

# CHURCH MUSIC, CONGREGATIONAL LIFE, AND THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN HARMONY: TOWARD A NEW APPROACH FOR MUSICAL ADVOCACY

John D. Witvliet

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## The prophetic voice

It is a dangerous move to name a church music conference “the prophetic voice.” Prophets, after all, say things like “away with your songs” and “I detest your pious offerings.”<sup>1</sup> Verses like these from Isaiah or Amos are typically not theme verses for our church choirs or music committees.

Prophets denounce the disintegration of conviction and practice, the disconnection of prayer and justice. Prophets hate anything that displaces God from the center of our devotion, even if it does make music. Prophets know that our greatest temptation to idolatry often comes not from things far away from the worship of God, but rather from the things closest to it. In the words of Abraham Heschel, what the ancient prophets attacked “was supremely venerable: a sphere unmistakably holy, a spirituality that had form and substance, that was concrete and inspiring, an atmosphere overwhelming the believer—pageantry, scenery, mystery, spectacle, fragrance, song, and exaltation.”<sup>2</sup> It all sounds rather like a good worship conference! In short, the prophetic voice interrogates what most of us spend our life promoting.

Fortunately, the prophet’s role is more than that of criticism. To use Walter Breuggemann’s evocative phrase, prophets not only engage in “criticism and the embrace of pathos” but also offer “prophetic energizing and the emergence of amazement.”<sup>3</sup> The prophetic word always calls us back to a vibrant vision of a God-centered abundant life that reconnects all the disparate strands of our lives into a tight-knit fabric of faithfulness. Prophets know that the most profound alleluias are those that resonate against the backdrop of lives marked by integrity and hospitality. As Heschel takes pains to point out, most prophets actually don’t hate music and liturgy. What they love and call us to is seamless integrity between worship and life.

One of the ways to picture this seamlessness is through a musical metaphor. While in prison, Dietrich Bonhoeffer developed a remarkably vivid and evocative image of the Christian life as polyphony, in which our love for God “provides a kind of *cantus firmus* to which the other melodies of life provide the counterpoint.” As Bonhoeffer suggested, “where the *cantus firmus* is clear and plain, the counterpoint can be developed to its limits.”<sup>4</sup> Here is an image that speaks to the prophetic concern for integrity of worship and life and offers those of us who make music some “prophetic energizing and the emergence of amazement.” It is an image, to mix metaphors, with which we musicians can resonate.

## Changing the question

Reflecting on the words of the ancient prophets and on Bonhoeffer’s image has led me to ask some very different questions than I originally planned to explore here. When I accepted the invitation to address the topic of music and theological education, I imagined that my goal would be to ask how we might protect the endangered species of music in theological education. This approach to advocacy would have focused on music in itself. It would have produced yet another address that preaches to the choir about the importance of church music. It would have complained about all those obtuse people out there who can’t see the importance of church music and won’t fund it.

But today, the questions I want to raise are not “how can music claim its rightful place” nor “how big can we build our musical barns and silos?” Rather, I want to ask how we musicians can more intentionally be of service to our congregations and schools. How can we more genuinely give ourselves away? How can we move from “silo” thinking to “honeycomb” thinking—from thinking and working in isolation to thinking and working in collaboration? How can we see our work as profoundly interrelated with other aspects of both congregational life and theological education? In what areas, especially in some areas that we have never really thought about, can music contribute to congregational life and theological education?”

This approach doesn’t focus on music in and of itself, but rather how music contributes to the larger aims and purposes of congregational life and theological education and, ultimately, to the symphony of communal Christian discipleship. The focus is on weaving the *cantus firmus* of our church music into the full fabric of community life. It is an approach that is, I hope, not defensive but constructive.

## What can music contribute to congregational life?

I want to begin with congregational life. For church music is not primarily a function of studio recordings or library research. It is first and foremost about the music that springs up inside the world’s thousands of congregations. Congregational life is the place to begin even when our primary goal for this conference is to explore the role of music in theological education, for theological education lives in symbiotic relationship with congregational life. Both theological educators and their students arise out of and are nourished by congregations, study the practices of congregations, and prepare to serve congregations. Congregations—even with all their stubborn imperfections—are to theological education what hospitals and clinics are to medical education: the primary institutional home for the daily practice of what we are ultimately about.

Most often, when we church musicians think of music in congregational life, we think of an hour on Sunday and the rehearsals that prepare for it. Every week, 100 million or so North Americans attend worship services. In basement apartments and vast cathedrals, in old village churches and sprawling suburban multiplexes, we join with others for preaching, prayer, sacraments, or ordinances—nearly all of it cloaked in music. For many Christians, “going to church” means, simply, attending a worship service. And when you go there, whether or not you “have church” depends in large measure on the music.

Often the centrality of worship is expressed in the loftiest theological rhetoric. The Second Vatican Council called public (eucharistic) worship the “source and summit” of the Christian life. What many Reformation traditions elevate to the status of “the means of grace” or even the “marks of the church” are essentially liturgical actions: preaching, baptism, the Lord’s Supper.<sup>5</sup> African-American congregations have traditionally drawn on the revival-like qualities of common worship as a key resource for sustaining congregational life and supporting personal spiritual life in times of tears and joy. Among evangelical traditions, “inspiring worship” is a non-negotiable ingredient in recipes that grow and sustain congregations.

So whether viewed sociologically or theologically, worship matters. It is a topic of central concern for any Christian leader, all Christian congregations, and each organization that is eager to support them.

Yet given the indisputable importance of worship, when we pause to ask the question, “What can music contribute to congregational life?” we usually limit our answers to liturgical ones. We fail to see that music can permeate congregational life. In fact, music is no more limited to liturgy in congregational life than art is limited to art museums.

This very point has been one of the significant surprises in our work at the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, through our work in the Worship Renewal Grants program. This program offers program grants of \$5,000 to \$15,000 per year to local congregations for initiatives designed to promote renewal at a local congregational level. The application process for these grants (see <[www.calvin.edu/worship](http://www.calvin.edu/worship)>) is fairly open. As a result, we see grant proposals that arise out of deep pastoral concern and feature enormous creativity. One key lesson we have learned from these proposals and programs focuses on the integration of worship with other parts of congregational life. A recurring theme in many of the best grants is that they retain a non-utilitarian view of worship but work to connect aspects of worship (including music) with the patterns and practices of congregational life. They give evidence of both a centripetal and a centrifugal force

that connects worship and other aspects of ministry.

Because of time limitations here, I won't refer to specific projects, but I do want to describe a range of possible projects that past grants have helped us to imagine. The following hypothetical projects illustrate how we might imagine the *cantus firmus* of church music permeating the whole symphony of congregational life.

In educational ministries, imagine a musician reviewing a congregation's educational curriculum to look for excellent, age-appropriate music to complement key lessons, recording it for families to use at home, and then using those hymns and songs in worship. Imagine a musician offering at least one adult education session per year on some aspect of music in the Christian life. Imagine a church musician teaching a youth curriculum on learning the Bible through music. Imagine a church musician teaching a session on worship for each class in the congregation, perhaps one different class per week throughout much of the fall or spring seasons. (Indeed, liturgical education may be the single most important and often neglected part of liturgical or worship renewal efforts in most Christian traditions.)<sup>6</sup>

In pastoral care ministries, imagine a musician treating every wedding and funeral not merely as a required gig to complete but rather a rich opportunity for specialized pastoral care ministry. A musician might compose a simple arrangement of a hymn that is chosen for each event, dedicate it to the families involved, record it for them, and—when possible—use the arrangement again in worship near the one-year anniversary of the event. Or imagine a musician selecting a "pastoral care hymn" of the year, which is then recorded and given to every hospital and nursing home patient in the congregation, a hymn that could also be used regularly in worship, acknowledging to the whole congregation the needs of these members of the church. Or imagine a church musician, in the wake of a devastating natural disaster, organizing a recording of music that demonstrates a Christ-centered response to natural disaster—perhaps it would include an organ voluntary on the book of Job, a setting of "O God, our help in ages past," a Pablo Sosa hymn or psalm, an Iona lament, a James MacMillan anthem, or Vaughan Williams's "Lord, You Have Been Our Refuge." A project like this would turn the musician into a pastoral care giver, and would likely deepen the appreciation that members of the congregation have for other aspects of its musical life.

In social justice ministries, imagine a musician creating what no other ministry might be able to pull off in many congregations, a joint ministry across ethnic and cultural lines. Combining choirs from congregations of different ethnic and socio-economic identities can be a powerful experience of unity. In a different area, imagine that every advocacy letter signed by a congregational justice committee would be accompanied by a hymn text or even a recording—a signal that the church's advocacy for justice is not merely legal but also doxological. (Indeed, many psalms of praise are highly political texts that speak about divine justice).

In ministries of witness or evangelism, imagine a musician working to spearhead an after-school music program that draws members

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of the local community to the church. In an era when public schools lack money for the arts, music education may be one of the best ways for churches to reach out to their communities and to meet our fundamental human need for artistic expression.

In congregational administrative functions, imagine a musician offering to lead sung prayer occasionally at the beginning of any committee or organization in the church, agreeing to lead one hymn or song of their choosing and one of the musician's—an ideal teaching learning opportunity for all. Imagine a musician working with all the committees in the church to select a "theme song" for each of them, exposing them to some of the most creative and provocative current hymn writers and composers, and then gathering the six or eight or ten theme songs together into a short little collection, which would become like a church's expanded mission statement—but this time not a piece of rhetoric that resembles a corporate memo but rather a collection of doxological and prophetic poetry.

And then, now that we've covered the parts of most congregational organization charts, imagine how all of this energy might feed back into worship. Any one of these approaches would lead to music gaining new resonances in daily life and ministry (and I realize that in most contexts, a musician would only ever have the time to take on one or two of these approaches). When that music comes back into the sanctuary, it could well be layered in the minds of most worshipers with connections to education class, hospital room visits, and committee discussions. In other words, these approaches not only would strengthen the ministries of the church, they would also end up strengthening worship and appreciation for worship. Appreciation for music in congregational life could well grow, but not by having us claim more resources for the music program, but rather by asking how we could be of more significant service.

To pose this theme in another way, what if those of us who are church musicians changed our implicit job subtitles from "director of liturgical music" to "stewards of music in congregational life." "Stewardship" is a diaconal function. Music in congregational life is not just priestly, it's also diaconal. Some deacons keep track of church finances. We keep track of the musical gifts in the congregations.

I realize that this approach may generate a worry that music will simply become a means to other ends. Well, that is, in fact, true. All of these ideas do make use of music. They are not non-utilitarian. But they do strongly resist the idea that music is a commodity (which is likely the underlying worry). If this is a modestly utilitarian view of music, it most certainly is not a commodified one. The commodification of music happens when music is viewed only as a way of generating an emotional high or a tool to market a congregation to a new clientele. No, the goal here is to hone and deepen ways that music can serve faithful ministry, quite apart from crass commodification.

I also realize that this approach will require that we rethink how we spend our time. We will need to learn to function not in musical silos, but in honeycombs. We will need to become more deeply involved in other aspects of congregational life—and,

yes, in ways that still preserve our practice time.<sup>7</sup>

Significantly, it may be that the most profound gains in all this have to do with something fairly elusive, something more pervasive and deeper than programs. This integrated approach aspires, finally, to build a congregational culture or ethos that is full of beauty, creativity, imagination, and shalom. In congregational life in North America today, so much so often feels corporate, memo-like, programmatic. Having music permeate congregational life may be one antidote to this form of reductionism.

### What can music contribute to theological education?

In light of this interconnected vision of music and congregational life, consider next the possibilities for weaving a musical *cantus firmus* throughout theological education. Often, seminary or divinity school musicians focus their attention exclusively on a worship course, an all-too-rare hymnody course, and seminary worship life. But just as music has much to offer the entirety of congregational life, so, too, it has much to offer in the whole enterprise of theological education.

To begin, it will be helpful to recall the stated mission of some institutions of theological education. The mission statement of our host, Perkins School of Theology, for example, is "to prepare women and men for faithful leadership in Christian ministry" through "its twin tasks of theological reflection and theological education to the glory of God." Yale Divinity School "has an enduring commitment to foster the knowledge and love of God through critical engagement with the traditions of the Christian churches in the context of the contemporary world." Greg Jones, dean of Duke Divinity School, has recently argued that seminaries "ought to focus on cultivating a love of learning and a desire for God that becomes manifest in transformative service."<sup>8</sup> These statements all point beyond some persistent tensions to an all-inclusive, committed vision of theological education as a servant of faithful discipleship. They all argue that seminary education is more than technical professional training for pastors. They all suggest that seminary training is not about abstract, arms-length analysis of propositions about God or religious life. Rather, seminary or divinity school life is simultaneously doxological, academic, reflective, interdisciplinary, devotional, integrated, and practice-oriented. Music in seminaries, then, is not just something to be studied at arms' length, it can also be prayed. Through both rigorous reflection and practical training, seminaries and divinity schools prepare people for Christian service in ways that bring glory to God and healing to the nations. Music in seminaries and divinity schools is finally a part of that large task.

Music, and especially liturgical music, has much to contribute to theological education throughout the curriculum. Consider the connections between music and some of the main elements of the theological curriculum:

1. HISTORY. Music offers a unique way of accessing historical wisdom. There are few better ways to understand the unique experiences, piety, and convictions of believers in earlier periods of history than singing

their hymns or hearing their music. There are, for example, few more effective (and efficient ways) of exploring the difference in patristic and Reformation piety than by singing "Of the Father's love begotten" and "A mighty fortress" and exploring what they convey about the convictions of each era. Relatedly, the recent growth in liturgical reconstruction recordings offers wonderful possibilities for supplementing church history textbooks, and for helping us more accurately perceive what historic practices of worship actually sounded and looked like.<sup>9</sup> In addition, a whole spate of recent publications has put the question of liturgical music not only on the radar screen of music historians, but also for the wide, broad world of social and intellectual religious history.<sup>10</sup> Imagine the possibilities if at least one history course at most seminaries would feature a musical component, with a local musician serving as a regular supporting instructor.

Music not only has value for studying Christian piety of long ago, but also of far away—across continents and cultures. Seminary education is increasingly aware of what Philip Jenkins has called "The Coming of Global Christianity." As Michael Hawn has taught us, music offers ways of experiencing Christianity worldwide that build empathy, cross-cultural understanding, and a deeper awareness of the contextual nature of all ministry.<sup>11</sup>

2. SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION AND PREACHING. Music offers an efficient and instructive window into the significance and inner workings of textual interpretation. Students who might be slow to discern the nuances or implications of how three textual commentaries handle the same biblical text wouldn't miss the point if they heard contrasting musical settings of the text. As Monroe Beardsley pointed out in his aesthetics textbook of a generation ago, there is a world of the theological difference between how Beethoven and Palestrina conceive of the incarnation as they set the Credo, and how Fauré and Verdi depict the fate of the dead in their settings of the Requiem.<sup>12</sup> Music helps us perceive and feel the differences in interpretation. For students preaching their first funeral sermon on Psalm 23, for example, drinking in the ethos that Franz Schubert or Randall Thompson generate around the text could help inoculate them against the twin temptations of triumphalism and sentimentality. For students struggling with how to preach their first Good Friday homily, spending some time with a Passion setting by Bach or Arvo Pärt may be better than most commentaries in helping them absorb the ethos of the text.

3. CONSTRUCTIVE/SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY. Music (especially hymnody) offers a particularly compelling way of condensing theological themes. For several years now, I've asked students on my theology exams to offer commentary on hymn texts. Sylvia Dunstan's "Christus Paradox" is like a semester of Christology condensed into a poem. Thomas Troeger's "View the present through the promise" is an elegant and memorable crash course in Eschatology.<sup>13</sup> Good Friday and Easter hymns regularly demonstrate how technical arguments about doctrine of the atonement become very tangible in shaping the piety of many congregations during Holy Week.

And it is not just the words of hymns that do this. Music itself not only illustrates but

also discloses theological themes in evocative ways. Jeremy Begbie is a particularly insightful writer on this theme, contending that "music can enable theology to do its job better."<sup>14</sup> Systematic theologian David Ford illustrates Begbie's claim by developing a soteriology based in part on a musical metaphor. Ford develops the image of the restored and redeemed individual as "the singing self" (after Eph. 2:18-21). Here is a bit of his musical analogy:

Sounds do not have exclusive boundaries—they can blend, harmonize, and resonate with each other in endless ways. In singing there can be a filling of space with sound in ways that draw more and more voices to take part, yet with no sense of crowding. It is a performance of abundance as new voices join in with their own distinctive tones. . . . The inclusive, uncrowded space of song therefore embodies a distinctive unity. It is a dynamic, incorporating unity that attracts people into its harmonies. There is no end to its enrichment, and it enables one to imagine how each singer can be valued and have something distinctive to offer while yet being given to the complex unity of the singing. . . .<sup>15</sup>

Conceiving of redemption in Christ as a "performance of abundance" turns seminary choir practice into a parable of divine grace. It draws on musical experience to help form the Christian theological imagination.

Another recent example of the prospects of musical study to benefit systematic or constructive theological education is seen in David Bentley Hart's much-discussed treatise, *The Beauty of the Infinite*. Hart suggests something that most members of the AGO knew long ago, which is that "Bach is the greatest of Christian theologians." But he develops this in quite a remarkable way, offering a new vocabulary for describing Bach's genius:

. . . no one as compellingly demonstrates that the infinite is beauty and that beauty is infinite. It is in Bach's music, as nowhere else, that the potential boundlessness of thematic development becomes manifest: how a theme can unfold inexorably through difference, while remaining continuous in each moment of repetition, upon a potentially infinite surface of varied repetition. . . . The analogy between God's and Bach's handiwork is audible chiefly in Bach's limitless capacity to develop separate lines into extraordinary intricacies of contrapuntal complication, without ever sacrificing the "peace," the measures of accord, by which the music is governed. This is especially evident, of course, in the great fugues, particularly of the later years: a double, triple, or even quadruple fugue is never too dense for Bach's invention to comprise, to open up into ever more unexpected resolutions, nor does a plurality of subjects ever prove resistant to augmented, diminished, or inverted combinations.

Then, after, references to the second book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, the *Art of the Fugue*, the *Fugue in F Major* (BWV 540), and the *Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Major*, Bentley concludes: "This is the pneumatological

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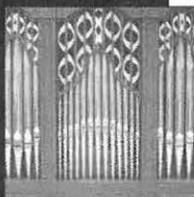


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dynamism in Bach's music, so to speak, the grace that always finds measures of reconciliation that preserve variety; and so this is how it offers an aesthetic analogy to the work of the Spirit in creation, his power to unfold the theme God imparts in creation into ever more profuse and elaborate developments, and to overcome every discordant series.<sup>16</sup> The point of this writing is not primarily to offer a theoretical account of Bach (though I would contend that it offers a language that could assist musical theorists in profound ways). Rather, the point is to help illuminate a theological conceptualization of eschatological redemption. It creates the context for creating a music-listening assignment in a systematic or constructive theology class.<sup>17</sup>

**4. CONGREGATIONAL STUDIES/PRACTICAL THEOLOGY.** Music also helps us picture the nature of Christian ministry. Congregational life is, we might say, like one big improvisational dance. Like jazz, Christian living (and ministry) depends on having a good score/script, on effective collaboration, on responsiveness, and on artful musicality. Jeremy Begbie argues that "improvisation can be a means of developing ways of interacting with each other that are intrinsic to any Christian account of coming to terms with the 'time' of others: attending to the other, listening in silence, responding flexibly."<sup>18</sup> His (and related) accounts offer compelling ways of picturing the church as a collective group of responsive, creative, collaborative persons-in-relationship. Musical collaboration is one interesting analogy for faithful ministry.

Music also participates in many ministries of the church. Each of the examples in the first part of this paper suggest ways that musical practices could be explored as one element in courses in education, pastoral care, social justice, and mission.

**5. WORSHIP AND MUSIC MINISTRY.** And of course, seminaries train pastors for their roles as leaders of worship, and often train musicians for the same. At first glance, it would seem that all this energy spent outside of the worship curriculum would severely impinge on our time there. But as with congregational life, when music is explored in multiple settings, our encounters with it in its natural habitat are much richer and deeper. When students have listened to music in a theology class, or sung hymns in a history class, our work in teaching worship or leading a seminary choir is much easier.

So, in sum, as with congregational life, music has much to contribute throughout the theological curriculum. Again, this vision asks different questions of music than we are accustomed to asking. We are used to thinking of music in theological education as being about what music is sung in seminary chapels, taught in seminary liturgy or church music classes, and practiced by students in field placements. By itself, that is very good. But it often suffers from a kind of "silo effect," cut off from other areas of vibrant theological discourse. We need to move from silos to honeycombs, connecting our musical experiences and insights across the curriculum and co-curricula. We need musical experiences that have centrifugal and centripetal force, from the worship curriculum and chapel into other areas of inquiry and then back again.

As with congregations, one benefit of making these connections is the resulting influence on the ethos of our schools. Every divinity school or seminary has a kind of overarching ethos or feel—the kind that Dan Aleshire and a team of scholars explored in their 1997 study, *Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Schools*.<sup>19</sup> They argue that formation for ministry is achieved most powerfully by the institutional culture or ethos of a school—a kind of gestalt sum total of all the events, attitudes, symbols, ceremonies, debates, and feasts that a community sponsors. When music permeates the culture of a seminary or divinity school, its overall ethos could well become more aesthetic, doxological, and imaginative. Indeed, musical modes of thinking and communicating are not only effective but also efficient ways of recovering the basic aesthetic, improvisational character of theology, ministry, and Christian living. As Langdon Gilkey once argued, "Art and music, though often used in crassly utilitarian ways, are one of the few modes of discourse available to us that still promise to teach us about something of intrinsic worth, a focal practice."<sup>20</sup> Music offers divinity schools a language to move beyond analytical modes of discourse to doxological modes of discourse. It gives us a language to use to learn to love God more truly.

Now as with congregational life, I can imagine a skeptical response to all this. For one, it sounds like a lot of work—all this on top of lives that are already overtaxed and underpaid. This is a point well taken. As with congregations, this vision changes how we musicians spend our time in seminaries. It calls us to collaborate with colleagues across the theological disciplines. It challenges us to learn the language of the theological academy. Yet we don't need to achieve each of the connections I've described. A good beginning on one significant collaboration between music and another part of the theological curriculum may be sufficient to communicate that music is not merely an isolated interest in the pursuit of theological education.

For another, all of this sounds like a distraction from our main love. Many of us musicians got into our business because we love Bach and Langlais. Those of us who are organists play recitals, organize concert series, and play impressive postludes. Who has time for effective ministry and for reading all those theology books when what we want to do is make excellent music?

But this is a vexing trap to fall into. The assertion that excellent music and effective ministry are mutually opposed is what we need to be against. What we need to be for is doing excellent theological education and excellent ministry by means of excellent music. Our aim is to harness all of the splendid resources we have access to and hook them up to the larger vision of the love of God and faithful service in all of life. Further, much of this provides new energy and focus for precisely what we most love. Assigning constructive theology students to listen to a Bach organ CD in conjunction with reading the writings of David Bentley Hart or David Ford creates an audience for our work that we've never had. Having MDiv students in courses on global Christianity coming to us for recordings and descriptions of musical practices worldwide changes their perceptions of who we are as musicians.

## Binocular vision and faithful service

In sum, I am suggesting that a fruitful place to begin rethinking music in the life of both seminaries and congregations is to start with every other discipline, department, or ministry and to ask what unique contributions music can make to those endeavors. The agenda here is an agenda of making connections and fostering collaboration. *What we need is a kind of binocular vision that sees through the eyes of music new possibilities for the life of faith and that sees through eyes of faith new possibilities for music. That will give us the depth perception we need for a constructive approach to musical advocacy.*

So how do we develop this kind of binocular vision? Consider this all-too-brief wish list:

- We need new partnerships between musicians and non-musicians—in nearly every area of divinity school or congregational life. A place to begin with this vision is by having each musician find one colleague in another area of ministry or instruction to partner with.
- We need new discussion topics among musicians. So often our discussions tend to focus on our music as an end in itself. We attend convention sessions on repertoire, rehearsal techniques, performance practice, or on the managerial skills we need to keep our organizations running. But for ministry-oriented musicians, this is not enough. We congregational musicians need conference sessions on "doing pastoral care at weddings through music." We seminary educators need conference sessions on "building empathy and cross-cultural understanding for those who lived long ago and far away through music."
- We need active participation in the organizations that support theological education. I see some seminary musicians at American Guild of Organists or American Choral Directors Association events, but almost none at American Academy of Religion or the North American Academy of Liturgy. We musicians need to read not only *THE AMERICAN ORGANIST* but also *Congregations and Theological Education*.
- We need continued advocacy for the significance of music but with a "rhetoric of possibility" rather than a "rhetoric of entitlement." The lack of arts funding in schools has taught us all to be advocates in our local communities. But the best advocacy never protests that we are entitled to funding. Rather, we learn how to identify and communicate the value of the arts for the community. We need more of that winsome rhetoric.
- We need new or revised degree programs that work to build up leaders who speak two languages, the language of music and theology. Or we need to advise our most promising students to pursue graduate study in programs in both areas.
- We need courses in which future pastors and musicians can learn together. One of the best things that has happened to my Introduction to Worship class is that it is required of both MDiv and MA students (usually pursuing degrees in education, worship, or missions). It often takes a while for future pastors and church musicians to learn how to talk together. But having them study together is a good first step in that process.

• We need to imagine realistic ways that our institutions might grow in appreciation for the gifts and insights that music offers. We would all love to have every seminary in the country receive a \$5 million endowment to hire two or three new faculty members, develop joint degree programs, and put music on the map. But in case that doesn't happen, the good news is that a great deal can be accomplished through more realistic strategies. While it may take several thousand dollars a year to hire a full-time faculty member in this area, a supporting instructor for a church history class may be possible for a few hundred dollars. While a new required course in hymnody is only possible in most contexts with direct divine intervention, a new unit in music and theology shared between existing theology and worship courses might be possible with some good brainstorming over a cappuccino in the faculty lounge. Beginning with these more realistic scenarios also would give all of us practice at honing a vision for music in theological education, so that if a major donor were to come along with a passion for music, we would be in position to spend the income from a large endowment well.

The "prophetic voice" that we have committed to cultivate together during this conference involves testing our current practices to see if there is integrity between our worship and life, our music making and ministry, and imagining new possibilities for effective service. All of my reflections are intended to be starting points for continuing conversations. So let me end not with final assertions, but rather with a set of questions to guide us:

Could it be that some of the significant problems in the field of church music are the result not only of American individualism and consumerism but also because we musicians have been too isolated, disconnected from some of the most pressing practical and theoretical issues of our time? Could it be that we often make music into an end in itself, rather than see it as a vehicle of service? How can a prophetic voice be not only something we aspire to speak to the larger church world but also something we take to heart ourselves?

Could it be that this integrative approach would be a more constructive way to approach advocacy for music in theological education? Seminary deans and presidents are currently being approached by people who think they should add faculty positions and programs not only in the areas of church music but also in the areas of theology and science, visual culture, cross-cultural communication, world religions, and even journalism—all in an environment in which students increasingly come to seminary with less scripture and theological literacy than before. Could the kinds of questions raised here (e.g., how can our musical gifts enrich our common work across the disciplines?) be more fruitful to pose to seminary deans and presidents than the questions we instinctively what to ask (e.g., how can we expand faculty and programs for church music?).

Finally, could it be that this integrative vision for music would help us better live into a New Testament vision for service and discipleship? Consider the little treatise on min-

istry that Paul builds in 2 Corinthians 9. It is a chapter about the offertory, about the monetary gifts that the Corinthians had promised to the church at Jerusalem. Though the context is about money, Paul's comments apply well to all kinds of stewardship, including the stewardship of the gifts of music in the Christian community:

You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others (2 Cor. 9:11-13)

This is a vision that is eucharistic, doxological, diaconal, and discerning. It breathes with a kind of abundance and overflowing joy. It is about meeting needs, overflowing with gratitude, and extending the *cantus firmus* of our love for God and God's music into every corner of lives. It is a vision that reminds us that "those who lose their lives will find it" (Matt. 10:39, 16:25). May God's Spirit give us grace to reflect that spirit in all our discussions.

#### NOTES

1. For example, Amos 5:21 and Isaiah 1:11-14.
2. Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), p. 197.
3. Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 62.
4. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 303.
5. See, for example, the Augsburg Confession, Article 7; Articles of Religion of the Church of England, Article 29; and Belgic Confession, Article 29.
6. See, for example, Jane Rogers Vann, *Gathered Before God: Worship-Centered Church Renewal* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).
7. For perspectives on collaborative work in congregations, see Randall Bradley's *From Postlude to Prelude: The Other Six Days of Music Ministry* (St. Louis: MorningStar Music, 2004), and Norma de Waal Malefyt and Howard Vanderwell's *Designing*

*Worship Together* (Bethesda, Md: Alban Institute, 2004).

8. Greg Jones, "Beliefs, Desires, Practices, and the Ends of Theological Education," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 203.

9. See several recordings by Paul McCreesh and Jerome F. Weber, "Liturgical Reconstruction as Reflected in Recordings," *Historical Performance* 29 (Spring 1991): pp. 29-37.

10. In American religious history alone, see, for example, Edith L. Blumhofer and Mark A. Noll, *Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land: Hymnody in the History of North American Protestantism* (University of Alabama Press, 2004); David W. Stowe, *How Sweet the Sound: Music in the Spiritual Lives of Americans* (Harvard University Press, 2004); and Stephen A. Marini, *Sacred Song in America: Religion, Music, and Public Culture* (University of Illinois Press, 2003).

11. C. Michael Hawn, *Gather Into One: Singing and Praying Globally* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

12. Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1958), p. 347.

13. See Leanne Van Dyk, ed., *A More Profound Alleluia: Worship and Theology in Harmony* (Eerdmans, 2004). Hymn texts are included after each chapter of theological analysis.

14. Jeremy Begbie, *Music, Theology, and Time* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 271.

15. David F. Ford, *Self and Salvation* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 121.

16. David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 282-85.

17. Princeton Seminary's Max Stackhouse teaches ethics by means of comparison with music. He develops a way of correlating three major modes of ethical reflection (ethological, deontological, and teleological) with kinds of artistic imagination and particular musical forms. He concludes that "the most profound aesthetic creativity occurs precisely where nuanced sensitivity to the actual social-cultural context is joined to both an architectonic discovery of the deep logic behind all that is, and to an inspired vision of that which is not yet." "Ethical Vision and Musical Imagination," *Theological Education* 31.1 (1994): 162.

18. Begbie, *Theology, Music, and Time*, p. 273.

19. Jackson W. Carroll et al., *Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Schools* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

20. Langdon Gilkey, "Can Art Fill the Vacuum?" in *Art, Creativity, and the Sacred*, ed. by Diane Apostolos-Cappadona (New York: Crossroad, 1984), pp. 187-92.



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