

MARYVALE INSTITUTE

**THE IMPACT OF SACRED MUSIC UPON
THE FAITHFUL**

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**THE IMPACT OF SACRED MUSIC UPON
THE FAITHFUL**

**TO WHAT EXTENT DOES SACRED MUSIC (PRE
OR POST VATICAN II) PROVIDE A DEEPER
ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST AND THE
LITURGY?**

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INTRODUCTION

Awake, my soul! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn! I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. For your steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds [Psalm 57: 8-10]

What is it about music that is so powerful, transcendent and mystifying that it can seem to almost ‘awaken’ something within us? The sound of a beautiful voice, or the resonance of strings in harmony seem to change the atmosphere of a room in an instant and cause us to move out of ourselves to consider this external manifestation that has, seemingly, impacted us from deep within. Yet, what does it actually really mean to be ‘awoken within’ and can we find meaning in this mystery? Why is it that the Psalmist cries out so earnestly to the harp and lyre to praise God with him in celebration, having escaped the pit? Why is it that the first thing the Israelites do when they cross the Red Sea is to sing? How can we truly sing to God simply for who He is and what He has done for us? Additionally, how do such profound experiences fit into more formal contexts such as Church, where the use of music and song is fulfilled to the highest capacity of function when "more closely connected . . . with the liturgical action? [CCC1157]

The unanswered questions above formed the embryonic reasoning to research this in light of a Catholic liturgical inquisition. Something outstanding and potent seems to belong to music and I believe it needs almost *constant* re-assessing and evaluation if we are to truly appreciate (and continue to appreciate) not just the effect that sacred music can have on us in light of a piece of music we like, but how and in what way sacred music can directly impact our life in Christ and our relationship with his Church, irrelevant (though not always exclusive) of our personal taste or appreciation of music.

The dilemma of this research then is not so much to address what kind of music should or shouldn’t be used in the liturgy (as this study has been done numerous times), my main preoccupation will be;

1. How do certain types of sacred music offer a knowledge of, and encounter with Christ, his Church, and the heavenly liturgy?

2. How do certain types of sacred music offer a way of drawing towards "the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful"? [CCC 1157]
3. To what extent has this been the case over the years?
4. If there is a methodical, theological, philosophical way in which to gauge this?
5. If there is a particular response we need to have as both priest and laity in light of these discoveries?

I believe this work is important as the debate over liturgical reform has caused a great split in the Church, and I believe searching to discover what it is to encounter Christ in the liturgy (through sacred music) is a healthy angle to approach this, as, for many, it is not just a case of personal taste in music, but a matter of salvation.

I am also drawn to this area of research due to both a personal interest as an active musician and songwriter in the Church myself.

Aims and Objectives

The project's aim is to learn the relationship between the laity, the liturgy, sacred music and Christ and whether certain forms of music have any correlation to provide a greater or lesser encounter with Christ and the liturgy. I aim to look at this through a short slice of history (early man up to the counter-reformation). The objective, therefore, will be to identify ways in which music can be practiced in parishes so as to serve the liturgy more profoundly and accurately and provide the faithful with a way in which to grow deeper in their relationship with Christ.

Catechetical Methodology

The methodology for this research will be, primarily desk-based, literature research using theologians, Church Fathers, scripture and doctrine on liturgy, aesthetics, anthropology, and scriptural exegesis as well as an unstructured interview with a professional to help either affirm or challenge my findings from the literature.

CHAPTER 1: MUSIC AND CHURCH HISTORY

This section will cover a semi-historical; and scriptural overview for looking at the relationship between man, music and divine sanctification in order to try and gradually draw towards an understanding of this related to a liturgical expression. In doing so I hope to present a blueprint from which we can build a more authentic and successful relationship between the music itself (often subjective) and an encounter with Christ and sanctification through the liturgy.

Part 1

Early Man: The Potency of Music

Sacred music in the Church's tradition is of "inestimable value" [SC 112] (especially in relation to its function in the liturgy) but the force and power of music have been felt through time and has consistently been related to that which connects us with an 'other', the 'divine'. Tribal, outdated and uncivilised as it may seem, man's desire for God, written in the human heart [CCC 26] is the motivator (known or unknown) for man's actions. No less so in terms of the use of music. What is more, man has linked the use of music to that of a relationship with 'good' or 'bad' spirits, namely, that certain types of music can connect with and relate to goodness (which we might call 'holy', 'divine', or 'sacred') and other types that connect with evil (which we might call 'profane', 'unholy', or 'earthly'). Man has an innate understanding as to the effect of music on one's inner life. Early man had a simple but nonetheless profound notion that "good music fosters virtue, while bad music fosters vice".¹ Every age has linked the bad and good effect that music can have, not just on oneself but on whole communities. Of interest, I draw us to an ancient account regarding a musician called Timotheus who was cast out of the city.² He was said to have:

deformed the majesty of our antient music and laying aside the use of the feven-fringed lyre, and introducing a multiplicity of notes, endeavours to corrupt the ears of our youth by means of therfe his novel and complicated conceits".³

¹ User, S. (2015). The Moral Power of Music. [online] Catholiceducation.org. Available at: <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/music/the-moral-power-of-music.html> [Accessed 20 May 2018].

² Doctrinal theme, 2017, Maryvale

³ Hawkins, John. General history of the science and practice of music in five volumes. [S.L.], Hansebooks, 2016, Pg.219

Whilst this may seem harsh for today's standards, the question as to how sacred music provides an encounter with Christ can be extended throughout all ages under the focus of divine revelation. I would argue that whilst most people understand the value and beauty of music in general, many have lost the understanding of the power with which music can actually and truly link us to the divine. This is all to say, as Richard Viladesau notes in his work 'Theology and the Arts'⁴ that "the association of music with the sacred is taken for granted in the religious sense of most Christians."⁵ We then must urge, not to return to the music of the past in order to recapture raw musical practice, but collate a fuller appreciation standing on the shoulders of the past. It was by no means a primitive era for early man in terms of creative genius. The skill and beauty of man's intricate composition are evidenced as far back as 2500 BC,⁶ yet, we might imagine a reserved simplicity in ancient man's understanding of the raw mystical power of music. The role of ritual in early man was mystical yet also a natural and holistic celebration of life, marriage, and death.⁷ Woven into this ritual would have naturally come song and music.

Respecting the ancient history of music, I push forward to consider an appreciation of sacred music in a liturgical Church setting, utilising a backwards and forwards glance that we are privileged to gain in scripture.

Part 2

Old & New Testament: Biblical Standards

We note the prevalence in scripture of the word 'to sing' as one of the most commonly used words in the Bible, occurring 309 times in the Old Testament and thirty-six in the New".⁸ We also note how the Psalms were written with the purpose of them being sung, which is why so many of the psalms naturally include the words "sing to the Lord" or some other reference to singing. I would argue that scripture shows us:

⁴ Viladesau, R. (2000). *Theology and the Arts*. New York: Paulist Press

⁵ Viladesau, R. (2000). Pg 13.

⁶ YouTube. Username 'creative*funnel'. Video title: '*Ancient Lyre - First Written Melody - Michael Levy*' (2011). Accessed 19 May 2018. <https://youtu.be/Tx6v0t5I5SM>

⁷ Jones, C. and Wainwright, G. (2008). *The Study of liturgy*. London: SPCK [u.a.]. Edition Pg.7

⁸ *ibid*

1. A system of authentic, integrated sung worship that can be used in the liturgy.
2. A way in which music and liturgy work together in order to truly draw God's people into an encounter with the risen Christ.

Additionally, it provides us two main ways that this was (and can continuously be) implemented:

1. By integrating scriptural words into the music.
2. By linking the act of singing to the human condition.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that "the texts intended to be sung must always be in conformity with Catholic doctrine...drawn chiefly from the Sacred Scripture and from liturgical sources". [CCC 1158] In scripture, we can see how song and instrumentation were themselves "closely linked to the liturgical celebrations of the Old Covenant"...which "lay store, not only by psalms and hymns that remain central in Jewish and Christian liturgy but by the different musical and symbolic registers of various musical instruments" [CCC 1156]. Additionally, the 'celestial' sounding harp and lyre feature prominently for festivals such as those seen in Chronicles 15:16 and Isaiah 5:12. I intend to briefly draw attention to such ritual in order to understand of the link of an ordered musical structure of praise leading, not just to a wholesome liturgical worship, but a self-reflection on our own lives. I would suggest that both the people of the Old Testament and the Church Fathers of the New Testament, recognised a firm and integral link between music, ceremony and the human condition, by which end, man could reckon their fallen, sinful nature and their human trials and pain against the majesty of God. As we cover scripture, we note how song and music are interrelated in the way of resonance between words sung, instruments used and the human condition. For example, the Halil, or reed pipe, was used to symbolise grief in Jeremiah 48:36, or Joy in 1 Kings 1:40. [CCC 1156-1158]." *Vatican.Va*,⁹

Emotion, experience, and journey is central to the story of man and music. Exodus 15 demonstrates to us the first song of the human experience¹⁰, as we follow their desert walking, plagues, miracles, death, life, joy, sorrow, salvation.¹¹ Their leader, Moses led the

⁹ Doctrinal theme, 2017, Maryvale

¹⁰ Sermon: The Holiness Of God - 1 Peter 1." *Lifeway.Com*, 2017, <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/sermon-holiness-god-1-peter-1>.

¹¹ Doctrinal theme, 2017, Maryvale

whole nation in a song celebrating God's holiness [Exodus 15:1], following their escape from Pharaoh's army. This moment of sung worship is demonstrative of an acclamation to a God who is personally invested in their lives and whose hand in their lives is beyond description to explain. Thus, song was the only way to verbalise this with a somewhat testimony in song. Added to this is the weight of symbolism that the swallowing of Pharaoh's army and their crossing represents for them in the ongoing sanctification of man.

Allegorically, sinful man serves the devil, typified by the Pharaoh, and is forced to labor in the mud of earthly desires. But when Christ offers to lighten our burden, we are led through the sea of Baptism, where he destroys the sins that enslaved us.

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Thus, we note now the Church “adopted the mode of singing that had been established during the development of the psalms: a way of articulated singing with a strong reference to a text, with or without instrumental accompaniment”.¹³¹⁴ What is more, it is a tool with which song can help guide oneself morally in one's life in Christ. We should take Paul's exhortation to heart in our liturgical practice where he commands us to;

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts ... and be thankful ... with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. [Colossians 3:15-17]

We also note the centrality of Christ in this sung worship and is a pattern we should take cues from in the liturgy. Arguably one of the most powerful accounts of God centred sung worship is in 2 Chronicles 20:21, where the musicians lead the charge into battle with songs of thanks, praising God. It was as they began to praise God that they began to defeat the enemy. The liturgy reminds us of this prevalence, recognising in the “Holy, Holy, Holy” the holiness of God and of the eternal song that fills heaven where there is one continuous “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty”.¹⁵ [Isaiah 6:3; Revelations 4:8] The order of worship that scripture teaches us comes from these kinds of acclamations, rooted, grounded

¹² Hahn, S., Mitch, C. and Walters, D. (2012). *Exodus*. San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius Press. Pg.17

¹³ DeClaissé-Walford, N. (2004). *Introduction to the Psalms*. St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press.

¹⁴ Thomas J, B. (2015). *The Moral Power of Music*. [online] [Catholiceducation.org](https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/music/the-moral-power-of-music.html). Available at: <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/music/the-moral-power-of-music.html> [Accessed 20 May 2018].

¹⁵Doctrinal theme, 2017, Maryvale

and directed with acclamations of who the Lord is. Gerhard Delling in his book ‘Worship in the New Testament’, speaks of a creedal mode of acclamation and hymn that focused around the proclamation “Jesus is Lord”.¹⁶ The early stages of the whole creed we profess at Mass now. Yet more than just an acclamation of truth, as I have already argued, acclamations of God in song incorporate the whole of God’s saving work in history and incorporates this into the rite, thus ordering and utilising song as acclamations of faith and doctrine, as well as praise and thanksgiving. For it is in the Lord that we put our hope in and to “live for the praise of his glory” [Ephesians 1: 13]. The unity of word, music, and doctrine is accounted for by the Church Fathers Tertullian, Justin Meyer and Clement of Alexandria. Thinking upon the ‘Holy, Holy, Holy’ acclamations, Clement considers we should “cry to Him as it were with a single voice if we are to obtain a share of his glorious promises”¹⁷... and Tertullian comments how the name of God is holy in itself always and “of itself makes others holy”.¹⁸ Thus, this acclamation when put in context of the liturgy and done so in song, we see integral parts of a whole framework that safeguard, teaches and leads God’s people in God orientated, heaven focused worship.

Whilst it is impossible to gain a one-to-one understanding from the Early Church congregation how effectively they, personally, grew in their relationship with Christ, it is telling enough to take early Church history as a reliable blueprint for how to implement sung worship into a liturgy in a way that truly integrates. Song and music show us that in the act of sung praise, there is something that goes beyond the ritual and liturgical, formal expression, and it is from scripture that we give foundation to our sung worship.¹⁹ *Musica Sacram* highlights this interconnection of music and the power of the act of song and prayer, fostering a state of union in the liturgy.

Indeed, through this form [sung liturgical prayer], prayer is expressed in a more attractive way, the mystery of the liturgy, with its hierarchical and community nature, is more openly shown, the unity of hearts is more profoundly achieved by the union of voices, minds are more easily raised to heavenly things by the beauty

¹⁶ Delling, G. and Scott, P. (1962). *Worship in the New Testament*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press. pg.80

¹⁷ Evans, C. (2004). *Of scribes and sages*. London: T & T Clark International. Pg.130

¹⁸ Tertullian (2017) “The Writings of Tertullian - Volume III” (Independently published), Pg.33

¹⁹ Doctrinal theme, 2017, Maryvale

of the sacred rites, and the whole celebration more clearly prefigures that heavenly liturgy which is enacted in the holy city of Jerusalem.” [Musicam Sacram, #5].

In other words, sung liturgical prayer more effectively reveals the mystery of the liturgy as well as more easily “accomplishes its heavenly purposes and sung liturgy is a revelation of Christ as well as a vehicle for profound participation in His saving work”.²⁰ Sacred music is not to jostle for position in the liturgy, rather, it accompanies us through it until the joyous commission, “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord”. Thus, our relationship to the liturgy is a relationship to life itself. The liturgy is a testimony of God’s work in our lives that opens us up to recognise God’s holiness. Our response in song is our testimony to this. What more sobering elixir could there be than music implemented properly into the Liturgy? Truly it should be the kind which leads us *out* of ourselves not sourced from an external mystery. This is not to negate our feelings and emotions as irrelevant, but rather, first, to behold God and what he has done in our lives, then being wrecked in recognition of the mercy He has shown us. Only then will our outward songs of praise be truly sung in “spirit and truth”. Placing God at the centre of our worship should be common understanding but, as I shall cover later on, our human natures regularly get in the way of this.

Part 3

The Middle Ages: An Empty Yawn

It is tempting to look back at the Early Church without considering the state of liturgical adaptations in the *current* age. After all, the rite of the Mass has adapted and changed throughout the centuries. The question is to what end? Why? And to what detriment or benefit either way? Additionally, whilst it is certainly helpful to look back on Church history in order to understand or even change things now, there can be a danger in doing so with a ‘romantic’ view on the way things were and, thus, clamour for those days back rather than looking at the way things have developed and assess things for how they lie now. This argument is often presented by those who endorse the current reforms of the liturgy and often points to the state of the Church in the Middle Ages. I will continue to look at the integrated nature of sacred music and Church teaching then with an eye to the main concern, that of discovering how an encounter with Christ and the liturgy was recognised and

²⁰ J. Olmsted, B. (2018). Liturgical Music as participation in Christ. [online] The Catholic Sun. Available at: <http://www.catholicsun.org/2011/12/15/liturgical-music-as-participation-in-christ/> [Accessed 20 May 2018].

understood in these eras. Thus, I hope to provide a more realistic understanding of the way music and liturgy have functioned in more recent times. The most recurring quote from those who support and enjoy the changes in the liturgy is that from Sacrosanctum Concilium (14), that the faithful should be led to "full conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations". The argument that, taking from this, it could be seen that members of the Church were becoming less and less engaged with the liturgy and attending more and more absent-minded. I will help to clarify the notion of 'active participation' in due course. For now, I note the apparent atmosphere of disconnect that could be argued to be seen profoundly during the Middle Ages.

The state of worship in the Middle Ages is argued by Cheslyn Jones (included in a compilation of essays in 'The Study Of The Liturgy'²¹) to have been somewhat of a disassociating or even exclusionary experience of the liturgy, where "the public and the 'plebs' were separated by a wall or curtain. The two only met at the high points of the liturgy" and as the people "busied themselves with their individual meditation and prayers" he notes the music to be "complicated choral singing that covered the real action" meaning that for "both clergy and people the fundamental structure of the rite and the basic unity of the assembly grew obscure".²² Furthermore, he leads us up to the point of the Reformation where he states how "the Mass had become an elaborate performance: there is a very rich facade, but behind it a great emptiness yawn". It was a place it seemed where you could "lose yourself in a prayer book" and only be pulled out of your half wake state by a reciting of the rosary or a hymn. Thus, he concludes "Communion appeared to be a private devotion without any special link to the Mass".²³ The debate on the disconnect of the laity to the clergy and liturgy is in no less decline since the Reform. As a leader of music in liturgy myself I have had emails telling me how people are not singing at Mass and that they felt it was because people don't like the new setting and songs, one directly quoting the "active participation" that the council spoke of. I also received a message saying how the music does not "uplift" this person anymore. Another who said that they felt the "thee's and thy's" were out of date and from another who said they prefered this.

It seems that so much has changed in the way of musical practice, yet the plight for 'participation' has not. We should be cautious not to let our response lead us to make the liturgy a circus of entertainment to combat this. On the whole, the majority of believers

²¹ Jones, C. and Wainwright, G. (2008). Pg.64

²² Doctrinal theme, 2017, Maryvale

²³ ibid

desire the best for each other and the Church, and truly are convicted in what they present. Yet there is every chance that, in the desire to move away from the apparent disconnect of years ago and avoid being 'bored to death' it is also quite possible to (borrowing the title of Neil Postman's discourse 'on society and entertainment') be 'amused to death'.²⁴ No less poignantly was this flame of debate kindled as when Klaus Gamber published "Reform of the Roman Liturgy". This was stoked more by an endorsement of the then Cardinal Ratzinger, who called Gamber one who "truly represents the thinking of the centre of the Church".²⁵ In his book, he addresses the temptation of "goading the participants into activity", particularly addressing 'Rock Masses' and noting how "young people who like rock music don't look for it in church, but in pubs and clubs. These issues raised, whilst maybe seeming out of touch to some, are no less relevant and important to us now. I am aware that for every anecdote of the 'yawn' of the Middle Ages, there were likely many who were also engaged in the liturgy. However, it was a time in history that has brought up for Catholic historians a pivot on which to discuss how liturgy *can* become a passive activity. It is 'passiveness' I want to address in the next section and to answer how a Christian congregation might be able to be truly an 'active participant' in the liturgy.

²⁴ Postman, N. (2006). *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. New York, Penguin Books.

²⁵ Baldwin, J. (2008). *Reforming the liturgy*. Collegeville Minn.: Liturgical Press. Pg.38.

CHAPTER 2: AESTHETICS, BEAUTY, AND FEELING

Whoever wants to learn about the objective nature of music wants to get out from under the dubious authority of feeling" [Eduard Hanslick]

That challenging quote from Eduard Hanslick is likely an unpopular slogan for a contemporary mind, and, I would imagine, for many faithful members of the Church, but Hanslick's statement is something that is applicable to many eras of history and, I think, maybe most prevalent for the eras following the enlightenment, the sexual revolution and the current identity crisis that we seem to be living in with our current growing generation. I believe that sacred music has the power to transform this confusion into growth and maturity and offer direction for our wandering hearts and minds through the Liturgy. I propose a set of guiding markers that I believe show us how this works most potently.

Part 1

Balancing Beauty

Man's seems in a constant struggle to get the balance between feeling and fact, emotion, and stoicism, faith and reason. This can be seen in what is often a tension between 'musical puritanism' or 'musical free form' that raises its head periodically in the Church ²⁶ that says one way is right over the other. I don't reject this as necessary *pursuit* at least, but the question that really should be asked is 'what kind of music is right, just and good for God alone, who is the source and reason for our praise in the first place?'. It might be tempting, to abandon emotion, letting go of our hearts; - the most deceitful of all things (Jeremiah 17:9) - or, one may think that we should follow St Augustine, living in light of the resurrection where Hallelujah should always be our song. The determination of musical 'puritanism' or 'musical free form' comes from good places, but is being asked in the wrong way. In the plight to reckon feelings and emotion with stoic unchanging truth and doctrine, I feel-akin to Richard Viladaseu who asks:

1. Might the beautiful not be a distraction? An escape? A way of deflecting the religious imperative and taming it by making it an aesthetic object.

²⁶ Viladesau, R. (2000). Pg. 14

2. Do art and music remove the aspect of 'holy fear' from the numinous *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*?

This presents us the complexity of encountering beauty and the 'feeling' that can be associated with this. We should never rely solely on our emotions to drive our theology, understanding, and teaching on God, yet we should also not fear the experience of beauty. This can be the tendency for some of us to force fit ourselves into truth rather than allow ourselves to be shaped by it and by the God who authors it. I speak to those of us who have the tendency to become captured only by the very utterly necessary and essential parts of our liturgy whilst forgetting that it is okay to 'feel' something in it too. We therefore necessarily wrestle with these juxtapositions. St Augustine himself was greatly moved by singing he heard at the liturgy. One cannot deny in his account, his emotionally driven response upon hearing music at a service.

*“The music surged in my ears, truth seeped into my heart, and my feelings of devotion overflowed, so that the tears streamed down. But they were tears of gladness.”*²⁷

Yet set against this is his own battle with the 'emotion' of encountering such beauty, and states his battle with these emotions with a two and fro, saying of the music he hears:

*“I seem to myself to grant them more respect than is fitting, when I sense that our souls are more piously and earnestly moved to the ardor of devotion by these sacred words when they are thus sung than when not thus sung”.*²⁸

In trepidation he finds himself coming towards a puritanical regard, whilst questioning his own theory stating:

*“Sometimes, however, in avoiding this deception too vigorously, I err by excessive severity, and sometimes so much so that I wish every melody of the sweet songs ... be banished from my ears and from the Church itself”.*²⁹

²⁷Viladesau, R. (2000). pg.19

²⁸ ibid

²⁹ ibid

This is a saint desperately treading the balance of beauty and pleasure, or, as he states vacillating “between the peril of pleasure and the value of the experience”. Yet Augustine, by his intellect, persistence, and humility manages to reconcile and balance this with a final recognition. He recalls once again his first experience of tears shed at the beauty of what he had heard and realises that he is moved “moved not by the song but by the things that are sung, when sung with fluent voice and music that is most appropriate, I acknowledge again the great benefit of this practice”.³⁰

Clarity of Voice

The exhausting mental gymnastics of Augustine was not a time-wasting exercise, rather it is the discipline we should all consider when approaching sacred music. We should, forstarterst, be able to hear the words that are being sung in the liturgy being both clear in speech and grammar. In Benedict XVI book ‘Beauty in Sacred Music’, Benedict imagines Augustine returning to the Church now.

*“Augustine, therefore, wept for tender devotion on hearing sacred praises sung in Church and in understanding the words accompanied by the music. He would perhaps weep even today if he heard some of the figurative music sung in our churches; he would weep not out of devotion, but of sorrow on hearing the music and not being able to understand the words.”*³¹

I believe also that “a primary concern is the music’s relation to the text, which is extremally exemplary in plainchant”.³² It is one of the most effective tools for the communication of Truth in sung form for its sobriety and clarity which compares to—(what Karl Gustav Feller calls a “sensually effective polyphony”).³³ If one cannot hear the words then one is not going to be able to be affected by the truth of doctrine being sung. Even in a language we cannot understand, something is still communicated through the care and delivery of the words sung. Plainchant protects this in the most assured way. I do not mean that the mere absence of plainchant means an absence of clarity or truth, I do mean though that, in order for one

³⁰ ibid

³¹Rutherford, J. (2012). Benedict XVI and beauty in sacred music. Dublin: Four Courts Press.Pg.54

³² Rutherford, J. (2012). Pg.44

³³ Rutherford, J. (2012). pg.45

to present an authentic piece of liturgical music that there needs to be a balance of tone, word, care, and delivery as part of what fosters this. There has been an influx of many new Christian songs from the consumer market of Christian record labels, most of which have been reserved to use within the Protestant evangelical Church communities, but increasingly have been picked up by directors and leaders of the Catholic liturgy. I myself have these included at the Sunday Liturgy. Whilst I try to pick themes related directly to the liturgical action as much as possible, I have noted concisely the times the congregation sing along most. In order of frequency it is:

- 1) The sung psalm
- 2) A well-known hymn
- 3) An unknown or contemporary song that is easy and simple in wording

There is by no means a scientific discovery, or way to choose songs every time, but it does state something to proclaiming the Truth in song with clarity. One specific piece of feedback I received from the parish priest when I began setting tunes to the psalms (which I usually do as a simple plainchant melody) was someone had enjoyed it very much, mentioning it was "nice to be able to hear the words sung clearly for a change". In the case of a well-known hymn, one does not always *rely* upon clarity of voice as many will already know it by heart, but clarity is still important as all liturgical song should be a declaration of Truth. It is in regard to new or unknown material we should be extra careful about. A discipline of clear dictation not only respects the congregation partaking in it, but it also respects the liturgy and The Lord. I brought one of my own songs to my singing coach in order to help me with diction. I was shocked by her her telling me that in one part she thought I was singing "LAW how could it be" and not "LORD how could it be". I should certainly sing the name of The Lord if I am meaning to bring it into a liturgical function and draw hearts close the same Lord. For a humorous side note, enter "The Mumbling Preacher" into YouTube and you can witness an entire gospel sung sermon of which no words are clear in the whole two and a half minutes of video.³⁴ Truth sung *clearly* from a skilled hand or voice can capture God's character and the moment of the liturgy arguably better than another type of music that is more aesthetically complex. I believe if we can approach this with a holy struggle then our receptivity in the liturgy will be all the more real, potent and connected

³⁴ YouTube. Username 'KevOnStage' Video title '*The Mumbling Preacher*' Accessed 19 May 2018. <https://youtu.be/9btKjErYGk8>

with sacred music, thereby directed towards God who is true and total beauty. One might say, the ‘sound’ of beauty is being directed to beauty itself.

Suffering and Joy. Flesh and Spirit.

Although the liturgy and the Divine Presence is ‘other’ and ‘mysterious’ to us, we should not reject the ‘flesh’ and ‘earthiness’ of ourselves. I apply this to liturgical music practice in so much as, like Augustine, we should hold onto aesthetic ideals, but balance this with the incarnate Word of God who became Himself flesh. Much of the “objections against ‘earthly’ music in the Early Church were based on the notion that music in itself is a heavenly reality, i.e, real music is celestial spiritual and therefore inaudible”.³⁵ We see Augustine struggling with the Platonic debate between spirit and flesh. He is attracted by the usefulness of song in raising the soul to God, but also fears that its pleasures will entrap the soul in a lower order of beauty and prevent its ascent to the true God.³⁶ Yet we unite with Thomas Aquinas in his rejection of the division between spirit and flesh [Summa; II II 1. 91 art. 2] and realise that human song can be spiritual and lead to the eternal.³⁷

I propose that, music throughout history can suffer us to be consumed by worship rather than being consumers of the worship of God.³⁸ This attitude can lead to not only an oversaturation of song choices, but also for music to be simply based on what is most popular with the congregation. People singing along is a good sign, but it is not an affirmation that the song chosen is appropriate for the liturgy and is leading the people to God. After all, if one was to sing ‘Yellow Submarine’ by the Beatles people would likely sing along. Someone talking to me about the new musical setting for Mass at a parish and said how the music doesn't ‘uplift’ them anymore. One perspective I enjoy regarding these points is from Protestant Evangelical preacher Alistair Begg at the Ligonier Conference, 2014. He speaks of *knowing* versus *experience* in sung worship, and although he is not speaking in terms of Catholic liturgical worship, I think the insight is perfectly applicable to music in the Catholic Church.

³⁵Viladesau, R. (2000). Pg. 17

³⁶ *ibid*

³⁷ Viladesau, R. (2000). Pg. 20

³⁸ Morgenthaler, Sally. *Worship Evangelism*. Zondervan Pub. House, 1999.

"The person who was to lead the praise, his opening gambit to lead the praise was this; 'How do you all feel this morning?'. Well that was enough for me ... If I told you how I feel, especially in the light of the last five minutes, you would question if I was even Christian at all! ... So, don't ask me that question. Ask me what I know ... Ask me what I know about God. Ask me what I know about His Word. (or no capital?) Ask me what I know to be a verity that can deal with my soul. That's what I need. Don't make me sing songs about how I feel".³⁹

He then juxtaposes this to the hymn "Praise My Soul The King Of Heaven", noting how, once we sing it, we are "reminded of truth", that we have been ransomed, healed, restored and forgiven, looking outwards to Christ and what He has done rather than inward to us.

Sacred Suffering and the Paschal Mystery

I suggest this feeling-based liturgy is a recurring theme amongst many parishes and reflects a growing trend of liturgy that we believe should serve *us*. This misses the central point of the liturgy which is the Paschal Mystery in which we share not just the 'feel goods' of life, but the reality of the joys *and* suffering, as we live out sanctification unto death, at which we hope for eternal life. This is intimately bound within the rubric of the Liturgy, setting our gaze towards Calvary and the Victim there. Beauty in music comes with suffering, for "God is transcendentally and absolutely beautiful and is to be found even in what to the world's eye is ugly and deformed and unworthy".⁴⁰ The true potency of music is that "it allows life's passion to be felt and embraced. This passion reflected in moments of pain and pleasure gives heart to the struggle and depth of the prayer. Our music is our strength. It sings our spirituality".⁴¹ Another person once told me how the music at one service made their child cry as it reminded them of their grandfather's funeral. I would say, so long as care is taken to comfort the child, it is firstly the most natural place to be reminded of mortality and death. The sacrifice of the Mass leads us to Calvary, to contemplate with the sorrowful mother of God Christ's own suffering and death. It is possible to transcend that with the joy of God changing death as victory. The Mass does not have to be a psychologically devastating event, but it is healthy to be grounded in the reality of our

³⁹ Knowing vs Feeling in Worship. (2013). [video] Available at: <https://youtu.be/KYNBdrFR5Bo> [Accessed 20 May 2018].

⁴⁰ Viladesau, R. (2000). Pg.52.

⁴¹ Stapert, C. (2007). A new song for an old world. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. pg.393

temporariness on earth. Sacred music can help foster a recognition of things most human. This should not be confused with sadistic or nihilistic music that celebrates death. It is important that we communicate emotion through sacred music not just cause it.⁴²

The Object of Our Worship

I by no means intend to belittle the anonymous people I have pegged in this research in order to judge the state of their love for Christ. I only note the recurrence with which I hear these things in Church environments that it tells me something of a trend of opinion. It forces me to question what part we as musicians can play in questioning our song choices and our reasoning for them ... I would side with Richard Viladesau over this in light of the dilemma of emotion and aesthetics.

*“Christian worship should not only eschew religious kitsch or sentimentality and superficially pious art and music; it should also contain an element of wariness concerning aesthetics satisfaction, even of a deeply religious kind, that would lead simply to spiritual repose, without being joined to a remainder of the anticipatory and world-changing nature of the joy and beauty that are central to our celebration..... The sensible beauty of Church music and art should serve and not distract from another and higher form of beauty”.*⁴³

I do not argue for music that is not aesthetically beautiful, but rather, I argue toward an appropriate relationship between emotion and aesthetics whilst aiming above our own feeling and experience. It needs almost an ‘out of body’ experience whilst also remaining feet firm on earth. Take, for example, Bach, a pinnacle of reference when it comes to music and beauty. If one is "really to feel the beauty of the emotion Bach evokes, one must attempt to feel, at least for one moment, what he felt, and one must therefore in some sense believe with him in the ultimate beauty he is representing".⁴⁴ We should learn that, for a truly authentic aesthetic appreciation to occur “there must be a willing, if only momentary, suspension of disbelief, a willingness to see life”.⁴⁵ It is one thing to have self-confidence and positivity and another to rely on self as the source of that feeling. I fear that this has

⁴² Graham, G. (2017). *Philosophy, Art, and Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ Pg 42

⁴³ Viladesau, R. (2000). Pg. 53

⁴⁴ Viladesau, R. (2000). Pg.45

⁴⁵ *ibid*

been one of the unintended side effects of Vatican II reforms, i.e., there has been somewhat of an interpretation that the laity's involvement in the liturgy can be of experimental freedom and should go more or less unquestioned. At the very least this leads to a messy or unattractive liturgy, at its worst it can turn into pseudo theological Lego brick liturgy where one chooses a block of music that fits simply because they have the piece and it means something to them. The two strongest examples I have witnessed first-hand as a congregation member was when I suddenly became aware that 'Blowing In The Wind' by Bob Dylan was playing as I stood in line for Communion. Secondly, a song by Michelle Cox called 'Believe' was chosen as a song for one liturgy. It includes lines such as "I can be anything I want, with this hope to drive me onward, if I can just believe in me". A (somewhat) harmless song alone. In the context of the liturgy it simply has no place. These are examples of where songs are a tail wagging the dog. It is doing something it was never meant to do in a space that it doesn't fit. We should be aware of things such as the liturgical season and choose songs appropriately. This means more than just choosing a hymn about the cross for Lent, or one on the Resurrection for Easter. Rather, it means immersing into the season and allowing this to directly affect our choices for the liturgy rather than trying to affect the liturgy itself. I will demonstrate some more practical tools for this (and many of my other concerns raised) in my final conclusion.

Part 2

Disposition to Beauty

Finally, I wish to draw towards, what I think, is the key to unlocking some of the issues raised in this research. I wish to suggest that one's encounter with the sacred, to the liturgy, and with Christ through the use of music is, to a great extent, dependent upon one's own interior disposition. It might well be possible to list a set of sacred music that, once applied rigorously to the churches (or Church's?) conditions and guidance, and has taken into account all the measures we have mentioned, is delivered with skill and reverence. It could even be put in to categories of 'sacredness' with the most sacred music at the top of the list and moving downwards to less so. This, in theory, would be tackling sacred music 'by the book' so to speak. However, I do not believe that using a piece of sacred music from our imaginary top ten list will automatically premise that it will allow many more people to encounter Christ and the liturgy, any more than if we were to use ones from twenty to thirty. I believe that interior disposition is that which will either aid and assist oneself to encounter Christ through sacred music or will be one's own barrier. I purpose it can often be taken for

granted that a beautiful piece of music will move a person towards the divine simply because of its beauty alone. As I have already discussed, the beauty of sacred music is not in its nice sounds (alone) but in the truth carried with it and the ability on oneself to take that into one's inner being. One needs to shift internally to recognise, not just the beauty of the music, but its place in the liturgy. What is the *liturgy* saying to them in this context? What is God trying to say *to them* in this context? In this way we are charmed both of sense *and* mind. Our feelings and emotions (such as the child who cried remembering her grandfather's death) play into it, yet this passes to where we make deeper realisations. In this state, we are disposed to the music in a manner much deeper than external characteristics alone.⁴⁶ When our disposition allows God into our emotions, the music can then truly affect us and allow us to comprehend the whole liturgical action much deeper. Take a secular example, the pain of a break up with a partner. There are many break up songs that people like to listen to in order to somewhat 'deal' with the turmoil of the situation. The singer and listener have a 'relationship' as they have both been through the same thing. Like the way to appreciate Bach is to (at least attempt) to feel how he felt in his music in order to appreciate its message and beauty, we can't be moved by the break up song if we are unwilling to deal with the reality of the breakup yet. The same could be said in terms of sacred music. The effect upon the listener is dependent upon an *intentional* disposition in order to reach beyond one's own frustrations. It takes a certain effort upon the individual. This is, arguably, even more challenging when one desires to connect with God in the liturgy. The opportunity for encounter can be lost unless they are willing to step out of themselves for a moment to encounter the power *behind* the music and reach towards God through it. The manner in which we as musicians 'perform' the sacred music can also *aid* one's disposition. It is possible to assess the energy, gentleness, loudness or quietness, fast or slowness of a certain piece used and, by association to the liturgy, recognise "those forms of music that have emotional and intellectual associations of sufficient "depth" to be appropriate carriers of sacred words or themes"⁴⁷, thereby recognising that "what distinguishes music from noise is precisely its patterns, which create a unity out of disparate elements".⁴⁸

The Luxury of Music

⁴⁶ Viladesau, R. (2000). Pg.37

⁴⁷ Viladesau, R. (2000). Pg.40

⁴⁸ Viladesau, R. (2013). *Theological Aestheticss*. New York: Oxford University Press. Pg. 149

Lastly, I believe that sacred music is somewhat a luxury. By this I mean, whilst sacred music is powerful and can foster devotion, it is not utterly vital. I say this not as a call to be nonchalant with sacred music, on the contrary, I think that recognising the bare minimum of what makes the liturgy truly God's work (ie, the priest, bread and wine) helps us recognise the central gravity of the Mass, pulling us towards the Paschal Mystery and thanksgiving sacrifice of the Eucharist. As musicians of sacred music, we must realise we are disposable, not worthless, but, rather, a vessel into which can be poured the Word of God, out of which is spilled in song. God does not need us, but he uses us. Imagine a service where there is no music. The altar is stripped bare, the walls are mere wooden beams and the skylight is just a patchwork of straw. If, in this scenario, we still cannot imagine falling in love with the reality of what happens at this action, where earth becomes Heaven's altar and meets with a kiss from Calvary, then we have missed the point of the Mass in the first place. If we as practitioners of sacred music don't place ourselves in a disposition that is open to know the mystery of God and set ourselves as a creature to Creator, then we have missed the point and our song is just a euphonious sentiment. If I might appropriate a quote from St Thomas Aquinas, all I have ever sung seems like straw compared to who God is. My sound is like a leaf falling on wet grass compared to the angel's worship of Him in heaven upon and around the altar.

CHAPTER 3: INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

In order to move to a more informed understanding of music and liturgy I sought out and spoke to several professionals. However, I specifically held an informal unstructured interview with an associate director of music who holds a prestigious position in the church.

I asked him to speak freely and flexibly, using his **historical knowledge** and **personal experience**, to answer two questions:

- 1) *How do you think music and liturgy has offered (to a lesser or greater extent) a powerful encounter with Christ and the liturgy over history?*
- 2) *Can some sacred music be considered more right, good and true than another type?*

The interview was recorded and transcribed. The results are presented as the following themes:

Part 1 **On Music and Context**

The interviewee referred to ‘contrafacta’ which is the practice of keeping the melody of a song but changing the words.

“The hymn ‘O sacred head how wounded’ was a bar tune. It was referring to how pretty a woman’s visage was. The person who took that and transformed it to ‘O head how sorely wounded’ elevated that music much further than it would have ~~been~~ ever been elevated normally and brought that music into a much wider audience and, now, the worldwide collective memory. However, to those who experienced it in 1521, it had to have conjured up the wrong images. A hundred years will sanitise just about everything. In [company redacted] we have finally used Hayden’s piece of music that Hitler also used. For many decades we just couldn’t because [of that].

If we are to safeguard a valid experience of the liturgy then we should learn from this example in so much that, if we are to contrafacta, we are sensitive to the potential triggers. I would suggest that we allow any secular songs that ‘hundred years’ to sanitise, rather than risk mixing up worldliness with sacredness. Even then, I would be wary of the application of contrafacta in any age and defer to music that is written with the intended purpose of being used at the liturgy.

Part 2

On Music and Context in Recent Times

The interviewee here speaks of his personal experience of what he sees happening with contrafacta practices *now*.

“This takes us to consider what is happening right now, which is taking a song directly off the radio and tweaking a few wordsand finding a religious side to it. ... Whenever we’re discussing liturgical music it must be understood that if the words are not scriptural then the poetry must be so enduring and be so high quality. It must proclaim the same kind of truths we would require with any kind of scriptural song”.

Despite my reservation to the idea of contrafacta at all, I appreciate the safeguard the interviewee soberly keeps, that the adaption should be an adaption to *scriptural* words. I find this a good safeguard if we are to use contrafacta in the sacred liturgy. It also substantiates my points in **chapter one part two**, to integrate scriptural words into music

Part 3

On Sacred Music Drawing One Deeper Into the Liturgy

The interviewee then asked himself; "*Can that type of music [contrafacta] elevate one to a different plane during the liturgy?*" To which he replied:

"It can, only if that person is fully engaged by it. That leads us to say ‘well there are different people with different tastes and some piece of music is not going to affect anybody’, but many studies have been done showing brain wave changes and emotional changes when people hear music. There is even perhaps a physical change. If that physical change

happens then that physical change can be used for good by the music. Can that be a transcendental experience? Absolutely! But it should be that the person is fully engaged by it! There is no one type of music that will cause the reaction you want out of everybody. Taste will be a factor, the person's receptibility, the person's engagement and everything that has happened in that person's life up until the Mass will also be a factor.

This supports my previous **chapter three part two** on disposition and the way much of the effect of music depends on the person's threshold and receptivity. The statement above helps us consider a safeguard in our mind when one considers appropriating any kind of music into the Mass. The interviewee seems to be saying that there should be a presupposition of one's own state of mind and sphere of influence, thus the effect that piece of music could have upon the person hearing the song can vary.

Part 4

The Language of Love

The interviewee then turned his mind to the language of (what he called) 'contemporary music' that is sometimes used in church.

*"Have you noticed that in a lot of contemporary music used in Church there is a preponderance of nebulous pronouns? **He** did this, **He** loves me. That's because that song probably didn't originate in something other than a secular love song, and it's just been converted and used in the church. Jesus' love is the kind of ~~a~~ love that a good parent gives you, which is the kind of love that has a discipline and expectation with it. The songs that we sing to Him don't need to express that sort of a lover relationship. Let's get the relationship with God right, the text right and our relationship with the whole thing right".*

This lays claim with my points in **chapter three part one** regarding 'the object of our worship', where I shared my thoughts on emotion and aesthetics and how a certain kind of sentimentality can creep into our sung worship.

CHAPTER 4: A WAY FORWARD

As musicians we are empty vessels responsible to help draw others to encounter Christ in the liturgy, but we are also responsible for understanding it ourselves. The encouragement from Sacrosanctum Concilium presents to all who partake in the liturgy that “through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration”. [SC 48] We lead another’s mind to the sacred by being bearers of sacred words via emotional characteristics in order to manifest the beauty of the transcendent.⁴⁹ Responsibly, we need a reflection of both self and others in order to understand these integral parts. Aiming for good liturgy should always take priority, but it is short-sighted if we *assume* that following the liturgy ‘by the book’ automatically engages and transforms others. Of course, we could say ‘I am not important anyway, God does the work’. True. So then why bother playing or singing at all? Because we recognise something powerful and hidden happening through sacred music that helps shape hearts and minds for God in order to be disposed and open to the mighty God. This being so, how can we value both good liturgy whilst also care for people’s hearts? I propose the following approaches:

1) Pastoral Humility

My passion is to help rekindle a devotion to the Eucharist through my music, yet I cannot assume that this is what people know I am trying to do, nor can I assume people even care. At a leadership conference earlier this year I was talking to a Catholic lady, sharing our ‘visions’ for various projects and ideas we had. Any time I explained about my vision for a revival in new, authentic Eucharistic sung worship her eyes would glaze over, and she would then share with me how the Church needs more women in leadership roles. After the third time of trying to share my passion, and the third time of her responding with her idea of how things should be, I realised that she either didn’t understand my vision, or she didn’t want it. This is not to say we abandon authenticity to people please, but to be aware that our ideas of authentic liturgy are not always shared. In recognising this, our role in music becomes more informed, i.e. we are not just turning up with assumptions but rather a more integrated approach that is both human and spiritual.

2) Relevance and Reverence

⁴⁹ Viladesau, R. (2000). Pg.42

We should ask, ‘is the piece I am bringing into the service *relevant* and *reverent*?’. We may think we can play Bob Dylan’s *Blowing in the Wind* ‘reverently’, but it will not be reverent to the situation of the liturgy. Its word and function is as a pop song, no matter how ‘spiritual’ we may think it to be. This principle can be applied to more overtly religious songs too, such as “*Mary Did You Know*”, most famous for its line “This Child that you delivered will soon deliver you”. This song may seem appropriate to do at a Christmas Liturgy; however, it takes away from the powerful nature of Mary’s Immaculate Conception and her womb who bore the Word made Flesh which draws us to comprehend the Eucharistic, all of which is essential in the spirit of Christmas. Thus, sacred music should be used in a way different from the meditation of the Word, so that it should not be conceived as a substitute for the latter but rather as complementary to it.⁵⁰

3) Musical Holiness

Sacred is that which is ‘set apart’. It is set apart solely for the liturgy. Therefore, it should be distanced somewhat from the ‘every day’. The early Christians themselves “were anxious to separate the use of music in their liturgy from that in pagan worship”.⁵¹ There are some current composers who write sacred music, such as Avro Pärt, who is creative and even slightly unconventional in his approach, yet something of its form demonstrates that it is clearly created for the liturgy. The major experience of many parishes is with folk music. This, I think, is much harder to present alongside the liturgy as something ‘set apart’. It can be done, but it takes considerable effort in the way the instruments are played and how the voice accompanies. Thus, it should not be discarded entirely, but those who partake in this form of music should be alert to how a guitar cannot compare in terms of the voice alone (such as plainchant or polyphony). In light of this, allowing Gregorian Chant and other forms of ancient sacred music to be more prevalent I think could only help both nourish and inform *newer* forms of sacred music with its discipline, structure, and tone.

4) Sing Prayer and Sing Clear

⁵⁰ Viladesau, R. (2000). Pg.43

⁵¹ Benedict XVI And Beauty In Sacred Music. Pg.42

Sacred music should be not just a song but also a prayer, both in form (the sound) and idea (the words). Songs should also be sung as clear as possible in order to be both true prayer and real song. The liturgy of the Catholic Church serves a twofold purpose: to pray and to teach. In chant for example, words are clear form, at less risk of being deformed and is where “we can hear the Word of God and absorb it”.⁵² Chant lends to the form of song and thus is like small individual lights on a sparse tree that shines with clarity and clear wording. This discipline of dictation should at least be applied to all other forms of sacred music.

5) Sing Sacraments

I also think it is imperative that we sing songs that support the liturgical action and, when possible, include sacramental devotions. This is part of the reason why I began writing contemporary songs with an unapologetically Eucharistic or sacramental theme. Eucharistic centrality is one way in which to help foster a more intimate encounter with the liturgy and Christ in the form of bread. This could help combat any divide between people’s knowledge and understanding of the Eucharist and the link to the liturgical action. We should lead those to look away from us and to the altar where the true orientation of our song it to be sent. Thus, we should remember;

“The dignity and lofty purpose of sacred music consists in the fact that its lovely melodies and splendour beautify and embellish the voices of the priest who offers Mass and of the Christian people who praise the Sovereign God” (Musicae Sacrae Disciplina, #31).

6) Sing Christ

An encounter with Christ is an encounter with the liturgy, and vice versa. The two experiences are intimately linked, but it is Christ who initiates this encounter. Christocentric songs should be preferable, even more so, Trinitarian songs, for the sacred liturgy is "a participation in Christ's own prayer addressed to the Father in the Holy Spirit. In the liturgy, all Christian prayer finds its source and goal". (CCC 1073)

⁵² <http://www.sanctamissa.org/en/music/books-and-articles-on-sacred-music/the-reform-of-church-music.pdf>

CONCLUSION: SILENCE ME

*When peaceful silence lay over all, and night had run the half of her swift course, down
from the heavens, from the royal throne, leapt your all-powerful Word*

– [Wisdom 15: 14-15]

When I learnt of this introit for Sunday of the Christmas octave something new opened up for me by way of understanding the liturgy and the Eucharistic in particular (recognising also the silent reciting of the canon that is done in pre-1962 liturgies). I had already been desiring to draw more towards a state of silence in sacred music, particularly (as has always been encouraged by the Church) at the end of Communion. Yet, for the first time, the reason for this silence made even more sense in relation to the Word of God and the Eucharist. It is in this moment of silence, having stopped playing, that I continuously recognised something profound had ‘fallen’ around me. Musicians, in serving the liturgy, are called to help lead people past a threshold of encounter and into the silent awe of a face to face with God. “The supreme moment of transcendence is frequently expressed by extreme softness of sound or even stillness: the analogue of the silent awe we experienced before the Transcendent”.⁵³

When I began this study, I was of the mindset that I would like to outline, once and for all, a distinction between the sacred music of long ago and sacred music since Vatican II. I imagined being able to use many disciplines and principles of historical, philosophical and theological rigour in order to establish a way to recognise and pick out a distinct divide. Yet, whilst this question is a good one, and one that I hope to pursue more, there is a complex relationship between Church history and human experience. One theologian said to me how he found my research topic "quite foreboding". Indeed, I knew it to be and I welcome the foreboding nature of it. The key import of my question was to understand how people's hearts are encountering Christ so as to fall in love with him and His Church. This had been as much a self-reflective exercise as it has been an outward one. I think it can be a worthwhile reflection for all of us in the Church to consider, musician or not.

For me and my own music, I wish to, like music itself, "pass through time and disappear",⁵⁴ so that my voice, though bound in this current, transient existence, might submit the

⁵³ Viladesau, R. (2000). Pg.40

⁵⁴ Viladesau, R. (2000). pg. 44

threshold of the eternal and lead others to meet that beauty. I have been coming to a conclusion that what I want is for every person who encounters my music to be moved to fall to their knees out of the sheer majesty of who God is and what He has done for them. Therefore, I don't want people to remember my music, I rather that, *through* my music, a person might be able to recognise and encounter the Living God. Thus, I desire to sing until I can be forgotten, and to remain forgotten, so that they remember an encounter with the living God. Then, I will be content that I played my part.

“When we listen to the scripture because of what Bach wrote rather than because of what St Matthew wrote, then sacred texts are being preserved in a form in which the traditional links with belief have been broken, even in some measure for those who count themselves, believers”. [Alasdair MacIntyre]

Sung worship should be a response to salvation history, to Christ's work in us as we work towards a sanctified life in Him, and through the liturgy, we may be nourished by His sacraments and empowered by Holy Scripture. As the assembly gathered together, we *respond* to this in song and prayer. Therefore, if we, as priests, ministers, and musicians, don't make an effort to both 'do' *and* 'understand' liturgy well, then we are at risk of, inadvertently, muffling, God's self-communication. Thus, we recognise that “the preparation of hearts is the joint work of the Holy Spirit and the assembly, *especially of its ministers*” [emphasis mine]. [CCC 1098] It is the sober and privileged for musicians to prepare hearts for an active life in the liturgy lived with the Godhead. In Spirit and trust we approach this mission, and plead to the grace of the Holy Spirit which “seeks to awaken faith, conversion of heart, and adherence to the Father's will”. (CCC 1098)

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