, or a non-scriptural text containing some Christian message. But who can tell, out of context, whether a Psalm, for example, is Christian music or Jewish

⁸⁵ “Liturgical ritual cannot be isolated from our Christian life because liturgy ritualizes identity.” (Fagerberg, p. 17) On ‘thick liturgy’, see Fagerberg, pp. 9ff.

⁸⁶ Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 2nd edn (New York: Continuum, 1945), p. 1.

⁸⁷ See above in the Introduction, p. 12.

⁸⁸ See for example Judith Marie Kubicki, *Liturgical Music as Ritual Symbol* (Leuven:Peeters, 1999), p. 190: ‘By negotiating relationships among the community and between the community and the God whom they worship, music-making allows individuals and the assembly as a social group to orient themselves, that is, to discover their identity and their place within their world.’

music or perhaps even neither? How many texts are meant to have a Christian message for one group of people, but would be condemned as non-Christian by others? There are plenty of secular love songs that could be descriptive of God's or Jesus' love, if one would wish to read them that way, and have been used as such. Likewise there are Christian songs that could be read in a completely secular context without any alteration and acquire meanings that would have very little to do with their original meaning. Thus it seems that neither content, nor the composer's intention is an entirely straightforward criterion for making a piece of music Christian.

The context in which the music sounds, including venue, occasion, audience and musicians, does not make music Christian music either, because it is external to the music as such. The characteristics of the music itself are even less helpful in defining it as Christian. Even though Christians have in certain periods favoured certain types of music for use in their music and those types of music have developed in a Christian context, there is nothing intrinsically Christian about the music itself. Neither does the label 'Christian' say much about the music's use.

Much the same problem occurs when using the category of 'religious music', although that is a much broader area. How does one define religious music? One of the problems with the term 'religious music' is that the religious character of music is often thought to be intrinsic to the music and somehow demonstrable. Handbooks on church music have often listed certain characteristics that would lend music a religious character.⁸⁹ Ethnomusicology, too, has sought to identify universal traits in religious music across cultures. The fact that music is universally connected with religious activities does not necessarily make music itself a religious phenomenon. It may be true that

[j]ust as there are certain theological premises which different religious traditions hold in common, there must be some analogous musical characteristics which pertain to all or a large number of the examples of religious music.⁹⁰

But even if there were a consensus about these characteristics, it would tell us very little about the actual religious meaning of the music. Moreover, not all music that is used in the liturgy is

⁸⁹ Cf. Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, 3rd edn (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1990) et al.

⁹⁰Faruqi, Lois Ibsen al, 'What Makes "Religious Music" Religious?', *Sacred Sound: Music in Religious Thought and Practice*, *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 50.1 (1983), 21-34 (p. 30).

necessarily religious in nature; ‘religious music’ would exclude music brought into the liturgy from ‘outside’.

‘Sacred music’ is a somewhat more helpful category. William Mahrt explains very clearly what is meant by the term ‘sacred music’. He distinguishes between the word ‘sacred’ (roughly comparable to the Latin *sacer*) and the word ‘holy’ (paralleled by the Latin *sanctus*). ‘Holy’ denotes a quality of a certain object, whereas ‘sacred’ expresses the fact that something has been set aside, dedicated to some particular noble purpose.⁹¹ Some things have such characteristics that they are not holy in themselves, but particularly suited for sacred use.

We call a saint holy, but a bishop sacred, the Mass holy, but the liturgy sacred.⁹²

Mahrt explains how there are things that become sacred by gradual reception (his example is the chasuble, which developed from a conventional garment to a sacred vestment exclusively for priests) and things that are perceived as always having been sacred (his example being incense). He argues that the same goes for music. Some types of music, notably Gregorian chant, have always been perceived to be sacred, whereas others have been taken out of the ordinary world and transformed. There has to be a discernable transformation for such music to become sacred and be aligned with the liturgy.⁹³ It seems to me that, properly used, the term ‘sacred music’ is quite clear; but its meaning has become blurred in the world of music. When, for example, a concert is advertised as a ‘concert of sacred and secular music’, the music that was originally set apart is used in such a way that it is no longer set apart in the same way. ‘Sacred music’ says something about the origin of the music, not its present function.

The term ‘church music’ seems clear in its meaning. The problem is that a great deal of music used in liturgy was not specifically written or adopted as church music. There are those who believe that music that is used in church should be music *for* the church or music *of* the church – but in reality, that is certainly not exclusively the case. ‘Liturgical music’ implies an even more specific nature or function – that of serving the liturgy. ‘Liturgical music’ can mean music *for* the liturgy or music *in* the liturgy. I will be using this term, merely because

⁹¹ cf. Otto’s concept of the holy, the ‘numinous’ quality of which is intrinsic to it as described in Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), Ch. 2.

⁹² William Mahrt, ‘The Sacred’, *Sacred Music* 135.4 (2008), 3-5 (p. 3).

⁹³ Mahrt, pp. 3-5.

‘music-in-liturgy’ makes for some very awkward sentences; but what I will mean is not music that is necessarily liturgical by nature, but (any) music that has assumed a liturgical role in a specific liturgical act.

To concentrate on music in its liturgical capacity thus means to exclude a number of related forms of music insofar as they are not used in a liturgical context: any religious music, Christian music, liturgical music and church music outside their liturgical context, as well as music used in non-liturgical worship. It does however include as vast a range of musical styles as long as they are being used as an integral part of a liturgy. I for one cannot think of many musical styles I have not heard used as part of liturgies – contemporary or ancient, vocal or instrumental, live or recorded, home-grown or exotic, improvised or minutely choreographed, all music has the potential to be part of a liturgy. Hence, for the sake of the argument, whenever in the rest of this study I speak about music I do not mean any particular kind of music, but I generally do mean music in a liturgical context unless it is qualified otherwise.

Approaches to music in liturgy

The liturgical context in which music finds itself is vital for the theological and ecclesiological reflection to which it invites the participant or the listener. Once music has assumed its role in the liturgy, it is impossible to study it as a separate entity; one has to look at it as music-in-liturgy. Music as music-in-liturgy is best discussed as a topic in liturgical theology, as one among many elements of the liturgy. But there is a problem. Music is not a clear-cut ingredient of liturgy. Rather than it being a liturgical component, it is more like a liturgical language that can be used in many different ways for many different purposes.

If, for example, we wanted to study an element of the liturgy such as the *Kyrie*, it would be relatively straightforward to do; at least we would know what we were looking for and where to find it. We would want to trace its history, the use of the phrase before it became part of the liturgy, its development, the forms it has taken and the different practices that have developed in different rites regarding the *Kyrie*. It may come in wildly different varieties, but it is still the *Kyrie*. But what are we looking for when we want to study the music in liturgy? It is not a fixed element of the liturgy, it may or may not be there. Throughout its history it will often

not have been written down but simply implied; it may be used at different points at different times to express different things. It is possible to describe the activity of saying or singing the *Kyrie* quite comprehensively, but is it possible to describe what people do when they sing?

There are several possible approaches to describing music-in-liturgy. Looking back for a moment at Dwight Vogel's list of types of liturgical theology which I quoted on page 21, it is possible to see where music fits into all these approaches. Each of these perspectives on liturgy forms an equally informative perspective on music in liturgy.⁹⁴

In terms of the *theology of worship*, there is a whole new field to look at when one does not just ask why people worship, but particularly why they worship through music. It seems to be a universal given that there is a need for people to worship through music, and that such musical forms of worship become accepted, expected or even formalized in the form of liturgy. Studies in comparative religion and ethnomusicology may be illuminating here to understand what it is about music that makes it so closely linked to the essence of worship.

The presence of music in the liturgy is also an acute reminder of the nature of liturgy as *primary theology*. What Vogel calls the 'immediacy of the liturgy as theological act'⁹⁵ becomes apparent in the closeness of liturgical music-making to human emotions. The fact that new music is constantly being added to the liturgical repertoire and old music being revised, discarded, or revived shows that the liturgy is indeed a creative place where people constantly redefine and rediscover their relationship with God. Questions to ask here are how liturgical music comes about, who makes choices as to which music to use, and how worshippers appropriate the music they use in their worship to the effect that the music is theirs, even if it is offered or chosen on their behalf.

Theology of liturgy is a form of liturgical theology that can be done either through music, or with regards to music. The latter would concentrate on the place of music within the whole of the liturgy, the meaning of individual pieces of liturgical music in their context, and the dynamics implied in liturgical music-making. It can have a practical application, such as laying out rules for the regulation of liturgical music. Theology of liturgy is also to be found within liturgical music itself. The music assumes as it were the role of commentator and

⁹⁴ Vogel, pp. 4-13; cf. above, p. 21.

⁹⁵ Vogel, p. 7

comments on the meaning of liturgical actions – much like the arias in Bach’s *Passions*, which are poetic interpretations of the passages from scripture sung in the surrounding recitatives.

The challenge of *theology in liturgy* in relation to music is to reflect on the place where theology is generated – the primacy of either *lex orandi* or *lex credendi*. Should systematic theology prescribe the theology the church expresses in its music, or should it allow itself to be informed by musical expression of beliefs? Many discussions about the ‘appropriateness’ of certain music in liturgy have this as their subtext.

Music in liturgy and *doxological theology* are very closely linked. The underlying principle of both is that there is no talking or singing about God without praising God in the process. The objective of doxological theology is to glorify God, and although music can have many different functions in the liturgy, its ultimate objective is the same. If the liturgy cannot but give rise to theology as praise, one of the first places to look for this to happen is in the music within the liturgy, which by nature does just that. One can also ask whether music in church is to be enjoyed, whom it is for, and whether music is still a form of praise or worship if we make it for our own enjoyment and according to our own taste.

Just as the church does not exist for its own sake but for the world, nothing the church does is ultimately done for its own sake. To be more specific in our reflection on *liturgy and life*, we can ask whether the music made by the church has any relevance to life outside the confines of the liturgy and the walls of the church. Can music really make a difference to people’s spirituality and prayer life, and can it perhaps be an instrument for change, challenging beliefs and attitudes? “[T]he song of praise to God is a song of justice”⁹⁶ – is it more than just a song? The composer James MacMillan seems to think so. He writes,

Music and spirituality are very closely entwined. They have a centuries-long relationship and you could say that music is the most spiritual of the arts. More than the other arts, I think, music seems to get into the crevices of the human-divine experience. Music has the power to look into the abyss as well as to the transcendent heights. It can spark the most severe and conflicting extremes of feeling and it is in these dark and dingy places where the soul is

⁹⁶Paul Westermeyer, *Let Justice Sing: Hymnody and Justice* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998a), p. 24.

probably closest to its source where it has its relationship with God, that music can spark life that has long lain dormant.⁹⁷

If we want to do music justice, we have to take into account its power to actually be effective and have a real impact on people's lives. John Bell, too, writes that what people sing shapes their faith and their actions. According to him,

[s]inging is not a neutral exercise. It should carry a government health warning that it can affect minds.⁹⁸

This is what makes music's partnership with liturgy a potentially fruitful and exciting one.

Studying music from the perspective of liturgical ecclesiology

Whichever way we look at music in liturgy, there is an underlying question we inevitably ask, which is the main question asked by all liturgical theology. What *really* happens in liturgy when people come together and use some form of liturgy or other as the way in which they worship God? This is not a technical question as to how certain liturgical customs came about and developed, or how to determine the proper way of doing things in liturgy. It is asking what the liturgy as a whole is about.

For the answer, we have to examine the nature of the church. After all, all liturgy can be said to be the church's self-actualisation; the place in which the church becomes the church by virtue of doing what a church does. A concrete worshipping community

constructs the sacrament-sign of the great Church and, in the sense that it makes present to this gathered community the saving word and work of Christ, brings that Church into existence in the order of action. Or, to put it in another way, the celebration of the liturgy by the local community actualizes the great Church. It is here at this level that the Church is visible, here that it is really in action.⁹⁹

For that reason, the question what really happens in liturgy can be rephrased as 'How does worship make the church what it is?' And thus, 'How does the church's identity depend on its worship?'

⁹⁷James MacMillan, 'God, Theology and Music' in *Composing Music for Worship*, ed. by Stephen Darlington and Alan Kreider (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2003), pp. 35-50 (p. 36).

⁹⁸John L. Bell, *The Singing Thing: A Case for Congregational Song* (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 2000), p. 56.

⁹⁹Crichton, p. 25.

The validity of this question is not entirely self-evident. It implies a theology of worship and an ecclesiology. In terms of worship it implies that not only is liturgy an end in itself; it is something that, in turn, exists for the benefit of the church. In terms of ecclesiology it implies that the church does not exist to offer liturgy, but the other way round – liturgy exists to actualise the church as the body of Christ.¹⁰⁰

The liturgy exists in order to constitute Church, which is the epiphany of the kingdom.¹⁰¹

Worship is an exploration and affirmation of the nature of the church. By saying that the church's worship expresses the nature of the church, one is saying that the liturgy exists *for* the church. It exists because the church needs it. If the reason for the church's existence were to perform liturgy, the meaning of the liturgy would have to be found in the liturgy itself. If the liturgy is understood to exist because the church needs it, it is true that, in Schmemmann's words,

Christian worship, by its nature, structure and content, is the revelation and realization by the Church of her own real nature. And this nature is the new life in Christ – union in Christ with God the Holy Spirit, knowledge of the Truth, unity, love, grace, peace, salvation.¹⁰²

Let us apply this line of thought to that aspect of the liturgy we are discussing - music. Clearly, the church does not exist for the purpose of making music. But music is a way in which to 'conduct' worship, whatever its content is – praise, petition, lament or any other dealings between people and God. When a church chooses to put its worship into music, the meaning of that music is to be sought in the fact that it is the offering of the church, and, of a particular church. It reveals the need of the church, and of that church, to use music as one of its forms of self-expression, and the need of that particular church to use that particular music as its self-expression at that time. If music exists for the church, it allows the church to express the kind of church it wants to be, or thinks it ought to be.

But as liturgical music does not exist, or should not exist, for its own sake, it also does not exist purely for the church's sake. Liturgical ecclesiology begins and ends not with the

¹⁰⁰ Cf. the earlier paragraph on liturgical ecclesiology, pp. 28ff.

¹⁰¹ Fagerberg, p. 94.

¹⁰² Schmemmann 1966, p. 29.

church, but with God's world. The church serves God's world. So too the church's liturgy and its music serve God's world. This is an easily neglected but vital fact. It means that the church's music does not reveal the nature of the church in itself, but the nature of the church as it perceives itself in its relation to God's world. In other words, music expresses the kind of church the church wants to be in and for the world. By virtue of its being 'for the world via the church', music used in liturgy can be said to reveal the church's own self-understanding.¹⁰³ It reveals the church's ecclesiology.

Characteristics of a liturgical ecclesiology of music

As we have seen, a liturgical ecclesiology of music requires a methodology that describes the musical object within the context of the liturgy which is performed by the church in and for the world. All liturgical theology in its primary form is performed in and by the church, and thus gives us an insight into the nature of the church. 'The church' always means the church before God, as the subject matter of liturgical theology is God, not the liturgy or the church itself. As Fagerberg writes:

If the subject matter of liturgical theology were human ceremony instead of God, it would be self-delusional to call it theology; it would be anthropology, not theology. Worse, it would be ritual narcissism. But liturgy is, in fact, theology precisely because here is where God's revelation occurs steadfastly.¹⁰⁴

It is clear that liturgical theology of music is primarily concerned with God; but in addition, liturgical ecclesiology, which has as its object the church, has a particular concern for the place 'where God's revelation occurs steadfastly'. A liturgical ecclesiology which considers music, then, will have to regard it as part of the context in which God's revelation occurs. It will consider the liturgy, and its music, as an event that is epiphanous - that is, as communicating, rather than symbolising or expressing, the reality of God. It is as Schmemmann writes about different approaches to the theology of the consecration of bread and wine in the Eucharist:

In the study of the Eucharist, theological attention was focused exclusively upon the question: what happens to the elements, and how and when exactly

¹⁰³ As Schmemmann says in Schmemmann 1966, p. 31: '[W]orship – as the expression, creation and fulfilment of the Church – places the Church before the face of the world, manifests her purpose in the world, the purpose of the people of God, set in the world with a Gospel and a mission.'

¹⁰⁴ Fagerberg, pp. 42f.

does it happen? For the early Church the real question was: what happens to the *Church* in the Eucharist?¹⁰⁵

There is a substantial difference between these two approaches, and it is the latter which does justice to the nature of the liturgy as epiphanous event. Fagerberg warns against understanding liturgical symbols as illustrations or visual aids; he writes about this:

The mystery of the eucharistic transformation is the mystery of the Church liturgically being what she is for the sake of the world. The entire Church and the entire liturgy is the sacramental presence of Christ, not just the transubstantiated elements.¹⁰⁶

One of the characteristics of an appropriate method to describe the church's music as fulfilling its liturgical role would be that it regards music in the light of this sacramental presence. Seeing music in this light helps avoid common misconceptions about church music such as the ones Paul Jones warns against: the idea that music in worship is about us; that it is 'for fun'; that it should be spontaneous, free, and involve little skill; that it is utilitarian; that it ought to be contemporary and popular; that its goal is to manipulate people's emotions.¹⁰⁷ An approach to music that is biblical, as is Jones' starting point and main concern, avoids these fallacies. It also avoids regarding the liturgy as a consumer-centered product, and allows it to regain its identity as God-centered event.

I think that a liturgical ecclesiology of music would need to have at least the following characteristics: it would take music as its starting point without presupposing an *a priori* ecclesiology to be embodied by it; it would consider the act of music making to have the potential to be *theologia prima*; and it would regard music as a communal activity.

Firstly, the method of this liturgical ecclesiology would be (at least in part) inductive. It would be willing to look for the identity of the church in its actual liturgy, and compare its findings in that area with other areas of the church's life and witness to see whether or not they are consistent with one another. If one wants to know what a church is really about, it is essential to be descriptive of a church's music, taking it as one's starting point and regarding it as a

¹⁰⁵Alexander Schmemmann, 'Theology and Liturgical Tradition' in *Worship in Scripture and Tradition*, ed. by Massey Shepherd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 165-178 (p. 177).

¹⁰⁶Fagerberg, p. 91.

¹⁰⁷Paul S. Jones, *Singing and Making Music: Issues in Church Music Today* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing Company, 2006), pp. 180-187.

form of witness that may complement, or even contradict, more ‘official’ accounts of what the church believes.

Secondly, a liturgical ecclesiology of music will need to take music seriously as an act of worship. That is, the act of making music would be seen as an act of theology and ecclesiology. This implies that it is not just the content of the music that determines the music’s meaning, it is the whole event that counts; attention is to be given to all the different aspects of music-making. For this to happen, theology and ecclesiology would have to be perceived as internal to the whole of the liturgy, as opposed to one generating the other. In music, form and content cannot meaningfully be separated. Equally, it is difficult and unhelpful to distinguish between form and content in the whole of the liturgy. The way things are said, sung, or done is as important as what is said, sung or done.

Thirdly, the ecclesiological method we are looking for would regard the liturgy as dynamic and contextual, as the work of all its participants and the place where church is created in every new act of worship. If a church I have never visited sends me their list of hymns for next month, there is only so much it can tell me. I would have to go and experience for myself to what extent the singing of hymns is a collaborative activity, who chooses the hymns and on what grounds, what the general dynamics of the hymn-singing in the liturgy are like and how people experience the hymn-singing, both as individual members of the congregation and as a community. I could only begin to have an understanding of the meaning of this list of hymns if I followed the community over a period of time and got to know its context, its history and its people; because

[t]he musically-mediated body-at-worship is an organic whole, changing and in motion – less a “being” and more a “becoming” – which defies any single “model”, metaphor or “vision” of “what church is all about.”¹⁰⁸

Two tools described by Mary McGann are essential to study musical performance in this way. Firstly, one needs to study the ethnography of musical performance,

a systematic examination and interpretation of music in context, in this case, within a community’s life and ritual.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ McGann 2004, p. 254.

¹⁰⁹ McGann 2002, p. 51.

Secondly, there needs to be an event-centred analysis, which puts the findings of the ethnographic research back into the context of the whole liturgy and examines the relationships between the musical performance and all other aspects of the liturgy.¹¹⁰ It seems to me that for liturgical ecclesiology to be able to learn more about the church through music, it should study musical performance in this thorough way, consider the act of music making to be a theological act, and turn to music to find a better understanding of the nature of the church.

Earlier on in this chapter, I borrowed Shands' phrase,

Liturgy is the canvas on which the parish learns graphically what it means to be the Church.¹¹¹

This chapter has helped to unpack that thought. Ultimately, all liturgy finds its significance in the fact that it is done by the church, the body of Christ. It finds its meaning in whatever we take to be the meaning of the word 'church'. The nature of the church becomes apparent in the church's practices. The liturgy is a place where the body of Christ imagines itself – as the church in a particular place and time; as a universal community, throughout the ages; as eschatological community, always looking forward to what it could and will be. As, in Shands' words, the parish learns what it means to be the Church, it becomes clear that this particular assembly matters because, in this place and at this time, it is the church. It is not inferior to the whole church, it does not have less purpose and less power than the whole church. It is not just part of the church,¹¹² because

[e]ach ekklesia, each congregation, community, Church, however small, however poor, however insignificant, is a full and perfect manifestation of *the* ekklesia, the congregation, the community, the Church of God.¹¹³

The parish, or the local church, or the individual community, is where the church is real. As Gelineau writes,

Those who hear God's call gather themselves together. (...) In particular gatherings, when they assemble together in a place and time that are always transitory, and in a location where they can recognize themselves as

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 51-55.

¹¹¹ Shands, p. 28.

¹¹² Hans Küng, *The Church* (Tunbridge Wells: Search Press Ltd., 1986), pp. 85f.

¹¹³ Küng, p. 86.

belonging to the invisible people of the redeemed. Wherever they are and however many they may be, the visible churches, together with the invisible kingdom that is to come, inseparably form the *mysterion* (sacrament) of the church.¹¹⁴

Liturgy is a place where the church practices being the church and learns what that involves; music is one of the tools it has at its disposal. As I show in Chapter 3, the church uses images or models to explore and describe its identity. These models are a way of describing relationships – within the church, between the church and the world, and between the church and God. The fact that music-making is a relational activity means that it is a particularly useful way for the church to express and discover itself, to practice good habits and right relationships.

Liturgical music-making means making choices; choices that reflect the reasons for the assembly to come together, and choices that reflect how the assembly sees itself beyond the liturgical celebration. It

involves choosing or creating the verbal and musical underpinnings that best reveal the nature of the celebration of the Christian mysteries: praise of God the Father by his incarnate Word in the breath of the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁵

It also involves choosing how best to express the nature of the community that celebrates these mysteries, always keeping in mind that

[t]he musically-mediated body-at-worship is an organic whole, changing and in motion – less a “being” and more a “becoming” – which defies any single “model”, metaphor or “vision” of “what church is all about.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Gelineau, p. 9.

¹¹⁵ Gelineau, p. 86.

¹¹⁶ McGann 2004, p. 254.

Conclusion: Music-making church

I started this chapter by looking at how the church's liturgy can be called an icon of the church. It represents all the different aspects of the nature of the church. Liturgical theology has grown into a discipline that strives to understand liturgy as the place where the church explores and reveals its true nature. There are many different and complementary approaches to the relationship between liturgy and theology, and the church is the place where this kind of reflection comes to life in practice. As music is an integral part of the liturgical life of the church, it comes as no surprise that there are various opportunities to study music in the context of liturgical theology.

The church is a worshipping church. In fact, it is in worship that the church comes into its own, and learns not only about itself, but about Christ. He is at the centre of the church's existence and practice. It is his work the church does, and his call to which the church responds, in preaching his gospel, sharing in his baptism and celebrating his meal. As Küng writes,

Christ is present in the entire life of the Church. But Christ is above all present and active in the *worship of the congregation* to which he called us in his Gospel, and into which we were taken up in baptism, in which we celebrate the Lord's Supper and from which we are sent again to our work of service in the world. [...] Here we are built up as a body, as the body of Christ, by remembering, thanking and looking forward, by sharing in the meal of joy, love and hope to which Christ has invited us, and by receiving the body of Christ himself.¹¹⁷

The church is also a music-making church. Its practice of reflecting on its liturgy and its own nature necessarily includes reflection on its music-making. It is recognised that music is an integral part of the church's worship and practice. If worship is where the church is alive, then the role of music must be properly understood as part of the church's life.

It is important that liturgical theologians, in the widest sense of the word, find ways of accurately describing musical practice, as well as imaginatively using their knowledge to strengthen the musical life of the church. Not only because, by scripture and tradition, the church is encouraged, or compelled, to make music, nor solely for functional reasons, but also

¹¹⁷ Küng, p. 235.

because there is something about music that seems to resonate with the very substance of what the church is about. Composer James MacMillan articulates this in an interesting and persuasive manner when he writes about composing music for the Triduum:

Michael Symmons Roberts, whose poetry I have set a lot, has used the term ‘the deep mathematics of creation’ about music. This is a term that chimes with me because music does seem to be a kind of calculus, a means of calculating something of our very nature. And because we are made in the image of God, music can be seen as a calculus of the very face of God. One way of doing that in music is to circle round the very moments when God made his deepest interaction with human history. (...) With this form of musical calculus there is an attempt to open doors and encounter the face of God.¹¹⁸

Music in liturgy and church is at its best an education, a preparation, for seeing the face of God.

Liturgy is by no means an inward-looking process. Identifying the patterns and the underlying motives in worship gives us some important clues about the church's relationship with the world. We can observe, through a careful examination of the liturgy, how the world is brought into God's presence in worship, and to what extent the experience of worship is taken out into the world and the outside world integrated with the worshipping community.

Since, as I argued, liturgy exists for the church and the church exists for the world, the question presented itself what the music used in the church's liturgy tells us about what the church perceives itself to mean to the world. That will be my main question in the third chapter.

Before moving on to further discussions about ecclesiology, it is necessary to take a step back. In the Introduction, I said that the study of the church through its music would require proper consideration of the place and nature of music within the liturgy. I have given some pointers as to what a methodology should look like, but any methodology would be incomplete without a proper understanding of the musical object. For that reason I will first have a closer look at the nature of music to learn more about this elusive phenomenon that is such an important part of the church's liturgy. Going back to the analogy between music and text, before we can begin to read what music is telling us, we first have to learn how to read it.

¹¹⁸ MacMillan, p. 41.

Chapter 2: Reading music

Introduction

This chapter explores ways of understanding the nature of liturgical music-making and of reading it. It prepares the ground for chapter 3, which aims to identify the potential of liturgical music-making in contributing to the nature and building of church: to the church's ability to fulfil its vocation towards God, his people and his world through its worship. The main purpose of chapter 3 will be to show that liturgical music-making tells us something about what the church perceives its vocation to be. Like chapter 1, this chapter is concerned principally with methodology because chapter 3 will need both a way of reading liturgy (as outlined in chapter 1) and a way of reading music in liturgy (as proposed in chapter 2) in order to be able to describe our understanding of the nature of the church as it is expressed in its liturgical music-making.

Generally speaking, there are two possible aims of such an investigation. One possibility is to offer a critique of the church's self-understanding as expressed in its music-making. However, my method in chapter 3 will be mostly inductive and focused on reading the implications of the practice of liturgical music-making for ecclesiology.

In chapter 2, there are two approaches that need to be held in tension when it comes to assessing music in liturgy: deductive and inductive. The deductive approach takes the church and God as its starting points, asking whether music has a place in the liturgy, and to what extent. It invites questions about musical appropriateness for its purpose, required standards, and models for quality; issues implicit in the writings of Joseph Ratzinger. The inductive approach starts with the effects of the practice of music-making on the shaping of the life of the worshipping community and the expression of its dynamics. It asks what kind of worship music constitutes, and how it is an expression of community. For this approach I refer to McGann, who looks at the matter from the angle of ethnomusicology and liturgical studies, and Kubicki, whose focus is on musicology combined with ritual studies.

Both approaches are relevant to music. The deductive is significant because it asks the question what the church wants, or rather needs, from music, and whether music is capable of offering what the church needs. It also asks whether music can do things which are not

desirable or even harmful in a liturgical context – and where the authority lies when it comes to decisions like these. The [inductive](#) approach allows for a thorough investigation of music as it is used in practice and the way it is understood by those who worship through it. There is room for investigation not only of the dynamics involved in the process of music-making, but also of the music itself, its musical structures and their effectiveness in specific contexts. Both approaches invite questions [about](#) what and whom music-making is for, and when it occurs in a liturgical context, what that says about the purpose of liturgical worship.

Both approaches are also of theological [significance](#). The first, because it invites reflection on the doctrinal basis of worship and questions as to the nature of God, the object of worship, and to what extent perceived [divine](#) standards should take precedence over the needs of those who worship. One of the key questions is the role of the [Holy](#) Spirit in all this, not only to liberate but also to regulate. The second approach is also of theological interest, because it focuses on the liturgy as contextualized event. It asks what happens when music functions as performed theology, so that worshippers are turned into liturgical theologians by virtue of their active participation.

Ratzinger's The Spirit of the Liturgy

As long as music has been part of Christian worship, it has been a pastoral and theological concern for those in positions of responsibility in the church. The question they have been asking, for various reasons and in various guises, is: What are the possible tools for assessing the nature and value of music in liturgy?¹¹⁹

Among those grappling with the many different aspects of music in liturgy is Pope Benedict XVI. His book *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (written when he was still Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger) includes a chapter in which he endeavours to make sense of the multi-faceted phenomenon that is music and to explore its proper place and form within the Christian liturgy. Throughout this chapter on music and liturgy, it is clear that he does not consider the relationship between liturgy and music to be an insignificant matter. Just like Augustine did, he sees both sides of the musical coin: music can be a powerful carrier of a biblical message, but also a dangerous

¹¹⁹ Richard Viladesau discusses this in the context of a study of 'art as a way to God' in Viladesau, Richard, *Theology and the Arts: Encountering God through Music, Art and Rhetoric* (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2000), pp. 11-58. He refers to Augustine and Aquinas as well as theologians of the Reformation era, among others.

distraction from true worship. Sketching the history of church music, he dramatically refers to the great turning points in its development as moments of crisis, of alienation and of culture war. The reason why the evolution of liturgical music has not been straightforward is the need for frequent reaffirmation of the specific responsibility music has when it features in the liturgy. The liturgy calls for certain limitations on its music's freedom of expression and autonomy.¹²⁰

He then goes on to describe the present challenges faced by the church, which naturally are affecting its music, as 'still more radical questions'. These challenges consist, first of all, of the tension between the universal nature of the church and its expression in local forms. This is as big a challenge for the church's music as it is for any aspect of its liturgy and theology. Then there are the two related problems of the ghettoisation of classical music in recent times and the seemingly unchristian character of popular music. The shift in the place of classical music has caused it to become elitist and marginalised, while Ratzinger sees the development of popular music as a move away from the kind of music that is acceptable in Christian worship.¹²¹

These few remarks already hint at most of the wider issues Ratzinger concentrates on in this chapter. The questions he addresses show his concern with the nature of music itself and the place of music in worship, as well as matters concerning culture, inculturation and musical appropriateness. He then goes on to integrate these observations about music into the wider framework of a discussion of the ways in which the music of Christian worship is related to the *logos* – the word of God, its incarnation in Christ, and its manifestation in the divine wisdom which is the foundation of all creation.¹²²

Firstly, music relates to *logos* in a literal sense: it engages with the words of scripture and the words of liturgy. The *logos* of the bible is the reason for liturgical music's existence. When humans recount and respond to God's mighty acts, ordinary speech is not sufficient. In the encounter with God, speech turns into song. The liturgy is this song's natural environment, both historically and in essence. The theological basis for liturgical singing is thus its

¹²⁰ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), pp. 145-7.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 147-8.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 148-156.

rootedness in scripture, its ability to simultaneously express the greatness of God and the impact of the encounter with the divine on people.¹²³

The second way liturgical music relates to *logos* is through its intrinsic rationality. Music is a gift of the Holy Spirit, who teaches us ways of expressing the inexpressible. In liturgy, Ratzinger, argues, music is to serve the Logos. Whether it serves the Logos or fails to do so can be discerned by the effect music has on people: ‘reason-able’ worship links a person closer to God and integrates the person, whereas worship that is not of the Holy Spirit causes disintegration of a person’s sense of self and disrupts the unity between the senses and the spirit.¹²⁴

Thirdly, the relation between music and *logos* is expressed in the sense of measure and orderliness that is fundamental to music and corresponds with the measure and order of the universe itself. By its very essence, music is connected with the Logos that is the meaning and source of the whole of history, and thus embodies community beyond time and space: ‘[a]ll our singing is a singing and praying with the great liturgy that spans the whole of creation.’¹²⁵

Other writers before Ratzinger have explored these three ways in which music relates to *logos*. Oskar Söhnngen, for example, systematically explores the complex relationship of music and theology. Using different terminology but essentially the same categorization, he sees the ways in which music relates to theology in a very similar way to Ratzinger’s classification.¹²⁶ Söhnngen first notes the way theological views have influenced the historic development of music over the centuries. To help develop a better understanding of how this process worked, he orders the relationship between music and theology into three groups.

Mentioned last in Söhnngen’s article is the approach to music which corresponds with Ratzinger’s first category: music as a way of communicating revelation. An ancient view on music which found its articulation mostly in time of the Reformation is that music in itself has theological signification. That is to say that music declares religious truths that cannot be communicated through the word alone, or even through the word full stop. Music is seen as

¹²³ Ibid., pp. 148f.

¹²⁴ Ibid., pp. 149ff.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 152.

¹²⁶ Söhnngen, Oskar, ‘Music and Theology: A Systematic Approach’, *Sacred Sound: Music in Religious Thought and Practice*, *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 50.1 (1983), 1-19 (pp. 1-16).

the *logos* put into words, and thus, in Söhngen's terminology, having a declarative character.¹²⁷

Secondly, music can be seen as an instrument for the human reaction to the divine; this corresponds to Ratzinger's views on 'reason-able worship'. At most times in the history of the church, music has been considered to make a valuable contribution to fulfilling the purpose of worship. There has often been, and still is, some distrust with regards to music in church. Despite that, music has mostly been seen as at least compatible with worship or even particularly closely related to it. Söhngen notes that there has mostly been a constructive and creative relationship between church and music from the early beginnings of the church onwards.¹²⁸ The few exceptions he mentions are the view held by many at the time of the Reformation, Zwingli in particular, that music stands in the way of a true encounter with God, and the contention of the humanists that art is secular and exists for its own sake.¹²⁹

As Söhngen also recognises, music features as a topic in theology. This way of looking at music is comparable to Ratzinger's third relation of music to *logos*. Going back to thinkers as early as Pythagoras, there is a philosophical tradition which stresses the mathematical aspect of music. The ways in which musical patterns and sound proportions are ordered are seen to be congruent with the mathematical laws that determine the order of the cosmos. On this view, the reason why God arranged the world in a certain way is because that was the manner in which God wanted his praise to be ordered. To compose and make music means imitating God's act of creation, and giving appropriate praise to the creator of music itself.¹³⁰

These three ways in which music relates to *logos* lead to three questions. The first question is one about theology *through* music. What, if anything, does liturgical music say about God, and how does it do that? But also, what does the fact that human beings make liturgical music, and the way they make it, tell us about human beings themselves?

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

¹²⁸ Ibid., pp. 8-12.

¹²⁹ Ibid., pp. 8-12. Note that Luther's attitude to music was different. His appreciation of church music 'provided a healthy and wholesome context in which to work, to sing, and to make music in praise of God,' as shown by the music that developed in the Lutheran tradition (Carl F. Schalk, *Luther on Music: Paradigms of Praise* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988), p. 11.

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 12ff.

The second question has to do with the purpose and function of music when used in worship. Could we, or should we regulate and assess it? Is the use of liturgical music all a matter of (individual or corporate) taste, or are there criteria for quality and standards for style? This issue combines questions to do with theology *through* music with a concern for theology *of* music: practical concerns as to how we use music in worship meet the question of the status of liturgical music.

Lastly, and more fundamentally, there is the question about a theology *of* music. This is the question about the nature of music in itself. What is music, and to what extent can we make sense of it? What is its role within the whole of God's creation? These are huge questions, and attempting to answer them would be beyond the scope of this thesis. However, even though delving deep into the philosophy of music is not the most helpful method of assessing the living reality of liturgical music-making, it is important to realise that these fundamental questions are always there in the background, and they do inform and influence our approach to more practical issues.

Both Ratzinger and Söhngen show a deductive type of reasoning in their approach to music. It allows them to ask some very fundamental questions about the relationship between music and worship and the boundaries of that relationship. Their starting point is not worship and its music, but ultimately God and his church. Music-making is thus seen as an activity which might, or might not, be an aid to worship. Music is examined as something which has the potential to align people to the divine – or indeed alienate them from God.

Bearing in mind that the main aim of this thesis is to read liturgical music-making as an expression of church, it is clear that a deductive approach to music in liturgy is helpful and important, but incomplete. It is necessary to some extent to ask the fundamental questions that aid a better understanding of the nature of music, its place in theology and the insight it gives us into theology. However, a more comprehensive understanding of music in liturgy also requires a different perspective. Music is an event and music-making is an activity. In order to understand them, they need to be observed and experienced in practice, and the results of such observation need to be assessed inductively.

Both approaches are needed for a balanced view of music in liturgy, because any balanced theology holds God and his creation in tension. As Christopher Ellis rightly points out,

worship is directed towards God, but offered by people; because of its very nature there is a double tension between what God wants and what the worshipping community wants, and between how things might be and how they actually are.¹³¹ Learning to understand worship means learning to unpick this complex reality whilst being attentive to God and his people, to the messy reality of worship and the underlying vision of what it could be.

Music as performed theology

An approach to liturgical music which takes God, the church or the liturgy as its starting point assesses music according to its contribution, whether positive or negative, to theology, the life and identity of the church, or worship. The opposite approach takes the practice of music-making in liturgy as its starting point and seeks to understand what this practice shows us about the liturgy, the church, or even God. Such an approach may describe music as ‘performed theology’. This does not mean that an existing theology is put into music to enable it to be performed, but rather that theology is done (for lack of a better word) through the medium of music. Music in liturgy is where theology happens.

‘Worship and its music are performed theology,’ Mary McGann writes,

precisely because they express embodied relationality – they actualize and manifest the spiritual, ecclesial, eschatological, and ecological relationships that express and create a community’s identity. Theology is, after all, about relationships – the deep spiritual and ecclesial relationships that mark a religious people.¹³²

Music-making is not only the medium through which these relationships are being made apparent, but also the way they become reality. I will return to McGann’s work in more detail later on in this chapter and in the next chapter. First let me begin to unpack the phrase ‘performed theology’.

Crucial to Mary McGann’s approach to liturgical music is the notion that liturgy only exists in performance. A lot of research has been done in this area from the 1970s onwards; McGann draws mainly on the work of Mary Collins, Mark Searle and Margaret Mary Kelleher. The main idea is that there is no such thing as a timeless, locationless, cultureless liturgy that can

¹³¹ Ellis 2004, pp. 1-3.

¹³² McGann 2002, pp. 38f.

simply be imposed on a community. Liturgy becomes real in performance and always emerges from its context in a circular process of mutual shaping.

This assumption is an important one for the study of liturgy, as it shifts the focus from the liturgy *per se* to the way liturgy actually works in practice. It is a major concern for contemporary liturgical theologians to get this across. Fagerberg, for example, writes:

There is a broader definition of liturgy and a deeper definition of *theologia*. In this definition, the community's transformation in liturgical encounter with God is understood to truly be a *theologia prima*, and Christian theology arises from the Church-at-liturgy like civilisation arises *in* and *as* play.¹³³

Liturgy is not something which needs to be analysed first in order for it to be made theological. Liturgical language does not just express, it is performative. It creates new states of affairs. This process is theology in action. For those who participate in the liturgy, this means that

the performance of the liturgical rite brings reality to be, it does not merely bring it to expression.¹³⁴

It may seem obvious that liturgy is always a contextualized event, but the study of liturgical performance has developed only recently and it is by no means an angle from which the church has always looked at liturgy in the past. The church has tended to emphasise liturgical rite rather than liturgical event, and the study of liturgy has until recently been preoccupied with the 'doctrinal efficacy' of rites as opposed to their 'operational efficacy'.¹³⁵ The fact that music-making exists as event is also not as obvious as it seems. In the history of liturgy, musical forms have often been part of the liturgical package as a whole, even though there have always been significant local variations. Music has often been regarded as something fixed and standardized, rather than dynamic and contextual. It has not always been readily recognised as an integral part of the liturgy.

In his *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music*, Peter Kivy gives a clear example which shows that music only exists as event. He describes the different impact the following headlines would have on an reader: 'Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* stolen. Culprits sought by police,' and 'Beethoven's Fifth Symphony stolen. Culprits sought by police.' He writes that

¹³³ Fagerberg, p. 63.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹³⁵ Cf. McGann 2002, p. 10.

the reader will surely have come to the conclusion that the reason one can steal the *Mona Lisa* and not Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is that the *Mona Lisa* is a *physical object* and Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is a...Is a *what*? That's the problem.¹³⁶

An important, but sometimes overlooked caveat in all our dealings with music is that while we necessarily have to speak about musical works as if they were objects, in reality they are not. They happen, just like the liturgy of which they are a part.

This is one reason why McGann's emphasis on liturgy and liturgical music as event is entirely appropriate. Musical scores, and liturgies in their written-down form, are effectively no more than sets of instructions to facilitate their performance. The performance itself, as Kivy observes, can be taken to mean the act of following the instructions, or that which is produced in doing so.¹³⁷ And because the product is never exactly the same each time the performance happens, it is possible to say that there are things that can be said to be true of the music, but not of its performance and vice versa.¹³⁸

Hence the challenge McGann seeks to address is a real one. Her aim is to develop a method for

studying music within a community's worship performance, and for assessing how a community's musical performance affects the entire continuum of liturgical action, shaping and expressing an embodied theology.¹³⁹

That music is able to do this is a bold claim in itself. It is saying that the performance of music has an influence beyond itself – that it is in fact more than just music. Kivy's clarification of the concept of musical performance and McGann's stress on community imply that, for example, just to read a church's music schedule for the month is not to understand the music that was made there that month. Music becomes real only in its performance. There is no way to tell what its effect has been if one has failed to take each individual performance, as well as the collective effect of the performances, into account.

¹³⁶ Kivy 2002, p. 203.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 205.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 208.

¹³⁹ McGann 2002, pp. 10f.

Kivy thus finds that the meaning of music is not limited to the music per se, but is mainly located in its performance. Then it is yet another step further for McGann to claim that the meaning of music extends beyond its performance into the performance of the whole liturgy. From the outset, McGann does not just study music as worship, but music as worship *and theology*. The use of the phrase ‘*embodied theology*’ suggests that there is more to music than just expressing a pre-existing theology. Somehow the music used in worship *is*, at that time, a community’s theology.

As Kivy says, there are things true of a work but not of its performances, but more importantly, there are things true of a performance that are not necessarily implied in the work.¹⁴⁰ That is to say, the individual performance embodies at that point in time a unique theology that could only have been brought about by that particular music in that particular setting. It is this embodied theology which becomes integral to the whole liturgical performance.

Martin Stringer writes about the way in which liturgical performance is appropriated.¹⁴¹ He is dissatisfied with the way in which liturgical rites are studied as texts with little attention to their performed reality. Borrowing much of his terminology from Paul Ricoeur, he pleads for more attention to the ‘reader’ or ‘participant’ of the performance and a better understanding of the question of the nature of liturgy as either text or action. With regard to the latter, Stringer argues that a liturgical text, the rite, becomes ‘unwritten’ in its performance and moves back along its original journey from discourse to writing, to turn into discourse again. This discourse then regains all the original force of its pre-textualized form, especially by realising its implicit illocutionary acts and adding perlocutionary acts.¹⁴² As a result,

as discourse, the referent, the object and, perhaps, the meaning of the event becomes specific and, like discourse, determined by the setting and the context for that event.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Kivy 2002, p. 208.

¹⁴¹ Martin Stringer, ‘Text, Context and Performance: Hermeneutics and the Study of Worship’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 53.3 (2000), 365-379

¹⁴² In speech act theory, the terms illocutionary and perlocutionary act refer to the intention actualised in speech and its actual effect respectively; applied to the liturgy, an illocutionary act could be to declare bread and wine to be the body and blood of Christ, whilst its perlocutionary effect could be to enable people to receive the body and blood of Christ.

¹⁴³ Stringer 2000, p. 377.

This is where the participants come in. If the meaning is contextual, they are the ones who, at least in part, determine it. In fact, all participants are in this way being made liturgical theologians, that is, they interpret the word of God through the liturgy in a way relevant to their situation. This is true of all parts of the liturgy, and, by virtue of its character as a shared activity, clearly also of its music. Honest liturgical music speaks the truth about relationships, proportions and values in a community. It reflects not only the way these are, but also strives to show something of what they should be like.¹⁴⁴ In providing that vision, music in liturgy shows that the nature of the liturgical assembly is not so much idealistic as eschatological.

Liturgical music-making as symbolic activity

Music in liturgy expresses both what a worshipping community is and what it is not, or more importantly, not yet. Because music-making is an activity and a process, it has the potential to transform, or at least to allow liturgical assemblies to discover where they are and where they can see themselves going. Judith Marie Kubicki writes about musical performance as an opportunity for the ‘rehearsal’ of right attitudes and right relationships.¹⁴⁵

Kubicki’s thesis is that music operates as ritual symbol and as such is integral to the liturgy. She shows this convincingly in the context of Taizé. She concludes that

the music of Taizé does indeed embody meaning that in some way makes connections between the life and mission of Taizé, the purpose of the liturgy and liturgical music, and the lives of the pilgrims who come to pray.¹⁴⁶

Moreover, it is not only in a Taizé context that music is a ritual symbol; it has the potential to function like that in any community, as long as it negotiates that particular community’s relationships with each other and with God. The way it negotiates these is by being music, rather than anything else, and by doing the things only music can do: helping certain people sing and play certain things in a certain way, together.

¹⁴⁴ As McGann records when interviewing churchgoers: “People at [the Community of Our Lady of Lourdes, San Francisco] claim that the Holy Spirit is at work, “circulating with power,” drawing them into an experience of being one body; enabling them to be channels of life, vessels of spirit and of grace one o another; bonding them in a way that honors the giftedness of each one while effecting a deep sense of unity. What emerges, in these moments of song, is an experience of the “body incorporated” – a vision of communal life, of “what church is all about,” not just when we sing and gather for worship, “but all the time.”” (McGann 2004, p. 236).

¹⁴⁵ Kubicki, p. 191.

¹⁴⁶ Kubicki, p. 91.

When Kubicki writes that music is a ritual symbol, she means that people recognise something in music that tells them who they are in themselves and in the world. The context in which people participate in this process is the ritual context of the liturgy. The liturgy, as event, comes into being through the interplay of music and all its other ritual elements. For that reason, liturgical music must be studied in its context.

Kubicki and McGann stress that liturgy and music only exist in performance. When music-making occurs in the liturgy, it is an integral part of it. As such, it forms an integral part of people's encounter with God as a community. If research can show how worshippers' communal experience of liturgical music-making informs their perception of themselves before God, its findings will be of interest for our understanding of the church.

Whilst taking a similar approach to their object of study, Kubicki and McGann deal with vastly different forms of musical expression. The music of Taizé is structurally and functionally very different from the music McGann encounters in the communities she studies, and requires different ways of engagement and organisation on the part of the participants and worship leaders.¹⁴⁷ Even so, they are only two examples of music one might encounter in the liturgy. There are many more possible styles of liturgical music, and within those styles, many different liturgical uses.

The purpose of the work of McGann and Kubicki, and indeed of this thesis, is not to assess whether any particular style of liturgical music-making is in any way better or more effective than another. It is to describe the process by which music-making in a liturgical context contributes to the creation and discovery of a communal identity, so as to be able to ask, in a reverse movement, what we can learn about the church's self-understanding from its music-making. Whether a particular musical style embodies a more helpful model of the church than another is a different matter. The main concern here is to find a method to describe how music is able to embody 'being church' in the first place. In the following section I will be looking at different types of music in the liturgy; not to find out which works best, but to come to a better understanding of the number of different functions of music in liturgy.

¹⁴⁷ For a summary of Kubicki's musicological analysis of the music of Taizé, see Kubicki, p. 91. Cf. McGann's lively description of the music made by the community she studies, in McGann 2004, pp. 30-42.

Types of music in liturgy

Different forms of music in the liturgy are there for different reasons. They meet a variety of needs. People meet for worship with a large range of intentions and expectations which are reflected in the different elements of their worship. The liturgy offers a structure in which these different experiences come together into a coherent whole. There are times for prayer, times for listening to scripture, times for reflection and learning, times to respond to God's word, times to celebrate God's presence together, and so on. It is no surprise, then, that the music used in the liturgy also serves a variety of purposes and meets a variety of needs. There are times when music requires people's full attention and times when it has an auxiliary function. There are times in the liturgy when the process of music-making is the sole medium through which people worship, and times when music-making is an accompaniment to the liturgical action.

When studying music in liturgy, it is important to keep in mind that precisely because it is such a varied practice, there is not just one way of looking at it. Just as a variety of models is needed to describe the nature of the church as a whole, so the church's liturgy and its music provide a variety of images that give an insight as to what the church's worship is about. The range of reasons why people choose to include music-making in their worship tells us something about the needs and aspirations of the worshipping community.

The following exploration of some of the forms of music-making in the liturgy does not just serve to give an overview, but also to ask the question from which angle to approach such a diverse collection of practices. Music is a versatile medium. Looking at the various applications of music can give us an insight into the reasons why the church chooses to use it – or not to use it. They in turn tell us something about what the church perceives its worship, and itself, to be about.

Christian liturgy employs a whole range of verbal and musical forms of expression. One of the strengths of music-making as a part of the liturgical celebration is that it is flexible whilst still being a communal activity. As Joseph Gelineau writes,

We must seize the grace of this day, of this assembly, of this moment, and clothe it in its appropriate musical and vocal form.

Because of this no liturgy is ever reduced to the execution of well-oiled ceremonies that can be utterly boring. And only because of this can we recognize those moments of grace that bring the history of salvation to life, here and now, through signs and symbols, music and song.¹⁴⁸

Because of the particularity of each instance of liturgical music-making, it is important to appreciate and understand its form and its function in the light of its present context.

In an exploration of liturgical music as homily and hermeneutic, Robin Leaver defends the value of musical proclamation alongside verbal proclamation and argues that the homiletic function of music should be better understood and appreciated. To make this point, he uses the example of an Anglican choral evensong, listing the variety of functions of its musical components:

At the beginning the organ voluntary directs the thoughts and prayers of the congregation by setting the mood for worship. The Psalms that follow, sung to Anglican chant, are partly praise, partly prayer. The Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis are praiseful and prayerful responses to the two lessons. Then, after the suffrages and collects, comes the anthem, the sermon in sound.¹⁴⁹

These different roles of music are pointers towards the range of activities, aims and emotions involved in the act of worship of which they are a part.

The various functions of music in the liturgy depend on the particular place of each individual musical part of the liturgy. This is why Joseph Gelineau describes his approach to music in the liturgy as a search for the ritual roots of the sung parts of the Mass. Because he does not take the musical parts of the liturgy at face value, but always reads them in their historical and ritual context, he is able to understand their function and offer both an appreciation and a critique of the musical form they take. The specific liturgical function of each part of the Mass should be obvious whether it is said or sung.

¹⁴⁸ Gelineau, p. 166

¹⁴⁹ Robin A. Leaver, 'Liturgical Music as Homily and Hermeneutic' in *Liturgy and Music: Lifetime Learning*, ed. by Robin A. Leaver and Joyce Ann Zimmerman (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998a), pp. 340-359 (p. 343).

For that reason, there is a whole palette of possible forms of musical expression used in the liturgy. Gelineau literally uses the image of a palette as an illustration of this variety of musical forms.¹⁵⁰ Any form of music finds itself somewhere along two axes: the axis showing the range of musical forms between speech and song and the axis that orders musical forms according to their relationship with words, so that they find themselves anywhere between just words and just music. For example, litanies and liturgical dialogues would be much closer to the ‘words’ end of the spectrum than to the ‘music’ end, whereas the opposite would be true for florid alleluias, even if both of these are sung rather than spoken. Somewhere between music and words, speech and song, we find the whole gamut of liturgical music-making.

From words to music

When Robin Leaver mentions the organ voluntary which precedes the service of evensong, he says that it “directs the thoughts and prayers of the congregation by setting the mood for worship.”¹⁵¹ That sounds straightforward enough, but immediately indicates an important point. This music, even though it occurs right on the edge of the liturgical celebration, is more than just wallpaper; it has a function. It helps the congregation to worship. Music at this extreme of the words-to-music axis does not seek to convey anything, but that does not mean that it does not serve a particular purpose of its own. Instrumental music can be very powerful in creating an atmosphere conducive to prayer.¹⁵² Towards this end of the spectrum we also find types of music which are sung, but almost or entirely wordless – vocalizations, as Gelineau calls them. They operate at that point where words fail and music itself is the main catalyst of the worship.

We have seen that liturgical theology seeks to make explicit the theology that is implicit in worship. When it comes to music in liturgy, the liturgical theologian assumes that music in liturgy is more than music, that it is also a theological practice. Theology in its wider sense includes more than just words. The fact that forms of music on the musical side of the words-to-music axis can play a crucial role in an act of worship invites questions as to the nature of theological discourse. Their role could be described as expressing, conveying and revealing

¹⁵⁰ Gelineau, p. 88.

¹⁵¹ Leaver, p. 343.

¹⁵² Gelineau, p. 101.

things about God and thus as a theological role.¹⁵³ Don Saliers, in his *Music and Theology*, explores where music and theology meet. He writes,

Can music alone, without words, be theologically significant? For anyone who regards theology as always strictly a matter of verbal claims to truth, the immediate answer is no. Should what we mean by “theological discourse” be so restricted? (...) Perhaps there is something about the ancient conception of theology as prayer, as liturgy, as poetry and song that we must recover today.¹⁵⁴

He goes on to describe how music affects people, and mentions ways in which music can be revelatory and evocative of many things, and most of all of God. If God’s self-revelation comes in other ways than the word alone and our imagination is a valid theological tool, we can see music as one of many possible expressions of how we perceive being in the presence of God and what our response could sound like.

Listening is an art, and what people hear when instrumental music is played will differ from person to person. Some people will hardly be aware of the music, while for others listening might be a deep and meaningful experience, and for some intensely irritating. This partly depends on people’s level of active listening, but partly also on their ability to not just listen to the music as music, but to also be aware of what they hear. Don Saliers writes,

The act of listening to music is crucial to the theological significance of music, with or without sacred texts. For “hearing” music as the bearer of theological import requires not only a “musical ear,” as we say, but also a sensibility for hearing music *as* revelatory.¹⁵⁵

Listening actively is a skill that can be acquired with practice, and involves both the discipline of paying attention and the discipline of recognizing what is heard – and of course there is the matter of personal taste and familiarity. Hearing music as revelatory requires yet another level of attention; it requires a certain ‘listening *through* the music’. Apart from listening and interpreting, there has to be an engagement with the heart as well.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Cf. Brian Wren, quoted in Saliers 2007, p. 21: “Christian theology as reasoned enquiry hopes not merely to *express* and *convey* the faith called forth by God’s self-disclosure...but to explore, discover, and know more about it.”

¹⁵⁴ Saliers 2007, p. 28f.

¹⁵⁵ Saliers 2007, p. 67.

¹⁵⁶ Saliers 2007, p. 67.

Taking Leaver's example of a service of choral evensong, we can see that many different kinds of musical theology are present there, spanning the entire words-to-music axis. Setting the mood for worship with the help of instrumental music means making non-verbal theological statements about the nature of this God the worship will be directed towards. Praise and prayer are two sides of the same coin; there is the discovery of God in the lessons and in prayer, and the addressing of God accordingly, both by praying and by returning these discoveries to God in praise. In the anthem, there is a creative interplay between words and music, just as a sermon in words presents an interplay between human words and the Word of God.

On the far end of the words-to-music axis, we find those verbal expressions which necessarily, but not always consciously, acquire some sort of musicality, whether it be through tone, register, intensity or otherwise. The spoken word in the liturgy is never entirely without ritual tone, and it is particularly important to find a common voice when people recite texts together.¹⁵⁷ In between the spoken word and purely instrumental music there is a whole range of types of chant, song, and other uses of music, each with their own place and function within the liturgy. They all have their use, and when assessing them it is important not to generalise but to assess them in the particular context in which they occur.¹⁵⁸

The other axis on Gelineau's palette of musical forms in the liturgy is the axis that runs from speech to song. The defining characteristic here is pitch; this is the first feature that distinguishes song from speech. Others are melody and rhythm. Towards the speech end of that axis, we find liturgical elements such as readings and spoken prayers.¹⁵⁹ Moving towards song, we find for example the collects, which in the context of a traditional evensong are generally recited on a single tone with or without inflections and often embellished with some more florid 'Amens'. The music helps to fit the prayer into the flow of the liturgy and to make it heard clearly without causing a distraction. Singing the prayers is a way of speaking up with an added sense of solemnity. Apart from the practical side of this in an age without microphones and amplifiers, there is also an aesthetically pleasing side to this use of the voice. It also enhances the proclamatory character of what is said.

¹⁵⁷ Gelineau, pp. 89f.

¹⁵⁸ Gelineau, p. 100.

¹⁵⁹ Gelineau, pp. 88ff.

The difference between this liturgical use of music, which is entirely the servant of the word, and the function of an anthem or a voluntary could be summed up as follows:

It may perhaps not too tritely be suggested that the aim of an anthem is to be fittingly beautiful, and the aim of liturgical music is to be beautifully fitting.¹⁶⁰

In the canticles, another musical component of evensong, we encounter music in a related theological function: that of proclamation. We can tell from the nature of the canticles why they have been set to music countless times throughout the history of liturgical music; it is almost impossible not to sing them. The songs of Mary, Simeon and Zechariah echo the first song in the bible, that of Moses and Miriam, in their spontaneous outbursts of praise. Their main objective is to declare God's glory and recall his wonderful deeds.

There is a prophetic side to this proclamatory function of music as well as a homiletic side. Unlike in a sermon, in music everybody can take part in the proclamation of God's glory. The prophetic ministry can be shared between all those who have something to offer. As Leaver notes, this is the understanding Paul expresses at several points in his letters when he speaks about 'addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs;' Leaver writes:

Here the prophetic role is clear. Christians are to come to terms with the word of Christ and then proclaim it through music.¹⁶¹

There is a diversity there which still finds its reflection in the diversity of liturgical practices, when the word of God is sometimes proclaimed by a single cantor, sometimes by a choir, sometimes by purely instrumental music, and often also by the whole congregation, singing with and to each other.

Theologically understood, music in worship is akin to the preaching ministry in its liturgical setting. Its function is to proclaim the word of God to the people of God.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Walford Davies and Harvey Grace, *Music & Worship* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1936), p. 19. Davies and Grace develop a useful classification of music. It can be pure or applied. If applied, it can be applied to worship or to purposes other than worship. If applied to worship, its form is to be determined by its purpose as either music *in aid of* worship or music *as a vehicle of* worship. Anthems and voluntaries, for example, count as music in aid of worship; they can be expressive within certain criteria of judgment. 'Liturgical music', e.g. parts of the ordinary of the Mass or of evensong, is a vehicle of worship and thus more restrained.

¹⁶¹ Leaver 1985, p. 53.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 53.

This is preaching ministry understood in its most inclusive sense; the proclamation of the word of God shared between composers and performers, professionals and amateurs, leaders and followers, ministers and lay people alike.

To say that a proclamatory understanding of the nature of music is inclusive does not mean that it gives everybody *carte blanche* for sentimentality and anthropocentric worship. Rather, there is an objectivity about this function of music which prevents worship from losing its balance. It is exactly the theology that keeps liturgical music in check and helps it understand its due place as servant of the Word. If liturgical music is serious about its theological nature, it has to engage with the fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith, and if it does so, it will be so shaped by them that it loses its autonomy and becomes *musica crucis*.¹⁶³

Liturgical functions of music

Within this proclamatory function of music, Leaver singles out a specific instance in which music most obviously takes on the role of preaching. In an evensong, he argues, the anthem is the equivalent of the sermon in a Eucharist and even though it is delivered through a different medium it has the same function. This is made clear by the fact that historically evensongs have mostly been without sermons, thus making space for the preaching that is done through the anthem.

Leaver then goes on to give examples of the effect an anthem can have, similar to that of a sermon. He quotes from John Wesley's writings, from which it seems clear that although the exact moment of Wesley's conversion was a non-musical experience, the anthems he heard at St Paul's Cathedral on the afternoons before and after this event must have given him exactly the right message to prepare for and nurture the conversion experience. The musical homiletics paved the way for his conversion in the way a non-musical sermon would have done, and then helped him interpret what happened to him. It seems possible, from the knowledge we have of music at St Paul's Cathedral in those days, to identify almost with certainty the particular anthems and psalms Wesley would have heard. Leaver explores in detail how well these settings of the words Wesley recorded would have fit in with the conversion experience he was going through. The fact that he found the anthems' words

¹⁶³ Ibid., pp. 53ff.

important enough to record them in his diary, even though he did not explicitly comment on their musical form, shows how deep an impression they made on Wesley at a turning point in his life.¹⁶⁴

Music has this homiletic function because it is generally able to operate as hermeneutic; that is to say, to interpret discourse and texts, such as those used in the liturgy.

Liturgical music functions homiletically when it is an independent genre, such as an anthem or motet; it functions hermeneutically when it adds an interpretive dimension to the liturgy.¹⁶⁵

The contribution music makes to liturgy in this way also has a theological component. Music in its hermeneutical capacity differs from other forms of liturgical music, such as music as solemn speech and music as proclamation, in that the music is more than the medium through which a message is communicated; it is part of its meaning. Leaver draws a parallel between the changing forms of music throughout the liturgical year and the use of liturgical colours of vestments and paraments as their visual hermeneutical equivalent.

Musical forms can both unify and diversify. Their ability to distinguish different parts of the year and set apart special feast days and other observations can be seen first of all in the seasonal Gregorian settings of the ordinary of the Mass. The different settings of versicles and responses and different Psalm tones in Anglican choral evensong work according to this same principle and, if planned carefully, will reflect the overall character of the season as well as that of the individual occasion. In doing so, music is not so much adjusting to the character of the whole of the liturgy; it is actively contributing to the shaping and interpretation of that character.¹⁶⁶

On the other hand, music is a powerful factor in creating unity within a liturgical context. It can provide a consistent hermeneutic throughout a service by drawing parallels between elements that are alike. One example of this, as noted by Leaver, is Luther's *Deutsche Messe* in which Luther creates an audible connection between the *Kyrie* and the *Agnus Dei* (which are very similar in content) by making their incipits identical.¹⁶⁷ In this and similar cases the

¹⁶⁴ Leaver 1998a, pp. 343ff.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

¹⁶⁶ See Henk van Waveren, 'De kleur van de zondag in klank weergegeven' in Louis van Tongeren, *Klankkleur: De Muzikale Markering van de Zondagsliturgie* (Kampen: Gooi & Sticht, 2004), pp. 101-110.

¹⁶⁷ Leaver 1998a, pp. 351ff.

music interprets what is happening in the liturgy and helps the worshippers to focus on the meanings it draws out of elements of the liturgy. A similar kind of hermeneutic could operate through different means – gesture, for example – because like music it relates closely to the words and can operate simultaneously.

Juxtaposition is often used as a form of musical hermeneutic. In genres such as cantatas and passions, the interpolation of chorales and recitatives provides an ‘instant’ theological interpretation of the surrounding work by musical means. The same applies for Lutheran Magnificat settings from the 16th century onwards and some modern settings, like those by John Rutter and Carolyn Jennings. John Rutter, for example, combines the words of the Magnificat with the 15th century English Marian poem *Of a Rose*, the antiphon for Marian feasts *Sancta Maria, succurre miseris* and the *Sanctus* from the *Missa cum júbilo*. The effect is twofold: it underlines the Magnificat’s origin as the song of Mary, and the *Sanctus* in particular gives Rutter the opportunity to evoke musically the festive spirit of Marian feasts in countries like Spain, Mexico and Puerto Rico, where they are celebrated with much singing, dancing and exuberant processions.¹⁶⁸ Carolyn Jennings’ *A New Magnificat* combines the song of Mary with the song of Hannah (I Samuel 2) and lets the music guide the encounter between the two testaments and facilitate their mutual interpretation.¹⁶⁹

Gelineau calls this type of liturgical music ‘musical’, meaning that the music takes the lead and turns the piece into an autonomous entity which can easily be detached from its liturgical context and transferred to the concert stage. This does not mean that it cannot find a place in liturgy as well, but there are some issues that need to be taken into consideration when a piece of liturgical music has become a piece of music in its own right. Whether and how it can be used liturgically without taking over depends on how it integrates with any particular assembly’s life and repertoire.¹⁷⁰

What is missing from Leaver’s list of musical components of evensong is the hymn, and yet hymns and congregational songs are the most commonly used form of liturgical music. The congregational song takes countless musical forms, from Reformation-era metrical forms to

¹⁶⁸ John Rutter, *Magnificat*, The Cambridge Singers and The City of London Sinfonia, Cond. John Rutter, CD, CSCD504 (1998). Rutter describes the process of composition in the CD booklet.

¹⁶⁹ Carolyn Jennings, *A New Magnificat*, Combined Choirs of St Olaf College, The St Olaf Orchestra, Cond. Sigrid Johnson, CD, St. Olaf Records E-3116/7 (2008).

¹⁷⁰ Gelineau, p. 99.

Taizé chant to the modern worship song. Historical attitudes have varied as to who was allowed or technically able to sing, and the content has ranged from entire sermons in poetic form to a single repeated line and from the God-centred to the personal.¹⁷¹

As Erik Routley describes in his book *Hymns Today and Tomorrow*, hymn writing is a very consciously theological activity. A hymn

needs to be a combination of doctrine and experience. What [the hymn writer] *says* needs to be based on doctrine. He is writing about God, or about God's works. He is also writing about the church's experience of God – about the forgiveness of sins or the communion of saints or the duty of man in society as in the sight of God.¹⁷²

Routley clearly makes the distinction between a hymn's words and its music; in fact, his book is not concerned with the music of hymns at all. The role of music, he says, is to enhance the corporate character of the act of hymn singing. A hymn is thus a kind of enhanced corporate 'speaking the community's mind', with the words taking precedence and the music playing a facilitating role, as well as adding to the enjoyment of the experience. Routley seems to view music as almost something that endangers the effectiveness of a hymn, as so many people enjoy the singing of hymns because of the safe familiarity of the tunes and forget to give due credit to the words.

Taking the music more seriously, but still considering it to be context rather than content, is Paul Westermeyer. He identifies three factors that contextualize and thus potentially alter the content of a hymn: its tune, the nature of the community doing the singing and the worship context in which the hymn is sung, with its particular location in time and place.¹⁷³ Mary McGann argues that while song texts are a significant part of liturgical music and require attention on their own terms, they owe their meaning to the whole complex communicative event in which they sound:

Textual images are affected by the associations and memories that are awakened by the various channels of communication operative, kinetic and visual as well as audio-acoustic. Metaphors/images of persons and the

¹⁷¹ Bert F. Polman, 'Forward Steps and Side Steps in a Walk-through of Christian Hymnody' in *Music in Christian Worship: At the Service of the Liturgy*, ed. by Charlotte Kroeker (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005), pp. 62-72. Polman gives a brief but accurate overview of the history of hymnody.

¹⁷² Erik Routley, *Hymns Today and Tomorrow* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1964), p. 20.

¹⁷³ Westermeyer 1998a, pp. 82f.

community found in song texts may resonate with, or be in conflict with, what is experienced in other aspects of the ritual-musical event.¹⁷⁴

According to John Wilson, it is possible to identify objective features that make a hymn singable and memorable, and thus successful. He mentions its melodic outline, its rhythm, its harmony and its overall structure.¹⁷⁵ These are all musical features of the hymn, and they contribute substantially to the success with which it is learnt, remembered and passed on.

The words of a hymn are so embedded in its context that content and context are often regarded as inseparable. It is rarely just the words that make a hymn famous or popular; when a community sings a hymn, it sings the hymn's history, its own history and their joint present. This can be a healthy thing to do; but it can also be felt to be a struggle when there is a clash of interests between the old repertoire and modern hymns.¹⁷⁶ According to Michael Molloy, we should not be overly worried about singing hymns that have a slightly outdated feel to them, but rather celebrate them as part of our heritage:

Just as theology cannot ignore the historical development of doctrine from the early Church to the present, so too our musical life will not be healthy if it is expected to operate in a historical vacuum, cut off from its past. Hymnody is an important link with our past, ranging from the pre-Vatican II Church back through to Apostolic times. If we are to be true to our Christian roots and heritage, then hymnody must be an important constituent element of liturgical worship. A square peg can fit a round hole if the dimensions of both shapes are able to accommodate each other.¹⁷⁷

Styles and repertoires of congregational singing can tell the observer a great deal about the way a church community engages with its past and looks toward the future, especially since people feel a sense of ownership of hymns, whilst they can be analysed musically, textually and historically.

¹⁷⁴ McGann 2002, p. 26

¹⁷⁵ John Wilson, 'Looking at Hymn-tunes: The Objective Factors' in *Duty and Delight: Routley Remembered*, ed. by Robin A. Leaver, James H. Litton and Carlton R. Young (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1985), pp. 123-152.

¹⁷⁶ See e.g. Robin A. Leaver, 'Hymnody in Reformation Churches' and Frank C. Quinn, 'Problems of Hymnody in Catholic Worship' in *Liturgy and Music: Lifetime Learning*, ed. by Robin A. Leaver and Joyce Ann Zimmerman (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), pp. 281-307 and 308-323 respectively.

¹⁷⁷ Michael James Molloy, 'Opportunities for Hymnody in Catholic Worship' in *Liturgy and Music: Lifetime Learning*, ed. by Robin A. Leaver and Joyce Ann Zimmerman (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), pp. 324-339 (p. 336).

As the above shows, the worshipping community has a wide range of forms of musical expression at its disposal. Liturgy involves choices which affect the worshipping community. Kubicki explains how the church is ‘the reality mediated by the liturgy’.¹⁷⁸ Discussing Kelleher’s research on liturgy as mediating meaning, she writes that in performing the liturgy, ‘the church is performing itself.’¹⁷⁹ The church as a whole is always in the process of realising itself through its ritual, its symbols and its art; the local community’s choices are a particular manifestation of that process.¹⁸⁰ Taking the music of Taizé as an example, Kubicki shows that musical choices have a particular role in this process. As a communal activity, liturgical music-making mediates corporate identity. It is more than just a symbol; it is an action.¹⁸¹

Music as ecstasy, symbol and rhetoric

Andrew Wilson-Dickson identifies three main capacities in which music manifests itself in religious contexts. Firstly, according to him, music has an ecstatic dimension; secondly, it is symbolic; and thirdly, it can be a form of rhetoric.¹⁸² Wilson-Dickson does not expand greatly on the actual technicalities of each of these three dimensions. However, since they seem to me to cover the most important ways in which music functions, I would like to borrow his taxonomy and look at the ecstatic, symbolic and rhetorical aspects of music in more detail. An understanding of these will provide a good basis for reading music as theology in liturgy.

Wilson-Dickson mentions first of all that there are ways in which music takes us ‘out of ourselves’. Music can have a profound effect on people; it can be ecstatic. We see examples of that everywhere. At music festivals, people often completely forget themselves and the world around them and are absorbed by the music. In religious contexts also, people can be completely mesmerized by music - for example in the worship of Pentecostal churches and other charismatic congregations, or even more extremely in the whirling dance of the dervishes in Sufism which leaves both participants and spectators in a state of trance. This is the kind of effect Ratzinger warns against, calling it ‘the expression of elemental passions’ and ‘in opposition to Christian worship.’¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ Kubicki, p. 174.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 174.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 174.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 177-181.

¹⁸² Andrew Wilson-Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1992) pp. 11ff.

¹⁸³ Ratzinger 2000, p. 148.

Music is a profoundly physical phenomenon at every stage of its creation and enjoyment. It is, of course, possible to conceive music entirely in the mind without the composer ever touching a piano key or a piece of paper. Likewise after a musical performance there may not be any physical record left whatsoever. But music is an event. Without strings, reeds, air, saliva, there would be no music in the first place, and without ears and indeed the rest of the body there still would be no music to enjoy. I mention the rest of the body not just because the body in its entirety may respond to music in some way or other, but also because it is not just the ears which hear music. A lady who works with deaf people explained to me that if she were ever trying to sign (sic!) a song to them without playing the music as well (on a tape, for example), the deaf people would sense that the music was missing and they would not be able to enjoy it as much. Jeremy Begbie quotes the example of the deaf percussionist Evelyn Glennie and writes,

[t]he dispositions and configurations of bodies and their movements are not incidental to musical experience but enter into the fundamental dynamics of musical production and reception, something often sidelined in European musical traditions.¹⁸⁴

It is not surprising, then, that music affects people in a physical way. Some musical formalists, notably Kant, have even said that the only way music can interact with a human being is by affecting the body, not the mind.¹⁸⁵ In many cultures and musical genres it is almost impossible to make a distinction between music and dance. To make music means to move to the music, to engage the whole body, and it seems natural for dance to be accompanied by sound. To many people it seems completely unnatural to sit in a concert hall listening to a piece of music in silence, without being allowed some kind of physical response, and in fact that passive kind of listening is a relatively recent, Western habit. Again, Begbie notes:

One of the differences between responses thought appropriate at a ‘classical’ music concert and, say, a rock concert is that the quality of the former is often measured by the degree of stillness achieved during performance (‘you could

¹⁸⁴ Begbie 2000a, p. 27.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Kivy 2002, p. 59. Musical formalists are those who do not ascribe any content to music, but believe that the only aspect of music that can be appreciated is its form, or sound structure, cf. Kivy 2002, Ch.5 in particular.

have heard a pin drop'), in the latter by the degree of physical movement generated ('I came away exhausted').¹⁸⁶

He adds that even in the classical concert the music generates movement in the listener, but it is an inner movement.

The physical nature of music and the physicality of human responses to it bring us to what Andrew Wilson-Dickson calls the ecstatic dimension of music. He suggests that there is a very fine line between the sounds produced by ordinary physical phenomena, such as the sound of walking or that of the heartbeat of one's mother before birth, and sounds we would classify as music, such as beating a drum.¹⁸⁷ It is in the nature of certain kinds of music to be compelling in that way, and demand that the listener submits to their internal rhythm. Certain religious and non-religious music seeks to induce forms of trance in the listener. Sometimes the music invites certain physical reactions which cause or deepen forms of trance. The distinction between music and physical reaction may be blurred, and it may be unclear – and quite irrelevant - which of the two came first.

Whenever music takes control and subjects the mind and the body to its own laws, its effect can be called ecstatic – literally, causing 'displacement'. People cannot help moving to music and often do not notice that movement is going on at all; music affects their body directly because it is what their body is attuned to. Such is an 'ecstatic' response to music. Apart from having an ecstatic effect on people, music is also ecstatic in itself; firstly, as a phenomenon, and secondly, in the way it relates to other media connected with it, such as words and images.

A lot is known and understood about the physical attributes of music and the technicalities involved in its conception. J. M. Joncas sums it up quite comprehensively by saying that musical phenomena may be studied first of all through the analysis of the physical characteristics of the sound produced, secondly through the organisation of sounds into complex structures and thirdly as cultural phenomena. We understand a lot about each of

¹⁸⁶ Jeremy S. Begbie, 'Play It (Again): Music, Theology and Divine Communication' in *Creative Chords: Studies in Music, Theology and Christian Formation*, ed. by Jeff Astley, Timothy Hone and Mark Savage (Leominster: Gracewing, 2000b), pp. 45-75 (p. 66 and footnote).

¹⁸⁷ Wilson-Dickson, pp. 11ff.

these aspects of music.¹⁸⁸ It is possible to measure the physical properties of sounds very accurately, analysing their pitch, volume, duration and timbre.¹⁸⁹

If we understand a piece of music in terms of its musical form, it gives us a lot of information about the intended function of the music, especially when understood within the conventions and idiom of the time and place of its conception. Music, or rather music-making, as a cultural artefact is of interest to many of the human sciences. Joncas mentions research undertaken in the fields of musical psychology, musical sociology, musical anthropology/ethnomusicology and semiotics. These sciences provide valuable frameworks within which to describe and explain musical events. There is virtually no limit to the extent to which we are able to analyse music and its effects.¹⁹⁰

Nevertheless, there is something about sound in general, and about music as art form, which leads us to think that the total effect of music is greater than the sum of its technical parts. As Nicholas Cook rightly notes, all descriptions of music involve metaphor. Even technical descriptions. He reminds us of how we don't think twice about describing notes as 'higher' or 'lower' than others; yet the only way they are high or low in reality is where they appear on the stave when written down. Musical texture is another example. How can something have texture if we are not able to touch it? He asks,

And what did you mean when you referred to a 'piece' of music? Do you tear strips of music off a roll, like cloth, or chip them off a block? A block of what?¹⁹¹

We cannot talk about music without using metaphors every step of the way. The fact that we have found clever ways of referring to musical events does not mean that we fully describe them.

When people learn to read musical notation, they learn to read music more or less as a language. It has its own script, its own equivalent of a grammar and its own rules which, if applied correctly, are the building blocks of a – to a certain extent - meaningful structure.

¹⁸⁸ Jan Michael Joncas, 'Liturgical Music as Music: The Contribution of the Human Sciences' in *Liturgy and Music: Lifetime Learning*, ed. by Robin A. Leaver and Joyce Ann Zimmerman (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), pp. 220-230 (pp. 220f.).

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 221f.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 222-230.

¹⁹¹ Nicholas Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 69f.

People who are being educated within the Western tonal system learn to build on scales and chords and ‘speak the language of music’. Definitions of music vary widely between cultures and eras and not all types of music are as precisely ordered as Western tonal music, but it seems fair to say that all music has some sort of ‘musical grammar’. But again, much of this grammar is really a metaphor for something that goes beyond the music. Cook speaks about ‘music between the notes’. In a sense, that which we can write down is not ‘music’ at all. Notation is itself a metaphor for something that goes beyond it. Consider flicking back in a score and comparing two passages of the music side by side. That is, in terms of musical reality, an impossible thing to do. As Cook explains,

After all, you can’t fold time like paper; (...) [w]e experience [music] in time but in order to manipulate it, even to understand it, we pull it out of time and in that sense falsify it.¹⁹²

Time is a key element of music, perhaps even more so than it is a key element of other art forms that depend on time, such as dance or theatre. If one takes a still from a film, or takes a picture of a scene in a play, most of the experience is lost; but the picture does say *something*. It gives some information about the nature of the film or play, even if it is not much. A ‘still’ from a piece of music does not even say nothing - it cannot exist in the first place. A chord on the page is not the equivalent of a still from a film, because there is nothing to see. Music can only be heard, and hearing is necessarily dependent on time.

That is not to say that time in itself is everything. A synthesized performance of a piece of music which does exactly what it says on the page is a performance in time – exactly the right time even - yet does not produce ‘real’ music.¹⁹³ Shaping of time, dynamics and timbre are things that make music real for us, even though we cannot adequately prescribe or describe them. By contrast, forms of musical notation in different parts of the world have ways of describing things like timbre very accurately, but leave out musical properties most of our Western forms of musical notation cannot do without, such as rhythm.¹⁹⁴

Considering how full of metaphors our everyday language is, it should not worry us too much that we use so many of them when talking about music; but they do teach us to handle our musical knowledge with some suspicion. Even if we have completely analysed a piece of

¹⁹² Ibid., pp. 70f.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 61f.

music in all the above aspects and we know the physical attributes and structural rationale of every note and the cultural and historical *raison d'être* for the piece as a whole, we still cannot actually express why it *moves* us.

Even without understanding why, the knowledge that music *does* affect people is universally applied in many ways. Music is believed to have healing power and is used in many forms of therapy, to complement other forms of therapy or even on its own.¹⁹⁵ Music is used for marketing purposes, to lure people into shops and get them in the right mood for buying something, to create the right atmosphere in restaurants, bars and clubs. Calming classical music has even been used to fight crime in public places such as stations, and as an alternative form of punishment at schools. As our understanding of the human brain grows, research shows increasingly clearly how musical performances affect us.¹⁹⁶ Still, even though a lot is known about both the ordering of musical sounds and their effects on us, the challenge remains to adequately describe music itself.

These are some ways in which music is partially beyond our grasp, and thus to some extent out of our control. For that reason, it is often seen to have some kind of power. Music appears to be a language, rational and ordered, but in fact is not entirely explicable and speaks to our emotions first of all – or even to our physical being. In some kinds of music that are used in a religious context this ecstatic dimension is particularly prominent. Such music appears, by definition, to fall short of Ratzinger's requirement we came across earlier, that worship ought to be 'reason-able' worship. One of the reasons for this is that music does not create meaning in a straightforward way; it bypasses, as it were, the rational and engages the whole person. As Begbie stresses,

Musical meaning is realised through the interplay between its processes and a host of extra-musical processes and activities.¹⁹⁷

Such processes and activities can be social, cultural, physical – to name a few – and they are fully integrated with the music. The music's interplay with all these different factors is what creates its meaning. In music's interplay with words, for example, it is often impossible to tell

¹⁹⁵ Cf. June Boyce-Tillman, 'The wounds that sing: music as transformation' in *Wounds that heal: Theology, imagination and health*, ed. by Jonathan Baxter (London: SPCK, 2007)

¹⁹⁶ Cf. for example Siu-Lan Tan and others, *Psychology of Music: From Sound to Significance* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2010).

¹⁹⁷ Begbie 2000a, p. 19.

whether the words mean what they mean because of the music, or whether the music's emotional attributes are inspired by the words. Thus music is often accused of 'hijacking' texts and other media, overruling reason, and taking precedence over words. People will sing things they would hesitate to say. One only has to look at the lyrics of many national anthems which people sing without thinking twice. Organists and ministers of religion often grumble about the 'inappropriate' requests they get from people who want a certain piece of music played at a wedding or a funeral. It is often the case that people request a piece of music, not a set of words. It would seem odd if someone wanted the words of the *Pie Jesu* read out on their wedding, but people do ask for Andrew Lloyd Webber's setting of the same words to be played.

In her article *Are musicians more religious?*, Rosamund Bourke mentions a number of studies into the relationship between musical experience and religious experience. The two are very similar, and one study found that 'listening to music' was the most frequently reported trigger for religious experiences.¹⁹⁸ It seems that, beyond any distinctions between what we tend to call 'religious' and 'secular' music, all music has the potential to be religious, by virtue of the 'wavelength' at which it addresses people. However, Bourke also observes that music is no guarantee for a religious experience, and that a religious experience need not be accompanied by music:

While it seems that music has the power to induce a state of contemplation, a quieting of one's inner voices to 'let God speak' (...), we need to recognise both that many intense experiences of music may be wholly secular and that the presence of God may often be found in noisy surroundings.¹⁹⁹

The religious side of music does not always manifest itself in an ecstatic way. To understand music, it is important to look not only at its ecstatic function, but also at its symbolic dimension.

Whilst the ecstatic dimension of music implies that music asserts itself and takes over - for example by compelling people to succumb to its rhythm and its internal world of time and by taking precedence over words or images – music does not always put itself in the foreground.

¹⁹⁸ Rosamund Bourke, 'Music and Spirituality: Are Musicians More Religious?' in *Creative Chords: Studies in Music, Theology and Christian Formation*, ed. by Jeff Astley, Timothy Hone and Mark Savage (Leominster: Gracewing, 2000b), pp. 126-140 (pp. 126ff.).

¹⁹⁹ Bourke, p. 129.

Music also has the ability to point beyond itself, much like the way a symbol is a way of expressing a more complex truth that can be explored on much deeper levels. In the introduction to the first chapter, we looked at how Mattijs Ploeger sees liturgy as an ‘icon of the church’. It is not surprising that music, as part of the liturgy, should have a symbolic dimension. The question is, then, what its object is.

As many early Christian writers in particular have explored, music follows and symbolises the interior patterns of creation. Those patterns point to the way in which God has deliberately ordered his creation. Thus it is believed that they offer a window into the creator’s mind. By carefully studying the harmony of creation, it is possible to come to a fuller knowledge of God. The ordering of music has often been seen to function as a microcosmos revealing the harmony and order of the wider creation. It is not just the Greek philosophers and the Church fathers who were interested in this side of music; we find reflections on the mathematics of music and their relationship to the order of creation in the music theory of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and all the way up to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach.²⁰⁰ In the Middle Ages up until well into the Baroque era, the study and practice of music was very much preoccupied with numbers and structures. Three types of music were recognised: *musica mundana*, the harmony of the cosmos, the seasons, day and night, measure and number; *musica humana*, the harmony of the human being with all its intricate processes and good proportions, the microcosm displaying the greater order of the macrocosm; and finally *musica instrumentalis*, actual music, skilfully created by human beings to give voice to the order of the cosmos and the human being.²⁰¹ Understanding the inner logic of music has also been seen as a form of training, the soul’s ascent into God’s harmony and beauty. Augustine describes in his *De musica* that music not only points us towards God, but actually takes us to God.²⁰²

A similar way of describing this function of music is by calling it iconic, rather than symbolic, in nature. Terence Thomas and Elizabeth Manning have explored this concept in an article

²⁰⁰ Söhngen, pp.2ff.

²⁰¹ Kees van Houten, *De kruisvorm in de Matthäus-Passion van Johann Sebastian Bach* (Boxtel: Drukkerij Bordat b.v., [n.d.]), p. 3.

²⁰² Begbie 2000a, pp. 81f.

that is particularly interesting to us here, because they explicitly link this iconic nature of music with its liturgical function.²⁰³ They argue that

music functions in an iconic way when brought into ritual action (...) Given that music functions in this way, it is part of the action which is a vehicle for divine grace, power and blessing and not a mere appendage.²⁰⁴

Music in such a context functions in a more specific symbolic way; it symbolizes the underlying message and ritual action very precisely, and thus embodies some of it. It even

partakes of some of the qualities of the original message it represents, so that the devout Christian venerates the original message through its representation. The music of the Mass embodies the essence of the ritual by representing its significant attributes and status.²⁰⁵

This verges on a view held by some writers, who take the symbolic nature of music one step further and describe music as sacramental. That is not just an elegant way of saying that music shows us something about the nature of God. This view attributes a more substantial role to music. James Lancelot notes that the traditional definition of a sacrament, ‘an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace [...]’, can apply to music as long as we extend the meaning of the sacrament to the whole of our lives and not ‘shut it in church’.²⁰⁶ Having mentioned that St Thomas Aquinas calls a sacrament ‘a sign of a sacred reality in as much as it has the property of sanctifying human beings’, Lancelot writes that music

combines a powerful symbol of God’s love (creation of music and indeed of the human voice) with human creative skill (in finding out tunes and in making musical instruments). Here also we find reinforcement of a truly incarnational theology: God becoming man, God using human means to further his will. Look at it another way: we make music, but God uses the music to move our minds if we are receptive.²⁰⁷

A sacrament does not just show something, or even embody something, but it is effective; it actually imparts its ‘inward grace’ by means of its ‘outward sign’. In the case of music, that would mean that what we hear (taking the liberty of replacing ‘visible’ with ‘audible’) allows

²⁰³ Terence Thomas and Elizabeth Manning, ‘The Iconic Function of Music’, in *The Sense of the Sacramental: Movement and Measure in Art and Music, Place and Time*, ed. by David Brown and Ann Loades (London: SPCK, 1995), pp. 159-171.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 164f.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

²⁰⁶ James Lancelot, ‘Music as a Sacrament’ in *The Sense of the Sacramental: Movement and Measure in Art and Music, Place and Time*, ed. by David Brown and Ann Loades (London: SPCK, 1995), pp. 179-185 (p. 179).

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

us to share in the ‘inaudible’ grace God offers us through the music that he has given us the capacity to create.

If the notion of sacrament is extended to include not just the church’s traditionally recognised seven sacraments but the sacramental dimension there is to the whole of creation, music certainly has something to contribute. It can and does indeed effect change in people – physical, emotional and cognitive change. It is no coincidence that music is often used to help bring about healing in therapy and counselling contexts. The order and harmony music symbolises can in fact become real to a person, much in the way a sacrament is seen to affect in its spiritual reality the change its outward appearance symbolises on a physical level. This way, the ascent of the soul to God through music, to use Augustine’s terminology, might be described as a sacramental act. Thus, as we have seen, the ecstatic function of music allows it to affect people by its own musical structures, whereas music may introduce people into a reality beyond itself by virtue of its symbolic function.

According to Wilson-Dickson, as well as being ecstatic and symbolic, music is also a form of rhetoric. Music is a form of communication. Not in the first place the communication of meanings, but the communication of emotions. Whereas rhetoric in its ordinary sense means the use of vocal techniques to convey a message persuasively and effectively, music as rhetoric may convey emotions with or without words. It is emotionally charged ‘speech’, with or without speech.

It is sometimes argued that singing, or at least creating musical sounds, is more natural to people than speech. Before we learn to speak, we produce all sorts of melodious sounds, and we use them in a rhetorical way: to make others understand how we feel and persuade them to give us what we want. The opposite argument also exists – that music developed to enhance the natural inflections of the speaking voice.²⁰⁸ Whichever way round music and speech influence each other, it can be observed that when we feel strong emotions such as anger, grief or joy, our speech almost turns into song.

²⁰⁸ A discussion of this can be found in Anthony Storr, *Music and the Mind* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), pp. 1-23.

Most types of vocal music in some way exploit that fact, some more obviously than others. Opera is the most striking example of musical rhetoric, exaggerating human emotions to almost grotesque proportions to convey the drama of the action. Most forms of vocal music employ some sort of correspondence between the content of their words and their musical form, shaping the music to reinforce the meaning of the words by the musical patterns to which they are set. Certain forms of plainsong may be rhetorical, making the words sound like exaggerated speech. In more elaborate forms of plainsong it is not so much the stresses of words and sentences that are drawn out, but the ‘weight’ of the text, which gains some kind of authority by virtue of its extravagant ornamentation. Few types of vocal music deliberately deny or counteract the natural flow of speech, except to make a point. The effect of polyphony varies, and has often been a cause for concern; Gelineau points out that there is a risk, in some instances, that ‘the Word of God will be the loser.’²⁰⁹

Kees van Houten describes how many 16th and 17th century works on music theory show a strong interest in classical rhetorical techniques. These rhetorical guidelines go back as early as Aristotle, but were formulated more precisely by Cicero in the first century BCE. Originally meant to apply to the art of public speaking, his guidelines were used by Baroque composers to structure the process of composing their music and also by performers to help with their interpretation of the pieces. Translated into musical directives, they were applied as follows. One started off with the *inventio*, the main musical theme, the expressive qualities of which were expected to suit the words, if there were any. Next came the *dispositio*, the ordering of thematic material within the wider framework of the composition, followed by *elaboratio*, adding detail and expression by means of different musical figures. Finally, the *memoria* and *actio* – the effort required on the part of the performer (usually not the same person as the composer) to learn and internalise the music so as to create an authentic and expressive performance of the piece. J.S. Bach, as Van Houten argues, was one of the masters of this rhetorical technique.²¹⁰

The relationship between music and human emotions, particularly the exact way in which musical emotions translate into human emotions, is something which Kivy refers to as a ‘black box’:

²⁰⁹ Gelineau, p. 100.

²¹⁰ Kees van Houten, *De Hohe Messe van Johann Sebastian Bach* (Boxtel: Drukkerij Bordat b.v., 2002), pp. 142ff.

We know what goes in: the musical features that, for three centuries, have been associated with the particular emotions music is expressive of. And we know what goes out: the expressive qualities the music is heard to be expressive of.²¹¹

Of what happens in between, we cannot be sure. But even if we cannot fully understand how music generates emotions, we have to start with looking at musical sounds. They can be meaningful in themselves. People tend to refer to music as meaning or expressing something even in its absolute form, i.e. when all one hears is sounds without any accompanying text to direct one's thoughts. It is difficult, however, to pinpoint exactly how the ordering of sound creates musical meaning.²¹²

In his *Aesthetics*, Monroe Beardsley dedicates a chapter to theories about musical meaning.²¹³ Before presenting four main theories of musical meaning with respect to music without words, he mentions three ways in which music reminds us of other things: tunes of songs may bring to mind their words, even when those are not sung; music becomes associated with certain occasions if it is often played in the same context, and music may imitate non-musical sounds that exist in reality. Peter Kivy also mentions three ways in which music is expressive: it can resemble sounds that human beings use to express their emotions (e.g. speech), sound like visible aspects of human behaviour (e.g. bodily movement), or be generally associated with a particular emotion without resembling its sound or visual properties.²¹⁴ Musical rhetoric employs all these means to convey its message effectively. The question remains what the nature of that message is.

Beardsley goes on to introduce the Formalist Theory of musical meaning. According to this theory, there are two things music is *not*: it is not an expression of a psychological state or quality - because in music that which is expressed and the means of expression are not distinct. He writes,

To understand a piece of music is simply to hear it, in the fullest sense of this word.²¹⁵

²¹¹ Kivy 2002, p. 48.

²¹² Theo Willemsze, *Algemene Muziekleer*, 8th edn. (Utrecht/Antwerpen: Het Spectrum B.V., 1982), p. 15

²¹³ Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1958), pp. 318-352 .

²¹⁴ Kivy 2002, p. 38.

²¹⁵ Beardsley, p. 337.

As we saw earlier, music is also not a language. Musical formalists call the way music is expressive ‘pure process’, rather than the creation of meaning.

To show that absolute music ‘means’ requires more than merely showing that it ‘could have meant,’ (...) [w]hat must be shown is that absolute music exists as a representational or linguistic system.²¹⁶

This is something which cannot be shown. That is not to say that there is no internal meaning in music, but it means that any internal meaning is unlikely to be describable by non-musical means. It is of *musical* interest.

The question of the ‘meaning’ of music becomes more complicated when looking at music that is not absolute. A significant component of many musical works, which affects people’s understanding of the music in a major way, is text. Vocal music - which is hardly ever absolute – is the most obvious example. Other cases in which text relates to music are title music (in which the work’s title refers to some extramusical content) and programme music (in which a composer expresses, and makes the listener aware of, an extramusical narrative by means of music).²¹⁷ Liturgical music sometimes employs these techniques. Organ works, for example, tend to ‘speak’ through their title, often in combination with the quoting of melodic lines from a chorale or a liturgical text. An example is Jean Langlais’ *Incantation pour un jour saint*, which both by means of its title and by means of its thematic material quotes both the Litany and the acclamations *lumen Christi* and *Deo gratias* that traditionally accompany the newly lit paschal candle into the church during the Easter vigil. The effectiveness of such musical quotations of course depends on whether it can be assumed that people will recognise them as such.

When words are being sung, they form the first clue as to what a piece of music is about - not only the actual words that are sung are what gives the piece its character, other factors also come into play, such as the age, language, style and provenance of the text, the occasion for which it was written, and possible unusual juxtapositions of separate texts.

²¹⁶ Kivy 2002, p. 199.

²¹⁷ Willemze, pp. 23f.

However, it is not always clear whether we still ought to read texts in the same way after they have been set to music. It is often suggested that this is impossible or unhelpful. For example, Christopher Page writes:

Melody has its own logic of development, tension and release which is most commanding to the ear. When we hear a song our normal disposition – which is to interpret syntax, metaphor (and all the things which help produce literary meaning) as forms of altercation requiring a calculated response – is changed. It is not that words mean less when they are sung (though in some senses this is true); it is rather that word-bearing melody has a special power to placate the critical faculties we normally bring to bear upon texts and to establish a kind of absolute authority for what is said in the song.²¹⁸

As it seems, music tries to lure us into adopting a noncritical attitude towards the text that is sung. Note the use of the word ‘word-bearing’ – it is the music that takes on the active role. When Vernooij speaks about the ritual function of music, he even suggests that in case of well-known hymns it is harmful to interfere with the words, because the way they have been taken up in the music has made their actual meaning subordinate:

The words of these types of hymns [that have a set place in the cycle of the church’s year] ought not to be approached rationally, but emotionally, that is, as part of their tune. A ‘better’ text would destroy the ritual effect of the hymn.²¹⁹

Page and Vernooij are speaking about different types of music, and of course each type of music treats its text differently. Page is right in noting the effect of music on text, especially if one considers the context in which he writes this is the introduction to a collection of 12th century music. Vernooij, from his own contemporary perspective, shows us two interesting points: once united, text and music cannot easily be separated, and the meaning or value of musical works is influenced by external factors, such as tradition and liturgical context, as well. However, as Richard Viladesau writes, it remains important to realize that

[w]hen music is used to carry or to express a text, the dimension of conceptual meaning is still present. Skilful music can enhance the meaning by associating appropriate feelings with it; poor music can undermine the meaning by connecting it with trivial sounds or inappropriate associations and emotions.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Christopher Page (ed.), *Abbess Hildegard of Bingen: Sequences and Hymns* (Antico Church Music, 1983), p. ii

²¹⁹ Anton Vernooij, ‘Musiceren en Luisteren’ in *Ritueel Bestek: Antropologische Kernwoorden van de Liturgie*, ed. by Marcel Barnard and Paul Post (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Meinema, 2001), pp. 145-154 (p. 148, translation mine)

²²⁰ Viladesau, p. 47.

Neither music nor text is completely taken up in the other. If someone sends me a hymn sheet from a service they went to, I cannot have as full an experience of the singing as the person who attended; but neither could the person who went to the service have enjoyed it in the same way if the hymns had been unfamiliar and there had not been any hymn sheets left, or if the hymns had been sung in an unfamiliar language. Whether music or the word is more in charge of the relationship than the other, the fact remains that the meaning-making is a collaborative effort.

There are also those who feel that it is inappropriate for the music, rather than the text, to be the leading factor. Two famous occasions where arguments revolved around the intelligibility and natural flow of the words are the Council of Trent and the advent of opera as a musical form in the sixteenth century.²²¹ In both cases it was vital that the words could be understood and that there was as little artificiality about the music as possible. Carrying these criteria to their extremes severely limits the role of music.²²²

In *The Corded Shell*, Peter Kivy presents his theory of musical meaning which he argues is an improvement to two existing ones.²²³ The first theory he corrects is a conventional way of looking at the composer's relation to his text, in which the expressiveness of the music matches the expressiveness of its text, program or title. The second theory is an eighteenth century one, going back on Johann Adam Hiller and James Beattie. It differs from the first one in that it does not ascribe any expressive properties to music; rather, music is seen as something undifferentiated which can accommodate itself to any text and becomes definite and intelligible only by virtue of its text. For that reason there can be no (in)appropriateness between text and music in a musical work. Kivy largely agrees, but holds a more moderate view: language is indeed a particularizing factor in an expressive vacuum, but it circumvents the expressive ambiguity of musical works rather than directly affecting musical expressiveness. The main contribution of texts or titles is to provide the work with intentionality.

Kivy's 'moderate indeterminacy' position has four advantages. Firstly, it leaves a possibility for inappropriateness to exist. This is vital, as there undeniably *are* cases of inappropriateness

²²¹ Kivy 2002, pp. 160-181.

²²² Ibid., pp. 160-181.

²²³ Peter Kivy, *The Corded Shell* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 95-111.

– Kivy gives the example of singing Shakespeare’s dramatic line *Th’ expense of spirit in a waste of shame is lust in action* to the flippant tune of *Yankee Doodle*.²²⁴ However, Kivy limits the role of the expressiveness of the music in favour of that of the text. Secondly, his theory acknowledges the fact that in many cases text and music *do* match (which Hiller and Beattie would deny) and explains the collaboration fairly adequately by showing that “the music roughly matches the text, and the text smoothes out the fit.”²²⁵ Thirdly, his view can account for the reuse of music without loss of appropriateness, which is quite impossible if one takes the conventional view; but not, as Hiller and Beattie might argue, *ad infinitum*. Fourthly, it gives a nuanced account of the ‘emotive specificity’ of music – not overly detailed, but positive with regard to the expressive role of music. Kivy concludes by remarking that expressive congruence does indeed exist, but only in some cases, and it should not be idealized. Music is not diminished by owing its specificity to its text.

Moreover, words are themselves more than just meaning. Beardsley suggests that we ask how music is not only related to the *sense* of words, but also and to their *sounds*. Words bring their own individual sound quality to the music. For the development of a piece it is particularly important that

the movement of the words as sounds – their stresses, pauses, rhythmic groupings, syllabic divisions – affects the movement of the music. (...) We ask of a melodic setting that it preserve the important secondary meaning of the original text by adjustment of stresses and pauses so that the suggestion is not lost, and we also note that sometimes the suggestion is intensified, or new and relevant suggestion added, by subtle nuances in the music.²²⁶

In some ways, words already imply certain aspects of their musical setting.

Musical appropriateness may seem to be something very subjective. Beardsley explains more objectively why there is such a thing as musical appropriateness. He states that

[a] musical passage is coherent with – appropriate to - a verbal discourse sung to it if it has some fairly intense human regional qualities that are either qualities designated by the words or qualities of the events or situation described by the words.²²⁷

²²⁴ Beardsley, p. 341.

²²⁵ Kivy 1980, p. 109.

²²⁶ Beardsley, pp. 340f.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

However, music often goes further than just being coherent with its words. In his discussion of musical meaning, Beardsley also introduces what he calls *presentational specification*.²²⁸ When music presentationally specifies the words, it does not just underscore their meaning, it also adds to it. A striking example Beardsley gives here is the contrast between the musical setting of the word *descendit* in two settings of the Credo of the Mass. Both *descendits* are set to a descending melodic line, as one would expect, but they are two completely different modes of descending: Palestrina's descent (in the *Missa Papae Marcelli*) is a smooth, gradual one which does not come as a great surprise, whereas Beethoven's (in the *Missa Solemnis*) is a dramatic plunge. On the whole, Beardsley thinks we should be tentative about this; but musical choices are made for a reason, and when we hear them we somehow sense what is meant by them. The interesting thing about presentational specification is that it explains how music says things without actually saying them. Another example that could be given is from Bach's *Hohe Messe* where the composer sets the text *et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum*. The movement begins in a distinctly sad way, no doubt expressive of mourning. It then changes halfway to the celebratory tone which in many other Mass settings does not begin until the next line, *et vitam venturi saeculi* – thus implicitly including, as it were, the resurrected dead in the enjoyment of the eternal life mentioned in the next phrase.

The ways in which music and words interact are many, and some are more difficult to describe than others. What should also be kept in mind is that, whereas music is capable of creating new perspectives on a text and vice versa, the musical event consists of a lot more. It also includes all those involved in the music-making and music-hearing and everything they bring with them - their knowledge, taste, skill, values, beliefs, and expectations.

Ecstasy, symbol and rhetoric are three ways to understand how music works. The above discussion of music as ecstatic is in some ways a caveat against reading music too literally, and a reminder of the complex nature of musical performance. Music is an event and engages the whole person; as such it needs analysing on many different levels. The fact that music has a symbolic dimension invites us to read between the lines of music and try to understand what the music points to. Not only is music traditionally seen to reflect the order and harmony of the cosmos, it has also been described as a sacrament, a way in which people can partake in that order. The rhetoric of music, by contrast, challenges us to a very close reading of music

²²⁸ Ibid., pp. 346-348.

and a search for meaning within the structures of the music itself. If music is a form of communication, in its own right or in combination with language, it is important to learn to understand its meaning.

Conclusion: Studying music-making in the worshipping community

Above, I mentioned that Mary McGann highlights the fact that

a community's musical performance affects the entire continuum of liturgical action, shaping and expressing an embodied theology.²²⁹

A musical performance in liturgy can become the way for a community to affirm its identity and live out its theology - by virtue of its nature as 'performance', expressing a community's theology and facilitating its worship.

Music in liturgy is music made by an assembly and directed towards God, in some particular way and for some particular reason. As Jan Smelik notes, it is not always out of joy that we address God. In scripture,

we encounter songs that are not primarily about jubilant praise. One doesn't just sing out of happiness and joy in God's salvation. Music also sounds when people complain, confess their sins, or ask for God's help. One doesn't always sing one's heart out. One doesn't just sing about what one has received. One also sings for lack of something.²³⁰

As this chapter shows, liturgy is capable of incorporating a wide variety of types of music which can be put to a wide variety of uses. Smelik writes that

the song that is part of the church service possesses a whole array of functions which hardly ever occur independently: the praise of God automatically entails that his name is being professed and proclaimed; the proclamation of God's Word in song implies that the congregation pronounces that Word as confession (cf. 'responds to the Word'). What does happen in the church service, is that certain functions are accentuated.²³¹

²²⁹ McGann 2002, pp. 10f.

²³⁰ Smelik, pp. 44f. (translation mine).

²³¹ Ibid., p. 71 (translation mine).

In negotiating all these different musical functions, it is important for a worshipping community to have a sense of ownership of its liturgical music-making. Don Saliers talks about

the inability of people to be “at home” in the songs and the other forms of worship that they use.²³²

The worship people offer has to be theirs, and it has to come from within. That, he says, makes the issues contemporary theology struggles with “simultaneously cultural and theological;” what is really at stake is

understanding how to live the Christian life together in a culture of forgetfulness.²³³

There is a double balance to be addressed: that between the old and the new, and the divine and the human. In times of liturgical reform it is tempting either to expect that all new forms of worship are beneficial and transformative, or to cling to a tradition which has become idolised for no other reason than that it is safe. Likewise, in a time of cultural crisis one has to find a middle way between locating worship entirely within the sphere of the human need for religious expression on the one hand, and perceiving it as something entirely transcendent, divorced from real human life on the other. As Saliers argues, we can only get this balance right if we rediscover the essentials of worship by studying our past. We have to understand why we worship in the first place to be able to ask ourselves how we ought to worship:

The texts we sing and the musical forms we employ will flourish only so far as they faithfully serve the point of the singing.²³⁴

Kubicki’s exploration of Taizé music is, in essence, an exploration of that ‘faithfulness’.²³⁵ Kubicki studies Taizé music in its functions as theology and as worship, but she also looks in detail at the nature of the music itself. She analyses not only the reasons for the creation of the music and the reasoning behind their form and structure, but she also asks why they work for this particular community. Her arguments are a combination of close musicological analysis of individual chants, their texts, and the way they are to be performed. She shows us that

²³² Don E. Saliers, ‘The Nature of Worship: Community Lived in Praise of God’ in *Duty and Delight: Routley Remembered*, ed. by Robin A. Leaver, James H. Litton and Carlton R. Young (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1985), pp. 35-45 (p. 37).

²³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 37f.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²³⁵ Judith Marie Kubicki, *Liturgical Music as Ritual Symbol: A Case Study of Jacques Berthier’s Taizé Music* (Leuven: Peeters, 1999).

different theories about the meaning and function of music are not mutually exclusive. Music is multi-faceted, and so are its use and its meaning; its different aspects work together.

At those points in the liturgy when the word is not enough, music's ecstatic function helps to take the worshipping community beyond itself. Music functions as symbol when it shows something of what the worshipping community could be. Music as rhetoric helps the community express itself and find its own voice, despite or perhaps thanks to the constraints of the liturgy. As the liturgical assembly lives the liturgy, the music is there to serve the liturgy. Through the medium of liturgical music-making, the assembly explores and rehearses the meaning of being the church, together, in this particular place. Both for those involved in the liturgy and for those who observe, music-making shows how the assembly thinks of itself as being church.

Chapter 3: Reading Church

Introduction: music as a window into the church

In the first chapter, we have seen that one's theological outlook influences the way one approaches the subject of music in liturgy. Those who study music are deeply influenced by the legacy of the Liturgical Movement: a dynamic view on liturgy as the work of the church in which music finds its proper place. Then I explored the qualities of music that equip it for its theological role in the liturgy, and we saw that there is also theological reasoning behind the way those qualities are employed. I set out from the start to read the church's music in order to understand the nature of the church better. The questions one asks about the church's music are an important indication of one's ecclesiology.

First of all, to be able to 'read church' through the lens of music, we have to ask ourselves: is it *the* church we want to 'read', or a *particular* church? That sounds like a straightforward question, but it is not. Someone who enters the discussion from the point of view of the individual worshipping community creates a whole other dynamic than someone who studies music as an expression of the nature of the church in general. On the other hand, whoever studies a particular church has to be aware of the fact that there is no such thing as individual churches existing in isolation; even a case study is not just a study of one particular church, but of one particular manifestation of *the* church.²³⁶

In this chapter I look at the way specific theologians are engaging with the way music expresses the nature of the church. First I look at the work of Mary McGann, in which she interprets the living reality of music in a parish and makes sense of it theologically. Then I present a different perspective in the form of the work of Joseph Ratzinger, who writes about the nature of the church and assesses the value and appropriateness of musical forms in the liturgy.

Different though their approaches may be, both McGann and Ratzinger are concerned with the same liturgical arena. Both of them respond to contemporary musical practice in the

²³⁶ Cf. Küng, p. 274: "There is, then, a multiplicity of local Churches [...] in which the one Church manifests itself [...] Thus the unity of the Church presupposes a multiplicity of Churches."

Roman Catholic Church. To start with, I give a broad overview of the musical and liturgical developments in that church over the past century. Then I revisit Alexander Schmemmann, in whose work – which we already encountered in chapter 1 - a nuanced way of balancing various approaches to liturgical interpretations is found. This leads to a reflection on the way different perceptions of worship and different models of the church shape our thinking about music in liturgy.

Setting the scene: contemporary developments in Roman Catholic worship music

The twentieth century has been an exciting and confusing time for the church in general, and in particular the Roman Catholic church, with respect to its liturgical and musical life. Never before have there been such in-depth conversations about liturgy from within the body of the church, involving both clergy and laity. And never before has the ecclesial hierarchy produced a similar collection official documents relating to the use of music in Christian liturgy. The work of the Liturgical Movement inspired scholars, musicians, composers and liturgists alike, not to mention many of the people in the pew. Disappointingly,

the official authorities gradually came to take a more negative stance towards the tendency of the Liturgical Movement to bring the liturgy closer to the people, the aim of the official authorities being to bring people closer to the liturgy.²³⁷

It is understandable that in a period of time when the liturgical stakes were high and the reform of the liturgy had gained such momentum, the vision of the Liturgical Movement and that of the official authorities started to diverge. However, the creative and transformative potential that was unleashed in the days of the Liturgical Movement has changed the church's thinking for good. Perhaps the most significant change was that

as soon as the people started taking an active part in the liturgy by singing parts of the Ordinary [of the Mass], they became in fact co-actors of the liturgy, though not yet recognised as such theologically.²³⁸

Richard Bot observes that the congregation has become not only a co-actor with the choir, but also with the priest, ever since sung dialogues with the priest were introduced – and that was a momentous step. The simple fact that congregations now share in the responsibility for what

²³⁷ Richard E.O.A. Bot, *Zingt allen mee: 65 jaar Liturgische en Kerkmuzikale Beweging in Nederland* (Kampen: Gooi en Sticht, 2003), p. 279 (translation mine).

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 279 (translation mine).

happens in the liturgy encapsulates the three tenets of the Liturgical Movement as summarised by Alfred Shands – a vital connection between worship and life in the world, active participation of each Christian in the liturgy, and an emphasis on the priesthood of Christ.

[T]he Liturgical Movement sees that the Christian doctrine of the priesthood of Christ is the key to both the reintegration and wholeness of life and to participation in the body of Christ. (...) It is the offering of ourselves, our souls and bodies through the eternal offering of Christ on behalf of the world.²³⁹

Once such a vision has been regained, the church will have to continue to take its liturgical life seriously and seek to align its official teaching and the living reality of the liturgy.

Neither the Liturgical Movement nor the collection of official documents²⁴⁰ produced by the church in the past century have left the church with a sense of clarity. The church's rediscovery of its liturgy is work in progress. Multiple experiments have taken place (especially up to and including the Second Vatican Council), many resources and initiatives have been generated– but the church has nowhere near arrived at a consensus as to what exactly happened in the twentieth century, or where it has left the church. It is time for the church to reflect, both in the systematic theological sense and through a continued 'testing of the spirits' in liturgical life.

It is in this arena that contemporary liturgical theologians have to find their voice. They work amid a multiplicity of practices and theological perspectives, trying to answer the question how, under contemporary conditions, the church can pray in such a way that it is true to its tradition, its present context, and most importantly, its essence. To give a brief overview of the challenges they face, I will borrow the structure offered by Jan Michael Joncas in his book *From Sacred Song to Ritual Music*. He systematically discusses the main official documents of the Roman Catholic church over the past century and their reception under five headings: the nature of Roman Catholic worship music, its purpose, the qualities it should exhibit, who should make it, and what instruments should be used. These are precisely the five main areas in which contemporary debates on liturgical music are taking place.

²³⁹ Shands, pp. 17f.

²⁴⁰ See below in the next footnote.

Joncas studies a select group of documents. He limits himself to twentieth-century papal, conciliar and curial documents for the Roman Rite, and also uses documents that are of particular importance to the Roman Catholic church in the United States. Whilst this is a relatively narrow selection, it reflects the main issues that other denominations and other countries have also struggled with.²⁴¹

Joncas begins his analysis by tracing the development of the understanding of the nature of Roman Catholic worship music as expressed in these nine documents. He looks at the terminology and categorisation the documents use with regards to music, and the views they express on languages and musical styles that are deemed appropriate for use in worship. The first group of documents (the papal, conciliar and curial ones) is very much concerned with what kinds of music are in and what kinds are out as far as the Roman Rite is concerned. The question asked by the documents is clearly ‘What is *Roman Catholic* worship music?’ rather than ‘What *is* Roman Catholic worship music?’ Even though the language remains prescriptive and careful, a broadening of the number of acceptable styles gradually emerges. More and more categories are ‘counted in’ – in the 1903 *Tra le sollecitudini* there are only three types of music that are deemed appropriate, Gregorian chant, classical ‘sacred’ polyphony and certain more modern music if in Latin. In the 1958 *Instruction* there are six: these three plus sacred organ music, popular religious singing in the vernacular and what is called religious music.

The fact that the *Instruction* tentatively considers the use in the Roman Catholic liturgy of non-vocal music as well as popular singing in the vernacular is a significant development. Joncas observes that theological views are shifting:

In Pius X’s thinking what was universal was a particular repertoire of music (Gregorian chant) that was equally at home in all cultures; in [the 1958

²⁴¹ The papal, conciliar and curial documents Joncas uses are Pius X’s papal instruction *Tra le sollecitudini*; Pius XII’s encyclical letter *Musicae sacrae disciplina*; the *Instruction on Music and Liturgy* by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, a Roman curial agency under Pius XII; *Sacrosanctum concilium*, a conciliar document issued under Paul VI, and *Musicam Sacram*, an instruction on sacred music issued by the Roman curial agency, the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship (Jan Michael Joncas, *From Sacred Song to Ritual Music: Twentieth-Century Understandings of Roman Catholic Worship Music* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997), pp. 1-6). The documents Joncas studies that are of particular relevance to his American setting are *Music in Catholic Worship* and *Liturgical Music Today*, both issued by a territorial bishops’ conference, and the *Ten-Year Report of the Milwaukee Symposia for Church Composers* and the *Snowbird Statement on Catholic Liturgical Music*, both written by groups of liturgists and musicians and addressed to those involved in the study and practice of liturgy in the wider ecclesial community (ibid., pp. 6-9).

Instruction] what is universal is not a particular repertoire, but the human instinct to express religious feeling with musical means.²⁴²

Because more styles are being allowed into the liturgy in principle, additional criteria also appear by which to determine whether music is genuine worship music: the intention of the composer, the subject and purpose of the composition and the extent to which the music is bound to the liturgical action.²⁴³ *Sacrosanctum concilium* (1963) picks up on this last point by stressing the fact that music is an integral part of the liturgy (whether – and this is its most innovative feature – sung in Latin or in the vernacular), and *Musicam sacram* (1967) picks up on the criteria to do with the intention and purpose of the music, stating that

[m]usic is “sacred” insofar as it is composed for the celebration of divine worship and possesses integrity of form.²⁴⁴

The second group of documents (1972, 1982, 1992 and 1995 respectively), specifically addressing the American situation, continues this trend of widening the perspective on church music. They show that the liturgical development has not stopped and reflection on musical issues is continuing. *Music in Catholic Worship* (1972) outlines a threefold method of judgement in evaluating music in liturgical celebration: musical, liturgical and pastoral. Music, it says, belongs in the category of signs and symbols. This is a big step towards a more serious valuation of music; for, as Joncas writes,

[t]o affirm that music functions as sign and symbol in worship is to heighten its importance in the worship event. Just as an analysis of a painting cannot substitute for gazing upon it, just as a synopsis of a novel cannot supplant reading it, so reciting texts intended to be sung in worship cannot engage worshippers in the same way as singing them.²⁴⁵

With *Liturgical Music Today* (1982) even going so far as to call music ‘a necessarily normal dimension of every experience of communal worship’, the reservations of only three quarters of a century ago seem to have vanished.²⁴⁶ The *Milwaukee Report* (1992) and the *Snowbird Statement* (1995) broaden not only the range of music deemed acceptable for use in worship but also the terminology used to describe worship music; they no longer speak about music intended for use in the Roman Rite, but the term ‘Christian ritual music’ as introduced in the

²⁴² Ibid., p. 18.

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 19.

²⁴⁴ *Musicam sacram* 4.a as quoted in Joncas 1997, p. 22.

²⁴⁵ Joncas 1997, p. 24.

²⁴⁶ *Liturgical Music Today* 5 as quoted in Joncas 1997, p. 24.

Milwaukee Report. The question ‘What is *Roman Catholic* worship music?’ has turned into the question ‘What is Roman Catholic *worship* music?’

Still, none of the documents have an uncritical attitude towards music or move away completely from the idea that Roman Catholic music has its own particular identity. They assess the work that has been done so far since *Tra le sollecitudini* (1903) and the impact it has had. Whilst showing an openness to discuss musical quality across stylistic boundaries, the *Snowbird Statement*

goes on to affirm a distinctive Catholic ethos, one that it regards as evident in music “that elaborates the sacramental mysteries in a manner attentive to the public, cosmic, and transcendent character of religion, rather than in styles of music that are overly personalized, introverted, or privatized” (Paragraph 8). The statement urges that such music, which has been employed by countless generations of Catholic Christians, be used as a starting point and guide for new developments.²⁴⁷

Joncas records similar developments in the areas of reflection on the purpose of Roman Catholic worship music, its qualities, its participants and the instruments that are used. This just goes to illustrate how massive the changes have been, both in thinking and in practice, over the last century. It is no coincidence that in a time of great shifts, the church has turned its attention to music. What is really at stake – and we see that most clearly reflected in the debate about ‘active participation’ of the faithful and the debate about singing in the vernacular - is the move towards the emancipation of the ‘people in the pews.’ The church has had to reflect not only on the question ‘What is church music?’ but also on, ‘What is the church?’ and most importantly, ‘Who are the church?’ The focus shifts from magisterium to people.

Mary McGann: music as interpretive lens

One of the people I will mainly be in conversation with on this topic is Mary McGann. I will be consulting her diptych of books, *Exploring Music as Worship and Theology* (2002) and *A Precious Fountain* (2004). *Exploring Music* is about methodology. It sets out a method for studying congregations using their music as the means of understanding them. *A Precious Fountain* is the narrative behind McGann’s methodology, the fruit of years of intensive

²⁴⁷ Burch Brown, p. 186.

observation, as well as a critical reflection on that narrative. Thus, McGann's work has a dual purpose. Not only does she study the liturgical and musical dynamics of a particular church community, she also explores the process or methodology by which she studies those dynamics. McGann shows as much interest in the way music tells us something about a community's identity as in what it is that we learn about them. She describes her project in terms of 'liturgical ethnography as liturgiology'. That is to say that the main aim of the research is not purely ethnographical, but serves a wider purpose. It increases our understanding about liturgy as a source of information about the dynamics of human interaction. As we learn more about what the liturgy means to a particular community, we learn more about the way liturgy works in general.

The community McGann studies is Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church in Hunters Point, San Francisco. It is an unusual and pioneering community. From its very beginning, it has fully embraced and expressed its dual identity as a Black and Catholic church. As the community is well aware, its roots do not just go back to 1942 when the church was first founded; in fact, as McGann describes,

[t]he streams from which music flows into the Our Lady of Lourdes community run very deep. They well up as a great river of sound that reaches back to the earliest days of African presence on American soil. They flow through the hush-harbors of slavery – the sorrow songs and jubilees – and cascade through the revivals of the Great Awakenings – the uptempo shout songs and improvised gospel songs – gathering up a great reservoir of repertoire that has seeped into the hearts and voices of this community of Our Lady of Lourdes.²⁴⁸

The music that plays such an important part in the liturgy at Our Lady of Lourdes is close to the people's heart; the sounds and rhythms are in their blood and there is a strong sense of ownership of that musical heritage. From the start, when the church was first established as a mission church in a developing area, this community has practised liturgical inculturation *avant la lettre* and compromised neither on its African heritage nor on its Catholic nature. It is quite unique in that way.

What becomes apparent straight away from McGann's account is that the Lourdes community (as they call themselves) work from the bottom up. Everyone's input and opinion is valued, and the liturgy is very much the 'work of the people' in its literal sense. This is most

²⁴⁸ McGann 2004, p. xxiii.

obviously and most poignantly expressed in the community's music, which McGann uses as an interpretive lens. For example, a rehearsal of their gospel choir is not a standard choir rehearsal where a group of people stand up to sing and one person at the front tells them what to do. Instead, all decisions are made democratically and choir members are invited to explore the music for themselves, suggest possible arrangements and variations, and take responsibility for a part of the song as and when they feel moved to. Likewise, during the actual service there is room for people to make songs their own. When someone feels a song is 'their' song, they take the lead, often encouraged by fellow choir members and members of the congregation as they are singing ("Sing it!" "Take your time!"). McGann herself is caught out one Sunday morning when a member of the soprano section suddenly summons her, "Come up here, Sister!" and urges her to sing with them.²⁴⁹ Children are also encouraged to take their part and given small solo passages to sing from as early an age as four, such as the Great Amen at the end of the Eucharistic prayer.

Something McGann is keen to stress is that the liturgy at Our Lady of Lourdes and its music cannot be separated, and neither can they be rehearsed or rigorously planned. There is some level of planning involved in that the liturgical season, the lectionary and the occasion determine to some extent what will happen in the service. It is arranged in advance who the main characters are – the lead singer, the speaker, the celebrant. But other than that, the service depends on improvisation and interaction. That improvisation and interaction is mainly musical. People do not so much stand up and spontaneously say something, but they do come forward and sing, take responsibility for a lead, or request a song. Musicians, in particular the drummer, accompany the words of the person leading the service or the preacher, following the flow and dynamic of the message. Music is omnipresent and the community value it highly. At her First Communion a young girl, when asked to say a few words about what the occasion means to her, sits down at the piano and sings "Yes, Jesus loves me!"²⁵⁰ Her growing up in this community has made music the primary medium for expressing her faith.

It is interesting to see that there is a high level of organisation involved in the liturgical music of the Lourdes community, yet within it there is a great deal of freedom. There is a robed choir, set apart from the rest of the congregation, that leads the singing. They have intricate

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 87.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 73.

patterns of moving around and standing in different places at different parts of the service, using the worship space in a way that is meaningful to the congregation. Being in the choir is quite a commitment and it takes a lot of hard work before a song is ready to be performed. Yet the experience of the congregation is not of the choir as an elite group, and the worship space occupied by the choir is by no means seen as a no-go area for the rest of the congregation. Members of the congregation encourage the choir, show their approval, and feel that they are involved. Even though some of the music is too difficult for the congregation to join in, it is felt that somehow the whole community sings.

If music is so integral to the liturgy at Our Lady of Lourdes, if it is to such an extent the ‘work of the people’ and it emerges so clearly from the very concrete and immediate circumstances of the community, it is no wonder that McGann’s method of study is one of maximum personal involvement. During the years she monitors the parish’s musical life she becomes intensely involved. She not only observes the parish’s worship, but actively worships there herself; she not only attends choir rehearsals with her tape recorder, but is soon roped in to join in the singing. She gets to know the whole of the congregation personally, and conversely they get to know exactly what she is doing. Her research is very transparent and as interactive as the liturgical music itself. When she is observing the community’s worship, making recordings and taking pictures, everyone knows what she is doing and approves of it. She spends a lot of time talking to individuals within the community, not just the key figures. As she is writing, she shows her drafts to a small group of designated people and confirms with them the accuracy of her account and interpretations before jumping to any conclusions. The whole of her research is a collaborative effort and probably benefits the community as much as it helps McGann in her understanding of them.

For McGann’s reflections on the method of her research, one has to look to her other, smaller book, *Exploring Music as Theology and Worship*. Here she gives a more general and theoretical methodology based on the experiences of her research with the Our Lady of Lourdes community. What she stresses most is the need for this very intensive involvement. That is how one gets to know a church. Her aim is to describe as accurately as possible the way a particular community expresses itself through the medium of its liturgical music, then to analyse this information and finally to interpret it theologically. This way of studying a community is informed by three disciplines: ethnomusicology, ritual studies and liturgical studies. These three disciplines combine the study of musical performance as human action in

a particular context with the study of the ritualisation of that musical performance, and finally the theological reflection on the content of music as ritual.²⁵¹

McGann's findings are not just recorded in *A Precious Fountain* in the form of a narrative. That which she perceives to be the content of her narrative is made explicit in the form of 'intermezzi' in which this theological reflection takes place. The intermezzi are entitled 'time', 'space', 'words', 'flow' and 'embodiment', thus covering the most important dynamics of a liturgical gathering. Interesting though the narrative parts of the book and the reflections on method in *Exploring music* are, these intermezzi are the places where we can really begin to see how McGann moves from describing the community around her to analyzing and interpreting her findings, and there we can discover the value of her research.

From these different liturgical dynamics, McGann sees an ecclesiology emerging that is first and foremost inclusive and integrating:

What emerges at Lourdes, as worship reveals Christ-being-in-his-Body in this local *ecclesia*, is a "redemptive reordering of relationships" – the fashioning of an inclusive community of disciples, guided by the Spirit.²⁵²

McGann sees this ecclesiology operative

- as the worshipping community orders persons and the community to wholeness and *diakonia*;
- acknowledges and honors multiple channels for the action of God;
- realigns the relationship of the *mystical* and the *real* presence of Christ,
- anticipates a new order of relationships within the church and society.²⁵³

In making use of the talents of men and women, young and old, lay and ordained, and in being true to its African American heritage, the Lourdes community embodies and honours the diversity and unity of the whole Body of Christ.

In the final intermezzo, 'embodiment', we learn how McGann comes to this conclusion. She sees a direct link between the embodiment of values such as generosity and kindness in the worshipping community and the way people physically inhabit the music they make. Black

²⁵¹ McGann 2002, pp. 13-36.

²⁵² McGann 2004, p. 266

²⁵³ Ibid., p. 266.

music in particular, she argues, is “holistic and embodied.”²⁵⁴ Thus, the act of music-making and ritual-making physically reorders and reaffirms the relationships in the ecclesial body. McGann observes that the level of physical interaction in the Lourdes community is very high and adds an extra dimension to the feeling of inclusivity and welcome. The music, too, is felt and experienced with the whole body, whether one is singing or listening. And listening consists of active listening, complete with gestures, movements, and verbal responses (such as “Amen!” or “That’s right!”). The music not only embodies a sense of community, but also a communal spirituality. Members of the community grow together in their understanding and experience of God, and through their interaction ‘agree’ to a shared spirituality. McGann describes this spirituality as full of joy and love, creating an integrated person and community, collective mystical experience and a sense of God’s liberation being active here and now. The music is the main catalyst as well as the most appropriate expression of that shared spirituality.

McGann is groundbreaking in the thorough and conscientious way she deals with the subject of liturgical music as a means of understanding a community. She has studied the community appropriately and thoroughly over a period of several years and the result has been approved by the Lourdes community as an accurate record of their liturgical practice. The account is subjective, and it is meant to be. The purpose of the study is to enter the community’s subjectivity and understand it from within. The work Mary McGann does is not just liturgical ethnography; it is musical liturgical ethnography. It is not difficult to see why McGann uses music as a lens through which to view the whole of the liturgy. After all, music is the life and soul of the community.

It is important to keep in mind, as McGann never fails to remind us, that whenever we are studying a congregation, however familiar to us, we are studying a culture and we have to stand back and choose our words as carefully as if we were studying an unfamiliar culture. The Lourdes community is a particularly interesting object of study for an ethnographer and someone who is interested in the social dynamics of a community, because the performance of its liturgy is the result of a process of democratic decision-making. It is important to realise that this is not by any means the case everywhere. Many Roman Catholic churches would regard their liturgy at least in part as something imposed by the appropriate authority. This

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 249.

clearly does not restrict creative participation in Our Lady of Lourdes. It is important to note not only who makes decisions and how much room for manoeuvre there is, but also to what extent that freedom is experienced and shared. The Lourdes community has a strong sense of corporate ownership of their worship.

As a Roman Catholic church, Our Lady of Lourdes naturally has to conform to a set liturgical framework, but the community has made it so much its own that whatever happens within that framework feels entirely home-cooked. The liturgical framework itself is experienced as a foundation to build on rather than a constraint. There are many Christian denominations that have more freedom to make their own liturgical choices than the Lourdes community. However, there are many churches where standardized rituals and customs seem to be devoid of any local colour. One of the challenges McGann would have to face if she were to broaden her research and do a comparative study would be to find a way into the minds of those whose liturgy is not as obviously contextualized as that of the Lourdes community and find out what makes them cohere. It is an interesting question, for example, to ask why people would choose to make music in liturgy that is not the kind of music they would use anywhere else in their daily lives. Is it just a matter of tradition? Is it because of the association of a particular musical idiom with sacredness? Is it a symptom of oppression, lack of liturgical freedom of speech, now or in the past? One thing is certain: a lack of obviously 'indigenous' liturgy can tell us as much about a community as an abundance of local character, but what it can tell us may be a lot more difficult to ascertain.

In this dissertation I am drawing attention to the relationships that build the church and the way they are made explicit in the way communities use music in their liturgy. McGann uses music as a lens through which to view the liturgical gathering. This is certainly a significant methodology, as music can be one of the primary sources of empowerment and identity for a congregation. I have also referred to music as something that can be read as a text. There is a difference between looking through music at the worshipping community, as McGann does, and looking at the music itself. The two are interlinked, and therefore often confused. Whenever we assess the value and appropriateness of music, we have to ask ourselves whether it is the music we are evaluating, or whether it is the effects that it has on people and the ordering of relationships in a community. Both are important. I find it tantalising that the work of McGann gives us such deep insights into the way a community works musically, and yet the question remains to what extent the properties of the music itself could be the

transformative element in this community's worship. Yet again, the music eludes us. As McGann's work shows, and, as we already saw, Adorno rightly writes:

To interpret music means: to make music.²⁵⁵

Joseph Ratzinger, too, struggles with the nature of music as he assesses its value in worship, and in the following I will discuss his approach.

Joseph Ratzinger: music under scrutiny

I have already shown that Joseph Ratzinger, like Mary McGann, is aware of the expressive qualities of music. His attitude towards music is ambivalent. Music can be among the greatest and most worthy expressions of Christian faith, but it can also be dangerous and lead us away from God. Some of what Ratzinger writes about music is rather controversial. For example, he writes that

the Church has had to be critical of all ethnic music; it could not be allowed untransformed into the sanctuary.²⁵⁶

That sounds rather harsh, and many for whom ethnic music is an important primary mode of expressing their faith would wholeheartedly disagree. What is Ratzinger trying to tell us when he makes a statement like that? One could easily be tempted to dismiss it as being elitist or patronising, but there is a theological argument behind it.

Earlier, I talked about the place of music in Ratzinger's *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. Music, he argues, engages with the *logos*, in several ways. Firstly, it engages with the *logos* in a literal sense in that there is no liturgical music that is not a response to the Word of God. Central to Ratzinger's argument is a second use of the word *logos* – the Holy Spirit, which the church's music is bound to serve. Music used in worship is not an autonomous entity, but is subject to the Spirit and is only beneficial when its effect is to draw people more closely into the life of the Spirit. Thirdly, Ratzinger uses the word *logos* to refer to the laws by which the universe is ordered and to which music, by its nature, conforms. The participation in the liturgy and the making of music within it connect us to this divinely created order; there is a cosmic dimension to all our prayer, worship and music-making.

²⁵⁵ Adorno 1963, p. 3; cf. chapter 2, p.

²⁵⁶ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 118.

In an earlier book, *The Feast of Faith*, Ratzinger already explored the theology of church music. His argument there clarifies what he hints at in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. He particularly expands the idea of ‘spiritualisation’ and argues that

the taking up of music into the liturgy must be its taking up into the Spirit, a transformation which implies both death and resurrection.²⁵⁷

Not just music, but the whole of the liturgy undergoes this transformation. As Fagerberg argues, those who engage in liturgy need to practice liturgical asceticism, that is, to submit to a spiritual discipline in order for the entire person to be integrated and whole. The liturgy has to be disciplined if it is to lead to a true participation in Christ.²⁵⁸ This is the kind of reasoning Ratzinger uses too. The concept of spiritualisation is a crucial idea in his thinking about the theological rationale of church music. He sees the history of the church, including its continuous struggle with its church music and its liturgical development, in the light of this process of spiritualisation. It is a process of disciplined discernment. The idea that creation and the Spirit are in constant dialogue provides Ratzinger with a way of understanding development and change and assessing the value and appropriateness of certain developments and changes within the liturgy and its music.

This is why the historical study of the church’s liturgy and its music is so fundamentally important for Ratzinger. To look at the history of church music is to see the Spirit at work and to watch the church struggle to make its response. Because there is a complex interplay going on between the work of the Spirit and the material world,

it is impossible to lay down a priori musical criteria for this spiritualization process, although it is certainly easier to say what is excluded than what is included.²⁵⁹

Here we begin to understand what the process of spiritualization entails; it is not just a process of unlimited growth, but also one of testing and discernment, ‘death and resurrection’. Not all music is in line with the Spirit, and it is the church’s painstaking task to decide what music deserves to be used in its worship.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 118.

²⁵⁸ Fagerberg, pp. 19-22.

²⁵⁹ Ratzinger 1986, p. 119.

Ratzinger lists five ‘governing principles’ to be taken into account when assessing church music.²⁶⁰ Firstly, he argues, the liturgy must be simple, in the sense that it must be such that it can be clearly communicated to anyone rather than just a select few. By ‘simple’ he does not mean easy or mundane. True simplicity is only achieved via a long process of purification and maturation.

The catholicity that should characterize the church is not just manifested in simplicity, but also in diversity. Therefore the second governing principle has to do with churches praying as they can, not as they can’t. The catholicity of the church is manifested in different parts forming a unified whole. A parish church should not try to worship like a cathedral and vice versa, and the same principle applies to their musical life.

Thirdly, when it comes to music in the liturgy there should be the opportunity for everyone to actively participate. That does not necessarily mean that all sing or play. Active listening is just as much a form of active participation as singing. What has to be discerned here is what mode of participation is appropriate at what time. There is, Ratzinger argues, a place for both active music-making by the whole of the congregation and a place for letting others offer their skill on behalf of the (actively listening) congregation.

The principles of simplicity, catholicity and active participation lead Ratzinger to a fourth point. He says that music must be accessible to all, correspond to any given context and enable the participation of the whole of the congregation. He does not mean that church music ought to be merely functional. Its quality ought to be assessed and safeguarded. He writes,

A church which only makes use of “utility” music has fallen for what is, in fact, useless. For her mission is a far higher one. (...) The Church must maintain high standards; she must be a place where beauty can be at home; she must lead the struggle for that “spiritualization” without which the world becomes the “first circle of hell”. Thus to ask what is “suitable” must always be the same as asking what is “worthy”; it must constantly challenge us to seek what is “worthy” of the Church’s worship.²⁶¹

Music used in worship is never just a means to an end. The church exists to glorify God, and God deserves the best the church has to offer.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 122ff.

²⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 124f.

²⁶² See the discussion on pp. 90ff.

Finally, Ratzinger draws attention to the rich musical heritage of the church. He observes that the Constitution of the Liturgy encourages the church to respect and make good use of the musical traditions it encounters in the different cultural contexts in which it finds itself, especially in mission lands.²⁶³ However, we (i.e. the Western Roman Catholic church, for which he speaks) don't have to look to foreign cultures to find a heritage worth treasuring. It is important not to lose the rich musical tradition that has developed in the church over the centuries, but at the same time it must be kept alive in this day and age.

Music such as this can only be preserved and cultivated (...) if it continues to be sung and played as prayer, as a gesture glorifying God, in the place where it was born – in the Church's worship.²⁶⁴

Ratzinger's insight into the relationship between liturgy and music is complex. He asks:

Can liturgy accommodate real church music? Does it in fact demand it, or does it exclude it?²⁶⁵

Music does indeed have a place in the liturgy; in fact it takes a place of great responsibility. But it needs to be carefully regulated and reflected on – not so much by theology, argues Ratzinger, but from the perspective of historical Christian experience. It is within the church's tradition that music and liturgy have always been interacting and working through the inevitable tensions in their relationship. The five 'governing principles' Ratzinger presents are the result of his reflection on the issues concerning liturgical music that throughout the history of the church have arisen and have had to be worked through.

It may seem an interesting incongruence that on the one hand Ratzinger speaks about the validity of diversity within the church and endorses the view that all musical traditions are to be respected, and on the other hand he firmly excludes certain types of music from the church's worship. Apparently, what 'works' for a group of people is not necessarily what Ratzinger would say is good for them.

The evaluation of music in worship is not in the first place a musical matter. The main question is what the nature of worship is and how music fits in with that. Ratzinger's thinking

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 125.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 126.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 100.

starts with the church. Not in the first place with liturgical or musical data, but with the nature of the church itself as represented in its worship. The church exists for the glory of God; therefore music ought to be made for the glory of God. Whatever other functions it may have are secondary. The whole point in the history of the church is spiritualization, i.e.

bringing creation into the mode of being of the Holy Spirit and its consequent transformation, exemplified in the crucified and resurrected Christ.²⁶⁶

Therefore music should be part of that process and help us tune in to the mode of being of the Spirit.

That is why, as we already saw, Ratzinger is critical of the use of ethnic music in the liturgy. He writes:

If music is to be the medium of worship, it needs purifying; only then can it in turn have a purifying and “elevating” effect.²⁶⁷

He is particularly aware of the dangers of a music that, instead of elevating the senses into the realm of the Spirit, numbs the mind and serves as a way of releasing energy and escaping reality. Such music can even assume ‘a cultic character, a form of worship, in fact, in opposition to Christian worship.’²⁶⁸ The heart of Ratzinger’s argument is this:

Not every kind of music can have a place in Christian worship. It has its standards, and that standard is the Logos.²⁶⁹

Interesting is that Ratzinger probes into the properties of music itself and searches for a way to distinguish between types of music that are in themselves conducive to worship, and types of music that lack the necessary properties. He borrows the thought of Plato and Aristotle, who present a fundamental distinction between the Apollonian and the Dionysian in music. Music associated with the god Apollo is

the music that draws senses into spirit and so brings man to wholeness. (...) Thus this kind of music is an expression of man’s special place in the general structure of being.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 118.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 119.

²⁶⁸ Ratzinger 2000, p. 148.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 151.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 150.

On the contrary, Dionysian music is sensuous, intoxicating and damaging to a person. Ratzinger recognises that the distinction between rational and sensuous music is still valid today, if less strictly defined than it once was. It is clear to him that the Holy Spirit is on Apollo's side.

Alexander Schmemmann: letter and spirit

The work of Mary McGann and Joseph Ratzinger clearly shows that the valuation of music is linked with one's theological outlook and one's views on what the church and its liturgy are for. We must therefore reflect again on the question we asked earlier, how we 'read' the liturgy. When we try to read the music within it, we have to be well aware of how we 'read' it. Do we read music like a work of fiction or non-fiction? Do we consider it to be a beautifully crafted book of hours or a disposable newspaper? Do we stick to the letter as if it were a book of law, or do we read the music like a play, which only comes to life in performance? Are we prepared to put effort into interpreting and translating its original text, or would we rather have an abridged version in modern English?

In order to engage with these questions, I briefly turn away from the subject of music and return to the work of Alexander Schmemmann. Schmemmann is deeply concerned with the way the church orders its liturgy and the congruence or incongruence between liturgy and life. What the church does, reveals what it thinks it ought to be. The church's liturgy is its life and expresses her identity. So what would Schmemmann make of a church community such as the one Mary McGann studies, in which the church's liturgical practice so clearly emerges directly from the perceived corporate identity of the community, and even from the individuality of members within that community?

The sincerity of the Lourdes community and the way their liturgical actions are meaningful and resonate in 'real life' witness to one of Schmemmann's key beliefs, that the liturgy is there for the church and the church exists for the world. However, he makes a case for discernment in matters of local practice. He by no means advocates an approach to liturgy that is entirely prescriptive. Neither does he intend to stifle creativity. He does however make a case for a balanced approach to local variants in liturgy, tending towards that which the church as a whole, rather than the local congregation, has discerned to be a worthy form of service. He writes that the Ordo

can be neither a law requiring blind submission to the letter and nothing more, nor a good and ancient custom to be fulfilled only insofar as it corresponds to the “demands of the times” or to the taste of those who are praying. On the contrary the meaning of the Church’s liturgical life must be contained within the Ordo, insofar as it defines the general structure or “rite” of her worship. Torn away from this meaning, the Ordo becomes a lifeless and meaningless “law”. And if it is torn away from liturgical practice, the latter is surrendered to the mercy of the customs, tastes and whims of this or that epoch, making liturgical practice the expression of these customs and tastes but not of the Church in her spiritual and eternal vocation.²⁷¹

Schmemmann does not often write explicitly about music in the liturgy. That is not very surprising. After all, the context in which he works is that of the Orthodox liturgy, in which music and the word are so inextricably interwoven that speaking about music as if it were a separate entity would be almost ludicrous. Moreover, it is not just the fact that music is such a central part of Orthodox liturgy - it is the same with every component of the liturgy Schmemmann describes. Any discussion of a part necessarily takes place in the wider context of a discussion of the whole of the liturgy. So, in the spirit of what he writes about the liturgy as a whole, we can draw out some general rules that can be taken to apply to the music of the liturgy. For Schmemmann, there is no expression of church that is not also the expression of *the* Church. Therefore what is done in a church’s liturgy should be an instance, an embodiment, of the essence of the universal liturgy of the Church. Presumably Schmemmann would approve of any use of music that is faithful to that principle. The question remains what are the guiding principles by which to discern that faithfulness. What does it mean for music to express, not just the nature of an individual community, but the essence of the Church?

Schmemmann makes a simple but profound observation about liturgical music in his book *The Eucharist; Sacrament of the Kingdom*. Guiding the reader through the different parts of the celebration of the Eucharist, he describes the reading of the gospel, together with its accompanying rituals – the gospel procession, the singing of the alleluia verses and the censuring of the gospel. Ultimately, he writes, all the music of the church can be traced back to two types of singing, psalmodic and melismatic singing. They correspond with two basic ways of perceiving the nature of worship. In psalmodic singing (chanting in such a way that the words are clearly understood), the word takes precedence over the music. Thus the verbal nature of worship, its ‘inner subordination to the word: the holy scriptures, the apostolic

²⁷¹ Schmemmann 1966, p. 39.

witness, the tradition of faith', is expressed.²⁷² In melismatic singing (the singing of very few syllables set to very elaborate musical patterns), such as in the alleluias, the melody takes precedence over the words, and this corresponds with a different aspect of the perception of worship. Schmemmann writes:

Melismatic singing, however, expressed the experience of worship as a real contact with the *transcendent*, an entry into the supernatural reality of the kingdom. Whatever was the source of melismatic singing – and there are several scholarly theories about its origin – there is no doubt that in early Christian worship it occupied a significant place and that one of its chief expressions was precisely the singing of the *alleluia*. For this term itself is not simply a word, but a certain melodic exclamation. Its logical content can of course be translated with the words “praise God,” but by this content it is not exhausted and not in fact translated, for the word itself *is* a transport of joy and praise before the appearance of the Lord, a “reaction” to his coming.²⁷³

This explains both the form the utterance takes, that of a profoundly emotional cry,²⁷⁴ and the place it occupies in the liturgy. It precedes the reading of the gospel which is indeed the moment of encounter when the word of God arrives and is proclaimed in the midst of the congregation.

In this passage from Schmemmann's book on the Eucharist we find a historical statement combined with an observation about the nature of the sung alleluias and an explanation of their meaning – Schmemmann's preferred way of making sense of liturgical phenomena. In this brief exploration of the nature of one small musical element of the liturgy, the alleluia verses, Schmemmann uses the method he applies to the whole of the liturgy when he writes about the nature of the Ordo, the basic structure of worship. With respect to the Ordo, he asks three questions. Firstly, he wants to know what the nature of this basic structure of worship is, looking beyond the rules, regulations and texts at its inner dynamic. Secondly, he asks how this structure developed and what its origins are. And thirdly, he is concerned with the meaning of the Ordo – the theology expressed in and through the church's rule of prayer. Very importantly, his starting point is the liturgy as it is; he writes that

²⁷² Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), p. 75.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

²⁷⁴ Schmemmann refers to the anthropological work of Gerardus van der Leeuw here.

[i]n order to be true to its calling, liturgical theology must always draw its conclusions from the concrete data of the living tradition of worship, from the liturgical facts.²⁷⁵

Schmemmann stresses the fact that one does not do justice to a liturgical tradition by jumping to conclusions about the meaning of the liturgy without paying sufficient attention to the actual living reality of worship. But equally importantly, he doesn't just take these liturgical facts for granted; he investigates their origin and development and discerns their meaning.

In his description of the singing of the alleluia verses, Schmemmann presents that small musical part of the liturgy as a profound liturgical act. He takes into account its place in the overall structure of the liturgy of the Eucharist, its musical style, its history, its nature and its meaning. This is a good model for anyone seeking to describe the meaning of a particular musical component of liturgy. It helps us to find an answer to the question we asked before, 'what does it mean for music to express the essence of the Church?' To view a liturgical act such as the singing of the alleluias in the context of the liturgy as a whole reminds us of its place in the overall dynamic of the liturgy. An understanding of its musical style helps us to be aware of the kind of utterance it is. By tracing the history of its use we can discern its function and *raison d'être*. An awareness of the nature and meaning of a certain musical component of the liturgy can provide a guideline as to what type of musical expression might be appropriate. For music to express the essence of the church means both freedom and responsibility. Freedom, because as long as one is aware of the reason why a certain musical component is part of the liturgy there is room for different expressions of it, just as there is room for variation within the general framework of the liturgy; responsibility, because that which is expressed is not the opinion or taste of a certain person, community, time or place, but rather that which the Church as a whole is about.

Every valuation of music in worship will reflect how the balance between freedom of expression and responsibility towards tradition in the use of music is perceived. For Mary McGann, the stress might be more towards the freedom side of the scale. Her interest is in how a musical act is the individual expression of the nature of a community and the effect it has on the edification of that community. Joseph Ratzinger would find himself towards the other end of the scale, tracing the music used in liturgy back to its origins and drawing on the accumulated wisdom of a long tradition to discern which forms of music may be considered

²⁷⁵ Schmemmann 1966, p. 40.

to be a worthy offering from the church to God. His approach, too, is about the edification of the community; but whereas McGann seems to focus on a horizontal, community-building kind of edification, Ratzinger's is the search for asceticism, a communal ascent to the realm of the Spirit – a vertical movement. Schmemmann's work hints at a way of studying music that takes fully into account both the in-depth study of the origins of the music we use in worship and the role it fulfils within the liturgical gathering. His brief discussion of melismatic singing also gives us a clue as to why – despite Ratzinger's objections - there are examples of time-honoured, respected church music in which word and reason do not take precedence. If ever the Dionysian spirit crept into the church, it is was in those rousing, florid alleluias that were there even before the advent of polyphony, sung by the church because it sometimes just cannot contain the abundance of its praise.

The perception of worship: implications for ecclesiology

This exploration of three very different approaches to liturgical data gives rise to two important issues: our perception of worship and our perception of the church. How we answer questions regarding the nature of worship and of the church depends on who we ask. For Gordon Lathrop, for example, these questions are one and the same. People gather to be church, and being church is their worship.

Such a way of discussing church is not necessarily an exaggerated ritualism or a romantic idealization of past practices or a reflection intended only for the so-called liturgical churches. Every Christian community has a meeting for worship. It is to that meeting that ordinary English speech refers with such usages as “Do you go to church?” or “Church took a long time today.”²⁷⁶

The primary meaning of worship is in the gathering of people around the core Christian symbols and practices that make them church.

Christopher Ellis, writing from a Baptist perspective, finds that to make sense of Baptist worship one has to look for meaning in the interaction of the values which shape the worship and provide it with theological coherence, rather than in the relationships between the various components in an ‘order of service’. These values are attention to Scripture, the importance of personal devotion, the church community in which the worship takes place and the

²⁷⁶ Lathrop 1999, p. 6.

eschatological horizon which gives an outward- and forward-looking dimension to the worship.²⁷⁷ He also interestingly applies the three dimensions of worship as presented by the Roman Catholic liturgical theologian Kevin Irwin – the epicletic, the anamnestic and the ecclesiological – to Baptist worship. Shifting the focus away from Irwin’s Eucharistic understanding of worship, Ellis compares

his *anamnesis* with the Baptist attention to Scripture, *epiclesis* with the concern for devotion and the Spirit, and *ecclesiology* with the Baptist understanding of the Church as primarily manifested in the local congregation.²⁷⁸

Differences in the perception of worship exist across denominations, congregations and individuals. No two people participating in the same act of worship perceive it in exactly the same way, and individual churches have their own individual emphases. These reveal a lot about the actual views that are held about what the church is about and what, or whom, worship is for. Before I look at different perceptions of the nature of the church, I first want to know how people from different denominations perceive their worship in different ways.

The anthropologist and sociologist Martin Stringer has done research into the perceptions of worshippers in four different Christian congregations in Manchester – a Baptist congregation, a Roman Catholic one, an independent house church called the Independent Christian Fellowship and an Anglican church. His method is much the same as McGann’s, although he only spent six months with each congregation and his method of data collection varied considerably depending on the setup of the congregation he was studying at any given time. In his book *The Perception of Worship* he reflects at length on the process of gathering information by listening what people say about worship.²⁷⁹ He finds that they do not say a lot, and what they say is not necessarily what they really feel. In the end, the actual attitudes of people to worship as they are expressed in their behaviour prove to be almost more meaningful than their words.

In the Baptist church Stringer finds a warm welcome. The members of the congregation are very willing to talk. Their attitude towards the worship is attentive and active, despite the

²⁷⁷ Ellis, p. 73.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 75.

²⁷⁹ Stringer, Martin D., *On the Perception of Worship* (Birmingham: The University of Birmingham Press, 1999).

minister planning and conducting the service. They feel a sense of ownership of their church and a strong sense that they are members of that particular community by choice. There is also a part of the life of the community that goes on outside the worship and complements it.

The Roman Catholic congregation however is characterised not by a sense of community, but by a rather individualistic approach to worship by the worshippers. The people who have jobs to do, do them as per usual and those who attend the worship get out of it whatever they choose to get out of it – some participate and follow the service, others sit and reflect, and no one is around either before or after the service. People sing when they happen to like the songs, but if not, or if they do not know the songs, they do not sing, and that too is acceptable.²⁸⁰ Despite this seemingly indifferent attitude to what goes on during an act of worship, the people who attend insist that the mass is the most important part of their lives – they attend out of habit or a sense of tradition, and feel a stronger connection with the timeless, placeless event of attending mass than with the worshipping life of the local congregation.

The Independent Christian Fellowship could not have been more different. Many of its members live together, work with and for each other, and meet several times a week in a variety of groups. Everybody is expected to contribute to the worship, which takes place in a converted house where the pastor, his family and several other church members live, and while there are a pastor and elders, the setup is such that there is no clear focus for leadership. The worship does not have a set structure. It consists of hymns, choruses, prayers, ‘words’ (spoken by an individual in the first person as if by God) and testimonies in no particular order, although in an orderly, composed manner. There is also often a sermon and an informal sharing of bread and wine with no form of ritual attached to it. The community welcomes Stranger and individuals are very eager to share their faith and their conversion experiences, but they do not approve of any form of recording or note-taking and expect full participation, which makes research difficult. The community is close-knit, yet the worship has something non-corporate about it; the worship consists of members making their own individual contributions and there is the constant background noise of people murmuring private prayers or speaking quietly in tongues.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 116.

Stringer's first impression of the Anglican community is that of discontinuity and inconsistency. The discontinuity manifests itself in the abundance of festivals, rites for special occasions and self-contained liturgical units in worship; the fact that each act of worship seems to be different from all the others. The inconsistency lies in the fact that individual beliefs of the congregation don't necessarily match with the church's official teaching and that there is a variety of popular beliefs and practices that could be called forms of superstition. Worship is characterized by bold ritual statements that involve all the senses. All bring their own particular gifts into worship, there is a great sense of celebration and the worship overflows into everyday life in the community with its various social concerns. The church community consists of three very different congregations which claim to be mutually tolerant and inclusive but in reality are very much separate entities.

Stringer's analysis of these congregations focuses very much on the individual understanding (or lack of it) that participants have of the worship they attend. He argues that in each of these congregations the memory of past experience, corporate or individual, plays an important role. He finds that

worship 'works' primarily through the memory of past experience. What is essential in worship is its repetition over a number of weeks, months, or years. The constant replaying of the same sequence within the worship, whether highly organised as within the Roman Catholic church, or totally unorganised but with common themes as within the Independent Christian Fellowship, allows the individual to build up a store of memory around a particular series of ideas, images and statements. (...) What is important for the understanding of worship is the recall of experience, and the drawing together of disparate memories within the scope of that experience, so giving a special significance to all other memories.²⁸¹

Stringer's intention has been from the start to find some kind of 'common ground' between very different types of worship experiences. He finds that memory plays an important role in the way these experiences are perceived. Because the experience of worship is part of an ongoing process, there appears to be very little common ground between the different groups he studies. The individual experiences of the worshippers are shaped by the very different identities of their churches.

²⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 193f.

I would like to go a step further and reflect on Stringer's findings in a slightly different way, asking what images of church emerge from these different perspectives on worship. For this it is helpful to introduce Avery Dulles' models of the church.²⁸² Apart from applying these to Stringer's findings, I will also invite Mary McGann, Joseph Ratzinger and Alexander Schmemmann back into the discussion and ask where they fit in. Finally, I will explore the relationship between their 'model of the church' and their views on the music within that church's worship. It should be clear that 'the church' means many different things to many different people – and, indeed, churches. The use of models and images to draw out different aspects of the nature of the church is nothing new or particularly controversial. I think, however, that it is the most constructive way of having a conversation about those things which unite the Church and divide the churches.

Dulles notes that the use of images in ecclesiology is biblical (the New Testament speaks about the church nearly exclusively in images) and has had a place in reflection on the nature of the church throughout the church's history. It is a positive way of dealing with the fact that the church is a mystery and that the categories we normally use to describe the world around us do not seem to apply to the church.²⁸³ He also rightly states that

[t]o be fully effective, images must be deeply rooted in the corporate experience of the faithful. (...) The manufacturing of supplementary images goes on wherever the faith is vital. (...) In religious education a constant effort must be made to find images that faithfully communicate the Christian experience of God.²⁸⁴

A model is not quite the same as an image. A model can be an image which 'is employed reflectively and critically to deepen one's theoretical understanding of a reality'²⁸⁵ (Dulles gives as examples the images of the church as temple, vine or flock), or it can be more abstract than an image (for example, institution, society or community).

Dulles initially limits the number of models he discusses to what he calls the five basic models. They are the church as institution, the church as mystical communion, the church as sacrament, the church as herald and the church as servant. In the later, expanded edition of his book, he describes his search for a model that would integrate these five models, and he adds

²⁸² Dulles, Avery, *Models of the Church, Expanded Edition* (New York: Doubleday, 2002).

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-18.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 19f.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

a sixth, the church as community of disciples. None of these models in itself does justice to the full reality of the church. One needs all of these models (and more) to make sense of the church. Any given church will exhibit some traits of each model, but have its own emphases. Together they make up the complex reality of the life of the church which can only be described using a multiplicity of models and images, all of which a balanced theology of the church must incorporate.

According to the institutional vision of the church, the identity of the church is expressed in its visible structures. The church is seen as an independent and perfect society, self-sufficient and standing far above any other society. It exists for its members, whom it promises eternal life. Its members are those who adhere to its teaching, are admitted to take part in the sacraments and subject themselves to those in authority in the church. With the church lie the powers to teach, sanctify and govern. The fact that only a few within the church are called to exercise these powers means that the church is not a society of equals.²⁸⁶

While the church as institution is characterised by its visibility, the church as mystical communion is a model that stresses the interior bonds of fellowship that bind the church together. This communion is given by the Holy Spirit and manifests itself in mutual care and concern among members. Within this model, two images are most prominent: those of the Body of Christ and the People of God. They are very similar in their democratic tendency, their emphasis on the way the Holy Spirit directs the church and their focus on mutual service and community, the principal difference being that the image of the People of God suggests more individual freedom for its members.

The third model, the church as sacrament, offers a more dynamic picture of the church. Whilst not denying the importance of the church's outward structures and interior relationships, it does not define the church by them; rather, it portrays the church as an event. A sacrament being a sign of grace, the church actualises itself when it serves as a channel for grace.

The Church therefore confers the grace that it contains, and contains it precisely as conferring it.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 31-42.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 65.

This may take many different forms, as the church ‘incarnates itself’ differently at any given time in any given place.

In the fourth model, the church as herald, the church does not actualise itself by channelling grace but by a linguistic event: the proclamation of the word. The word is that around which the assembly gathers, and it is their primary vocation. The church as herald is a church that points away from itself, to the message it is called to proclaim. The church is focused on God’s Kingdom, which it announces as an eschatological reality rather than trying to realise it in this world. The boundaries of the church are extended to incorporate anyone who comes to believe the word and thus is saved.

The church may also be regarded as the servant of the world. In all the models mentioned before, the church is seen as a kind of mediator between God and the world in one form or another. Servant ecclesiology explores the role of the church in modern secular society in which the world no longer looks to the church for such mediation. The role of such a church would not be proclamation of the word or traditional forms of worship, but being in the world, discerning and affirming God’s presence there. The mission of the servant church is to transform the world itself into the Kingdom of God.

The sixth model, the church as community of disciples, was added to build bridges between the first five models. It traces the nature of the church right back to its roots, the first followers of Jesus, and their relationship with Jesus and each other, in contrast to society. The concept of discipleship is inclusive and flexible, and above all, it finds its meaning in the following of Jesus himself. As Dulles writes,

The Church is never more Church than when it gathers at the feet of the Master, as occurs in liturgy. [...] Every sacrament is a transaction between the living Lord and the community of the disciples.²⁸⁸

The different perceptions of worship that Martin Stringer identified in the various congregations he studied can be traced back to different perceptions of the nature of the church. None of the congregations fully embodies any one of the models of church, but they all tend towards stressing aspects of one more than the others. The Baptist church, for

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 206.

example, is very much community-focused as in the ‘mystical communion’ model, but also stresses the centrality of the word in all their worship, as in the ‘herald’ model. The Roman Catholic worship combines the institutional model and the model of the church as sacrament. The worshippers gather at the event of the mass through which they receive grace (as in the sacramental model), and that event is provided for them, as relatively passive recipients, by a church which exists to provide for the faithful.

Although the Independent Christian Fellowship is perhaps right at the other end of the spectrum ecclesologically, it too shows certain characteristics of the institutional model, especially that of the church being a self-contained, perfect society – but in this case it is the individual community, rather than the church as a whole, which makes up that society. It is, however, a far from hierarchical society, and the nature of the interaction between members of the community and the spirit-led worship suggest a strong tendency towards the ‘mystical communion’ model. The kerygmatic function of the church is certainly present, but it is directed inwards, at the own community, as opposed to the outward mission of the model of the church as herald.

The Anglican congregation shows clear signs of functioning along the lines of the sacramental model. What rings true in particular is that, as Dulles describes it, ‘[w]herever the grace of Christ is present, it is in search of a visible form that adequately expresses what it is.’²⁸⁹

The Anglican congregation, with all its different festivals, customs, symbolic acts, types of services and different smaller congregations seems to be constantly searching for ways to make God’s grace present. Meanwhile, some elements of the institutional model can also be seen, and the church’s attentiveness to its social and cultural setting hints at aspects of the model of the church as servant.

All these very different communities have in common that their worship is an exploration of ways to express their identity. They are not just looking for a corporate identity, but exploring what it means to be the church. Even communities such as the Independent Christian Fellowship, which seem to distance themselves from the wider church, express an ecclesiology in doing that: the view that the church is called to be perfect and set apart from the rest of society.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 66.

Music: reading between the lines of worship

The questions asked by all the theologians we have met so far in this chapter all come down to the one question, ‘What is worship about?’ Joncas’ exploration of twentieth-century ecclesial documents about music seeks to clarify how and why it is that a changing church has to spend so much time and effort reflecting on the role of music in its liturgy. McGann’s writings draw the reader into her vivid descriptions of a worship experience that cannot be done justice by just a scholarly analysis. Ratzinger explores the fine balance between the safe and sacred confines of tradition and the openness called for by the present circumstances in which the church finds itself. Schmemmann’s work is a quest for the essence of worship, the spirit behind the letter of the liturgy. Stringer struggles with the fact that it seems to be so difficult for people to communicate their experience of worship in any meaningful way, and wants to know why. Dulles’ typology of the church is a way of trying to get a handle on an ecclesial reality that is frustratingly elusive and varied, and in which the common practice of worship seems so hard to describe and define. Now we have to take this question one step further and ask whether the work of these theologians brings us any closer to an understanding not just of what worship is about, but of what music in worship is about.

When we look at the community McGann studies and the church Ratzinger envisages, it is clear that the ecclesial models implied in their approaches are quite different. McGann is keen to stress the event-character of worship and the fact that liturgical music unfolds in the context of a ritual and as ritual.²⁹⁰ Every new act of worship is an act by which the local community redefines and reaffirms itself, and as such constitutes the church. Whilst McGann focuses on notions of event or performance and community, Ratzinger ‘zooms out’, as it were. The music which features in the church’s liturgy is not a reflection of this particular community’s ecclesial identity here and now, but the product of the church’s lifelong process of reflection and refinement. Whereas for McGann Christian ritual and its music reflect the plurivocality of the cosmos, for Ratzinger they reflect the order of the Spirit. The model of the church as institution in which Ratzinger is firmly rooted, with its hierarchical approach to music, seems to treat music much like a matter between the church and God, leaving the worshippers in a more or less passive position. The relationships expressed in the music of the Lourdes community, however, are human relationships as well as relationships with the divine –

²⁹⁰ McGann 2002, p. 35.

In ritual events, then, music making is a way in which a community expresses and actualizes itself as a social body.²⁹¹

Perhaps the biggest difference between these two approaches is exactly the relationship between ecclesiology and music in the thinking of McGann and Ratzinger. For McGann, the musical worship event appears to take on the function of a playing field in which views and experiences to do with the nature of the church can be explored. It is the place where ecclesiology is made. The whole ordering of the music making, both in form and content, seems to be an implicit ecclesiology. For Ratzinger, it is clear that the church's official ecclesiology should govern the use of music in worship. This is where Ratzinger's approach also differs from Schmemmann's. Schmemmann, as liturgical theologian, holds that liturgy is *theologia prima*, and worship constitutes the church. Ratzinger's is a deductive theology of liturgy more than what Schmemmann would consider to be a liturgical theology. His thought takes him from theological truth to liturgical consequence, from beliefs about the nature of music to their implementation in the church's worship.²⁹² Whilst Ratzinger and Schmemmann share a deep interest in and respect for the historical development of the liturgy, Schmemmann appears to have found a healthier balance between an understanding of the past and the living reality of the liturgy and its music.

Reading the church

We have seen that the fact that the church is a music-making church says something about its theology and its worship. It shows that the church reflects on God and addresses God with its heart as well as its mind. It is clear that different communities have their own emphases, governed by both their theology and their practice. These different emphases in the way music is used and ordered in worship shape the communal life of a church community.

In his article *Ecclesiology and Church Music: Towards a Possible Relationship*, Sven-Erik Brodd talks about

possible ecclesiological categories that may be hidden in church music itself, in its performance and in the way it is organized.²⁹³

²⁹¹ Ibid., p. 25.

²⁹² Cf. Ellis, p. 14.

²⁹³ Brodd, p. 128.

He gives a few examples of these areas in which the study of music can be of importance to ecclesiology – although, he says, he is rather a pioneer in that area, so far there has been no substantial systematic study of ecclesiological categories in music, and the list is not meant to be exhaustive. The categories he discusses in some detail in his article are the general concepts of edification and communion. After that he looks more specifically at the church's catholicity and unity and at the way the ordering of church music may be analogous to actual ecclesial structures, which he illustrates with examples from the baroque period. Edification, communion, catholicity and ecclesial structures are some very central concepts in ecclesiology, and, as Brodd shows, they are also central to the practice of liturgical music-making.

Since their appearance in the Nicene creed of 325 AD, the four marks (or notes) of unity, sanctity, catholicity and apostolicity have traditionally been used to characterise the church. These are the marks that give the church its identity. Sven-Erik Brodd already gives us a flavour of how music can be a way into exploring the church's unity and catholicity.²⁹⁴ It is also possible to say that the church's holiness and apostolicity are expressed in music. I will look at the four marks of the church through the lens of music.

As the marks of the church are so essential to the church's identity, they overlap. In his book *The Catholicity of the Church*, Avery Dulles explores the church's catholicity as the overarching reality which includes the other characteristics of the church. Dulles imagines the catholicity of the church as a structure of which different aspects of catholicity are the dimensions. There is a vertical aspect to the church's catholicity which is made up by its height and its depth. To use the analogy of height means to view the church in the light of the identity it receives 'from above', from God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The church also receives its catholicity 'from below', from its rootedness in its members' common humanity and God's call to be a church in the world. The church's catholicity finds its breadth in its unity-in-diversity and the plurality of its 'incarnations' across continents, languages, cultures and so on. The length of the church's catholicity means its length in time, and its transcendence of any barriers of time.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 134-137.

²⁹⁵ Avery Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 106 *et passim*.

It seems to me that within these axes of catholicity the other marks of the church find their place as well. The church's *unity* is implied in the whole concept of catholicity; after all, the immense dimensions of the church in all its four directions still form one and the same church, extended in time and space. The church's *sanctity* is what it receives 'from above'; its rootedness in something more than mundane. Its *apostolicity* extends both in time and space; going back to the tradition of the apostles, but also being an incentive to spread the word and engage with the world in new, diverse ways. Hans Küng also talks about the dimensions of the church in this way, mentioning the breadth of catholicity and the long roots of apostolicity.²⁹⁶

The church's catholicity is evident in the fact that its music is as wildly diverse as human society itself. Music of different cultures, places, centuries, idioms and temperaments finds its place in the church, performed on a variety of instruments, organised in countless different ways. Frank Burch Brown welcomes this diversity when he writes that

within the framework of Christian theology overall, the arts of worship need to be able somehow to encompass, or at least acknowledge and represent symbolically, the full range of religious and moral experience – from the relatively mundane to the sublimely elevated or horribly abysmal. They need to do so in such a way that the reality and hope of transformation and liberation (which together comprise salvation in the largest sense) becomes new and efficacious within the lives of the gathered people.²⁹⁷

This sentiment is not shared by everyone, as we have already seen, for example in Ratzinger's discussion of music's need for 'spiritualisation'. Catholicity, however, does not mean uniformity. On the contrary, it is best expressed in the deepest possible unity in the greatest possible diversity. This calls for respect, rather than competition. Avery Dulles gives the example (borrowed from Johann Adam Möhler) of a choir. A choir needs a variety of voices to be able to make an interesting sound, but it needs to keep the sound together without anyone acting like a prima donna. It is the choir master's task to maintain the balance whilst bringing out the best in every individual voice and making sure that a 'contrasting' voice does not become a 'contradicting' voice.²⁹⁸ The challenge for the church here is to respect different forms of music and accept them as necessary for a church that is able to speak to all cultures

²⁹⁶ Küng, p. 359.

²⁹⁷ Burch Brown, p. 184 .

²⁹⁸ Dulles 1985, p. 78.

and traditions, whilst making sure that its music serves the purpose and the need of the church as a whole.

It is in their common goal that all types of liturgical music express the church's unity. They may serve different purposes in worship; for example, a children's song may be used to enable the children to join in the singing and to teach them about the bible, whilst an organ voluntary or some quiet background music by a worship band may intend to set the mood for worship, a series of worship songs may allow the congregation to express their joy, their penitence, or their faith, and an anthem or solo piece may be a focus for reflection. But the goal of all music used in church, whether it be Gregorian chant or jazz, is to serve the purpose of worship. The church is a church that makes music together; there is no better way of illustrating its unity in diversity than that.

Unity is also expressed on a much smaller scale, in individual churches. Music creates its own time and draws participants and listeners into a world of its own. It unifies and structures a community's acts of worship. Ecclesial power structures and social rules can also often be discerned through their musical expression. Brodd, for instance, gives the example of the controversy surrounding the participation of women in liturgical chanting and finds that this is, in essence, partly an ecclesiological debate.²⁹⁹ It shows an idea of church in which some people are deemed 'worthy' of actively participating in the singing and others are not, the dividing line being their gender.

By contrast, a church can show its inclusivity in a very powerful way through its music, as Mary McGann illustrates. In the African American community she describes,

[t]he whole assembly is assumed to be essential to the Gospel style of music making (...) The relationships that are actualized in musical performance, among musical leaders and within the whole performing assembly, are highly reciprocal and interactive in character – a continuous and complex form of "call and response."³⁰⁰

This inclusive and interactive vision of church is created by a variety of musical styles in which people assume different roles and everyone's input is valued and expected. Throughout the history of the church, changes in the regulation of music in the church have mirrored

²⁹⁹ Brodd, p. 131.

³⁰⁰ McGann 2002, p. 76.

changes in actual ecclesial structures. By looking at the way the church's music-making is ordered, it is possible to discern the kind of communion the church wants to be seen as – hierarchical or egalitarian, top-down or bottom-up, institutionalised or inculturated.

On a wider scale, community is not just the fellowship between people gathered for worship, between churches and denominations, or even across the worldwide church. As Brodd notes, it is also a fellowship across the ages, and not just including the church from its beginning up till now, but also its origins in Judaism and its future life in heaven.³⁰¹ Interestingly, he finds that this ability of music to transcend the boundaries of time and space is rooted in the spiritual dimension it brings to the church. By virtue of its ability to engage directly with the emotions, any kind of music, whether with or without words, can expand the listener's world to include a sense of fellowship that transcends time and space.

The two remaining 'axes' of the catholicity of the church, its sanctity and its apostolicity, can also be found reflected in its music. Certain types of church music, such as Renaissance polyphony, seem to have been written with the sole purpose of expressing the holiness, the 'otherness', of God in sound. It is no wonder that the church regards such music as God-given, and urges that music in worship should be directed towards God. Such a 'vertical' view of music implies a God who will not settle for less than the best. This can be expressed in the view that ministers of music are to be 'set apart', so that the impression is given that God is a God who meets us in perfection and greatness. But music also shows us that holiness is something shared by the church. Music-making does not just express God's holiness, but also sanctifies the worshippers; that should be its primary aim. Gordon Lathrop writes,

The music is for the sake of the meeting and its central purposes. The mysterious power of song, pulling heart and mind into harmony, proposing order, making room for dissonance and for single voices within a final resolution and a pervasive community, suggesting transcendence with its sometimes unearthly sounds, must be broken. In the Christian meeting, such power ought not to exist for itself or for the enhancement of the power of the performers. Just as with place and time, Christians are interested in the existence of the sacred in music, but there is no specifically sacred Christian music.³⁰²

³⁰¹ Brodd, p. 133.

³⁰² Lathrop 1993, p. 112.

Finally, the apostolicity of the church may be illustrated by music in a similar way: by the fact that music has deep roots, and its purpose is ultimately missionary. The church finds its apostolicity in the fact that its traditions are handed down, from the first beginnings with the apostles via the whole history of the church to the present day. Apostolicity implies faithfulness and continuity, but also change. The whole history of church music running alongside the history of the church itself is one of negotiating the old and the new. The church's music has always been constantly juggling the need to communicate afresh with new generations and the challenge to remain faithful to the ways of the church.

It seems clear that music is able to express these ecclesial structures and relationships, and church musicians and composers use this ability of music deliberately and creatively. But a claim also made by authors such as Mary McGann is that music actively helps create and transform those structures and relationships. I already asked the question whether music is actually effective. The composer James MacMillan, answers that question positively by saying that music reaches the heart of our being and sparks life.³⁰³ Life in ourselves, but also life in our relationships and in our communities. This is what Mary McGann refers to when she mentions (in a phrase borrowed from Mary Collins) the 'redemptive reordering of relationships' she witnesses during her time with the Lourdes community.³⁰⁴ She expands on the reordering power of music when she writes,

Words, songs, prayers, and gestures are transformed into collective action, communal transactions, by the flow of acclamations spoken/shouted by members of the assembly. The community-ordered-to-wholeness is especially evident in moments of music-making, as diverse models of participation are held in creative tension with ecclesial solidarity in the act of giving praise.³⁰⁵

As all liturgy finds its significance and its purpose beyond itself, it is potentially transformative:

A pattern is clear: our old words and actions are made to speak a new grace. Just as the rich hopes and symbols of people of the first century became materials that were transformed into ways early Christians spoke of Christ, so our gatherings, our actions and words, our hopes, are also drawn into the same transformation.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ MacMillan, p. 36; see above, p. 38.

³⁰⁴ McGann 2004, p. 266.

³⁰⁵ McGann 2004, p. 266.

³⁰⁶ Lathrop 1993, pp. 23f.

The whole of the liturgy is involved in this process of transformation: every liturgical action, gesture, text and sound contributes. Music does not just record and express the ordering and reordering of a community; it also enables it. As Frank Burch Brown writes, music is not just a reflection of individual and communal identity, it adds something new to it as well. It may be a way of exploring it and stimulating its growth and development. He writes that

if the bonds between people were not both expressed and created in arts like music, neither would those bonds be experienced the same way. Music is not just a sign of the differences between different groups; it is one of the ways of establishing those differences and of showing that they matter. Neither is music just a sign of the blessed ties that bind; it is one of the ways of making those ties binding and blessed to begin with.³⁰⁷

Burch Brown notes that churches are places with a complex aesthetic, religious and social makeup where musical choices are seen to matter greatly. A church's choice of musical styles sends out a host of messages about its tradition, its temperament, its inclusivity and so forth. The same goes for a church's choice of musical instruments and the repertoire that comes with it. When it comes to the community's views and attitudes, the use of inclusive language in hymns is also a cue.

Each choice is also a particular exercise of taste that suggests, rightly or wrongly, something about the ethos of a church, its theological mindset and spirituality, its social commitments, its predominant economic and racial mix, its "target" age groups.³⁰⁸

Of course it is not the case that a worshipping community changes overnight when new music is introduced, or that there has to be a complete consensus about every single musical decision. Ideally, a community and its music grow together organically and democratically – and where this is not the case and a community does not inhabit its music, it is easily spotted. Reflecting on the methodology of her research with the Lourdes community, Mary McGann takes as her starting point the fact that relationships as expressed in the community's music are in accordance with the reality of the relationships in the community. Her aim is

to come to know the music as we come to know the community – that is, as we learn the complex relationships that are mediated in the community's life and in its liturgical-musical performance.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁷ Burch Brown, p. 163.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 163.

³⁰⁹ McGann 2002, p. 39.

She sees that worship, music and community are inseparable:

Worship and its music are performed theology precisely because they express embodied relationality – they actualize and manifest the spiritual, ecclesial, eschatological, and ecological relationships that express and create a community's identity.³¹⁰

However, making music together as a church is not just about expressing a state of affairs or keeping a community happy; it is also about creating a community that works, and changing states of affairs that are not right. We hear an echo of McGann's notion of a 'redemptive reordering of relationships' in the words of Paul Westermeyer when he makes the bold statement:

Music in worship embodies right relationships. (...) The relational implications of music lead to the doing of justice and peace.³¹¹

This view of music, as Westermeyer shows, has far-reaching consequences. It means, first of all, that we cannot use music as a drug, an escape from reality. If in music we have to speak the truth, it can be hard work and ask for a disciplined approach, and those who are involved in planning and performing music have a huge responsibility. There are great dangers involved in using music lightly:

If relations in our worship are incomplete and skewed, we can be sure our relations in the world will follow suit. (...) The relation between art and justice is not a verbal business. It has to do with the "non-discursive" realities of art, with connections, surprise, realities words cannot express, emotions in a healthy – not the usual superficial – sense. (...) If our worship and its music are shoddy and poorly prepared, our public witness for justice and peace beyond worship may be taken just as lightly.³¹²

The music the church makes matters, because just like its liturgy, it is an 'icon'. Through it, people are able to see the church: what people believe, how they relate to one another, to God and to their environment, and how they let their faith shape their lives outside the walls of the church.

³¹⁰ Ibid., p. 38.

³¹¹ Westermeyer 1998a, pp. 89f.

³¹² Westermeyer 1998a, pp. 88, 90.

Conclusion: Ecclesiology in a music-making church

We have seen in the work of McGann and Ratzinger that the same pastoral questions about the place of music-making in the church's liturgy can be answered very differently by different theologians and different communities, depending on their theological and ecclesiological priorities. McGann's work reveals the kind of dynamic and building-up of the people that is possible when music is seen as the 'work of the people' and an expression of the joint personality of a particular community. In Ratzinger we find the same pastoral concern addressed very differently: by striving for an edification that is an education into the Spirit according to tried and trusted principles. In Schmemmann's work we find these two poles integrated, and we are reminded that what Christopher Ellis writes about worship, 'inductive reflection will also need critical and deductive scrutiny,' is also very true of music.³¹³

People's perceptions of worship and the church and their approaches to music in worship mutually influence each other. Communities negotiate, consciously or not, between the ecclesiology of the wider church and the ways in which they themselves create an identity. If, as I argued in the first chapter, the church actualises itself in its worship, it will in some way communicate through its music what it is about – as a church, and as the church. We saw in the second chapter that there are a number of theological functions that music fulfils. The way these theological functions are applied to a community's worship is a key to understanding its dynamics. McGann observes in the community she studies that the people have a sense of ownership of their music and its theological purposes. Ratzinger is equally conscious of the theological significance of music and believes that the church should therefore supervise its use. Kubicki shows, by using the example of Taizé, how music which naturally emerges from the life of a particular community is able to shape its life to such an extent that the music becomes that community's way of being itself before God and the world.

Music shapes the church because it embodies its relationships - relationships inside the church and relationships of the church with the world - and it orders and reorders those relationships. It is able to do so because it is a form of theology and it is in itself worship. It is a shared activity done by a community to give voice to its deepest needs – the need to worship their God and to do so together. In its music, at its best, the church can not only see itself, but also

³¹³ Ellis, p. 15.

be itself. For this to happen, a lot of negotiation has to be done; but it is precisely in that negotiation and adjustment that a lot of the liturgical-theological work of communities is done.³¹⁴

Conclusion

In this study I have aimed to find a way of looking at the music the church makes, through which the church as a whole and individual church communities express who they are in relation to God, the world and each other. I have been more interested in the research process than in its actual findings. Both music and ecclesiology are complex areas of study, and finding a way to navigate them is an object of study in itself.

In the first chapter I looked at how contemporary developments in the study of liturgy have helped us to understand the church's worship better. We can only understand liturgy if we look at it from the church's perspective and take into account its relevance for the world as a whole. Similarly, the church's music cannot be studied in isolation but has to be understood as an integral part of the liturgy, a way for the church to express and establish its identity, both internally and with a view to serving the wider community.

I then looked at the particularities of music as a medium and liturgical music-making as an activity and an event. Music is very versatile and can serve many purposes. Theologically there are many functions music can fulfil within a liturgical celebration; music is a liturgical language rather than a component of liturgy. Music is also a form of worship in itself and is therefore both a very personal and a shared activity. The church reveals its theological and ecclesiological attitudes in the ways it finds to negotiate and regulate the use of music in its worship.

In the final chapter I started off by engaging with thinkers who approach music in the church very differently, yet share the same Roman Catholic tradition. The diversity of the church's approaches to music is significant, as this points to a diversity in theology and ecclesiology.

³¹⁴ See the quotes of Fagerberg on p. 16: 'God shapes the community in liturgical encounter, and the community makes theological adjustment to this encounter, which settles into ritual form' (Fagerberg, p. 9.), and Kavanagh on p. 18: 'It is the *adjustment* which is theological in all this. I hold that it is theology being born, theology in the first instance' (Kavanagh, p. 74).

An in-depth study of a congregation and its musical practices can be very useful in understanding its identity as a church. Music can also shed light on the nature of the church as a whole and illuminate and influence relationships within the church community as well as relationships of the church with its (secular) environment.

The catholicity of the church is expressed not only in the variety of musical forms, but also in the fact that music-making unifies and sanctifies the church, as well as in its potential for mission. Among the many challenges for the study of ecclesiology through music remains the dialogue between the local and universal church, and the search for theological integrity on both levels. Music, as a theological tool embedded in Christian communities' liturgical life, can help the church to understand itself and to be itself.

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