

Music Ministry

Music and Change: A Conversation with Dent Davidson

Sandra Montes

Dent Davidson has been exploring the music that we build into our worship since serving as a boy chorister in British Columbia, where he sang traditional Episcopal repertoire. At 16, he joined a gospel choir and fell in love with African American music, and from there he has kept growing and exploring ever-expanding ways to bring music that moves us and deepens our worship. Below, Sandra Montes shares highlights from her [interview with Dent](#).

As Dent introduces himself, he talks about his deep love for African American music. It was foreign to him, because everything he had learned before that was from a page to either his voice or piano. He says that “their tradition was call and response, and they can throw every ounce of their being into it.”

Music and healing

Dent says, “I call myself an artist, and I think healing best comes through the arts because they are a deep part of the human experience. The music that happens around us is taken into our bodies and psyche, and the act of singing is healing because we are taking in beautiful, healthy air and letting out the bad. It’s beautiful in itself, but when you do it in community, it’s an experience that defies words.” Early in our conversation, Dent sings *Come Bring Your Burdens to God*, and says that this song is eight measures of a simple call to come into God’s deeper, richer, more profound presence. Dent tells us about Threshold choirs – groups of people, often women, who go to hospices and homes where people are dying and sing people across the threshold from this life to the next. And people who are patients in memory care, the minute you begin doing “Amazing Grace” or “The Lord is my Shepherd,” oftentimes it will kick right in, because it went into our brains in a different way. We sang it – a different pathway that didn’t get wrecked because of the dementia.

Start with what you know and try things

Dent says that he has a soundtrack going all the time that includes pieces from world music to Stanford’s *Magnificat* to something in French and to gospel music. He’s often singing what he learned when he was eleven and a treble, things like *Hear My Prayer* by Mendelssohn and old, iconic Anglican pieces. If someone were to ask him what they could do if they wanted to go beyond the Hymnal 1982, he would say to go back to it and use it with fresh eyes. You can make the hymns your own. You can sing *Hyfrydol* like a dance instead of the stately way we’ve usually done it. One of the great principles in Dent’s life is giving people permission to try things. He says, “Take what you already have and use it. And then we have several approved resources in the church that you can use, and you can go beyond that.”

Planning that nurtures growth

“Planning is the heart of church music,” says Dent. He encourages us to wrestle with the scriptures first and ask ourselves what have we not heard before when we read these scriptures. One way to plan is by using the “Six Weeks Out” method – you look at the previous Sunday, the coming Sunday and the Sunday six weeks out. Once we tackle the scriptures, we can ask ourselves what’s going on in my congregation/city/country/world/creation? The conscious planning with the Word and as a team – music leader/preacher – is very important. It can be difficult, it takes time, but it is richly rewarding. In planning, he says, “Don’t use a fence, don’t set a limit, you can always reel it back in. Take a chance.” We must remember that our job at the root is to unbind; we need to unbind the scriptures – the Good News – and act like we have good news to share.

He suggests the following resources for planning:

- *Liturgical Music for the Revised Common Lectionary*, by editors Carl P. Daw Jr. and Thomas Pavlechko
- *Psalms for All Seasons: A Complete Psalter for Worship*, edited by Martin Tel, Joyce Berger and John D. Witvliet
- [Singing From the Lectionary](#)
- Various hymnwriters like [Ruth Duck](#)
- Sharing resources with our siblings throughout the Church

Welcoming and encouraging change

Instead of being expansive, many people approach our practice from: We learned it this way, we’re going to keep it this way, maybe we’ll try something new. Dent says that he thinks our church would attract more people if we showed them how much we have changed because of God, and because the way we sing together and worship together, not only makes us feel good but pushes us out those doors and into the world to serve.

Dent says that the fastest growing churches are the Latinx churches. People say that they don’t sing Spanish because there are no Spanish speakers in their churches. He says that it is not because we don’t have Spanish speakers in the room that we don’t sing Spanish songs. We don’t sing in Spanish because we’re afraid that we will change if Spanish speakers come through the door and make our worship different. “Our worship better be different every week!” he says.

Teaching new music to choirs and congregations

When you are teaching music to a choir, particularly a difficult piece, Dent says that you can build on what you already know, week to week. First, you can sing the song to them. Then, you can repeat the words slowly. Then, you can speak the song in rhythm. You can use call and repeat and continue this until people learn it.”

When teaching a congregation a new song, you can play the melody on the piano, or any other instrument, during the offertory one week. Then the next week, you can teach them pieces of the song and use call and response for that. You can also use your bulletin to let people know that the choir will be singing a song one week and the congregation will sing it the following week, to prepare them. Building trust is most important when you want your congregation to sing.

When people are hesitant to try new things and to grow, or if they think they want to leave a church instead of trying new things, it's a pastoral opportunity and they can be reminded that we work through, we pray through, we sing through, we live through our lives together and we do new things and old things. Dent says that we are called to teach the Church how to die and rise and that is our common ground.

Dent loves getting to know people and collaborating. You can reach him at DentDavidson@gmail.com.

*Over forty-five years of professional lay ministry, **Dent Davidson** has been called to continual examination and re-imagining of church music and liturgy, embracing the best of received tradition and expanding it. He has served in leadership roles in several parishes, two cathedrals and on a diocesan staff. Each position focused on vitality in worship. Having earned a degree in Composition and Vocal Jazz, he travels widely as a workshop clinician and consultant in music and worship and serves as Chaplain and Musician to the House of Bishops. He currently serves Trinity Parish in Santa Barbara as Animateur: one who imagines, teaches and leads new ways of expressing ourselves in liturgy and music.*

*Interviewer **Sandra Montes** is the Spanish Language Resource Consultant at ECF. She was born in Perú, grew up in Guatemala and settled in Texas as soon as she could. Her passions are God, family (especially her son), music, education and writing. Sandra has been developing original bilingual resources for her church, school, and others for years. She has volunteered and worked in the Episcopal Church since she was welcomed in 1986. She serves as musician, translator, speaker, consultant and writer. She earned her doctorate in education in 2016 and is a full-time freelance consultant and musician.*

Resources:

- [Why do Churches Need a Choir?](#) by Greg Syler, an ECF Vital Practices blog, March 13, 2017
- [Music Ministry: A Tribute](#) by Annette Buchanan, an ECF Vital Practices blog, October 2, 2017
- [Discerning Need: The Power of Openness, Listening, & Music](#), by Erin Weber-Johnson, an ECF Vital Practices blog, August 6, 2015
- [Piano-Strings Evangelism](#) by Richelle Thompson, an ECF Vital Practices blog, May 25, 2016

Decolonizing Church Music

Yuri Rodriguez

“Look around, look around, at how lucky we are to be alive right now....” Remember a year ago, the weekend of July 4th? The cancelled fireworks, the skyrocketing infections, the hospitals running out of beds, our disbelief that this pandemic was getting worse, the pain of losing our loved ones, the statistics, the political campaign, the virtual worship, the cancelled choir rehearsals, the debate between communion or ante communion ... George Floyd. And in the midst of such disorienting times, it was the powerful music of Lin Manuel Miranda, and his re-imagined history of the founding fathers fighting for freedom for all (truly for all) that brought us a cooling breeze and a sense of union, relief from the zoom fatigue and the uncertainty. This is just one of the many examples of how music and the musicians who executed, performed, recorded and shared their gifts with the world were among the great heroes of the pandemic.

Music kept us sane, gave us a purpose, moved us to bring our hearts together in emotions of solidarity, support and compassion. Music helped us feel better about ourselves, about our world. Musicians all over the world, from every genre and from every style, shared their gifts and skills with the hope of providing some sanity and love to a world folded in two by COVID-19.

And church musicians were no exception. When the news came that singing would spread the virus, making it more dangerous, church musicians in one way or another, perhaps some fancier than others, all of us, jumped into action and provided an answer to the question: What now?

Who decides?

Back in 2017, in his essay “Theologizing Latinamente,” Dr. Orlando Espín reminded us of something that has been greatly highlighted through this pandemic year, that the days of imperial and colonial naiveté are now behind us. Espín recalled Prosper of Aquitaine and his saying “*lex orandi, lex credendi*,” to remind us that the law of what we pray is the law of what we believe, and if what we pray is important, then what we pray for, who prays and where we pray are equally important.

The question is then, who chooses our *lex orandi*? Who chooses our prayers? Who chooses who prays and where we pray? Furthermore, this statement is equally fitting when it comes to church music. I propose that not just *lex orandi*, but *lex canendi, lex credendi*, in other words, the law of what we sing establishes the law of what we believe. Thus, if the law of what we sing matters, then who chooses our songs, what we sing about, who sings and where we sing matters just as much, perhaps even more. Our music, the songs we sing, are impacted by many circumstances, pressures, interests and conflicts that have their origin in agendas not strictly theological or even Christian. I would like to paraphrase Espín by stating that church music, just like theology can be and has been, manipulated or crafted into the service of ideologies and interests that might not be transparent or honorable. To pretend otherwise would be irresponsible and naïve. In the words of Espín: being treated as a second-class Christian or theologian (or musician) because one does not live (or sing) or read in the culture of the dominant is doctrinally and morally unacceptable and an example of an imperial attitude that borders on idolatry.^[1]

Since 2017, I have been sharing the story of how our two main Latinx hymnals, *El Himnario* (1998) and *Flor y Canto* (1984), are made up of songs that are not actually Latin American, although they have become part of the Latin American repertoire, thanks to common practices and the process of inculturation. Just as an example: In the Advent section of *Flor y Canto* (2nd ed.) there are 28 songs, only four of which are originally from Latin American composers. Similarly, in the Advent section of *El Himnario*, there are 23 hymns, and only three are originally from Latin American composers. This is an example of what happens when the *lex canendi* is established by the dominant voice in the church, even with the best of intentions.

A chance to experiment

Yet it was this pandemic that gave the Church the opportunity to experiment with non-traditional music. Here I cite two important efforts of the church to decolonize our *lex canendi*. With the support of the Becoming Beloved Community Grants, the Diocese of Indianapolis launched [Worship with Bravery](#), a series of four videos that featured non-traditional music played by musicians of color from Christ Church Cathedral in Indianapolis. Initially this was a project to feature brave worship, worship done with songs that are non-traditional. Our goal was to invite more musicians, priests and congregations to experience this music and perhaps implement it in their own worship.

However, when the pandemic hit we needed to add two other levels of bravery. Not only we were making music that was non-traditional, but we were making music during pandemic times and we were [musicians of color](#), making music at a time when we were constantly hearing the message that we, as immigrants and people of color, were not welcome in the United States. Furthermore, the Diocese of Indianapolis continued offering workshops to inspire us that included a series of virtual seminars with Dr. Alisha Lola Jones and Prof. Vince Carr from Indiana University.

Also, on November 1, 2020, our Episcopal Church livestreamed "[Holding on to Hope: A National Service for Healing and Wholeness](#)" from the National Cathedral and featuring our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry ([leaflet here](#)). With the objective to shine as a beacon of hope for the nation amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, racial reckoning and a hard-fought election, the Episcopal Church and the National Cathedral put together a service that featured mainly contemporary music, songs from different traditions, and none from the 1982 Hymnal, sung by singers and musicians of color from all over the Church.

What we learned

So, what did we learn as we experienced this music through a whole year of online worship? I believe there are four major lessons gleaned from these efforts. First, we learned that our church is ready and eager to start singing music from diverse traditions. Second, we learned that there were styles of music that are more adaptable to worship online and much more effective – contemporary songs, short songs, [chants](#) (traditional and [contemporary](#)), [songs accompanied by guitar](#), songs in unison. Third, we learned that the priority of our music when doing worship online was not aesthetic but missional. In other words, the online worship experience was meaningful as long as congregants could engage with the music, whether they were music literate or not. Finally, we learned that our church is longing to sing a liberation song; a song that can bring us together as equals, a song that can affirm what we believe – that we are called to be a loving, liberating, life-giving beloved community.

***Yuri Rodriguez** just finished her first year of Seminary at Sewanee, University of the South. She is a musician, singer, choral director and church leader who specializes in Latin American Music and Culture.*

Resources:

- [Music for Team Building](#) by Sandra T. Montes, Vestry Papers, January 2019
- [Music Ministry: A Tribute](#) by Annette Buchanan, an ECF Vital Practices blog, October 2, 2017
- [Music and Liturgy](#), The Episcopal Church, January 15, 2020
- [Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music](#) of the Episcopal Church

[1] ESPÍN, ORLANDO O. "Theologizing Latinamente: Had Anselm Known Us!" *Anglican Theological Review* 101, no. 4 (Fall 2019): 587–602.

O Come, Let Us Hum to the Lord

Jemonde Taylor

Editor's note: This is a video resource. You may watch the video on our [YouTube channel](#).

Many cultures worldwide have humming or droning as part of the religious tradition. A Harvard study reported that humming is good for health, and Psychology Today reported that humming may ease stress, boost happiness and soothe sinuses. There is something transporting and meditative about humming or droning, holding a sustained note for some time. It is deeper than a placeholder response when one does not know the lyrics to a song.

There are several examples of droning in the Christian tradition. The musical traditions in Ethiopia, England and the African American experience in the United States highlight the importance of droning or humming to connect the faithful to God. In the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition, the drone is the convergence of transcendence and immanence, of both corporate and private prayer overlapping. The drone connects the gathered community to the officiant who is chanting. Droning also connects the individual congregant who offers personal prayers to God. Both happen simultaneously.

It is not uncommon to find droning in the Episcopal Church. Some church choirs and congregations drone or hum during the Great Litany, the Litany at Ordination or the biddings in the Prayers of People, particularly Form IV. Anglican chant is not droning. However, the structure and repetition of chanting can have a similar meditative effect. There is droning in some African American spirituals composed by enslaved Africans. Traditionally, spirituals operated on two levels. One was a musical prayer to God. The second level communicated coded language, signaling when to escape chattel slavery. Droning, humming and chanting are rich parts of Christian spirituality. Droning can give a new perspective and lead to a remixing of Psalm 95: "O come, let us *hum* to the Lord!" Humming is healing.

*The Reverend Jemonde Taylor is the eleventh rector of Saint Ambrose Episcopal Church, Raleigh, North Carolina. Jemonde serves the Diocese of North Carolina as president of the Standing Committee, member of Diocesan Council, the Discipline Board, and co-chair for the Bishop's Nominating Committee. A board member of the Seminary of the Southwest and the Gathering of Leaders, Jemonde is also a member of a five-person group recently awarded a \$400,000 Henry Luce Foundation grant to produce a film and multimedia project on gentrification, race and theological education and practice. Learn more about his ministry by viewing his presentation, *Wrapped in Whiteousness*, on the Episcopal Church Foundation's [YouTube channel](#).*

Resources:

- [Discerning Need: The Power of Openness, Listening, & Music](#), by Erin Weber-Johnson, an ECF Vital Practices blog, August 6, 2015
- [Music for Team Building](#) by Sandra T. Montes, Vestry Papers, January 2019
- [Piano-Strings Evangelism](#) by Richelle Thompson, an ECF Vital Practices blog, May 25, 2016
- [Why do Churches Need a Choir?](#) by Greg Syler, an ECF Vital Practices blog, March 13, 2017

Music That Builds Bridges

Jeannine Otis

We all know the old expression, when you sing you pray twice. Well in my vision of music ministry, I add an additional thought – to do my best to live into the idea that *what* we sing has to do with the efficacy of our prayers. The sincerity of our prayers for building community and welcoming growth manifest themselves in the way we go about selecting music for our services.

Our challenge is to have music that authentically welcomes everyone.

The soul of the ministry is in the Word, and inclusive music is its ‘heartbeat.’

I feel that some part of the essence of the future of our Church lies in our ability to be authentically inclusive and to keep ourselves tuned in to that heartbeat.

Music is the universal language that reaches across generations and continents. So when we make the effort to be inclusive musically, we are praying the prayer that builds community and builds bridges.

Time, patience and an open heart

This thought is *not* a mandate for everyone to go out and prove themselves current by including music that doesn’t fit the scriptural theme for the day or the overall pulse of that particular worship community, but it *is* a mandate to explore those songs that go to the heart of what is moving and to include the ‘other’ (a term I dislike, but useful for projecting what some people feel in an unfamiliar worship setting.) This could include songs from many different sources. Then it is important to wrap the music inside the amazing liturgy of the church, placing it strategically, so that we can hear it in all its beauty.

Music placed in the course of worship with such care enhances our joy, our reflection, our prayer, our sense of hope. And it builds community in a way that is visceral, creating bonds and authentic connections.

There is no formula for this kind of work, except that we are driven by an open heart and love of the process. It takes time and lots of patience. Real progress in this way, however, begins with putting value on diverse cultural traditions and honoring the way the music is presented.

Presentation matters

I want to make certain to say that traditional music *is* an integral part of this ‘heartbeat.’ There are so many hymns and choral works that move us because they are beautiful. We’ve heard them as children and adults, and their spirit moves us in our solar plexus. Music can remind us of our loved ones, milestones and difficult times. These songs can lift us all up. But I do believe that *how* we present traditional hymns in worship is important. It is crucial to keep the energy and love of the music in the presentation, to relate musically to the story told in hymns and to sing the old hymns with love and with energy. It is also important, to do the educational homework and help all understand the history behind the traditional music we sing.

For example, the story I love to tell groups has to do with my trip to Leipzig and St. Thomas Church, where Bach was the “Thomaskantor” (Cantor at Saint Thomas). In that space, I got a sense of a kind of simplicity — of a man who was writing to glorify and uplift through his music while having children and living life. I think the soul of his music can be reached through the simple beauty of his music. He was by nature inclusive, and the heart of his music *is* inclusive.

In our more community-based settings, singing Bach can require lots of hands-on work, including selecting pieces that are accessible and a good match for the skill level of the choral group.

Learning this 'heartbeat' from others

Early on, I was influenced by several amazing musicians who loved music because it moved people. There was only good music and music that was not well done. Then, as I worked at Saint Mark's, I encountered Horace Boyer, Editor of *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, Carl Maultsby, and the Rev Dr. Claire McPherson, who have always had a lot to say about this subject and who lived into being musically inclusive. They all shared the belief that the concept of inclusivity is indeed the 'heartbeat' of the Church.

My mother, Adrienne Otis, was an accountant and a 'full-time' volunteer musician, organizing events that included C.L. Franklin and his church, as well as community choirs that sang Beethoven's Ninth, Bach chorales, and spiritual classics from H.T. Burleigh and Hall Johnson. That was an amazing journey for those from the African American Episcopal and African American Episcopal Zion Church traditions. Owen Jander at Wellesley College, Ms. Ivy, who played gospel music like she was the accompanist to Mahalia, and William Mann, a brilliant organist I knew in Detroit, all brought their love of inclusive music to my life.

Owen Jander loved Marion Anderson and Leontyne Price. This was not the usual at Wellesley College, but it became so under his leadership. Ms. Ivy was a master at serving as accompanist in any style. Then there was Mr. Mann. He could play anything on the organ. We will never hear of him, because his day job was as a postman. He could play the organ and make people cry, and then play an up-tempo song that would make those listening want to shout – although there was not much shouting in my church growing up. When I worked with him as a child, he would point to his ear, and say, "Listen. Watch the music, but listen."

This diverse group of amazing musicians loved being eclectic, just by the nature of who they were. And they all believed that the soul of what we do as music ministers lives in our desire to be inclusive and to inspire the best in all.

I bring up these people to point out my belief in the crucial importance that inspiring communities to reach out to one another and 'others' through music has for the life of the Church. There is no set formula. The actual 'doing' process is the glue. We need the term 'other' in discussion to dissolve. Although we always pray that the product is wonderful, it is the process that binds us. And so that process can become similar to walking a labyrinth, each step bringing us closer to understanding one another in our prayer as we make music in worship together.

This original prayer by Larry Marshall inspires my work:

It is comforting to know that when it was proclaimed that I was made in your image
That it's the Soul and not the body that was meant
It's comforting to know that when I talk to myself, I'm talking to YOU
When I talk to someone else that I'm talking to YOU
It's comforting to know that because of this I am never without YOU
THEREFORE
I am never alone as I wander through this wonderment called LIFE
Wrapped in the comfort of YOUR love

Jeannine Otis is a performer, writer, recording artist, teaching artist and Music Director who made her professional performance debut at the age of 13 with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra under the

direction of Carmen Dragon and with American Youth Performs as a soloist. Ms. Otis works with projects all over the world using art as a tool for social change and building community. Her book, The Gathering, has been turned into a music theater piece entitled "Who Am I" and featuring Anthony Turner. It has been presented in many settings, including the National Portrait Gallery in the Smithsonian in 2019. She is an honors graduate of both Wellesley College and Emerson College and is the Director of Music at Saint Marks Church in the Bowery.

Some examples of bridge- and community-building music

- ["Todo" by Sandra Montes](#), "[I Am Sending You Light](#)," [Ana Hernandez](#)
Traditional, "O God Our Help in Ages Past" (reminds me of my mother and her love of hymns)
- LEVAS, "There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit in This Place" (sat with the late Horace Boyer, editor of LEVAS, as he played the hymn and explained what it meant to him; such an amazing moment – we also danced the 'bus stop' together at Kanuga)
- *Wonder, Love, and Praise*, "Peace Before Us" (people have movements that go with this song.)
- [Taize. "Nada Te Turbe"](#), (We had a gathering with the leaders of the Taize Community in the early 90s, and I remember the feeling I got when I saw the icon and the many people who came to sing)
- *Song of Praise*, "Come Let Us Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness" (reminds me of Bill Randolph and our choir together)

Resources:

- [The Message of Welcome](#), by Linda Buskirk, an ECF Vital Practices blog, February 10, 2020
- [Risking Authenticity](#), by Lauren Kay, an ECF Vital Practices blog, June 4, 2019
- [Pronoun Buttons: A Sign of Welcome](#), by Lisa G. Fischbeck, an ECF Vital Practices blog, April 5, 2019
- [Ten Signs of a Welcoming Congregation](#), by Sandra T. Montes, Vestry Papers, November 2018

Descolonización de la música eclesiástica

Yuri Rodriguez

"Mire a su alrededor, mire a su alrededor, la suerte que tenemos de estar vivos hoy...". ¿Se acuerda del fin de semana del 4 de julio de hace un año? Las infecciones se habían disparado, los hospitales se habían quedado sin camas, nuestra incredulidad de que esta pandemia estaba empeorando, el dolor de perder seres queridos, las estadísticas, la campaña política, el culto virtual, los ensayos del coro cancelados, el debate entre comunión o ante comunión... George Floyd. En medio de tiempos tan desorientadores, estuvo la poderosa música de Lin Manuel Miranda y su historia reimaginada de los padres fundadores luchando por la libertad para todos (realmente para todos), lo que nos trajo una brisa refrescante, un sentido de unión y alivio de la fatiga del zoom y de la incertidumbre. Éste es solo uno de los muchos ejemplos de cómo la música y los músicos que ejecutaron, interpretaron, grabaron y compartieron sus dones con el mundo se contaban entre los grandes héroes de la pandemia.

La música nos mantuvo cuerdos, nos dio un propósito, nos animó a unir nuestros corazones en emociones de solidaridad, apoyo y compasión. La música nos ayudó a sentirnos mejor sobre nosotros mismos, sobre nuestro mundo. Músicos de todo el mundo, de todos los géneros y todos los estilos,

compartieron sus dones y destrezas con la esperanza de proporcionar un poco de cordura y amor a un mundo doblado en dos por la COVID-19.

Los músicos eclesiásticos no fueron ninguna excepción. Cuando llegó la noticia de que cantar diseminaría el virus, causando que fuera más peligroso, los músicos eclesiásticos -- de una manera u otra y tal vez unos más pulidos que otros --, todos nosotros entramos en acción sin vacilar y contestamos la pregunta ¿y ahora qué?

¿Quiénes deciden?

En 2017, en su ensayo "Theologizing Latinamente", el Dr. Orlando Espín nos recordó algo que se había mencionado mucho durante el año de la pandemia: que los días de ingenuidad imperial y colonial habían quedado atrás. Espín recordó a Próspero de Aquitania y su axioma "*lex orandi, lex credendi*", para recordarnos que la ley de lo que oramos es la ley de lo que creemos y que si lo que oramos es importante, entonces por lo que oramos, quiénes oramos y dónde oramos son elementos igualmente importantes.

Entonces, la pregunta es ¿quiénes escogen la *lex orandi*? ¿Quiénes escogen nuestras oraciones? ¿Quiénes escogen quiénes oran y dónde oramos? Además, este enunciado es igualmente apto cuando se trata de música eclesiástica. Propongo que no sea solo *lex orandi*, sino *lex canendi, lex credendi*, en otras palabras, la ley de lo que cantamos establece lo que creemos. Por lo tanto, si la ley de lo que cantamos cuenta, entonces quienes escogen nuestras canciones y los temas de ellas, quiénes cantamos y dónde cantamos cuenta en igual medida y tal vez hasta más.

Nuestra música, las canciones que cantamos, están influidas por muchas circunstancias, presiones, intereses y conflictos originados en agendas no estrictamente teológicas o incluso cristianas. Me gustaría parafrasear a Espín diciendo que la música eclesiástica, al igual que la teología, han sido manipuladas o escritas con intereses que pueden ser no transparentes u honorables. Pretender que ese no es el caso sería irresponsable e ingenuo. En las palabras de Espín, ser tratado como un cristiano o teólogo (o músico) de segunda categoría porque uno no vive (o canta) o lee en la cultura de la voz dominante es doctrinal y moralmente inaceptable y un ejemplo de una actitud imperial que raya en la idolatría^[1].

Desde 2017, he estado compartiendo la historia de los dos principales himnarios latinx usados en la Iglesia Episcopal. *El Himnario* (1998) y *Flor y Canto* (1984) contienen canciones que no son realmente latinoamericanas, aunque han pasado a ser parte del repertorio latinoamericano, gracias a las prácticas comunes y al proceso de inculturación. Solo como un ejemplo, en la sección de Adviento de *Flor y Canto* (2a ed.) hay 28 canciones, de las cuales solo cuatro son originariamente de compositores latinoamericanos. Asimismo, en la sección de Adviento del *Himnario*, hay 23 himnos y solo tres de ellos son originariamente de compositores latinoamericanos. Este es un ejemplo de lo que pasa cuando *lex canendi* es establecida por la voz dominante en la iglesia, incluso con la mejor de las intenciones.

Una oportunidad para experimentar

Sin embargo, fue esta pandemia lo que dio a la Iglesia la oportunidad de experimentar con música no tradicional. Aquí cito dos esfuerzos importantes de la Iglesia para descolonizar nuestra *lex canendi*. Con el apoyo de los subsidios Becoming Beloved Community (Convertirse en Comunidad Bienamada), la Diócesis de Indianápolis lanzó [Worship with Bravery](#) (Culto con Valentía), una serie de cuatro videos con

música no tradicional tocada por músicos de color de la Catedral Christ Church en Indianápolis. Inicialmente éste fue un proyecto de presentación de culto valiente, culto realizado con canciones no tradicionales. Nuestro objetivo era invitar a más músicos, sacerdotes y feligresías a que experimentaran esta música y tal vez a que la implementaran en sus propios cultos.

Sin embargo, cuando pegó la pandemia tuvimos que añadir otros dos niveles de valentía. No solo estábamos haciendo música no tradicional, sino que estábamos haciendo música durante la pandemia y éramos [músicos de color](#) haciendo música en un momento en que estábamos oyendo constantemente el mensaje de que nosotros, como inmigrantes y gente de color, no éramos bienvenidos en Estados Unidos. Además, la Diócesis de Indianápolis siguió brindando talleres que nos inspiraron, incluyendo una serie de seminarios virtuales con la Dra. Alisha Lola Jones y el profesor Vince Carr, de la Universidad de Indiana.

Asimismo, el 1º de noviembre de 2020, nuestra Iglesia Episcopal transmitió en vivo “Aferrándose a la esperanza: Un servicio religioso nacional para la curación y la plenitud” desde la Catedral Nacional con la presencia de nuestro Obispo Presidente Michael Curry (folleto aquí). Con el objetivo de brillar como un faro de esperanza para la nación en medio de la pandemia de la COVID-19, el ajuste de cuentas racial y una elección muy reñida, la Iglesia Episcopal y la Catedral Nacional organizaron un servicio religioso principalmente con música contemporánea y canciones de diferentes tradiciones --y ninguna del Himnario de 1982--, cantadas por cantantes y músicos de color de toda la Iglesia.

Lo que aprendimos

Entonces, ¿qué aprendimos al experimentar esta música durante todo un año de culto en línea? Creo que se pueden sacar cuatro lecciones principales de estos esfuerzos. Primero, aprendimos que nuestra iglesia está lista y ansiosa por empezar a cantar música de tradiciones diversas. Segundo, aprendimos que algunos estilos de música fueron más adaptables al culto en línea y mucho más efectivos: canciones tradicionales, canciones cortas, [salmodias](#) (tradicionales y contemporáneas), canciones con acompañamiento de guitarra, canciones en unísono. Tercero, aprendimos que la prioridad de nuestra música cuando rendimos culto en línea no es estética sino misionera. En otras palabras, la experiencia de rendir culto en línea fue significativa en cuanto los feligreses podían sentirse parte de la música, independientemente de si podían leer música o no. Finalmente, nos enteramos de que nuestra iglesia anhelaba cantar una canción de liberación, una canción que nos pudiera unir como iguales, una canción que pudiera afirmar lo que creemos: que estamos llamados a ser una comunidad bienamada que ama, libera y da vida.

***Yuri Rodriguez** acaba de finalizar su primer año en el Seminario en Sewanee, Universidad del Sur. Ella es música, cantante, directora de coros y líder eclesialística especializada en música y cultura de Latinoamérica.*

Recursos:

- [Música para fortalecer el trabajo en equipo](#) por Sandra T. Montes, Vestry Papers, enero 2019
- [Music and Liturgy](#), The Episcopal Church, 15 enero 2020
- [Diez señales de una congregación acogedora](#) por Sandra T. Montes, Vestry Papers, noviembre 2018
- [Para Crecer Espiritualmente Necesitamos Ser Amados](#) por Andrés Herrera, un blog de ECF Vital Practices, 23 agosto 2019

[1] ESPÍN, ORLANDO O. "Theologizing Latinamente: Had Anselm Known Us!" *Anglican Theological Review* 101, no. 4 (Otoño de 2019): 587–602.

Music Brings Hope and Healing

Bernadette Williams

On January 23rd, 2010, two weeks after the devastating earthquake in Haiti, I was with a group of musicians from the Holy Trinity Philharmonic Orchestra in Port au Prince as we went to one of the city's biggest rescue shelters to offer a concert. Without an invitation or plan or rehearsal, we arrived at the shelter with our own chairs and music stands and started to play. At first, you could see the anger, frustration and confusion on people's faces, as they watched us in our black and white uniforms. People in the audience had lost family members, their friends, their homes. They surely didn't expect to watch a bunch of people playing their ridiculous instruments or to hear songs. "It is not the time for that," some said.

However, when the orchestra began to play powerful pieces like the *Ave Verum Corpus* by Mozart and the *Gymnopedie* by Satie, there was a transformation. People started to cry. We could hear their cries of despair and also see the calm and comfort that came as the music continued. After playing these sober pieces for thirty minutes, the priest who accompanied us offered a memorial prayer, and the show moved on to upbeat rhythms – *Thriller* by Michael Jackson (I like to move it) and other Haitian folk songs with drums that had the crowd dancing, singing and laughing.

God's voice in difficult times

It was incredible to see the impact our music had on these people, ranging from deep sorrow to a simple smile. That impact was indeed shared by the musicians who offered this event, as well. We had not been spared by the earthquake. We too had lost everything. But we knew and understood the healing power of music and wanted to use it to help people through this horrific moment. That brought comfort to us all as we performed weekly in rescue shelters around country for a full year without any salary. The best reward a musician can have is to see the effect his or her music works on the audience.

People still ask where these musicians found the strength to hold their instruments and produce a sound. The answer is that God sent them to comfort his people. There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit was working through them and guiding them. It was a time when money, food, home, furniture, things, had no value. Everyone was lost and starting to lose faith. In that moment, this quote says it all: "Music is what is left after losing everything." In difficult times, music is listening to God's voice telling us that he is with us.

Music can change young lives

I have witnessed many miracles that happened because of music. The biggest showed me how music can change an aggressive and lost person to one who is kind and focused. For more than three years, I coordinated a social music program for youth at risk, sponsored by the Organization of American States (OAS) at the Holy Trinity Music School. This program recruits young people living in difficult conditions with limited economical resources, targeting especially youth living in dangerous neighborhoods,

orphanages and public schools. The plan was to give them a musical instrument, bring them together into an orchestra and teach them how to play together, how to be together, how to live together as brother and sister in Christ.

We recruited 200 youth and divided them into two groups: string orchestra and choir (string instruments were all we had at that time). We saw in their eyes excitement, happiness and hope. They were excited to hold an instrument for a first time in their lives, happy to be chosen and not forgotten, and they hoped that their lives would be changed forever. Holding a musical instrument means the world for these kids with uncertain futures. Most of their testimonies revealed that being part of an orchestra made them feel important and accepted.

Of course, the magic was not instantaneous. It took a little time to happen. The first summer camp with these youths ended up with knives out and daily misconduct. Using words to deal with their differences was so unfamiliar to them, and talking with an adult about their personal issues had never happened before, since no one had ever come to them and asked how they were feeling.

In particular, there was a young, smart teenage girl who chose the double bass, who almost never smiled during the entire program. She later told us how she was being abused by her stepdad while her mom was aware of the abuse. I heard so many painful stories, stories that I did not know how a human being could endure. Creating this safe, musical environment where these youth could produce and grow was the best gift they had ever received and the best medicine for their mental health, as their testimonies revealed. Being able to express their feelings through a musical instrument and to meet new friends made a huge impact in their lives. The program ended with around 80, mentally healthy young people, most of whom are trying to make a difference in other people's lives as well.

Music touches us all

One thing I am always sure of is that music doesn't have borders and touches everyone's heart. That's how powerful it is. I've seen no difference between the way music impacts people in Haiti and the U.S. or in the rest of the world. When I moved to San Antonio, to my new church family at St. George, I met a group of passionate musicians who meticulously choose the right anthem to match the gospel so the words of God can reach people's hearts. What I witness every Sunday is people coming up to the music team after the service to acknowledge how the music touches their souls and opens their hearts. During moments of crisis and uncertainty, music is one of the medicines we need to keep us calm and to give us hope. Music has no color, no nationality. It is the universal language that includes us all and makes us equal. It is the perfect creation of God.

***Bernadette Stela Williams** grew up in a musical environment in Port au Prince, Haiti. Introduced to the cello at eight years old, she became the youngest member of the Holy Trinity Philharmonic orchestra in 1997 and occupied the first chair in its cello section for more than ten years. Her studies and concert career took her to the U.S. and to Venezuela, where she came across El Sistema, a national program that provides music education for at-risk youth.*

Inspired by a short-term fellowship in arts management at the Kennedy Center and touched by her experience in Venezuela, Bernadette brought the El Sistema program to Haiti, with the assistance of the Organization of American States. She studied business management and accounting at the Episcopal University in Haiti and began work as executive manager for Holy Trinity's music school and orchestra.

Through the school, she was able to begin implementing the music program in many cities in the countryside.

Passionate about Haitian culture, Bernadette rewrote a dozen music score manuscripts from classical Haitian composers that were almost lost and adapted them for the orchestra. To promote this richness, she co-founded the nonprofit organization called Educ'Art in 2015 for the promotion of Haitian music and talented young Haitians. In 2018, Bernadette moved in San Antonio, where she holds the position of Director of Music Ministry and strings teacher at St. George Episcopal Church and School.

[This is Bernadette playing](#) with the St. Trinity School of Music in Port-au-Prince, Haiti at a Haitian Classics in the Garden event.

Resources:

- [Pitching Our Tent With God in the Pandemic](#) by Reagan Humber, Vestry Papers, January 2021
- [Songs of the Soul](#) by Lisa G. Fischbeck, ECF Vital Practices blog, July 19, 2021
- [Holding the Christ Light In the Darkness of Sorrow](#) by Pam Piedfort and Jennifer Sassin, Vestry Papers, November 2020
- [Come, Let Us Hum to the Lord](#) by Jemonde Taylor, Vestry Papers, July 2021

Evensong Meets Healing Sound

Steven Paulikas

In the spring of 2017, a group of talented musicians asked if they could use our Brooklyn church, All Saints, Park Slope, as a venue for their regular sound bath sessions. I was vaguely aware of this meditative practice that harnesses the healing potential of sound using various instruments and the human voice. It was clear that the group's intention to offer healing and hope in a loving environment matched the goals of our parish, and a partnership was born.

Bathed in sound

One Sunday evening, as people arrived at the steps of our historic church building, yoga mats in hand, I decided to join in and experience the sound bath session too. We settled in, laying on the floor and staring up at the 19th century barrel-vaulted ceiling, as the strange-looking instruments the musicians had brought began to flood the church's sacred space. A sense of deep calm washed over me, and I could feel the sound waves in my gut. Koshi chimes opened the session with a gentle tinkle, but gave way to cleansing whoosh of the rain drum. After that, tuning forks punctuated a brief silence with sharp twinkles. One musician even created a barreling dissonance by playing the two lowest organ pedals simultaneously. The sound caused my mind and my body to relax, and in all this, I was made plainly aware of God's presence. The experience reminded me of the joyful euphony described in Psalm 150: "praise him with lyre and harp...praise him with strings and pipe." I left feeling lighter, more focused and closer to God.

Episcopal liturgy bathes us in sound. Think of how your heart swells at the opening chords of the processional or how a Good Friday hymn can make you fight back tears. After a few months of sound baths at the church, I wanted to see if it was possible to marry the beauty of these new sounds I was

hearing with the healing words of Scripture and the Book of Common Prayer. That's how All Saints' Church became home to Sound Bath Evensong.

Evening Prayer sings a new song

The concept of Sound Bath Evensong is simple. The liturgy is Rite II Evening Prayer, just as it would be in a traditional choral Evensong, but instead of organ and choir, each musical element is associated with a sound chosen by the sound bath musicians. In a typical service, the Koshi chimes become the prelude, the rain drum accompanies the psalm, and tuning forks punctuate the words of the Magnificat. In place of an anthem, a percussionist unlocks the pungent reverberations of the gong in extended meditative solo. We closely follow the rubrics of the prayer book and read the lessons assigned for the day, using the sturdy backbone of our traditional liturgy to hold the healing power of the sound.



But as much as the sound bath transforms our usual experience of worship, the values of our faith have transformed the sound bath experience. A typical secular sound bath takes place in a yoga studio or other venue, and attendees pay a small fee to enter. Sound Bath Evensong on the other hand, is free and open to everyone, just like any other church service. As a result, many more people in our church's urban setting are able to benefit from the healing action of the liturgy. Seniors on fixed incomes and residents of our neighborhood women's shelter have become regular attendees. People who have the means to do so are encouraged to leave an offering for our neighborhood soup kitchen, and we're proud to have raised thousands of dollars for the most vulnerable in our community through the Sound Bath Evensong program.

Perhaps because Sound Bath Evensong is a unique experience both for churchgoers and those who don't usually attend church, it can have a surprising effect on many who attend. It's not uncommon to look out into the

congregation and see tears flowing down the face of a newcomer. One attendee who hadn't been to church in years said he felt a profound sense of holiness open up within him. Another said it started her on a path of healing after a childhood spent in an abusive religious institution. Once, as I was standing at the door following the service, a woman who had just moved to the neighborhood said, "I can't believe I live so close to something so extraordinary." We're fortunate to have caught the attention of many inside and outside the Church — including the Associated Press, which posted [a beautiful video story on the service](#) in March 2020.

Inviting strangers and friends into the love of Christ

I've noticed over the years that Episcopalians often get excited about novel programs and models of ministry, which is only natural given the demographic challenges we face. For us at All Saints', Sound Bath Evensong is just one small part of our overall attitude toward evangelism and growth, not a reinvention of the wheel.

From 2011 to 2020, our ASA increased from 50 to 135. God forbid we ever treat a precious human soul as a mere number, but I do think these statistics illustrate the grace the Holy Spirit has given our community to transform lives by the power of the Gospel. We have done this not by creating new tricks or sacrificing our faith in Jesus Christ, but rather by opening ourselves up to the overwhelming potential of the tradition we have inherited and by being intentional about sharing it with those who might not have found us otherwise. Sound Bath Evensong is just one expression of the most important component of church growth – inviting strangers and friends into the love of Christ.

If you're interested in exploring a Sound Bath liturgy program, we'd love to talk to you! As with any music-based liturgy, the most important step is collaborating with musicians who understand and respect the mission of the church and are willing to work with you. Church folk also have to understand and respect the musicians' aesthetic perspective and appreciate that this work is their spiritual vocation. We are fortunate to work currently with [Alex Beckmann](#), whose calming demeanor is a gift to all of us at the church. There's so much talent, empathy and love in the sound bath community, and a partnership with a musician or musicians can be a healing event in and of itself for both parties. My hope is that every church would be as blessed as ours has been in this sonic ministry of healing.

The Rev. Steven Paulikas is rector of [All Saints' Church](#) in the Park Slope neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York.

Archived Sound Bath Evensong Services at All Saints':

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_sYf5AiyYs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vi1V3skx6LY>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LcAQhd_bcA&t=552s

Image: The Rev. Steven Paulikas with sound bath musicians Alex Beckmann and Pamela Martinez at All Saints' Church. Photo credit All Saints' Church

Resources:

- [Finding Our Voices](#) by Ana Hernandez, Vestry Papers, November 2012
- [Four Steps to a Public Health Ministry](#) by Joshua Rodriguez-Hobbs, Vestry Papers, November 2018
- [The Quiet Center: Cultivating Inner Peace in Unsettling Times](#) an ECF webinar presented by Rebecca Roberts, April 1, 2020
- [Come, Let Us Hum to the Lord](#) by Jemonde Taylor, Vestry Papers, July 2021

Enjoying Music Again

Ellis Montes

I find playing historical music to be liberating. Perhaps this seems a bit strange, since it often involves quite a bit of research and learning (if not re-learning) to play music composed for older forms of our modern instruments. When I first entered the world of historically informed performance (HIP), which seeks to be faithful to the approach, manner and style of the era in which a work was originally composed, I stressed myself out over how to do everything "correctly." I wanted to make sure I was adhering to the right treatise from the right critic from the right country/town/region from the right time period. However, after learning techniques for applying my research to my performance, I found

that the HIP method was more than just playing as an 18th century music critic would like. It was a method for reinterpreting music and for questioning why one way was “correct” while everything else was “wrong” or “in bad taste.”

In my formal training as a classical musician, I sought to break into the world of orchestral music. This involved winning an audition, a process that often entailed performing musical excerpts in a very specific way to signal to the judges on the other side of a large screen, that I knew how to play everything “correctly” and that I had studied with all the important teachers. This audition process turned much of music into a precise science rather than an art, and it has been the cause of burnout for many of my colleagues and friends.

Enjoying music again

When I started studying HIP techniques, I began to enjoy music again. Perhaps the most inviting aspect of music is that composers often left many details to the performer. For example, instrumentation was not always strictly specified. Many pieces known today as a “violin sonata” could have been titled “for violin, flute, recorder, oboe or treble instrument.” Because of this, any piece of music was fine enough for my instrument, and I could change things up if I felt like it. Another potential variation in instrumentation is the use of percussion. It was rarely specified in compositions, but many documents show percussion used in many different contexts.

Even in the colonial era in New Spain, European composers, who were more familiar with this practice of imprecise instrumentation, would document the music of the Indigenous musicians and even compose music for Indigenous instruments. This is quite different than some cross-cultural music I encounter today, demanding that everything conform to a specific chord structure or sound. Another decision left up to the performer was how to play different musical parts. The music written down, particularly from the 16th-18th centuries, would often have little more than the notes. The composers would leave the questions of dynamics, phrasing, tempo, articulation or even ornamentation up to the performer. This factor has made me appreciate learning this music because it gives me the opportunity to suit the music to my own style of playing. Sometimes I can play a piece quickly, sometimes more slowly with more flourishes in between. Sometimes I can play my favorite part really loud for everybody to hear, or softly, so people have to come closer to listen in.

In addition to sticking close to the melody as written, much of this historical music allows for improvisation, something that many classical musicians are not well-versed in because of the 20th century obsession with playing everything exactly as written on the page. As an Indigenous Latino musician, I was raised in a music tradition rich in improvisation, and I learned to improvise in different styles. When I was training as a classical musician, however, I did not have many opportunities to use these techniques – at least not until I started playing HIP music. The HIP world has helped me bring my roots, roots that aren’t always recognized or celebrated in the Western classical music world, into my performance as a classical musician. I’ve enjoyed being able to add my own spin to different melodies when among friends and even on stage. I love the fact that communication between different musicians doesn’t just have to be imitating the dynamics or articulations, but it can also allow me to emphasize a melody with an extra flourish of notes.

In the past year, I have been able to apply my HIP techniques to music I’d performed in the past and to new music. Perhaps the most important thing was that I did not need the music I studied to be as detailed as when I played in the same room with other performers. Instead, I have been able to play

music on the instruments I have at home and in the ways best suited to them. Although this was mostly with older music, I was able to venture into the world of more modern music again, keeping it well within my grasp, in the lockdown situation. I felt like I could question why modern music needed to be played in a certain way, too, especially since I was performing it for myself. This approach has helped relieve some of my anxiety around not having in-person rehearsals, reading sessions, lessons or performances.

Taking ownership and changing it up

As we move out of lockdown, I hope that I can apply these techniques to future musical projects, especially those that take place in church. Here are some things to consider:

If I encounter a four-part hymn in a hymnal, what are some ways I can reinterpret it? How can I make it more approachable? How can I make it more personable?

First off, it is not mandatory for it to be sung with a choir and organ. That's only one way to interpret the hymn. Maybe I can appreciate the melody by itself by singing it in unison. Many of our beloved hymns began as simple melodies before all the other parts were added. In particular, the older hymns (such as those set/written by Martin Luther) may have been popular dance melodies in the 16th century. Perhaps our new interpretation could be a bit faster or slower than normal. Maybe some percussion – clapping or drums or other instruments – could be added to the music.

Maybe I can add some different instruments. For many of our beloved church composers (such as Bach and Charpentier), hymns were compositions with different possibilities for instrumentation. Charpentier's orchestra could have flutes, oboes, recorders, violins, organ and choir singing the exact same melody. Bach's hymns could be for just voice and organ or horn and voice or only violins. Maybe I can improvise with the hymn. If I am playing an instrument with other people singing, maybe I can add some notes here and there to connect different passages together. If the hymn follows a specific harmonic pattern, maybe I can improvise on the harmonies rather than the melody. It doesn't have to wait for the fourth verse as a descant. Maybe I can try improvising over the melody sung really slowly, filling in the gaps with more and more notes.

In the music world, we may not always feel comfortable reaching outside of what we've been taught. Especially for us classically trained musicians, it can be difficult to break out of what's written on the page or what our teachers have drilled into us. But we have a long tradition of musicians taking ownership of music and changing it up. Instead of confining ourselves to the box that we continue to reinforce, we can take a cue from our predecessors and reconsider how we approach playing music.

*Ellis Reyes Montes is an accomplished musician and writer. He is a life-long Episcopalian from Houston, Texas, and pursues his passions in music and writing with the loving support of his family. He often leads music and liturgy around the Episcopal Church, and he is a Story Weaver with the Beloved Community StorySharing Campaign. In addition to researching and leading church music and facilitating story sharing, he performs with various ensembles around the country, and he maintains a blog, openlyepiscopalian.blogspot.com and a podcast, *The Faithful Music Master*, where he seeks to investigate the love of God for all of God's creation. Whenever he is not writing or practicing/performing, he can be found studying languages, playing bridge, gardening or reading.*

A few examples of HIP techniques and thinking

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLAsLPof8eKIArktmLUu5EgW3I78Fy_MdV

Tracks 1-3 on this playlist are from the opera, *Alcyone*, by Marin Marais. The tune of the first and last dance would be rewritten as the Christmas carol, "Masters in This Hall". The music does not specify anything more than a treble and bass instrument, but, as this ensemble does, there's percussion and improvisation on top of the melody.

Track 4 is a piece from the colonial era in New Spain. This piece is probably a dance from the Indigenous community or a syncretism of Indigenous and Spanish musical traditions. The notation is unclear about which instruments are to play or even the tempo, but this ensemble brings the music to life.

Track 5 is from Bach's cantata, *Nach dir Herr verlangest mich BWV 150*, and it features at the start a rising scale from the voices, but then it passes onto the violins. A similar imitation happens at the end of the movement, with the violins playing the same thing that the voices sang before.

Track 6 is a famous piece, Pachelbel's *Canon in D*, but performed at a livelier tempo. The original piece was probably intended as a dance, with the violin parts evoking the sounds of dance fiddlers rather than stodgy violinists waiting for a bride to get from one place to another.

Track 7 is the original setting of the hymn tune that would become the famous Passion chorale, "O Sacred Head, Sore Wounded." Perhaps it's jarring to use such an upbeat setting for the text that we often pair with the tune, but it is the origin of this hymn tune, and many (if not most) of our beloved hymn tunes have similar origins.

Resources:

- [Music for Team Building](#) by Sandra T. Montes, Vestry Papers, January 2019
- [Keep on Singing](#) by Anna Olson, ECF Vital Practices blog, August 12, 2015
- [Discerning Need—The Power of Openness, Listening, and Music](#) by Erin Weber-Johnson, ECF Vital Practices blog, August 6, 2015
- [Oldfields, Newfields, and Balancing Tradition and Innovation](#) by Alan Bentrup, ECF Vital Practices blog, May 14, 2018

A Musician's Journey

Ronald Braman

My background in music began in my teens in high school. At the time, I suffered from a debilitating bone disease which crippled my ankle bone. I was an oddly spiritual teen who prayed a lot and loved going to church at my spiritual home in Fort Hall. I loved music, and singing was an outlet for my emotions.

My priest, Mother Joan Laliberté, was my confidante, confessor and spiritual guide. She also encouraged my appreciation for music. She borrowed the works of Mahalia Jackson for me. I fell in love with them and remain so today. Joan also sent me to a choral camp in the mountains of Challis, Idaho, where I was immersed in a rich repertoire that included church, classical, modern, Gospel, Spiritual, Broadway and folk choral genres. There were over a hundred basses that year. I remember, as they went down to their low E's and low D's, being transfixed by the wall of sound around me. I describe it as the thunder of God!

From there, I decided I wanted to devote my life to music. After graduation from high school, I enrolled at Idaho State University, intent on studying music. I spoke to the head of the Music Department, about my desire, and he asked if I had any musical training. When I offered my experience at choral camp and singing to the radio, he seemed amused, but to his credit he enrolled me in beginning classes. I excelled, and eventually he became my voice teacher.

I won some awards in voice competitions and travelled with Chamber Choir to Europe, singing beautiful church music in the great cathedrals they were written for. As a voice major, I was expected to be piano proficient, study music theory and refine aural skills (recognizing chords and intervals on hearing). While never very good at the latter, I found the piano to be another outlet for my creativity. Using the methods taught to me and some innovations of my own, I learned quickly, passing all piano classes I-IV. My voice teacher at the time said “why don’t you study that too?”

Throughout my education I continued to sing in church back home, and after the four years of music study, I moved to the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming, the place of my tribal enrollment. While there I cared for my elderly grandmother. I coordinated a community concert featuring Art Song, Sacred, Italian, Lieder and Hymnody, and I grieved the loss of the world of music. Coupled with the rural community and hardships of reservation life, I was a far cry from what I dreamed I would accomplish with my voice.

Home again, and with an expansive ethos of church music to share

My experiences and several losses and times of grief and healing have formed my ethos of music, and specifically, of church music. Eventually I returned to Idaho, and found myself back at my spiritual home in Fort Hall, the place of my baptism – Good Shepherd, where I became the Director of Music and remain so to this day.

I have been described as high church, but I love music that makes some high church folks cringe. I would rather not name those hymns, as I do not appreciate labels that denote them as less than, and I would rather not cause harm to hymns that many love.

There are hymns in the Hymnal that still have life, and some yet to be breathed into. “All who love and serve your city” (571) springs to mind. I have introduced that hymn in a couple events where I have served as liturgy designer / accompanist / vocalist.

I use “When Christ was lifted from the Earth” (603) often for its beautiful melodic line and words of justice. “O day of peace” (597) is another favorite that I come back to for the message of hope and unity, while “What does the Lord require” (605), sung with gusto and creativity with the melody and accompaniment, yields wonderful results.

For several years I have assisted the Episcopal Church Indigenous Ministries with Wintertalk, our Indigenous gathering, as a worship team designer and musician. I have offered my talents at General Convention in Indianapolis, Clergy Retreats for California and South Dakota and at the Diocese of Olympia’s online One Service for Turtle Island. I am currently in talks for other projects in the Episcopal Church.

At Good Shepherd I incorporate patriotic hymns around Memorial Day and Fourth of July though I know that is a discussion in the church today, along with displaying the flag. I would have no issue with moving

the flags, and the patriotic hymns come once or twice a year, hardly idolatry. In my small church Indigenous context this works.

Summertime at Good Shepherd tends to feel more laid back. We use the baby grand piano more (the reed organ seems to make it hotter), throw open the doors and hope the breeze wafts through. We have more Morning Prayer than Holy Eucharist here, the former not being too high, the latter incorporating sung Gloria, Doxology, Sanctus, Fraction and communion organ music. We gingerly incorporate Native American Flute and Drum songs wherever the moment calls for the Holy.

Focus on music you are moved by

As an advocate of and participant in Native ceremonial ways I feel it is right and good to incorporate traditional Indigenous practices into the service as is most respectful and appropriate to the community. I often stress to non-Indigenous communities the harm in co-opting Native like smudging, however well intentioned. Relationship with tribal peoples must be realized and participation in their cultural ways at their discretion.

Here at Good Shepherd, some of our hymnody has been translated into Shoshone and is included at different times in our worship. Songs from Taizé are beloved by me and used primarily in Evening Prayer, Compline and on Maundy Thursday. We often include Naraya, or circle dance / ghost dance songs into the service, and we burn traditional Indigenous aromatics and resin church incense. During the pandemic, when we reemerged for worship online, we switched invariably to Evening Prayer or Compline, as that seemed like a great thing we could offer that no one was doing. Lots more smells and bells here, as canticles were sung or chanted and incense filled the air.

If there is a takeaway here, it would be to focus on music that you are moved by, regardless of notions of high or low. Indigenous tradition fits in this world and is to be valued. You are likely to hear Drum songs, Native Flute, Bach, Jazz chords and Gospel-like shouts at Good Shepherd, depending on the mood. Our hymnody is formed by The Hymnal 1982, WLP, LEVAS, Songs of Praise, Gather, Taizé, The Porter's Gate, and several other sources made known to us.

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Resources:

- [Sing a New Song](#) by Peter Strimer, ECF Vital Practices blog, May 12, 2011
- [Navajo Millennial](#) by GJ Gordy, ECF Vital Practices blog, June 20, 2019
- [Singing a New Song](#) by Greg Syler, ECF Vital Practices blog, June 18, 2014
- [Music and Change: A Conversation with Dent Davidson](#) by Sandra Montes, Vestry Papers, July 2021

Volver a disfrutar la música

Ellis Montes

Encuentro que tocar música histórica es liberador. Quizás esto parezca un poco extraño, ya que a menudo implica considerable investigación y aprendizaje (o reaprendizaje) tocar música compuesta para formas más antiguas de nuestros instrumentos modernos. Cuando entré por primera vez al mundo de la interpretación históricamente informada (IHI), que busca ser fiel al enfoque, la manera y el estilo de la época en la que se compuso originalmente una obra, me estresé sobre cómo hacer todo "correctamente". Quería asegurarme de estar cumpliendo con las condiciones existentes en el país, el pueblo o la región en ese entonces. Sin embargo, después de haber aprendido técnicas para aplicar mi investigación a mi interpretación, descubrí que el método IHI era más que tocar como le hubiera gustado a un crítico musical del siglo XVIII. Era un método para reinterpretar la música y cuestionar por qué una forma era "correcta" mientras que todo lo demás estaba "mal" o "era de mal gusto".

En mi formación formal como músico clásico, busqué irrumpir en el mundo de la música sinfónica. Esto implicó aprobar una audición, un proceso que a menudo requería tocar partes de piezas musicales de maneras muy específicas para indicar a los jueces al otro lado de una pantalla grande que sabía cómo tocar todo "correctamente" y que había estudiado con todos los maestros importantes. Este proceso de audición convirtió gran parte de la música en una ciencia precisa más que en un arte, y ha sido la causa del agotamiento de muchos de mis colegas y amigos.

Volver a disfrutar la música

Cuando comencé a estudiar técnicas de IHI, empecé a volver a disfrutar la música. Quizás el aspecto más invitador de la música es que los compositores a menudo dejan muchos detalles a discreción del intérprete. Por ejemplo, la instrumentación no siempre se especificó estrictamente. Muchas piezas conocidas hoy como "sonata para violín" podrían haberse titulado "para violín, flauta, flauta dulce, oboe o instrumentos con sonidos agudos". Gracias a ello, toda pieza musical era apta para mi instrumento y podía cambiar cosas si lo deseaba. Otra posible variación en la instrumentación es el uso de percusión. Casi nunca se especificaba en las composiciones, pero muchos documentos indican el uso de la percusión en muchos contextos diferentes.

Incluso en la era colonial de la Nueva España, los compositores europeos, que estaban más familiarizados con esta práctica de instrumentación imprecisa, documentaban la música de los músicos indígenas e incluso componían música para instrumentos indígenas. Esto es bastante diferente a la música transcultural que encuentro hoy en día, que exige que todo se ajuste a una estructura específica de acordes o sonidos.

Otra decisión que quedaba en manos del intérprete era cómo tocar diferentes partes musicales. La música escrita, particularmente la de los siglos XVI al XVIII, a menudo tenía poco más que las notas. Los compositores dejaban la dinámica, el fraseo, el tempo, la articulación o incluso la ornamentación a discreción del intérprete. Este factor me hizo apreciar el aprendizaje de esta música porque me da la oportunidad de adaptar la música a mi propio estilo de tocar. A veces puedo tocar una pieza rápidamente, a veces más lentamente con más florituras en el medio. A veces puedo tocar mi parte favorita muy fuerte para que todos la oigan muy queda, para que la gente tenga que acercarse para poder oír.

Además de ceñirse a la melodía tal como está escrita, gran parte de esta música histórica permite la improvisación, algo en lo que muchos músicos clásicos no están bien versados debido a la obsesión del siglo XX por tocar todo exactamente como está escrito en la página. Como músico latino indígena, me crié en una tradición musical rica en improvisación y aprendí a improvisar en diferentes estilos. Sin

embargo, cuando me estaba formando como músico clásico, no tuve muchas oportunidades de usar estas técnicas, al menos no hasta que comencé a tocar música IHI. El mundo de IHI me ayudó a incorporar mis raíces, raíces que no siempre se reconocen o celebran en el mundo de la música clásica occidental, en mi actuación como músico clásico. Disfruté poder agregar mi propio toque a diferentes melodías cuando estaba entre amigos e incluso en el escenario. Me encanta el hecho de que la comunicación entre diferentes músicos no solo tiene que ser imitar las dinámicas o articulaciones, sino que también puede permitirme enfatizar una melodía con fiorituras.

Durante el año pasado, pude aplicar mis técnicas de IHI a música que había tocado en el pasado y a música nueva. Quizás lo más importante fue que no necesitaba que la música que estudiaba fuera tan detallada como cuando tocaba en una misma sala con otros músicos. En lugar de ello, pude tocar música con los instrumentos que tengo en casa y de la mejor forma para ellos. Aunque esto fue principalmente con música antigua, pude volver a aventurarme en el mundo de la música más moderna, manteniéndola dentro de mi alcance, en la situación de encierro. Sentí que podía cuestionar el motivo por el que la música moderna también necesitaba que se la tocara de una cierta manera, especialmente porque la estaba interpretando para mí. Este enfoque me ayudó a aliviar parte de mi ansiedad proveniente de no tener ensayos, sesiones de lectura, lecciones o interpretaciones en persona.

Tomar posesión y cambiarlo

A medida que salimos del encierro, espero poder aplicar estas técnicas a futuros proyectos musicales, especialmente a los que ocurren en la iglesia. A continuación, algunas cosas que considerar: Si encuentro un himno de cuatro voces en un himnario, ¿de qué maneras puedo reinterpretarlo? ¿Cómo puedo hacerlo más accesible? ¿Cómo puedo hacerlo más agradable?

En primer lugar, no es obligatorio que se cante con coro y órgano. Esa es solo una forma de interpretar el himno. Quizás pueda apreciar la melodía por sí sola cantándola al unísono. Muchos de nuestros amados himnos comenzaron como melodías simples antes de que se agregaran todas las demás voces. En particular, los himnos más antiguos (como los establecidos o escritos por Martín Lutero) pueden haber sido melodías de bailes populares en el siglo XVI. Quizás nuestra nueva interpretación podría ser un poco más rápida o más lenta de lo normal. Tal vez se podría agregar algo de percusión a la música, como palmas, tambores u otros instrumentos.

Quizás pueda agregar algunos instrumentos diferentes. Para muchos de nuestros amados compositores de iglesias (como Bach y Charpentier), los himnos eran composiciones con diferentes posibilidades de instrumentación. La orquesta de Charpentier podría tener flautas, oboes, flautas dulces, violines, órgano y coro cantando exactamente la misma melodía. Los himnos de Bach podrían ser solo para voz y órgano o trompa y voz o solo violines.

Quizás pueda improvisar con el himno. Si toco un instrumento con otras personas cantando, tal vez pueda agregar algunas notas aquí y allá para conectar diferentes pasajes. Si el himno sigue un patrón armónico específico, tal vez pueda improvisar sobre las armonías en lugar de la melodía. No tiene que esperar hasta la cuarta estrofa para un contrapunto. Tal vez pueda intentar improvisar sobre la melodía cantada muy lentamente, llenando los huecos con más y más notas.

En el mundo de la música, es posible que no siempre nos sintamos cómodos alcanzando más allá de lo que nos enseñaron. Especialmente para nosotros, los músicos con formación clásica, puede ser difícil romper con lo que está escrito en la página o con lo que nuestros profesores nos inculcaron. Pero

tenemos una larga tradición de músicos que se adueñan de la música y la cambian. En lugar de limitarnos a la caja que seguimos reforzando, podemos seguir el ejemplo de nuestros predecesores y reconsiderar cómo abordamos tocar la música.

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Algunos ejemplos de técnicas y pensamiento de HIP

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLAsLPof8eKIArktmLUu5EgW3I78Fy_MdV

Las pistas 1 a 3 de esta lista pertenecen a la ópera *Alcyone*, de Marin Marais. La melodía del primer y último baile se reescribió como el villancico "Masters in This Hall". La música no especifica nada más que un instrumento de graves y agudos, pero, como lo hace este conjunto, hay percusión e improvisación además de la melodía.

La pista 4 es una pieza de la época colonial en la Nueva España. Esta pieza es probablemente una danza de la comunidad indígena o un sincretismo de tradiciones musicales indígenas y españolas. La notación aclara qué instrumentos tocar, ni tampoco el tempo, pero este conjunto da vida a la música.

La pista 5 es de la cantata de Bach *Nach dir Herr verlanget mich* BWV 150. Al principio presenta una escala ascendente de las voces, pero después pasa a los violines. Una imitación similar ocurre al final del movimiento, con los violines tocando lo mismo que las voces cantaron anteriormente.

La pista 6 es una pieza famosa, el *Canon de Pachelbel en D*, pero interpretada a un ritmo más vivo. La pieza original probablemente tenía la intención de ser una danza, con las partes de violín evocando los sonidos de los violinistas de la danza en lugar de los pesados violinistas que esperaban que una novia llegara de un lugar a otro.

La pista 7 es el original de la melodía del himno que se convertiría en el famoso coral de la Pasión, "O Sacred Head, Sore Wounded". Quizás es discordante usar un escenario tan optimista para el texto que a menudo combinamos con la melodía, pero es el origen de esta melodía de himno, y muchas (si no la mayoría) de nuestras amadas melodías de himnos tienen orígenes similares.

Recursos:

- [Música para fortalecer el trabajo en equipo](#) por Sandra T. Montes, Vestry Papers, enero 2019
- [Descolonización de la música eclesiástica](#) por Yuri Rodriguez, Vestry Papers, julio 2021
- [Para Crecer Espiritualmente Necesitamos Ser Amados](#) por Andrés Herrera, un blog de ECF Vital Practices, 23 agosto 2019
- [¡Predica!](#) por Megan Castellan, Vestry Papers, mayo 2019