SPRING 2013 EBY LECTURE

How Can I Keep from Singing?

Leonard J. Enns

We believe that music is . . . the persistent focus of [human] intelligence, aspiration and good will. To be an artist is to arrive at some sort of resolution of the mind and matter struggle. . . . To be an artist is not the privilege of a few, but the necessity of us all.[1] —Robert Shaw

This essay, a slightly revised version of my 2013 Eby lecture, is largely an attempt to justify a career of teaching music at Conrad Grebel University College, where the Eby lectureship serves as an annual forum in which to present individual faculty research. In a previous Eby lecture given in 1984, entitled "Music: Intellect and Emotion",[2] I argued for the necessary linking of both mental and affective involvement in the best musical experiences; that position remains unaltered for me today. Still, years of work as conductor and composer in my "laboratory" at Grebel (namely, the Chapel), in numerous congregational settings, and in concert have turned theories expressed in that lecture into experientially-grounded convictions. The focus of my thinking in the present essay is that music makes an important and unique contribution in three distinct settings: the post-secondary academy, the gathering for Christian worship, and society in general via the public concert.[3] As documentation, I draw examples from my own work as a conductor and composer, most of which were presented through commercial and archival

The Sound Examples of recordings referred to in this article are available at https://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/cgrsoundexamples. All the examples that employ recordings, except number 5, are available indefinitely. Example 5 is licensed until March 2017.

[1] *The Choral Journal* 23 (February 1983), 21.

[2] "Music: Intellect and Emotion," in *The Conrad Grebel Review* 2, no. 2 (1984): 89-105.

[3] While this may seem a disparate list, it represents the three central thrusts of my career as educator, church musician, and conductor/composer.

recordings at the lecture.

I make two basic assumptions. The first assumption is that music is an expressive art created by humans, using sound as a medium and time as a canvas; that it requires listening, as opposed to hearing; and that it rewards repeated listening with deeper appreciation. I distinguish between *hearing* (being aware of a sound) and *listening* (being engaged with a sound).[4] The second assumption is that the path to this progressively deeper appreciation has three stages: (1) liking music, (2) understanding music, and (3) appreciating music in an engaged, informed, and potentially transformational way. These stages are not necessarily sequential; engaged appreciation will develop over time in a zigzag way as repeated listening, study, and experience put liking, understanding, and appreciation into dialogue with each other.[5] One might, for example, learn to understand a late Beethoven quartet, then to appreciate it in a deep way, and then come to really like it! All three stages are part of a rich whole. Still, engaged appreciation is normally the result of the other two.

While most people like music and find it meaningful in various, often profound ways, the task of university-level music education in a liberal arts setting is to take students who like music to the next step of understanding it. Normally, in such programs the ultimate goal is an informed *appreciation* of music. The emotive response to music may vary individually and cannot be taught, but the depth of appreciation will be directly related to the level of understanding. The goal of informed music appreciation is fundamental for liberal arts programs in music, where it is valued highly as distinct from the priority placed on performance and technical proficiency in typical music performance faculties and conservatory programs. (In the Canadian system the degree nomenclature of "B.A. [Music]" versus "B. Mus." reflects these differing emphases.)

Although worship is not to be simplistically equated with "education,"

[4] Composer Paul Hindemith's perspective is helpful here. He writes: "[M]usic, whatever sound and structure it may assume, remains meaningless noise unless it touches a receiving mind. But the mere fact that it is heard is not enough: the receiving mind must be active in a certain way if a transmutation from a mere acoustical perception into a genuine musical experience is to be accomplished." Paul Hindemith, *A Composer's World* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1961), 18.

[5] See also Edward T. Cone, "Three Ways of Reading a Detective Story–or a Brahms Intermezzo," in *Music: A View from Delft*, ed. Robert P. Morgan (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1989), 77.

mature public worship will necessarily involve a complex interweaving of the cerebral, the sensual, the emotional, and the physical—this latter in varying degrees. At the same time, even that parsing suggests a false division of what in the end is best called "the human." When we engage with the Holy through music in public worship, both the meaning and the meaningfulness of the encounter become enriched as our understanding of music and its role in worship increases. The same dynamic process applies to other elements of worship as well.

Music in Post-Secondary Education

While there is significant flow-through between education, worship, and concert, the place of music is distinct in each context. Education helps us understand music. Worship asks all its elements including music to serve its prime purpose, and thus the first question for music in worship is functional rather than aesthetic. The concert setting provides the richest context and potential of all, ideally combining elements of education with spiritual and emotional engagement.

It is some of the benefits of music to education that I want to consider first. In general, the study of music, as of other performing arts, offers a bountiful, holistic way of *learning* and a profound way of *knowing*. Intellectual inquiry, physical training, and affective experience all work together in a unique way in music studies and serve as mutual enrichment. I have in mind "formal" education at the post-secondary level in these comments, but I also intend them to be understood broadly and not restricted in their implications to a structured educational setting. The focus is not on how music education is accomplished, but on the significance of music studies as a part of education in general. My remarks may contribute to discussions about priorities determining educational curricula, particularly in the liberal arts setting that is still the seedbed of many church-related post-secondary education programs.

I should say here that performance training per se is best located in a conservatory rather than a university. At the same time, university academic studies in music history, theory, aesthetics and so on, if totally separated from a context of actually making music, do an injustice to both the art of music and the potential of music education. The goal of balancing these

two—balancing "doing" and "thinking," if you will—provides a rationale for liberal arts programs in music such as the one at Conrad Grebel University College. The educational significance of music as a discipline depends on its being both *considered* and *experienced*. The aspiration of music education is for the affective dimension—spiritual and emotional—to be integrated with listening and performing in an informed way. This integration will then lead to, and enhance, true and engaged music appreciation. Such emphasis makes music a very powerful and unparalleled mode of learning and knowing.

Music studies engage unique modes of learning, since music is much more dependent on psychological, psycho-acoustical, physical, and cultural elements than on the normal language syntax underlying, and to a great extent limiting, the methodology of most other disciplines. Students learn music in ways that address them directly and require them to embrace the subject matter in modes mainly bypassed in their other studies. In performance, students benefit from ways of learning that involve physical engagement (think of pianists, string players, singers, percussionists), integration of physical and emotional elements (music expression is related to emotion, whether mimicked or real, as is the case for actors), and a high degree of self-awareness and context-awareness (monitoring at many levels is constant as performers adjust pitch, rhythm, and volume, according to requirements of the score, feedback from others in the ensemble, audience response, and so on). The robust cognitive, physical, and emotional integration, and the flexibility and "stretch" that music requires and develops are virtually unique in the academy (akin only to performing arts such as dance and drama), and significantly beneficial to students' education.

I now want to look at how and why music education offers benefits going well beyond the apparent boundaries of the discipline itself.

Music Teaches Self-knowledge

The way meaning flows from music is complex and nuanced. The lessons offered will vary, depending, for example, on whether one engages as performer or listener (or composer, for that matter). However, there are general claims that can be convincingly supported, especially in relation to the educational setting. While a liberal arts music education will admittedly have as an objective some level of performance proficiency, the aim, as we

noted earlier, is increased *appreciation* of music. But even this is only the outside skin of the real way in which music can be central to that education, namely in its contribution to a more humane society.

For students engaged in music making, the art helps them both to know themselves and to develop interpersonal sensibility. In the setting of a choir, for instance, music asks singers to develop confidence in themselves while teaching them about their place in the larger choral (that is, social) context. In the following example, consider how the individual parts make their contribution but also become subsumed into a collective sound, losing their individual identity while becoming part of much richer whole. Singers must be self-confident and contribute individually, while balancing those elements with the full ensemble. The example is from my composition, *Nocturne*.[6] The words are those of Lorenzo to Jessica in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (Act V, scene 1):

> *Here will we sit and let the sounds of music*
> *Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night*
> *Become the touches of sweet harmony.*
>
> *Look how the floor of heaven*
> *Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold;*
> *There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st*
> *But in his motion like an angel sings,*
> *Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubins;*
>
> *Such harmony is in immortal souls,*
> *But whilst this muddy vesture of decay*
> *Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.*

Music and Others

Given the increasing globalization of our world and despite the unhelpful concomitant fetish with "differences" in some quarters, the potential for music's positive impact is increasing.[7] I suspect that the depth of our

[6] Sound Example 1: Leonard Enns, "Nocturne" (excerpt), *ShadowLand* Audio CD (Waterloo, ON: DaCapo Chamber Choir, 2009). Used by permission of DaCapo Chamber Choir.

[7] The underside is that there can also be a perverse misuse of "music" (using the term loosely),

knowledge about the religion, history, and culture of others stands in inverse proportion to our inclination for behaving aggressively toward them. If, after studying and performing their music, we take a further step and sit down with them to share the experience of music, the temptation to settle disputes aggressively will no longer be moot. Music can take us to a place where greed and aggression dissolve; it can help chip away prejudices and make us more mutually sensitive. Unfortunately, there are bad, humiliating, and insensitive examples of patronizing arrangements of music from cultures other than our own. But more and more musicians are working with humility and understanding in order to develop a mutual embrace within the global community through music. Consider the Israeli-Palestinian choirs and orchestras whose mission, while certainly musical, is equally to foster mutual understanding and peacemaking. The work of Daniel Barenboim and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, bringing together young musicians from Israel and the Arab world, is one instance among many.

Music offers a powerful entry into the world of others. Engagement in their sound-world will often result in a new level of appreciation of these folk. It may start with an introduction to the practices of their culture; it may be through music that we begin to understand their religious values, or find a strong bond with them as fellow human beings. One compelling example of the positive, sensitizing role music can play in reinforcing and re-informing a global neighborhood is a recent work by the young Iranian-Canadian composer Iman Habibi. His composition, *Colour of Freedom*, is for a western-style choir and a Persian-style soloist. Habibi gives the English words of Canadian author, poet, and political activist Marina Nemat to a choir singing in a "Western Art Music" style, and provides the Persian words of 10th-century mystic and poet Baba Taher to a soloist singing in a traditional Persian style.[8]

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frequently with the effect of reinforcing prejudices, misogyny, and other divisive, harmful, and hateful ideas.

[8] Nemat is a contemporary Iranian-born Canadian who as a teenager was imprisoned and tortured in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison for criticizing the Iranian government. She is noted for her books *Prisoner of Tehran* (Toronto: Penguin Group Canada, 2008) and *After Tehran: A Life Reclaimed* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2010).

The text for this excerpt[9] is as follows:

The streets of Tehran
Cannot remember the colour of freedom,
For even the pavement of alleyways
Is crimson red.
— Marina Nemat

My sorrows plenty, and my pains countless
Alas, there is no remedy to my pain
oh God, my companion doesn't know
That my cries are involuntary
— Baba Taher

Freedom is the colour of water,
And it dripped through our fingers
Till all that was left was thirst.
But seeds of light
Remain in the depths of darkness
And will grow when droplets of hope
Find their way through layers of cruelty.[10]
— Marina Nemat

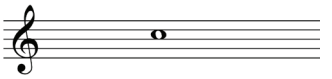
Who can listen to this music without being deeply touched by the lament of seemingly unachievable aspiration? The feeling of longing for a true human bond is palpable—a visceral sense that we are all one family, with one hope. The lament, however, is particular, and Western listeners cannot help but feel, along with empathy, a degree of discomfort and complicity in such sorrow. Here music brings global neighbors closer together in an experience of the common currency of the human condition, an acknowledgment of the pains we inflict on each other but also the hope we can offer each

[9] Sound Example 2: Iman Habibi, *Colour of Freedom* (excerpt). DaCapo Chamber Choir (February 25, 2012). Archival concert recording, Kitchener, ON. Used by permission of Marina Nemat, Iman Habibi, Amir Hahgigi, and the DaCapo Chamber Choir. In this performance the Persian texts of Taher are sung by the Iranian-Canadian Amir Hahgigi; the English words of Nemat are sung by the choir.
[10] Used by permission of Marina Nemat.

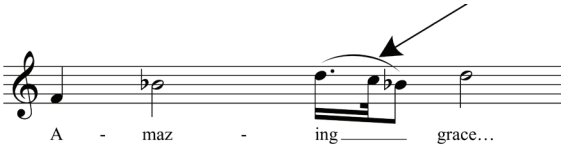
other and the joy we can share. Peacemaking may begin with an effort to understand others, and when the intention is as noble as in this example, not only can music *making* be a partner in peacemaking, well-intentioned and carefully planned music *studies* can contribute as well. A corollary is that academic studies in Global Music—offered at Grebel and increasingly elsewhere—are a legitimate, relevant, and arguably indispensible part of any education program that sees music as a humanizing discipline. Such a focus is an obvious natural fit for institutions offering peace studies.

Music and Relationships, Context, and Situation

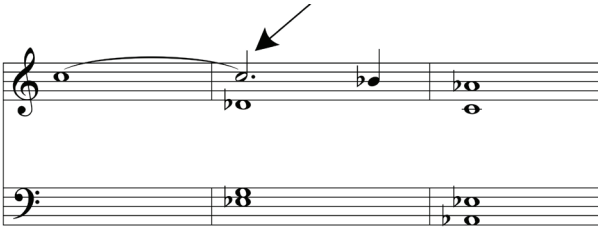
A sound by itself can never be music; it can only be music in relationship to another sound. Further, musical *meaning* derives from musical context: the same note in four different settings, for instance, has four different meanings, purposes, and ways of behaving. Take an ordinary pitch "C" as an example. First, it is a largely meaningless sound by itself, contextualized only by the framing silence:



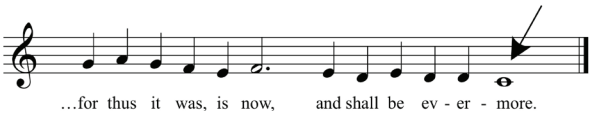
Second, it may serve as a fairly insignificant "passing tone" between the two more important melody notes (of *Amazing Grace* in this example):



Third, it may be a "suspension," a goal-driven note whose context demands that it will descend to another place before the issue is resolved (the context ascribes an aural teleology to the note!):



Lastly, the same pitch may serve as an important destination, as a point of arrival. The C here is an octave lower than the previous ones, to simplify the notation:



[In the lecture, Sound Example 3, given at the piano, demonstrated all four instances above.]

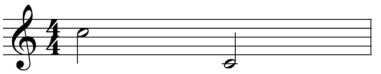
Note that while we are referring to the same pitch in all cases, very different meanings obtain in each case as a result of various contexts. The point is that *sound* can become *music* only in relationship to sound, and that the function and meaning of a sound will change depending on its context. Expressive meaning requires, and is impacted by, relational context. Grasping this musical reality and, more important, *experiencing* it as a performer or listener, can help with understanding the effect of context even in non-musical situations. The metaphor must be unpacked and the analogy tested, but the lesson is there. Music may serve as a metaphor by which we can find a deeper understanding of the importance of relationship and purpose in our interaction with others and the environment. The learning is not necessarily "cerebral": it is visceral, perhaps psychological, and possibly even spiritual.

Music and Investigative and Imaginative Skills

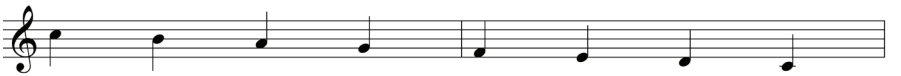
A core aim of music education is to foster an understanding of potential and possibility. How does one develop an idea, how does one explore the "sound world" opened up by two different pitches, for example? One can work within the defined "space" (C to G, for instance, in something like "Mary had a little lamb") or introduce new ideas, colors, or pitches as nuance and enrichment (think of what Beethoven does with those two pitches that open his Fifth Symphony), and so on. For the music student, the challenge is to explore the potential of an idea using sound as the material for the argument. The "language" of the dialectic is particular to music, but the challenge is not unique; every novelist, poet, painter, or dancer is searching, exploring,

and expanding an idea in a certain way. The contribution that music makes, along with other fine and performing arts, is to couch the search in a non-verbal mode and to engage the mind in a way that stretches and enriches. For the composition student, the task is to develop a single germ motive into an extended satisfying work; for the music analyst, it is to find the way back—to discover how an entire composition unveils the potential of one or more basic ideas.

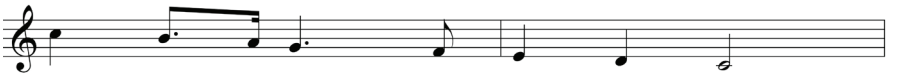
As a simple example, take two pitches separated by an octave, a high and a low C:



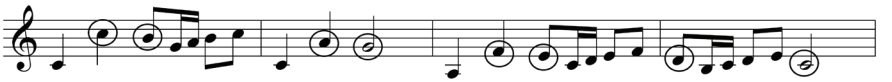
We can explore the possibilities in many ways. Filling in the descent can give us a C major scale:



With the addition of some simple rhythms, the music takes us to a specific Christmas carol:



More sophisticated embellishment of this fundamental scalar descent takes us to the Land of Oz:



[In the lecture, Sound Example 4, given at the piano, demonstrated all four instances above.]

Our imagination might then consider reversing direction, and treating the basic gesture as an ascent rather than a descent. Then further melodies emerge, including that familiar mnemonic, "Doe, a deer," from *The Sound*

of Music. The process of development is fundamental to most disciplines, either at the forefront or as the other side of cohesion, consistency, logical decision-making, and so on. Music exercises and strengthens that process. William Blake begins his poem *Auguries of Innocence* with these lines:

> *To see a world in a grain of sand,*
> *And a heaven in a wild flower,*
> *Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,*
> *And eternity in an hour.*

This is an enviable perspective, one that music education can equip students to achieve.

Music Enriches and Transcends Text

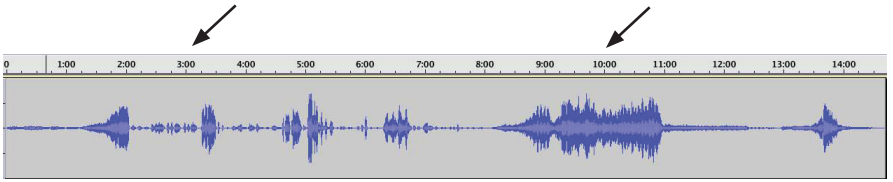
Finally, and especially pertinent to the present topic, music plays a vital role in combination with text. Music can be a bountiful resource for language studies and has contributions to make in this regard in the academy, church, and concert hall. While music appears to be pre-lingual both historically and developmentally, it is also beyond—or above—language in its ability to express and carry meaning. Combined with words in choral and solo compositions, music can extend, nuance, and elevate text and meaning. The acoustical alchemy of this art exists in the passage from semantic to spiritual meaning, from the physical to the transcendent.

Music allows us to express the deepest joy, grief, longing, and fear when words alone will not do, or when we find it impossible to express ourselves in words. Examples are endless, but I will offer one from contemporary American composer Eric Whitacre's setting of the final verse of 2 Samuel 18. The composition is *When David Heard*, for a cappella choir.

> *When David heard that Absalom was slain*
> *he went up into his chamber over the gate and wept,*
> *and thus he said:*
> *My son Absalom,*
> *would God I had died for thee!*

Even on its own, this is a powerful text in the context of the larger drama. But listen to the way Whitacre's music deepens the grief reflected in the text. We hear stunned, shocked grief; outpourings of uncontainable grief; broken grief.[11]

While this example presents only the first three minutes or so of the work, the entire composition extends over a quarter of an hour. Grief pours out in waves, as a halting lament over a huge canvas of time. A simple intensity graph of the work in performance shows these waves of lament, measured here with minute markings:



The example ends just before the second "outburst" visible at 3′ 15.″ on the graph above, which displays the sound image of this section. The text fragment "O, my son Absalom" is repeated over and over in a musical keening that continues for most of the work. The only instance of the phrase, "would God I had died for thee," is at the 10 minute mark, nested near the center of the largest outpouring. This example presents one of many possible instances of music enriching and even transcending text. Reading the text takes about 20 seconds; living the meaning of it takes a lifetime. Whitacre's music takes us much closer to embracing and experiencing the real life impact of the text than reading alone can do. This supra-lingual meaning that music can bring to text is one of its great contributions in education, worship, and concert settings (more on the latter two below).

A much-quoted statement of the great American conductor Robert Shaw is one of the best summaries of the overall educational challenge, gift, and necessity of music, whether within a formal education setting or elsewhere:

> *We believe that music is more a necessity than a luxury, not simply*

[11] Sound Example 5: Eric Whitacre, "When David Heard" (excerpt), *ShadowLand* Audio CD (Waterloo, ON: DaCapo Chamber Choir, 2009). Used by permission of Walton Music Corporation and DaCapo Chamber Choir.

> *because it is therapeutic nor because it is the universal language, but because it is the persistent focus of [human] intelligence, aspiration and good will. To be an artist is to arrive at some sort of resolution of the mind and matter struggle. . . . There is no landscaped approach to beauty and truth. You scratch and scramble around intellectual granites, you try to diffuse or tether your emotional tantrums, you pray for the day when your intellect and your instinct can co-exist, so that the brain need not calcify the heart nor the heart flood and drown all reason. But in that struggle lies the tolerable dignity and a tolerable destiny. . . . To be an artist is not the privilege of a few, but the necessity of us all.* [12]

Music in Christian Worship

In the church, the question becomes: How does music serve the needs of the worship service? Here the potential exists for music to be an act of worship in and of itself, and, as is most often the case, to enrich the verbal dimensions of worship, enhancing the meaning of the text and allowing worshipers to engage in ways that transcend the limits of normal language.[13]

Music as Reading of Text

Just as spoken word becomes part of worship both through active listening and engaged participation, so does music. And typically in the Christian church word and music combine to carry worship. The gathered community listens to music—perhaps in a prelude, a choral anthem, or another form—and participates in it, especially through hymn singing.

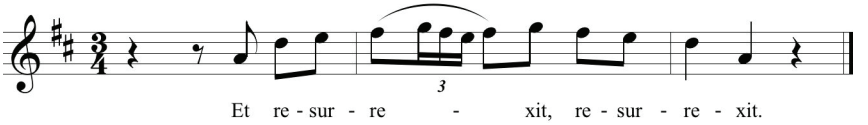
It is in the solo and choral worship elements and in hymn singing that music becomes a certain "reading" of the text. As in all cases the music can "paint" the text, but this is hardly its main function in worship. Further, what works well for one word in one verse of a hymn may not be suitable for a subsequent verse. It is more important for the music in a hymn to express the

[12] *The Choral Journal* 23 (February 1983), 21.

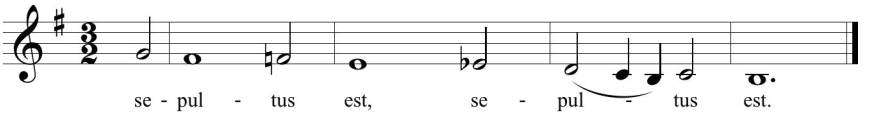
[13] See also Leonard Enns, "The Composer as Preacher," in *The Conrad Grebel Review* 15, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 269-81. Reprinted in *Music and Worship: A Mennonite Perspective*, ed. Bernie Neufeld (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 228-46.

concept of the text rather than the *particulars* of the text.[14] Choral anthems, and hymn arrangements that combine choir and congregation, can attend to this latter task of opening up the meaning of specific words or verses. But even there it is more the spirit of the lyrics than the flesh of any given word that is at the heart.

Johann Sebastian Bach is a master at acoustically en-fleshing the word (the Word); consider the rising flourish at the *Et Resurrexit* of his B Minor Mass. His setting of the word "resurrexit" is a good example of word-painting:



This flourish stands in brilliant contrast to the immediately preceding stark, grave-like descent of the *Crucifixus*, an example of music expressing the concept of descent (rather than the particulars of a single word):



[In the lecture, Sound Example 6, given at the piano, featured these settings.]

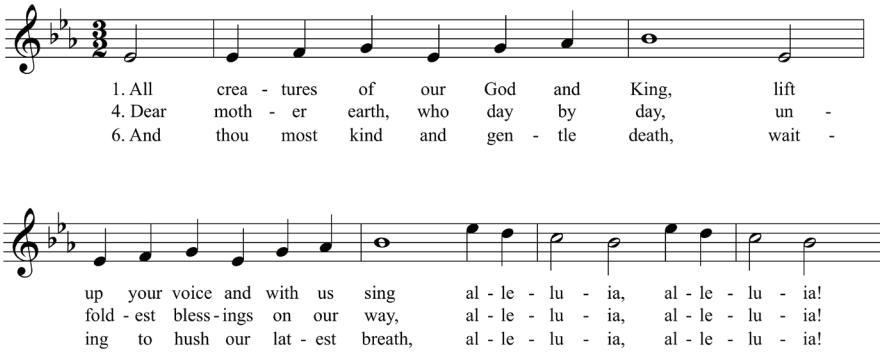
Whether operative at the level of the basic concept of the text or in a specific "word painting" manner, music combined with words will often be a reading of the text and may at times have primary influence over the text in the spiritual development and faith formation of worshipers.[15] While this is a topic for exploration elsewhere, suffice it to say here that the composer for worship is faced with the demanding task of attending to both the precise meaning of individual words and the overall intent of the lyrics.

[14] For a discussion of the topic of text and music in hymns, see Kenneth Hull, "Text, Music and Meaning in Congregational Song," in *The Hymn* 53, no. 1 (January 2002). Reprinted in *The Conrad Grebel Review* 20, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 81-106.

[15] See Hull, "Text, Music and Meaning" in the *The Conrad Grebel Review* reprint, 97-98. I am grateful to Hull for his distinction between a "setting" of a text and a "reading" of a text, particularly as it applies to hymns and other vocal music for worship.

I find composing in response to this challenge to be deeply rewarding, and here I offer one example of my own writing for choir and solo voice. I am working with a familiar hymn text, "All Creatures of our God and King," translated from the Latin of Francis of Assisi. My intention is to give the text renewed, fresh, and possibly expanded meaning. While the melody normally associated with this text presents a regal reading of the words—fitting for "our God and King"—it leaves little room for the kindness and gentleness of death, or for any sense of meeting death with other than a staunch, stiff-backed heroism. Yet that is the sense imparted by the hymn tune at the sixth verse, which begins: "And though, most kind and gentle death, / waiting to hush our latest breath, / Thou leadest home the child of God. . . ." For a text such as this, a one-size-fits-all approach provided by a tune can be too constraining; the more the melody is in keeping with one verse, the less it may be for others.

Here is the familiar hymn tune, with the first phrases of verses 1, 4, and 6: the melody is very fitting for the first verse; less so, I maintain, for the fourth verse; and not suitable at all for the sixth.



One alternative might be to use a melody that has no "form-fitting" aspect at all. This is how many chant melodies work, aspiring simply to carry the text, not to "read" it in any particular way. Another is to create a new setting of the text, allowing for musical variation from verse to verse. Such settings (readings) are typically the contribution of soloists or choirs in worship. In these works, sometimes called hymn anthems, a new music/

text combination can add further layers of meaning and nuance to familiar, often treasured texts. The example I offer is my setting of the Francis text for baritone soloist and male choir.[16] While some music repeats from verse to verse, I have centered this reading of the text on the sixth ("gentle death") verse. Francis, translated into English, teaches a gentle, patient approach to death, which itself is the gate to the ultimate home of the "child of God." Perhaps a new setting of that verse, such as this one, can shed fresh light on the text and theology of the hymn.

Congregational song can also be enhanced and extended by a choir in worship, where, for example, the choir may provide a particular interpretation or musical commentary on a familiar hymn shared in song with the congregation. In these and other ways, music extends and nuances the meaning of text in worship. An example of this approach is my hymn-anthem, "Incarnate God."[17]

Music as Communion

While music in worship often serves as a way of deepening the meaning of text, its most fundamental role is as a kind of communion. Each worshiper engages with others in a visceral, potentially spiritual way through participating in communal song, and may also enter the presence of the divine through singing and listening to music. Though the understanding of the *sacrament* of communion that I grew up with in a small Mennonite church may seem out of date today, I still value its emphasis on making things right with the neighbor before taking the bread and wine. My belief is that this sacrament in its fullest sense always involves a living out of the bidirectional pattern of the cross—a commitment to both neighbor and God.

[16] Sound Example 7: Leonard Enns, "All Creatures of our God and King" (excerpt), *In Concert* Audio CD. Winnipeg Faith & Life Male Choir; Phil Ens, soloist (Winnipeg, MB: Faith and Life Communications, 2002). Used by permission of Mennonite Church Manitoba.

[17] Sound Example 8: Leonard Enns, "Incarnate God," *How can I keep from Singing,* Audio CD. Conrad Grebel Chapel Choir; Jan Overduin, organist (Waterloo, ON: Conrad Grebel University College, 1997). Used by permission of Conrad Grebel University College. I have altered the first word of the text; it will be familiar to most readers as "Strong Son of God." The hymn anthem is dedicated to George and Esther Wiebe, both now retired from long and distinguished careers as music professors at Canadian Mennonite Bible College (now Canadian Mennonite University) in Winnipeg, Manitoba, whose work daily demonstrated the points I am making in this essay.

Congregational song may serve in a like manner, as a kind of communion that reaches in both of these ways. It is "sound theology."

Communion with one another[18]

When we gather in worship, we are part of a community that exists both physically in the present and mystically through space and time. We are one with those who are present, one with those who have gone before us, and one with those who will come after us. When we own long-held confessions of faith, this web of relationships comes alive; in congregational singing, the poetry and the music of our hymns confess this reality. Traditional hymn texts and music in particular bind the Christian church across time, while contemporary and global texts and music often unify it through space. In these ways, congregational hymn singing is one of the great gathering forces of the church.

The Protestant Reformation was, among other things, an expression of the desire for meaningful involvement in worship, for a fundamental change from observation to active engagement, from pseudo-mysticism engendered by obscure Latin to direct encounter with liturgy and biblical text in the vernacular. Central to this re-formation, communion became both personal and communal, to be engaged in tangibly and spiritually rather than observed as a mystery. The bread was touched, broken, and shared by all. Similarly, the physical, sensual reality of congregational singing—making sound, breathing in unison, celebrating, sometimes weeping, through the formalized structure of song—is a gift offered by music in worship. When worshipers inhale together and join in song, a bond is created in the service of praise, confession, supplication, and affirmation. In communal singing, the "vertical" extension to the divine is grounded in a "horizontal" embrace of the group; the horizontal axis of the cross is en-fleshed. Congregational song affirms participation as a central dynamic of post-Reformation worship; in engaging in congregational song we live out in sound a commitment to the community of believers.

[18] For an expanded discussion, see my "Music as Communion," *Canadian Mennonite,* November 16, 2009, 4-7.

Communion with the divine

With our plethora of words and endless articles of faith, and our prescriptions and dogmatic descriptions, do we not diminish the divine source and ultimate home of our being? Is God so small that mere words will suffice, both in our imagining of, and in our approach to, the divine? The numerous biblical references to God as light, wind, fire, and so on are more akin to music than to text. Music offers us the possibility of transcending even these specifics of language, and of taking us to a point beyond the constraints of verbally limited imagination.[19] Music can bring us, unfettered by verbal logic, into communion with God, binding creature and creator, soul and source, and when rightly part of worship, it can become a profound and direct contact with God.

Hymn *texts* specify and channel the "fire" of this divine communion, while hymn *music* extends the reach of the texts and potentially brings us to God. If we only *listen* to music in worship, no matter how lovely or refined, how ancient or contemporary it might be, the Reformation has not yet happened, and the curtain of the Temple has not been torn open to allow us to enter the Holy of Holies. Without engaged hymn singing, we remain observers rather than participants.

The gift offered by music in worship, then, especially through congregational song, is that it may serve as a unique kind of communion, reflecting both dimensions of the cross—communion with one another and with God.[20] When thoughtfully chosen and placed in the liturgy, congregational song brings the experience of communion from behind the screen out into the midst of the people. It is possibly the Reformation's most visceral, sensual, and precious gift to worship.

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[19] A similar point is made by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834): "In holy hymns and choruses, to which the words of the poet cling only loosely and lightly, that is exhaled which definite speech can no longer comprehend, and thus the sounds of thought and feeling support one another and alternate until everything is saturated and full of the holy and infinite." Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 75.

[20] John Rempel asks: "How can music shape worship that believes that change of heart and change of society is possible?… A basic criterion then for the role of music in worship is its power to transform.… We come to worship blinded to the neighbor before our eyes. We leave worship with eyes and hands of compassion." John Rempel, "An Anabaptist Perspective on Music in Worship," in *Music in Worship: A Mennonite Perspective*, ed. Bernie Neufeld (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 42-43.

Music in the Public Concert

I will name the public concert as the third element of my discussion, though I must leave in-depth exploration of it for future consideration. Briefly, the public concert can be a setting for virtually all the issues noted so far, at its best combining education with spiritual and emotional engagement. It may, but need not, include "entertainment."

Music education will have an impact on the concert experience. If the relationship that I have proposed between *liking*, *understanding*, and *appreciating* is not specious, then we will experience a concert in greater depth as we understand more about the music we are hearing. It will become part of the fabric of our life, our imagination, and our relationships with others. In terms of possible parallels with the worship setting, except for occasional situations listeners do not regularly burst into song (a pity, perhaps!) but in a concert setting they can be, and often are, transported and transformed in ways similar to what is experienced in worship. The public concert ideally offers an experience of transcendence and positive challenge, and helps to build the road to a more humane society. The contributions of music to education, mentioned earlier, apply here too: the public concert can sensitize, dignify, pacify, motivate, and help create a vigorous, creative, positive community and a nobler society.

As well, the public concert is a setting for catharsis; for spiritual aspiration; for lament, confession, hope, and celebration. Ideally, as distinct from worship, it is blind to confessional and cultural preferences (although it remains true that much of the choral repertoire either arises from within the church or is related to ecclesial liturgies). The concert setting provides an unequaled context for combining elements of education, spiritual and emotional engagement, and, occasionally, entertainment.

Summary

I am proposing that music has a rightful, uniquely fruitful place in education; that music becomes a type of communion in worship; and that music in the public concert offers benefits at personal, social, and spiritual levels, and is potentially transformational at all levels. If there is solid ground for these proposals, then there are implications for education, worship planning, and even for concert programming choices. I offer these thoughts as a possible

starting position from which to consider what is being done in these areas, how best to allocate relevant resources, and how to establish priorities and approaches so that the gifts music offers to the academy, church, and society may flourish.

Composer, conductor, and educator Leonard J. Enns retired in June 2013 from Conrad Grebel University College, where he was a faculty member for more than three and a half decades. During that period he made more than 300 church visits across Ontario, Quebec and the United States with the Chapel Choir, which he founded in 1977. He is the founding director of the national award-winning DaCapo Chamber Choir, and has contributed many works to the concert and worship repertoire. For details: www.lenns.ca.

THE BENJAMIN EBY LECTURESHIP

Established at Conrad Grebel University College in the 1980s, the Benjamin Eby Lectureship offers faculty members an opportunity to share research and reflections with the broader College and University community. Benjamin Eby (1785-1853) was a leading shaper of Mennonite culture in Upper Canada from the 1830s on. He and his wife Mary arrived from Pennsylvania in 1807. By 1812 he was an ordained bishop, and by 1813 the first Mennonite meetinghouse in the Waterloo area had been erected. About 1815 Eby saw to the building of the first schoolhouse. He continued his outstanding leadership in the church and in education throughout his life, all while supporting himself as a farmer. A lover of books, Eby wrote two primers for public school children, compiled the *Gemeinschaftliche Liedersammlung*, a new hymnal for Mennonites in Ontario, and edited a volume of articles by Anabaptist and early Mennonite authors. The latter is noteworthy especially because it preserves in a ministers' manual the traditional worship practices of the (Old) Mennonite Church. The Lectureship honors Eby's belief that the motivation to learn is a response to the Christian gospel.