

Grace and Tradition – Spiritualities in Cathedral Music

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Abstract

This article examines the place of cathedral music in a secularizing world which is developing a range of spiritualities (which will be explored). It will explore notions of identity, meaning-making, ritual, the concert/liturgy division and inclusivity; these will be examined in the light of a phenomenography of the musical experience. It will include small case studies of lived experience. It will interrogate the complexities in the interrelationship between the past, the present and the future and the potential role of grace in guiding these interactions.

Introduction

This article raises a series of questions around the place of a cathedral in the contemporary world of spiritual searching. As a ritual space, it needs to address its relationship with the ancestors, the living and (perhaps most significantly) the as-yet-unborn. The latter group have often been ignored or overlooked in the church's thinking, and in Western culture in general, which, with its increasing number of museums, sometimes seems more about preserving the past than looking towards the as-yet-unborn. For, example, we may not have initiated such environmental degradation if we had paid greater attention to them.

In considering the purpose of the cathedral we may consider which of these best describes this:

- For the Christians in the diocese
- For anyone in the diocese
- For the regular attendees at the cathedral
- For tourists
- For spiritual seekers
- As an acoustic space
- For preserving a tradition

The magnificence of the cathedral space is well described by Marcel Proust (1904):

The cathedral, which shelters so many saints, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, kings, confessors, and martyrs that whole generations huddle in supplication and anxiety all the way to the porch entrances and, trembling, raise the edifice as a long groan under heaven while the angels smilingly lean over from the top of the galleries which, in the evening's blue and rose incense and the morning's blinding gold do seem to be "heaven's balconies" – the cathedral, in its vastness, can grant asylum both to the man of letters and to the man of faith, to the vague dreamer as well as to the archaeologist.

It is for many visitors a place of paradox and mystery in a society which desperately needs this:

Mystery can be defined as a *known unknown*. Mystery is “a mixture of certitudes and uncertainties; of probabilities, hypotheses, realities that surpass us, and fundamental questions to which we have no answers. ... It is one of those words that is indefinable, but that can in the final analysis be part of any definition. (Gebara 1999:133)

The questions around the functions of the cathedral concern freedom and control. The Monastery in Manchester offers a very innovative model of what this space may be used for, fusing past, present and future:

The Grade II listed building offers a magnificent setting for your most momentous occasions. In line with the vision of the original residents of The Monastery – the Franciscan brothers – our beautifully renovated buildings, Welcome Café and friendly team of staff are here to offer you a safe space and healing retreat. Welcome to Manchester’s modern-day, multi-faith sanctuary.¹

Spiritual seekers of various kinds find a place in this repurposed Franciscan monastery, whose activities include sound baths, weddings, meditation of various kinds, a herb garden and so on. If this challenges the limitations today on cathedral activity, Thomas Browne challenged it in the 17th century:

There is a musick wherever there is a harmony, order or proportion., even that vulgar and tavern Musick, which makes one man merry another mad, strikes in me a deep fit of devotion and a profound contemplation of the First Composer. There is something in it of Divinity more than the ear discovers; it is an Hieroglyphical and shadowed lesson of the whole world and creatures of God. . . In brief, it is a sensible fit of that Harmony, which intellectually sounds in the ears of God.’ (Harvey 1996:7)

This passage illustrates the concept of common grace which can form part of this debate between freedom and control. It concerns God's goodness which extends to all his creation — things that are 'common' or 'general' to all the world such as art and creativity, drawing on Matthew’s Gospel 5 v45: He “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust”:

[Common grace] curbs the destructive power of sin, maintains in a measure the moral order of the universe, thus making an orderly life possible, distributes in varying degrees gifts and talents among men (sic), promotes the development of science and art, and showers untold blessings upon the children of men. (Berkhof 1979: 434)

Spiritualities

Contemporary society is characterised by spiritual searching challenging the steady rise of secularisation in the twentieth century. The secularism that characterised modernity has failed (Habermas 2008). Rowan Williams distinguishes between church goers , describing patrons (visiting but not committed) and subscribers (those who are committed to the religious community) to religion (Williams 2012:87). For the religious subscriber, the narrative is accompanied by a collection of dogma and creedal statements – often cemented in their lives by liturgies that embody these. Both of these groups attend and value cathedral evensong but for different reasons.

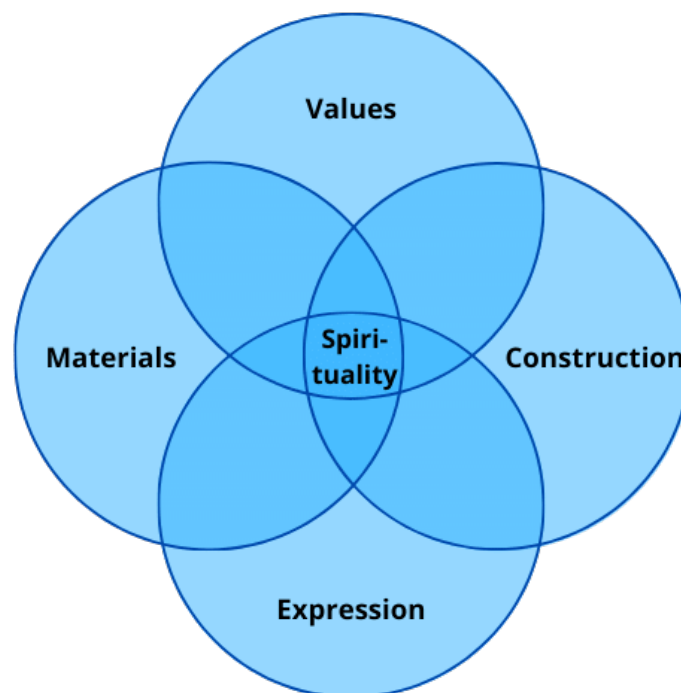
¹ <https://www.themonastery.co.uk/> Accessed Sept 10th 2024

It is often assumed that all attenders will find cathedral evensong beautiful. However, when university students went to one, their responses were very varied. Some thought it beautiful, some saw it as out of date, while others felt excluded with nothing to join in with. One person described how it felt beautiful, but also cried during it because this beauty covered over the misogyny, racism, ablism and imperialism of the Anglican church. The hymnody reinforced this, with sexist hymns such as *Father hear the prayer we offer* and *He who would valiant be* and warlike sentiments such as *Stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross*.

The twenty-first century has seen the development of a number of spiritualities. In these I have identified these strands:

- METAPHYSICAL – a search for the beyond
- INTRAPERSONAL – changes in the self
- INTERPERSONAL – between people
- INTERGAIAN – with the natural world
- EXTRAPERSONAL – ETHICAL – across cultures
- NARRATIVE – religious stories
- TRADITION – the practices of the great faiths (Boyce-Tillman 2016: 74-78)

The musical experience is often identified as a source of the spiritual experience. The author has constructed this phenomenography² :



I shall use the domains in this model to structure the rest of this paper.

² Boyce-Tillman, June (2016). *Experiencing Music – Restoring the Spiritual, Music as Wellbeing*, Oxford : Peter Lang : 123-129 developed in 2023.

Construction

This domain concerns how the music is put together, how much repetition of ideas there is, and how much contrast. The form of a piece concerns how the musical argument is designed which affects whether the performer or listener can understand or make sense of it. There has been much discussion regarding whether some forms of construction are holy or not. In some of the debates, Platonic views of the cosmic ordering of music (such as those of Clement of Alexandria) have led to conflicts about styles of music that encourage virtuous behaviour, and those which do not. Routley (1978) was following a thread of mid-20th-century heated debates in books such as Charles Cleall's *Music and Holiness* (1964). Cleall dismissed popular song and dance as lustful, dissipated sexual acts (Cleall 1964, 68– 69) that exclude God, while jazz and swing represented a passivity of the flesh and the happiness of those who cannot think (Cleall 1964:86– 87), revealing again the debate between emotion and reason, and the reification of racist stereotypes. Throughout much of the 20th century, these perspectives were aligned with the value systems of the academy, which viewed Western art as “the most precious gift of civilization” (Bishop Trevor Huddleston, quoted in Cleall 1964: 45).

These views have been widely challenged and replaced by a view of authenticity ideally shared between the performer and others (Moore 2002), as jazz and other non- classical styles have found their places in worship.

A variety of music has now found a place in Cathedrals. Gregorian chant is now justified by tradition but also by means of the sanctity of chant and church modes. Organ improvisation is an orate practice which is part of the tradition. Taizé services are finding a place with some measure of improvisation within the group often containing a great range of musical expertise amongst its members. The worship song has found a regular place in churches but less often in cathedrals, and is regularly despised by those upholding the sanctity of the classical tradition of cathedral evensong. The orate Gospel choir is now more acceptable and jazz ensembles can find a concert space there, especially now that there is a larger literature on the spirituality of jazz. These are welcome signs of the cathedral giving difference some dignity.

John Tavener brought some of these together in *The Veil of the Temple* (2001-3):

The supreme achievement of my life and the most important work I have ever composed ... go beyond Christianity and embrace Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism and the religion of the American Indians ...by the act of writing *The Veil* I understood that no religion could be exclusive. The Veil has become light – there is no longer any veil. This tearing away of the Veil shows that all religions are in the transcendent way inwardly united beneath their outward form.
(Moody 2014)

I followed his example in creating *Space for Peace* (Boyce-Tillman 2011)– an attempt to give difference dignity (Sacks 2002). This event included choral groups from a variety of sources – community choirs, schools, the university, church choirs, an imam, a rabbi, a singer from the Hindu/Sikh tradition with harmonium and tabla. The cathedral is a resonant meditative space. The groups are situated around the cathedral in various chapels and the transepts. The groups chose what they wanted to sing in advance, and in the central section also chose when they sang. There was additionally a set of short chants that they all shared. The event reflected a model for peace in which we all do our own thing but have to work out how it all fits together. The audience/congregation could also

ask them to sing as well. The congregation and choirs were able to move around the building, lighting candles, praying, being quiet, as they chose, but also participating in creating the musical sound. Many participants called it a liminal space and testified to its powerful effects:

- "Space for peace" was one of the high points of my life. ...The cathedral was cleared of chairs which was wonderful - one great echoing space. It was all about peace – calls for peace constantly mingling and changing. ...I was able to sit and meditate on the stone floor in the middle of the North Transept, one of the most beautiful parts. It came to me that "peace is possible". (Unpublished comment 2009)
- A superb atmosphere of peace and the Cathedral almost seemed to come alive with the artists' presence.
- I loved being able to wander around and stop and listen as the mood took me. and as a member of the audience I felt involved. I wasn't being sung 'to' or 'at'.
- Kasam Sumra's Call to prayer from the Cathedral pulpit was a stroke of interfaith genius!
- Pooja Rana created a wonderful devotional atmosphere in the small chapel.
- Sounds of New Gospel created a vibrancy as one walked through the Cathedral.

This was a construction that included formal sections but also elements of chance/choice. Later in this article I will look at the development of musical forms with holes in them which leave space for improvising groups and ones that require the audience to participate. I love using the cathedral space with groups scattered. I started with a piece called *The Call of the Ancestors* (Boyce-Tillman 1998), in which a rock group, Thai gongs and African drums were placed around the cathedral. For the choral festival of the cathedrals' groups of universities in Liverpool Metropolitan cathedral, I wrote *Ecological Celebration* (Boyce-Tillman 2007) in which small groups of singers were placed around the circular building. This proved immensely successful, as they were singing into the widest part of the building, rather than performing from the middle and therefore singing into the narrowest part. *PeaceSong* (Boyce-Tillman 2005), in Winchester Cathedral, used twelve different choirs scattered all over the building for the first movement; they were singing fragments of song that might have been sung in the cathedral in the past, separated by periods of silence. I called it *If these walls could only speak*; I felt I was making audible unheard sounds stored in the arches. In *The Healing of the Earth* (Boyce-Tillman 2001) I had children scattered around the cathedral with two stones each (which they had chosen for their sound), knocking these together to represent the sound of the big bang at the beginning of the earth. Combined with subdued lighting it had a magical effect. So, the cathedral is a space with many nooks and crannies which can be exploited acoustically in imaginative ways to bring the wonder of the Divine alive in new ways.

Materials

This domain concerns who is allowed to perform, which singing styles are permitted and what instruments can be included. There has been an increasing involvement of girls as choristers and of outreach programmes such as those at Bradford Cathedral recruiting from a range of social classes, ethnicities, and so on.

Women's voice choirs were found in the early church from the fourth to the sixth century:

[Ephrem]founded choirs of consecrated virgins, taught them the hymns and responses whose wonderful contents celebrated the birth of Christ, his baptism, fasting, suffering, resurrection and ascension, as well as the martyrs and the dead. He had these virgins come to the church on the

feast of the Lord and on those of the martyrs, as they did on Sundays... And he taught them music and the laws of song. (Quasten 1983:79)

Susan Ashbrook Harvey (2000) draws attention to the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant, who were found throughout the Syrian orient, both in Persian and Roman territory. Hymns were written to give words to women in the Bible which were probably sung antiphonally by choirs of women in the village, town and city (Harvey 2001:105–9):

Ritual practices granted each member of the community a necessary place and purpose. ... Liturgy allowed a situation of social and cultural critique, wherein women's voices and their good works could be upheld as morally and theologically worthy. At the same time it negotiated the impact of that critique... Women's ritual voices and women's rhetorical voices could offer a view of ... [the] Kingdom. (Harvey 2001:129–30)

The embodiment of singing was extolled in early Protestantism:

Since singing is so good a thing, I wish all men [sic] would learn to sing. The exercise of singing is delightful to nature, and good to preserve the health of man. It doth strengthen all the parts of the breath and open the pipes. (Byrd 1588 in Fellowes, Dart and Brett 1965)

At one point in *Space for Peace* participants were asked sing a word for peace on a single note:

I have sung for many years but it always meant working out if the next note was a G sharp or G natural and a crotchet or a quaver. Because you only asked me to sing a single note I was aware of the breath entering and leaving my body and it became a meditative experience. (unpublished interview)

The early gallery choirs (1700-1850) of the Anglican church were situated in a gallery behind the congregation and consisted of a range of people of both genders, varied musical expertise and social class. They were an inclusive group whose purpose was to support the congregation. Each part was doubled at the octave so that anyone could sing whichever part they were able to which made singing in a choir easily accessible.

The choral tradition established in the Victorian church colonized voices and religified certain timbres (Schirr 2018:48). Aspiring ministers had to retrain their voices to produce "pure and authentic, gendered voices that are meant to dominate any worship event" (Schirr 2018: 42). This choral tradition was replaced by the gendered European tradition of soprano/treble, alto, tenor, and bass:

The systematic ordering of voices according to patriarchal, Eurocentric epistemologies. (Schirr 2018: 44)

There is a rise outside the church of choirs that are more inclusive such as Sarah Morgan's work (Morgan and Boyce-Tillman 2016) and the natural voice network initiated by Frankie Armstrong (Bithell 2014) which has generated so many community choirs. These have established a very different choral tradition from the selective cathedral choir. It would seem that community choirs provide a real and valued attempt to create a different choral genre. The idea of the "traditional" choir as one which is exclusive, selective, formal and values a high degree of technical skill in music was once stereotypical, but is no longer. When these community choirs are allowed to sing in the cathedral acoustic, they are deeply nourished and affirmed by the acoustic properties of

the stone arches. However, there are stories of these not being considered “good” enough to be allowed into the space.

If everyone’s sounds are considered divinely inspired, who is allowed to make sounds in the cathedral? There are imaginative projects, such as *La Folia* in Salisbury³ where young people with learning difficulties are allowed into one of the galleries and can make their voices echo in the cathedral space. Do we silence the sounds made by babies and people with dementia? Often their sounds in worship are reflecting the mood of the liturgy. In some pieces created for cathedral performance there can be roles for these, such as in *Conflict to chorus* (Boyce-Tillman 2015).

In a London church in 2024, I initiated an event entitled *Arts for Sanctuary*. The musicians were from various traditions playing in the space which was surrounded by visual art installations. At the beginning, John Pfumojena – an mbira player – started to play. The gentle flowing sound of the mbira resonated through the space, and when John started to sing people were overwhelmed by the power, tone-colour and the intensity and passion of his singing. A woman with learning disabilities was taken up with his wonderful sounds and started to make sounds with him. At one point I initiated a sound bath that included a rainmaker, crystal bowls, birch pipe, shruti box, a 22 inch Chinese gong, brass singing bowls, and dumbek. I started with the chant; “Be still and be present” as the sound bath began – the instruments echoing beautifully around the marvellous acoustic. Some people could enter a fascinating golden tent and in a gold space be enveloped in sound.

Debates about the embodiment of singing, singing styles, gender and ethnicity echo throughout the history of cathedral music. Even today the control over who can make sounds in the space is exercised with greater and lesser degrees of control by various cathedrals.

Expression

This domain concerns what can be expressed and the meaning of the music. It includes the relation of any text present to the meaning. In a cathedral, there is debate about which theology is acceptable and where religious narrative sits. Jeremy Begbie (2000) requires music to be theologically specific to be sacred. He has devoted a great deal of skilled musicological analysis to support this claim. His position limits the scope of the sacred to the extent that even Messiaen’s *Quartet for the end of time* (1941) does not find a place, despite Messiaen’s place as a leading Avant Garde Roman Catholic composer. Begbie’s concern to avoid an idolatry of music means he denies any place for experiences that may not sit clearly within the confines of traditional Christian theology (Begbie 2017: 13). Is music religious when the text is religious? There can be a dichotomy between text and music (Kivy 2002:14). The relation between feeling, meaning and music is definitely more problematic in pieces with a text (Langer 1953:85) and, as set out above, secular music can function in a sacred way.

The hymn enables the congregation to have a deeper relationship with theology than the rationality of the sermon. It carries the theology deep into the psyche of the believer.

³ <https://www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/arrangements/la-fofia-evening-song/> Accessed Sept 1st 2024

However, a dilemma exists here around the conservatism of texts, lack of inclusion or social protest – elitism and gender (Boyce-Tillman 2014) – which often sits uneasily with the more radical theology of sermon and prayers. But maybe the words are an integral part of the music without giving it a particular meaning. Amongst Western classical works, requiem masses are very popular, providing comfort to people who do not subscribe to the doctrine. They give listeners a chance to contemplate dying and death. Nicholas Cook likens well-known classical pieces to familiar rooms around which people can wander freely and use as secular rituals (Cook 1990:242). Music invites people to undertake the journey:

[Music] does not offer meaning but triggers the effort to produce the meaning. (Voegelin 2010:165)

Meaning also reflects the norms, values and assumptions of a particular context into which it is placed. So it is latent in a concert setting, but more fully manifest in a liturgical setting (Thomas and Manning 1995:164).

Langer (1953) has explored in detail the relationship of feeling and music. What music refers to has been much debated, particularly in relation to absolute and referential music with a title. Musicology has concentrated on intrinsic meaning in the music; but even this is not simple. Where intrinsic emotion comes from is also a mystery explored by Price in *How can music be merry* (Price 2000). But there is also extrinsic meaning – meaning that has been locked onto certain pieces by circumstances in a person's life, such as hymns associated with weddings and funerals or associated with love and engagement. This phenomenon enables music to play an important role in reminiscence therapy with older people. Both pleasant and painful memories can be recalled by carefully chosen pieces of music, particularly hymns and popular songs. Alan Bennett illustrates this well:

I am one of those boys state educated in the 40s and 50s who came by the words of *Ancient and Modern* through singing them day in and day out at school every morning in assembly. It's a dwindling band, old fashioned and of a certain age. You can pick us out at funerals and memorial services because we can sing the hymns without the books. ... I have never found it easy to belong. So much repels. Hymns help, they blur. (Bennett 2001)

The way people view religious narratives in pieces of music can be described as devotional, storying and cultural (Boyce-Tillman 2016: 77-8). The storying approach sees religious narratives as good stories. Here the narrative simply gives the expressive colour to the music. The development of the oratorio form enabled biblical stories to be told in a manner that can be observed by the audience who are not asked for a devotional response but behave like an opera audience. 'You know that it's fiction; but you can believe it in a make-believe world' (Boyd 2015)⁴. Music can enable the musicker to enter into a make-believe world – a temporary state with no necessary relation to the person's actual belief systems beyond the experience itself.

In the cultural approach, the narrative becomes an exploration of a past culture, rather like visual artefacts such as sculpture and frescoes. It is a way to bring our cultural history to life. This approach sees the narratives as significant for a particular culture which can

⁴ Interview on the BBC Radio 4 Today programme August 26th 2015. Boyd is famous for blurring the distinction between fact and fiction in his *novel Nat Tate: An American Artist* a piece of fiction masquerading as non-fiction.

be personal and/or national/international (Tillich 1964), and separated from the hearer geographically or historically. Many of the religious narratives have become part of a variety of identities – some personal, some national.

In the devotional approach the world is a manifestation of God (Begbie 2000:271). The text becomes more important. There are debates about the importance or condemnation of the sensuous and emotional nature of music; creed and dogma are here seen as more important than the spiritual experience. This is the meaning usually associated with liturgical music. There is a considerable literature on music in Christian worship and liturgy discussing its efficacy, style and appropriateness.

In the smorgasbord of spiritualities in our world today there is also the presence of traditional religious practices outside of their liturgical contexts, including music, prayer, ritual, preaching and theological texts. These are often used in private devotional practices to enter a liminal space. Repeated sung phrases (mantras) often play a significant part in these.

Values

This domain is concerned with what values underpin the musicking, referring both to the context and the content of the piece. Many cathedrals have concert programmes as well as liturgies, and the issue is whether these contexts are similar or different in their meaning and power. A cathedral sits in the context of the Christian church as a whole, and this examines what an inclusive ecclesiology might look like in musicking (Small 1998); and whether this might require a particular style of leadership.

This domain calls into question the tension between maintaining a tradition and acting in a new way embracing the present and future:

The other crucial choice illuminated by the past involves the courage to make painful decisions about values. Which of the values that formerly served a society well can continue to be maintained under new changed circumstances? Which of those treasured values must instead be jettisoned and replaced by different approaches? (Diamond 2005: 522-23)

Tiffany Steinwert (2003) set out an inclusive ecclesiology which is a reworking of the four hallmarks of traditional ecclesiology:

- Unity – changed from doctrinal uniformity to solidarity (drawing on the work of liberation theologians)
- Holiness – changed from individualised piety to justice-seeking
- Catholicity – changed from imperialism to radical inclusion accepting difference
- Apostolicity – changed from a male lineage, to committed action

Perhaps it is the musicking in the cathedral that can help with this transformation:

My intention was also to show that music could be a genuine way to *create* situations, to *construct* social relations in situations, to *communicate* in a holistic way that combines body and ethics, individual and community.” (Westerlund 2002:144)

As a composer I wanted to explore different value systems through my own compositions. This led to the piece *The Healing of the Earth* (Boyce-Tillman 2001). It has an intentionally ethical system based on the valuing of diversity and connecting with the environment supported by feminist theoreticians of music (Subotnik 1996). It is based on a notion of community in which, through participatory performance, professional musicians and children work together with integrity (Sharp 1998). There are few examples in musicking traditions of the West where adults can behave as adults and children as children and both be included in a musical event. There are situations such as the cathedral choir where children have to behave like adults to be accepted. Other situations, such as nursery classes, require adults to behave like children to facilitate group music making. In this work, I tried to develop an inclusive structure in which experienced musicians played quite complex textures while children had sections which they themselves devised. Valuing the environment was reflected in the titles of the nine movements: Wisdom, Water, Knowledge, Fire, Technology, Earth, Compassion, Air, and Communication. A pluralistic Value system is reflected in the range of cultures from which the songs are drawn, including Native American, Urdu, Israeli, Yoruba, Muslim, and Christian sources. These fit alongside newly composed material in a more Western classical style. Diversity is put together with respect for both the differences and common elements. The Values of the Western classical concert with its separation between the composer, performer and audience were in this work balanced by a more democratic process of creating and performing. There were sections devised in the piece to permit performers to have a hand in the compositional process. The players and singers were placed around the audience, who also had to sing. The notion of a musical performance as packaged by a conductor at one end of a space and propelled to the other where it is received by an audience, was now replaced by one in which each member of the audience had to construct their own listening experience, depending on which group of musicians were near them. In the domain of Construction, I chose a structure with holes for improvisation, pieces devised by both the orchestra and the children. As a composer I became a frame-builder weaving together a variety of contributions from a variety of sources.

By innovating in all the domains mentioned, I am exploring how musicking can contribute to new ways of reconciliation and peace-making in our communities:

- [The processes of peace] involve learning new skills and expanding the meaning of concepts, often “unlearning” what was formerly believed to be true. (Cohen 2007:31)
- Through performance, communities are finding ways of seeking truth and also recognizing its multiple faces. (Cohen: 2008: 3)

John Tavener writes of his basic intention of music as healing:

The original intention of music, according to the ancients – all of them, is that it gives heart’s ease, and I think that is the one thing. If I’m able to give one inch of heart’s ease, that would make my life – my work – worth doing and living. (Boyce-Tillman and Forbes 2020)

This central intention includes revisiting distinctive leadership styles in the development of community choirs and their relationship to traditional western classical styles of leadership. Two aesthetics exist in the choral music-making world today:

The Classical perspective emphasizing performance, perfection and virtuosity - the standard or “taproot” aesthetic that has been recognized in music education since its inception in the mid-1800s.

The second is an aesthetic for singing which stresses community building, diversity, group collaboration and relationship. (Pascale 2005)

Much literature claims that the classical perspective has demusicalised a number of people:

The Kings College Cambridge choral tradition has done for church music what Barbie has done for women.⁵

The ethos of the cathedral choir has sometimes been seen as make or break in relation to music. Some choristers describe it as the most nourishing musical experience that inspires a musical life – a singer for life. Another accounts are of a climate of fear initiated by public ridicule and harsh judgement. Writing of the community choir leadership style, Sarah Morgan writes:

At a practical level, one of the most useful skills I acquired was an ability to look around a group and quickly notice people who looked uneasy or uncomfortable, and make it acceptable for people to voice their unease, as well as finding ways of making mistakes an accepted and even a positive part of the process of learning. (Morgan and Boyce-Tillman 2016:49)

The focus of the leadership is balancing challenge and nurture, demanding interpersonal skills and empathy. Is it possible that the two styles of leadership can be brought together as they are in the best leaders in both traditions?

Postlude – the liminal space

To return to the phenomenography around which this paper is based. If the four areas involved in musicking fit with the person singing or listening to a piece of music, they will be drawn into the liminal space which is what many people ask of musicking:

For the first twenty-five minutes I was totally unaware of any subtlety... whilst wondering what, if anything, was supposed to happen during the recital.

What did happen was magic!

After some time, insidiously the music began to reach me. Little by little, my mind – all my senses it seemed – were becoming transfixed. Once held by these soft but powerful sounds, I was irresistibly drawn into a new world of musical shapes and colours. It almost felt as if the musicians were playing me rather than their instruments, and soon, I, too, was clapping and gasping with everyone else... I was unaware of time, unaware of anything other than the music. Then it was over. But it was, I am sure, the beginning of a profound admiration that I shall always have for an art form that has been until recently totally alien to me. (Dunmore 1983:20-1)

For some, this experience will be in the context of cathedral evensong. It involves crossing a threshold in ways of knowing often called a limen:

A limen is, of course, literally a “threshold.” A pilgrimage centre, from the standpoint of the believing actor, also represents a threshold, a place and moment “in and out of time,” and such an

⁵ This quotation comes from a monk from S.S.J.E. speaking in the US. It has caused a great deal of mixed responses – discussion, anger and rejoicing. It is interesting that it does not originate from feminist circles but from a male religious. Quoted in Boyce-Tillman, June (2014), *In Tune with Heaven or Not: Women in Christian Liturgical Music*, Oxford: Peter Lang P236

actor – as the evidence of many pilgrims of many religions attests – hopes to have their direct experience of the sacred, invisible or supernatural order, either in the material aspect of miraculous healing or in the immaterial aspect of inward transformation of spirit or personality. (Turner 2004)

Crossing this threshold involves leaving everyday knowing behind:

Art uproots us into virtual reality... Time in the standard sense of *khronos* [author's italics] is suspended, and space is irrelevant because the viewer/listener/reader is encapsulated in the art, the virtual space provided by the artists. (Galtung 2008:54)

For some in cathedral musicking, this will happen in both a liturgical and/or concert setting, for it can happen in both. So there is a case for maintaining the tradition which includes much extrinsic and intrinsic value and meaning for many people but perhaps less frequently than in the past.

There is a possibility for outreach both in terms of people but also in new ways of using the space to build a wider community, giving difference dignity, and contributing to community cohesion. To return to the first question of the paper, who is welcome to musick in the cathedral? For the regular attendees at the cathedral, cathedral evensong is almost certainly profoundly important in their spirituality, and they embrace it as a devotional experience. For the Christians in the diocese, cathedral evensong will possibly appeal; but worship songs may be for some the main way of getting to the liminal space as well as repetitive meditative events such as those using Taizé chant or dances for peace. For tourists, cathedral evensong will be important but possibly as a cultural experience. For any musicians of a classical persuasion, they will likely delight in the perfection of the musical style; musicians of other traditions may long for a chance to explore the interface between their tradition and the beautiful acoustic space. Others that may also delight in the acoustic are less experienced choirs and children and people with learning difficulties. If it is to include everyone in the diocese, then a greater variety of musical styles and traditions will be included including more popular traditions. For the spiritual seekers, openness will be necessary to interfaith dialogue and the spiritualities emerging in the mixing and matching that characterise the those emerging on the internet.

In all of these scenarios, the fundamental question is: how will control be exercised and who will exercise it? What criteria will be developed to help with these choices? Will these concern the construction of the music (are some construction systems not sacred?); the materials (who and what can make sounds); the expression (what can be expressed if words are present); or the value systems embraced by the musickers and the musicking? How do these criteria fit with the notion of God's generosity or Jesus's concern for the marginalised in his ministry, or the nature of the Holy Spirit (is it everywhere or in special places)? The answers concern whether space can be given for the range of spiritualities emerging in a post-secular society, making a cathedral a space in which everyone can search in various ways and find a place. Here we need to look at the as-yet-unborn as well as the living in a society which is developing such a variety of spiritualities, and also to see how such magnificent buildings may serve the future rather drop into ruins or undergo conversion into luxury dwellings.

Where is common grace to be found in our rapidly changing society? Upon the answer to these questions, depends how available the experience of John Tavener's music will be to a wider community, as described by the Dean of Winchester cathedral:

If you happen upon a Cathedral and stay for Evensong, the glory of Tavener's music can come as sheer grace. You are simply invited to let it anoint you with its costly perfume. It is a gift. No one is demanding anything first, checking your fitness or looking for the right answers. A door is opened in Heaven. It is a moment of Christ-inspired generosity. The kingdom is offered without restriction or condition. (Atwell 2020:279)

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