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“From the heart, may it go to the heart.” Thus reads the autograph manuscript of the Missa Solemnis by Ludwig van Beethoven. Communication, “heart to heart,” is a characteristic of all good music, sacred or secular, from any time period. What is it about this intangible phenomenon of sound that is able to touch us, to change us, to stir us to new ideas and different attitudes, to unite us as one? We in Jesuit education have a tremendous opportunity to connect with our students—mind, spirit, and body—through the in calculably rich medium of music.

Since the earliest of times music is thought to have had qualities that affected behavior, directed morals and philosophy, and molded character. For the early Greeks and Romans, music is not a separate art from dance or poetry, nor is it separate from worship. From its beginnings as we know them, music functioned as an integral part of religious ceremonies. As Jan Swafford puts it, “Art and religion were one, serving the eternal needs of societies—binding the community, sweetening labor, soothing the bereaved, expressing emotion, placating and entreating the mysterious powers of the world” (4). Ancient notions of the centrality of music to human endeavor, both individual and communal, are alive and well in contemporary liturgy. “Music in Catholic Worship” states that “[m]usic should assist the assembled believers to express and share the gift of faith that is within them and to nourish and strengthen their interior commitment of faith. . . . The quality of joy and enthusiasm which music adds to community worship cannot be gained in any other way. It imparts a sense of unity.” Music not only accompanies and enriches the expression of texts, it can also “unveil a dimension of meaning and feeling, a communication of ideas and intuitions which words alone cannot yield. This dimension is integral to the human personality and to growth in faith” (Simcoe 225).

Music of all ages and kinds can and does embody tremendous power to move and to transform individuals and whole communities. Following our Jesuit tradition and its interest in the education of the whole person, those of us who are privileged to provide music to the university community have an extraordinary chance to enrich the environment of our campuses.

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The opportunities lie in the classroom, in liturgical and para-liturgical experiences, both traditional and creative, and in the concert or recital setting.

For our purposes in Jesuit education, the "good music" at our disposal can be divided into musical repertoire without text and musical repertoire with text. It can also be discussed in terms of music that is coupled with other art forms—for example, with visual art or dance. For performer and listener alike, music without text can be a wonderful vehicle for opening hearts and minds to the divine. In the words of "Liturgical Music Today," "[i]nstrumental music can assist the assembly in preparing for worship, in meditating on the mysteries, and in joyfully progressing in its passage from liturgy to life. Instrumental music, used in this way, must be understood as more than an easily dispensable adornment to the rites, a decoration to dress up a ceremony. It is rather ministerial, helping the assembly to rejoice, to weep, to be of one mind, to be converted, to pray" (Simcoe 257). While that description refers to music for a gathered assembly whose specific intent is to worship, music's power to "convert" is by no means limited to specifically church settings.

Compositions for solo instruments or chamber music can offer excellent vehicles for broadly "ministerial" music. Much of our organ literature was originally written for liturgical use, as was some of our chamber music. The original intent is often reflected in the titles of the musical works, as, for example, in Couperin's Consecration or the many Kirchensonaten of Mozart. The ancient premise that music leads us to experience God challenges us to explore as widely as possible the broadest range of forms and styles. The list out of which a coherent repertoire might be formed is endless, and includes everything from early polyphonic music and Chopin nocturnes to Haydn string quartets and Mendelssohn organ sonatas.

Instrumental music achieves its purpose not only in liturgical and para-liturgical settings, but in the recital setting as well. A thoughtfully organized organ concert or chamber music recital can be a great tool for opening hearts, nourishing souls, and building character.

Such endeavors can be quite expensive, but we at John Carroll University have been fortunate to have been able to attract a number of professional musicians who have been willing to give of their time and talent for the benefit of the community. This past fall semester, members of the Cleveland Orchestra performed gratis at our St. Francis Chapel. The chamber music recital, a gift to JCU and the greater Cleveland community, included the Brahms Clarinet Quintet.

Just as influential and expansive is the music repertoire that couples music with text. The great English composer Henry Purcell (ca. 1659-95), writing of this special union in his preface to The History of Dioclesian, says "Musick and Poetry have ever been acknowledg'd Sisters, which walking hand in hand, support each other; as Poetry is the harmony of Words, so Musick is that of Notes; and as Poetry is a Rise above Prose and Oratory, so is Musick the exaltation of Poetry. Both of them may excell apart, but sure are most excellent when they are join'd, because nothing is then wanting to either of their Perfections: for thus they appear like Wit and Beauty in the same Person" (Stevens 11). The options available to a director of music are astoundingly rich and varied. One might start with the ancient music of chant, which includes Gregorian chant settings such as the Veni Sancte Spiritus (the Sequence of Pentecost), or the Haec Dies, (the setting of the gradual of Easter Sunday). Another type of chant that lends itself beautifully to many offerings is the chant of the Taizé community, an ecumenical community of Brothers in Taizé, France, that focuses on reconciliation in the universal church. In contrast to the Gregorian settings, Taizé chants are homophonic, brief, and simple in harmonic construction. Music with text may actually tell a story or series of events in one piece or series of pieces. One work of this kind is the Seven Last Words of Christ by Théodore Dubois. And then there are, of course, the many glorious settings of the Mass by composers of every style imaginable, from chant, Machaut, and Mozart to Bernstein, Ramirez, and Andrew Lloyd Webber. Among the various settings of the Requiem that might be mentioned here, I have found the Fauré particularly accessible to students. Finally, there are many individual pieces that simply evoke a particular mood or expression, such as a song of praise. The Laude Dominum of Mozart is a prime example.

All of this music both nourishes and challenges the students. First, it does so in terms of musical elements such as phrasing, articulation, texture, range, music history and performance practice. In addition, the music exposes student singers and listeners to other languages. They have an opportunity to perform or experience various styles of prose and poetry, not to mention different philosophical points of view. Sacred texts offer religious tenets and doctrine, stories and questions, diverse scripture translations, and experiences of faith and the spiritual realm.
Both the academic and liturgical year provide a wealth of opportunities for diverse musical experiences. First and foremost, we worship through liturgy, and whether it be the large university gatherings or regular weekend liturgies, these Masses are prime examples of the unification of music and worship. Beyond the Eucharistic celebration, there are seasonal opportunities for music and prayer to mesh. A simple form adaptable to any season is a series of readings coupled with musical "responses." One well-received Advent celebration using this format is the Ceremony of Lessons and Carols, a service that combines traditional scripture readings alternating with seasonal music. The musical selections might be Advent or Christmas carols sung by choir alone, choir and congregation, or a mixture of the two, alternating either between the carols or within the carol itself. An instrumental piece or a stanza for solo organ may serve as one of the responses as well. Tenebrae, a traditional Lenten service, is another example of this type of seasonal offering.

Alternating music with readings of some type easily lends itself to augmentation or diminution and can offer a venue for other wonderful combinations of music and prayer experiences. For instance, instead of using a variety of music from different times or composers, one might employ one specific musical work or expand the readings to include literature outside of scripture. This past spring the John Carroll University Chapel Choir offered a service incorporating the Five Mystical Songs of Ralph Vaughan Williams. The program coupled one scripture reading from each Sunday of the Lenten cycle with a reading of similar focus from such authors such as Thomas Merton, Julian of Norwich, and e. e. cummings. Each of the five songs then became the musical response to the two readings preceding it. Going further, one might construct a service around a particular idea to complement a season, a feast, or some particular event or holiday that is taking place on campus, or to fill a particular need of the university. At such times, when the occasion itself provides a kind of unity, the music may be drawn from different times, styles, and genres. Drawing together Gregorian and Hildegard chant with pieces from the Rutter Requiem into a successful, unified whole is a realistic possibility! Services that lend themselves to the combination of music with other art forms work also work well on these sorts of occasions. A piece of carefully chosen music combined with contemporary dance that is choreographed with integrity and respect for the sacred moment and prayer that it reflects can have a powerful effect on the community.

St. Augustine wrote in his Confessions of an experience of listening to sacred hymns and canticles, "the music surged in my ears, truth seeped into my heart, and my feelings of devotion overflowed so that the tears streamed down" (190). Beethoven, writing in the autograph album of his friend Lenz von Breuning, quotes from Schiller's Don Carlos: "Truth exists for the wise; Beauty for a feeling heart. Both are meant for each other" (Wegeler and Ries 162). Ferdinand Ries, a student of Beethoven, claimed that Beethoven held these words of Schiller as embodying the highest of ideals, and wrote that his teacher's works "openly proclaim to the world what he confided to his intimate friend" (159-60). Saint and secular composer, centuries apart, agree.

Music possesses the ability to transcend all barriers of language, race, education, culture, and time. Through it, we as human beings find a place to unite in one song, one sentiment, one feeling and truth. It seems an impossible longing, an unattainable dream of the idealistic, yet we may be on our way. Beethoven, deaf at the time he finished the Ninth Symphony in 1824, only had a chance to hear it in his mind's ear. We in 1998 are left to speculate what Beethoven might have felt had he heard the Finale (another of Schiller's texts) presented at the Winter Olympic games this January. A full 174 years later, the corners of the world literally united in one performance to offer this piece of music at the same time, and with one voice! We in Jesuit education have in music a mighty voice with which to proclaim the truth and beauty of our world, of our worship, and ultimately of our God.

Works Cited


